

**Fair Trade Governance, Public Procurement and
Sustainable Development:**
A case study of Malawian rice in Scotland

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Abstract/Summary

This thesis provides an account of the way in which meaning associated with the term ‘fair trade’ is negotiated within a number of discrete, yet interrelated communities, in a way which influences stakeholder understanding of the concept – and as a result, structures the way in which public procurement strategies integrate fair trade governance into their operation.

Building from the identification of ‘fair trade’ governance as a means to embed the intra-generational social justice concerns of sustainable development within the public procurement system, the thesis investigates how the ambiguous meaning of fair trade is reconciled in discourse and practice. Specifically focusing on the case study of Scotland – where Local Authorities are involved in a complex network of state and private governance initiatives – investigation reveals that despite various influences to the contrary, fair trade is strongly conflated with certification administered by the dominant global fair trade certifying body, Fairtrade International (FLO). However, exceptions are argued to demonstrate an active negotiation of this domination over meaning. In particular, one Authority has purchased ‘fairly traded’ Kilombero rice – produced by members of the National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM) – as part of its fair trade strategy, by accepting claims of fairness not on the basis of external certification, but on trust from a socially orientated import organisation.

Extending the study along the supply chain, investigation reveals that while the producer organisation sees fair trade as beneficial to their overall objectives, they identify significant limitations with the FLO approach. For this reason they have pursued World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO) accreditation in order to back their claims to fair trade operation. As such, the dominance of FLO certification is seen to be actively contested as part of a wider dynamic in which different approaches vie to influence the understanding, and therefore the praxis of stakeholders.

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Note on Citations for Interviews and Web Pages

As noted in Chapter Three, best efforts have been made to ensure that sources used in the development of this thesis are identifiable and traceable; so that others can easily verify or further extend the research presented. As such, where it has been possible, the names of interviewees are cited as direct support for the empirical narrative. However, in some cases, contributors requested either partial or full anonymity, in which case interviews are cited appropriately. A full list of named and anonymous contributors can be found in Appendix 7.

The thesis also contains references to web pages cited in the text according to the Harvard style. In these cases, there are no page numbers to cite where direct quotations have been made, although the initial “WS” (indicating website) has been included to differentiate these from other reference types.

Glossary of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
ABNT	Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas
ADMARC	Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (Malawi)
AFN	African Fairtrade Network
AFNOR	Association Française de Normalisation
ATO	Alternative Trade Organisation
BAFTS	British Association of Fair Trade Shops
COC	Code of Conduct
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
EC	European Commission
EFTA	European Fair Trade Association
EMAS	Eco-Management and Audit Scheme
EU	European Union
FINE	Alliance of: Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International, International Fair Trade Association/World Fair Trade Organisation, the Network of European World Shops! and European Fair Trade Association
FLO	Fairtrade Labelling Organisation International/Fair Trade International ¹
FOREX	Foreign Currency (Exchange)
FTN	Fair Trade Nation
HL	Hired Labour (FLO certification)
IDT	International Development Team (Scottish Government)
IFAT	International Federation for Alternative Trade
ILO	International Labour Organisation

¹ Please note: given the name changes undergone by this organisation (see Chapter Two) bibliographic information is presented in this thesis as per the name of the organisation at the time of publication.

ISEAL	International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance
JTS	Just Trading Scotland
KSFA	Kaporo Smallholder Farmers' Association
MASFA	Mchinji Area Smallholder Farmers Association
MK	Malawian Kwacha
MEPC	Malawi Export Production Council
MSI	Multi Stakeholder Initiative
NASFAM	National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi
NEWS!	Network of World Shops!
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NLI	National Labelling Initiative (of FLO)
PDO	Protected Designation of Origin
PGI	Protected Geographical Indicator
PSFPI	Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative
SDO	Sustainable Development Officer
SFO	Small Farmers' Organisations (FLO certification)
SFTF	Scottish Fair Trade Forum
SFTMS	Sustainable Fair Trade Management System
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WFTF	Wales Fair Trade Forum

WFTO	World Fair Trade Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Introduction

This thesis emerged out of the growing interest of policy makers, practitioners and academics in the use of public procurement as a tool to promote sustainable development. By and large, the necessity of the state to procure the goods required to perform its functions has always been used to promote other policy objectives (McCrudden 2004) – such as supporting the interests of specific social groups. However, with the emergence of the sustainable development concept and paradigm, great attention has been paid to how procurement decisions can continue to obtain value for public money, while at the same time promoting environmental and social policies (Arrowsmith and Kunzlik 2009). One specific argument within this broader narrative has been that the public purchase of so-called ‘fair trade’² goods can contribute towards the promotion of ‘sustainable development’ by fostering intra-generational social justice (Morgan 2008).

This association between ‘fair trade’ and ‘sustainable development’ is not new. Indeed, as early as the mid-1990s, it was noted in academic discourse that “fair trade principles *can* contribute to the development of long-term sustainable development” (Strong 1997, p. 1). Subsequently, this conclusion has been reformulated without such hedged language, and in offering a definition of fair trade, the organisations centrally involved in such practices³ agree that:

“Fair Trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. *It contributes to sustainable development* by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalised producers and workers – especially in the South” (FINE 2001, p. 1).

² Building on the precedent of other discussions, this thesis uses the term ‘fair trade’ to signify the concept as well as the wider movement of producers, organisations, businesses and consumers who support it, and conduct their operations and campaigns accordingly. As this thesis is in itself an exploration of the multifaceted nature of the concept, it is not possible to provide an *ex ante* definition, although Chapter Two gives the clearest sense of what can be implied by the term.

³ For discussion of which organisations have contributed to the FINE definition of fair trade, see Chapter Two.

This fundamental association between fair trade and sustainable development has also been mirrored by UK Government policy, which identifies the purchase of goods produced and traded under such governance as a tool that has the potential to contribute to international development efforts in a way that is sustainable over time (DFID 2009). As such, in 2009 it was announced that the Fairtrade Foundation – the organisation responsible for licensing Fairtrade International’s (FLO) Fairtrade certification mark in the UK – was to be supported with a grant of £12 million (Fairtrade Foundation 2009e WS). Further to this, central UK Government policy and procurement guidelines acknowledge that constituent government institutions can contribute towards the fair trade movement through the procurement of fair trade goods (OGC 2008). In parallel to these central policy developments, fair trade goods have become increasingly popular among both private and public buyers, with FLO-certified sales surpassing £1 billion in the UK in 2010 (Fairtrade Foundation 2011 WS), and there have been widespread efforts to integrate fair trade goods into the public spend (Fisher 2009).

While this phenomenon has been identified in the academic literature as a means of broadening the scope of government considerations in undertaking its purchasing function (Morgan 2010), analysis has so far largely failed to move beyond a celebration of this innovation. There is an urgent need for a more critical consideration of fair trade procurement policy and praxis. Indeed, as collective understanding of the effects of fair trade governance has widened and deepened, investigation has revealed examples in which outcomes are less easily recognisable as positive – either for stakeholders immediately involved or those indirectly affected (see for example Neilson and Pritchard 2010). Furthermore, given the variety of practices that are labelled as fair trade, generalised claims about the relationship between generic fair trade approaches and sustainable development are even less rigorously supportable than conclusions drawn about specific governance practices. Indeed, analysis of the existing literature identifies that the evidence base concerned with the overall effects of fair trade governance is significantly limited. This is of considerable importance since the implementation of broad government policy is potentially being shaped by more specific discourses that promote certain fair trade practices over and above other governance arrangements (Malpass et al. 2007) – irrespective of the limited understanding of empirical impact on development processes (Mohan 2010).

In order to contribute towards filling this knowledge gap, the investigation presented in this thesis undertook a case study of public procurement in Scotland. This area was chosen on the basis that its devolved government has become involved in the Fair Trade Nation (FTN) programme – a scheme identified in the literature to be based on the promotion of certification administered by FLO. The investigation relied on qualitative data generated from interviews and captured from hard and soft documentary evidence. Overall, category analysis was employed to identify the ways in which the concept of fair trade is interpreted by a variety of stakeholders interested in the integration of governance into public procurement. Drilling down to a specific Local Authority, and in particular an individual supply chain, this dissertation provides an embedded case study that represents a multi-sited, international, in-depth enquiry into the negotiation of meaning around the concept of fair trade. The analysis reflects on the congruencies and tensions that different interpretations generate, especially around the dominance of FLO certification, and provides insights into the relationship with sustainable development outcomes.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One begins with an exploration of the concept of ‘sustainable development’. Starting from a brief outline of its historical background, the chapter argues that, at its core, the concept was an attempt to reconcile the various themes of aggregate economic growth and distributive justice (long since the core of international development thinking) with the newly emerging concern of environmentalism. However, despite the subsequent and widespread proliferation of the term, the more tangible meaning of sustainable development has remained widely debated and intensively contested. Indeed, academic analysis has provided a variety of typologies to describe the different interpretations of sustainable development, mostly based on the trade-offs between different prioritisations of the economic, environmental and social elements that comprise it (Hopwood et al. 2005).

Using these tools, the chapter argues that, in general, the integration of sustainable development in the UK has been based around an environmentally ‘weak’ interpretation of the concept. More specifically, the prioritisation of economic considerations with some

concern for environmental stewardship is also found in efforts to embed the concept in government procurement activities. Against this background, the purchase of food for the public plate is identified as one example where a more holistic approach has been adopted (Morgan 2008). The chapter explores the development of this approach in the light of the opportunities and limitations identified in legal frameworks that govern public procurement, and of wider and more creative perceptions of the notion of ‘value for money’.

Despite the positive way in which such approaches to the public procurement of food have been conceptualised, Chapter One also identifies the embedding of a strong localising agenda – which aims to procure food produced as near as possible to the site of consumption – within the attempts to reform policy and practice. Here academics focusing on public procurement acknowledge wider critiques that local food does not necessarily contribute to more economically, environmentally or socially desirable results (Morgan and Sonnino 2008). As an extension of this narrative, it is noted that other goods can assist in the creation of more holistic contributions; and one such proposition is that of so-called ‘fair trade’ goods. However, despite the parallel existence of a significant volume of literature on fair trade (discussed in Chapter Two), this association is not critically explored. Given government support for the procurement of fair trade goods where it is considered legally possible, and the ambiguity with which this policy is elaborated, the first chapter argues that such a project has significant importance.

In **Chapter Two** attention turns to the widespread literature that specifically addresses the subject of ‘fair trade’. Beginning with a brief history of fair trade activity, it is argued that the term essentially refers to the governance of south-north supply chains in a way that aims to benefit southern producers more than conventional approaches. After reviewing discourses of government policy and the academic literature concerned with public procurement, the chapter outlines the hugely heterodox approaches that can be, and are implied by the term ‘fair trade’. Indeed, a synthesis of the secondary literature traces the development of governance from its beginning, where disparate organisations relied heavily on trust for their legitimacy, to the development of third party certification approaches – and specifically that operated by Fairtrade International (FLO) which has come to dominate the market. Reflecting critically, it is argued that FLO certification cannot necessarily be accepted as a tool to

promote sustainable development. Indeed, literature suggests that this certification has facilitated the development of less effective approaches to fair trade, which might not be delivering the development benefits assumed in some discourses (see for example Gendron et al. 2009). Furthermore, it is highlighted that FLO is not the only organisation to have developed formalised governance frameworks for the practice of fair trade; and the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO) is specifically identified as claiming a more “authentic” approach to the concept (WFTO 2011 WS). In addition to this parallel accreditation, there are both longstanding and more recent organisations which have continued to employ a model of fair trade operation grounded in trust and personal relations (Raynolds 2009, p. 1086). In this sense, understanding the relationship between public procurement practice and sustainable development first requires an understanding of how the concept of fair trade is interpreted in this context. It is the identification of this issue that set the primary focus of this dissertation.

A review of evidence on the impact of a variety of fair trade practices demonstrates that the existence of more and less effective fair trade approaches is not adequately grounded in empirical investigation. Indeed, it is specifically noted that, while most studies concentrate on FLO certification, there is little evidence available on the operation and outcomes of alternative approaches. Furthermore, the overall evidence for the association between fair trade governance and positive (sustainable) development outcomes is limited in existing studies. This situation is a significant issue for those promoting FLO certification and especially more generic ‘fair trade’ governance as a tool for sustainable public procurement.

Chapter Two also highlights the ambiguity of UK Government discourse, which conflates fair trade approaches with so-called ‘ethical trade’ governance (OGC 2008). Exploring this latter category in the academic literature, a main point is that these initiatives are considered as qualitatively different to fair trade: while the latter is concerned with conditions of both production and trade, the former is exclusively about the private regulation of the production site (Smith and Barrientos 2005). As such, further ambiguity is introduced on how headline government policy might be interpreted and, hence, on the kind of development outcomes that should be expected.

A final complicating factor identified in Chapter Two is that, in the face of Government ambiguity over what constitutes desirable procurement practices, the National Labelling Initiative (NLI) of FLO in the UK, the Fairtrade Foundation, is considered to be proactively encouraging the public consumption of FLO certified goods. According to existing literature, this has been achieved partly through the development of accreditation for certain communities that requires a demonstrable increase in the consumption of FLO certified goods. Importantly for this study, while such accreditation covers public organisations such as schools and universities, other versions also make requirements of public procurement activities in local administrative institutions.

While there is only limited empirical evidence that this has had an effect on public sector procurement, some raise concerns about the rise of “Fairtrade absolutism” (Mohan 2010, p. 94), where FLO certification is considered to be gaining a monopoly at the expense of other fair and ethical trade approaches. This is a considerable issue given the lack of evidence on the effectiveness of any of the possible governance approaches identified in these discourses – and, as such, it underlies the importance of investigation into what governance practices are actually being adopted on the ground.

Chapter Three draws together the literature review process in a discussion of the research approach and methodology adopted in the thesis. Firstly, the overall direction of the investigation is discussed before four specific research questions are outlined as a tool around which the research has been structured. The chapter builds on the theme of ambiguity in language identified in the previous discussion to suggest that ongoing investigation must be grounded in a ‘constructivist’ approach to ontology. However, given a prevailing concern for empirically verifiable outcomes, it is a ‘critical realist’ epistemology that underpins the approach adopted in this thesis. This chapter also explains the specific choice of Scotland as a case study, the practical development of how data was acquired and discusses the decision to develop the project through an ‘embedded case study’ of one specific Local Authority and their purchase of ‘fairly traded’ Kilombero rice from a mission-driven, alternative trade organisation: Just Trading Scotland (JTS). As well as taking the opportunity to develop knowledge of a mission-driven organisation, the investigation was also designed to respond to the limitation of current literature in failing to consider producers themselves as agents of

change (Tallontire 2009, p. 1009). Based on this observation, the thesis makes a proactive attempt to investigate the agency of southern stakeholders in negotiating what it means to be involved in 'fair trade'. Finally, the chapter discusses issues of research ethics and the reliability and validity of the interpretations presented.

Chapter Four presents empirical findings from the investigation to explain the meaning and development of the FTN programme and its integration into Scottish international development policy. It emerges that the FTN programme initially arose from a civil society initiative in Wales. As the idea was developed, the group engaged in discussions about how a FTN should be defined and thus what objectives would need to be achieved for such a status to be claimed. This story is particularly relevant, as different stakeholders held different views about what would be required. While the Fairtrade Foundation was initially invited to play a prominent role in the initiative – which, for various reasons, they felt unable to accept – the group set out from the very beginning to ensure their interpretation of 'fair trade' was wider than FLO certification. Indeed, even by the time an independent panel was formed to evaluate the appropriateness of the criteria, stakeholders felt that there should be requirements for a number of dedicated fair trade shops and the proactive construction of fair trade infrastructure. However, it was also identified that the programme would work best if criteria were quantifiable and grounded in existing knowledge of fair trade. For these reasons, the eventual mandatory requirements of the FTN programme were exclusively based on increasing the consumption of FLO-certified goods in private, but also the public sector, both through specific criteria and requirements for increased geographic accreditation from the Fairtrade Foundation.

Despite the technical focus of the FTN programme, the way in which this initiative has been integrated into the Scottish policy has, to some extent, obscured such an emphasis. Indeed, government representatives make a point of identifying that there are a multitude of certifications and aspects to their approach. In this sense, the official discourse of the Scottish Government very much mirrors the broad representation of desirable procurement policy offered by the central UK Government. While research instruments limited the ability to evaluate if discourses of (government) actors genuinely reflect their view, one significant

issue that appears to be shaping Scottish policy is the interpretation of European Procurement Directives.

Moving beyond the macro position, Chapter Four also reports on the discourses projected by Scottish Local Authorities. Here it is emphasised that the Fairtrade Town scheme is having a significant influence on the interpretations of fair trade procurement – particularly in generating the prioritisation of FLO certified goods over those that might fall into the category of ethical trade such as Rainforest Alliance. Nevertheless, there are also examples of more reflexive consideration of what goods can be legitimately included in fair trade initiatives. One such example is the embedded case study of East Dunbartonshire, a Local Authority that purchased ‘fairly traded’ Kilombero rice from a dedicated fair trade import organisation, JTS. While the rice carried no external certification, the claim to fairness was taken on the basis of the organisation’s social mission and the personal relationships of trust which developed.

Taking up the opportunity to extend the understanding of how the meaning of fair trade is negotiated by different stakeholders, the Kilombero rice supply chain was further investigated through empirical research in Malawi. Moving to provide an account of producer involvement in these wider processes, **Chapter Five** provides the development context in the country – as one of the least developed countries in the world – and specifically discusses the background to the development of the National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM) – from which JTS sources Kilombero rice. The chapter deals with NASFAM’s involvement with fair trade and highlights the way in which the organisation has sought to create supportive and beneficial markets as part of its overall mission to diversify income streams – and as such, promote wider export diversification needed to shift Malawi away from reliance on tobacco production. While it was discovered that FLO certification has proved to be useful, primarily as a tool to access markets, there are significant local limitations to such a strategy. In some situations, the costs of certification are prohibitive and can negate financial benefits from fair trade sales in the short term. In others, such as NASFAM’s effort to find an export market for Kilombero rice, certification is too expensive and also not locally available – despite being used by producers in other countries. While in theory such certification is extendable to new geographic regions, NASFAM has not found such processes to be easily

accessible. This is particularly significant as the chapter also reports a wider context in which FLO is proactively developing its presence among producers, arguably to the exclusion of other accreditation initiatives such as the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO), and its African regional Chapter, Co-Operation for Fair Trade Africa (COFTA). Indeed, insights suggest that events in Malawi have embedded these networks in more of a competitive than a complementary relationship.

Building on these empirical findings, **Chapter Six** provides an overall analysis of the situation based on the ontological position discussed in Chapter Three. This chapter reflects on the empirical material through the identification of six interconnected (yet discreetly identifiable) communities in which the meaning of fair trade has been actively negotiated and contested. Taking such an approach, it is suggested that while FLO certification has established a domination of public procurement strategy and praxis in Scotland, the idea of “Fairtrade absolutism” (Mohan 2010, p. 94) suggested by some authors can be questioned. Indeed, discussion of the way in which signified meaning associated with the term ‘fair trade’ is generated in different contexts provides support for the argument that such governance is widely embedded in a social movement (Bacon 2010). As demonstrated by the case study of Malawian rice, such a structure provides the opportunity for stakeholders to use the flexibility of language to navigate around barriers to participation in the dominant narrative. Finally, the chapter also discusses how empirical findings of this study reflect on the argument presented in the public procurement literature that fair trade might provide mechanisms to promote sustainable development.

The final **Overall Conclusion** then returns to an overview of the research project and specifically discusses the way in which research questions have been addressed and what implications the study has for the future of research and practice.

Chapter One: Public Procurement and Sustainable Development

“A sustainable food strategy... would involve a judicious combination of ‘local and green’ and ‘global and fair’, the former to reduce the ecological damage of the food system, the latter to improve the prospects of desperately poor commodity producers in developing countries” (Morgan 2008, p. 1243).

This chapter charts the rise of ‘sustainable development’ as a dominating concept in policy, planning and analysis over the last thirty years. Specifically, it is argued that the development of this concept has represented an effort to reconcile various themes in international development thinking (primarily the themes of aggregate economic growth and distributive justice) with the newly emerging concern of environmentalism (Wapner 2003). The end result of this process has been the popularly conceived economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development. As this concept has been enthusiastically operationalised by a range of stakeholders, its multifaceted nature has produced a multitude of different interpretations (Connelly 2007). Furthermore, given its rhetorical yet malleable nature, sustainable development has prompted a huge range of policy change, especially in the UK, which has become recognised as being at the vanguard of European initiatives (Russel 2007). After reviewing the academic literature concerned with these policy developments, it is identified that the interpretation of sustainable development in the UK has been based on a ‘weak environmental’ perspective (Walker and Brammer 2009). Where social considerations are included these understandably revolve around local and certainly national stakeholders, and not around the interests of those in developing countries.

The chapter then moves to a discussion of public procurement – or the purchase of goods and services by the state – in the UK, and particularly the purchasing of food for consumption within public institutions (Morgan 2008, p. 1239) – such as administrative buildings, schools and prisons. Here it is suggested that the incorporation of sustainable development principles has been more holistic, being due to creative interpretations of 1) the legal frameworks that govern public procurement and of 2) the perceptions of what constitutes best value for the

public purse. Moreover, academics (see Morgan and Sonnino 2008) specifically conceptualise the reforms in this area as an effort to devise and implement procurement strategies which contribute to the principles of sustainable development.

The analysis of this approach reveals that the creative procurement agenda has tapped into food systems which are perceived to make more positive contribution to economic, social and environmental development than is the case with so-called conventional food chains. As is demonstrated, one of the strongest narratives embedded in procurement reforms has been the increasing demand for more localised food production. This is a policy narrative which has been criticised in the specialised literature on the basis of the idea localised food does not fundamentally make a more substantial contribution to sustainable development than produce from greater distances, especially when considered against the initial aim of the sustainable development concept to reconcile international development issues with a growing concern for environmental degradation. Unfortunately, however, this critical evaluation has not extended to other components of the creative procurement agenda. In fact, although ‘fair trade’ goods are considered an important part of a more sustainable procurement model, this position is more assumed than critically investigated: despite a growing literature on the subject (discussed in Chapter Two). As such, it is identified that there remains important research and analysis to be undertaken in the area of public procurement reforms and thus the intended contribution of the current research is established. The final section in this chapter emphasises the importance of this research agenda for academic analysis. In synthesis, while public purchasing has already incorporated fair trade goods, the central UK Government has also supported this practice with a policy commitment. However, the wording of such policy holds significant ambiguities which require close examination. This situation adds even greater weight to the importance of the forgoing investigation.

The Intellectual Archaeology of ‘Sustainable Development’

Although at the discursive level ‘development’ has always been concerned with improving overall ‘quality of life’, early operationalisations were overwhelmingly focused on economic growth (Anand and Sen 2000). In this context, the so-called ‘modernisation’ approach to

development situated the cause of ‘underdevelopment’ as endogenous to the developing world (see for example Lerner 1958; Rostow 1959), failing to consider how interaction between different regions had affected development trajectories (Leys 1996). By viewing poorer countries as at an earlier stage of a unitary development trajectory, the concept of development was much less widely applied to so-called ‘modern’ nations. However, throughout the twentieth century these narratives were increasingly challenged on a number of different fronts (Gardener and Lewis 1996), and three themes arguably brought significant pressure for a shift towards the concept of sustainable development.

Firstly, work in the 1950s questioned the dominant view that levels of development were endogenous by suggesting that the relative wealth of different countries were inter-related. In 1950 Prebisch and Singer identified that while poorer nations tend to export low-value raw commodities, wealthier countries exported higher-value more highly processed goods – thus leading to a longstanding decline in the ‘terms of trade’ for the developing world. In contrast to the classical economic theory of comparative advantage⁴, Prebisch (1950) argued that not all nations could benefit from this division of labour and advocated a restructuring of trade interactions. Other contributors were more radical in their policy prescriptions and advocated breaking the links between north and south (Frank 1966, 1967), although even such extreme positions failed to suggest a change in patterns of Northern consumption (Baer 1972; Gilbert 1987). The only change required of northern actors was higher levels of demand for southern goods (Daly 1996, p. 107) and this position only strengthened under the post World War Two liberalisation agenda (Biersteker 1992)⁵.

The second major influence on traditional development thinking was a strengthening in the social justice agenda. By the 1970s, evidence suggested that national growth did not ‘trickle down’ to reduce poverty, as it was previously supposed (Ingham 1993, p. 1811). While some called for balancing growth and equality (Chenery et al. 1974), others attempted to remodel the conceptualisation of ‘development’. Perhaps most prominently, academics and

⁴ David Ricardo advocates that each country has a comparative economic advantage for the efficient production and export of some goods. As such, it is in the overall benefit of all countries to concentrate on economic activity where their advantages lie, and then trade to obtain all the goods and services that are required by an individual economy.

⁵ Indeed, it was this situation which some see as central to the development of private development initiatives such as “fair trade” (Fridell 2007).

practitioners promoted a concentration on the basic needs of the absolute poorest (Ghai et al. 1977; Ghosh 1984; Hicks and Streeten 1979). While this work no doubt influenced the concept of sustainable development emerging at the time (see below), the Basic Needs approach was greatly hampered by questions such as “what” exactly counted as a basic need, in what context, and, more importantly, “who” was going to claim the “right” to decide what these goods and services are, and “on what basis” was this decision to be made (Streeten 1984, p. 973)?

The third and final major influence on development thinking prominent in the literature was a growing concern for the effects of human economic activity on the ecology of the earth. It was recognised that maximising economic productivity in the short-term, irrespective of the consequences for the natural environment, was likely to undermine the physical sustainability of economic activity (Lafferty and Langhelle 1999) – and, as a consequence, reduce the timeframe in which to promote development in the future⁶. While there has been a longstanding recognition that humans should live in harmony with nature (Mebratu 1998), environmental issues became increasingly prominent in the 1960s – for example with the suggestion of a link between carbon dioxide and the phenomena of global warming (Teller 1965 cited in Daly 1968: 399) – and 1970s – when the *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al. 1972) report suggested that current levels of population growth would place significant pressure on the global economy in the future.

Sustainable Development: Integrating the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development

In response to growing environmentalism, in 1972 the United Nations (UN) convened a conference which aimed to find “a common outlook and common principles to inspire and guide the peoples of the world in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment” (Sohn 1973, p. 423). However, at this time, the preservation of natural capital attracted little attention from poorer developing countries who were more concerned about

⁶ As Dobson (1998) points out, the concern for sustainability does not necessarily have to assume human transcendence from the ultimate limitations imposed by the temporally and spatially finite nature of our current planet.

poor material conditions (Wapner 2003, p. 4). In the light of this division, the UN began its effort to more fundamentally integrate the respective concerns of economic growth and environmental degradation. In 1983 the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) was convened to address the new interrelated concern “about the accelerating deterioration of the human environment and natural resources and the consequences of that deterioration for economic and social development” (Gentile 2009, p. 197). Returning their findings in *Our Common Future* (the so-called Brundtland Report of 1987), the Commission famously proposed that the world needed to pursue an agenda of “sustainable development...that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987, p. 43).

While some academics suggest that environmental protection is “without doubt the central idea” of sustainable development (Jacobs 1999, p. 30), others insist that it is ultimately an anthropocentric concept (Anand and Sen 2000; Lee 2000). Langhelle (2000), points out that the Brundtland report did not advocate environmental protection for its own sake, and more specifically singled out the “essential needs of the world’s poor to which overriding priority should be given” (WCED 1987: 43). This is a perspective which strongly mirrors the ideas of the Basic Needs approach but also stressed that “sustainable development requires...extending to all the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a better life” (WCED 1987, p. 24). Likewise, sustainable development proposed that the poor were assured their fair share of the resources required to meet subsequent aspirations, and that “such equity would be aided by political systems that secure effective citizen participation in decision making and by greater democracy in international decision making” (WCED 1987, p. 25). Finally, the theme of northern responsibilities was developed in that “sustainable global development requires that those who are more affluent adopt life-styles within the planet’s ecological means - in their use of energy, for example” (WCED 1987, p. 25).

As can be seen from the above, sustainable development as presented by the Brundtland report incorporated many previous themes of development thinking. In this way the concept attempted to bridge and unify previously splintered issues (Wapner 2003) – an aim which has been most commonly conceptualised as the “three pillars” (Giddings and O'Brien 2002,

pp. 188-189), “three spheres” (Lehtonen 2004) or “triple bottom line” (Henriques and Richardson 2005) of sustainable development.

Contested Interpretations of Sustainable Development

Perhaps inherent in the bridging of previously more distinct issues was the necessity to maintain a certain flexibility in the concept of sustainable development (Wackernagel and Rees 1996). Indeed, “there are major debates as to the nature of sustainable development, the changes necessary and the tools and actors for these changes” (Hopwood et al. 2005, p. 47). One specific factor that has allowed a proliferation of multiple meaning has been the ambiguous nature of language (discussed at length in Chapter Three), and specifically, the introduction of conceptually related, yet distinct and parallel terms such as “sustainable growth” and “sustainability” (Palmer et al. 1997, pp. 87-88). Given the ambiguity contained within the concept of sustainable development there has been considerable variety in its usage and, as a result, a considerable contestation of its meaning. As Giddings and O’Brien (2002, p. 187) argue, “sustainable development is a contested concept, with theories shaped by people’s and organisations’ different worldviews, which in turn influence how issues are formulated and actions proposed”.

As a result of this situation, some argue that sustainable development is too vague, “an expression of political correctness which seeks to bridge the unbridgeable divide between the anthropocentric and the biocentric approaches to politics” (Richardson 1997, p. 43). In this perspective, the vague nature of sustainable development allows capitalism to continue with ‘business as usual’, maintaining the focus on economic growth as the central solution to poverty reduction (Castro 2004), and disguising practices that are environmentally and socially undesirable (Lele 1991).

Beyond this position, some scholars have developed classifications of different approaches to sustainable development in order to analyse its interpretation and concretisation – for example within public procurement (see below). Most early efforts concentrated on identifying ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ environmental perspectives (for example see Daly and Cobb 1989). At the so-called weak end of the spectrum, it is noted that mainly economically focused actors are

calling for the preservation of aggregate levels of capital. Such a perspective is justified by claiming that many environmental resources can be substituted for human-made alternatives through the advancement in technology (Solow 1991 p. 13 cited in Anand and Sen 2000, p. 2035)⁷. It is this approach to sustainability which has been adopted by mainstream development institutions (Jacobs 1999; Tisdell 1999), and is often associated with the advocacy of market governance (Hopwood et al. 2005).

At the other end of the scale are those who argue that “man-made and natural capital are fundamentally complementary and only marginal substitutes” (Daly 1996, p. 76). In this interpretation, the global economy should not quantitatively expand but qualitatively adapt to reduce the through-put of environmental resources (Daly 1996). From this perspective, sustainable development requires the perpetuation and expansion of natural, financial, human, physical and social capital (Pretty 1999).

The limitation of these approaches is that they concentrate on the environmental sphere without taking into account socio-economic consequences (for example Hopwood et al. 2005), and other contributors extend the classification and argue for example, that where ecocentrics tend towards social and economic equity, technocentrics are more likely to support the economic and political status quo (O’Riordan 1989). However, these typologies are also found wanting as “sustainability and social justice do not necessarily go hand in hand” (Marcuse 1998, p. 104) – and indeed, often involve considerable trade-offs. In this light, another round of classification has provided more flexible ‘maps’ with which to identify how different approaches vary across their commitments to the environmental, social (justice) and economic components of sustainable development (Connelly 2007; Hopwood et al. 2005; Palmer et al. 1997).

Beyond these positions, Meadowcroft (2007, p. 300) argues that debates “have often missed the critical political point that this concept was not formulated as part of the technical vocabulary of social science, or as an operational rule that would allow policy outputs to be automatically read off from a list of situational inputs”. Instead, sustainable development is

⁷ Although this perspective does still allow for the specific protection of “critical natural capital” (1998, pp. 43-44) such as protection from the sun (Anand and Sen 2000, p. 2037) for example.

seen as a normative point of reference for environment and development policy making, and not as a concept that can, or should, be concretised in specific definitions (Jacobs 1999; Lafferty 1996; Meadowcroft 2007). As such, sustainable development is compared to “liberty”, “democracy” and “justice” for its role in helping to frame and focus debate, while remaining open to constant interrogation and re-interpretation (Meadowcroft 2007, p. 300).

Building on this perspective, other scholars identify a need to develop guiding principles used to assess the relative merits of different interpretations. These perspectives consider that “sustainable development is fundamentally a matter of negotiating its normative principles and adjusting them to contextually dependent priorities and needs” (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 3). Examples of such attempts can be seen in Table 1 where it can be noted that, despite differences, a large degree of overlap has emerged.

Mitchell et al. (1995)	Haughton (1999)	Morgan and Sonnino (2008)
Futurity (inter-generational equity) Equity (intra-generational equity)	Futurity (inter-generational equity) Social justice (intra-generational equity) Transfrontier responsibility (geographical equity)	Equality and justice in meeting basic needs without imposing risks and cost on future generation
Environment	Interspecies equity (importance of biodiversity)	Environment part of economic decisions
Public participation	Procedural equity (people treated openly and fairly)	Democratic decision making

Table 1: Interpretations of the Principles of Sustainable Development

While there may be greater agreement about the underlying principles of sustainable development, this approach only defers what the concept really means to more specific situations; and in this sense a full circle is completed back to the problem of how trade-offs occur in the minds of practitioners (Gibbs et al. 1998).

In this case, just as research into the applications of the concept of development has long been identified as important in the evaluation of both thinking and practice (Gardener and Lewis 1996), the same remains true for sustainable development. Indeed, it is proposed by those who have developed classifications of the varying positions that such matrices can then play

“a range of analytical and rhetorical roles, and so also prompt critical analysis of how the term is used by policy makers and others” (Connelly 2007, p. 260). It is this approach which is employed in the assessment of how sustainable development has been incorporated into UK government policy. However, before this discussion it is also important to consider another fundamental theme in the academic literature which is directly relevant to the issue of this thesis.

‘Governance’ for Sustainable Development

Another fundamental debate in the literature concerned with sustainable development has centred on the most effective way to translate the concept into action. While earlier work discussed this aspect of the issue in an abstract way (below), later writing has applied the concept of ‘governance’ and moved towards a discussion of ‘governance for sustainable development’ (see Meadowcroft 2007; OECD 2002).

In wider literature, the term ‘governance’ is used in a variety of ways and has a variety of different meanings (Gereffi et al. 2001b; Gerry 1998; Rhodes 1996). What unites these disparate applications is the recognition that far from being centralised, power to affect the organisation of society is widely, if not unevenly distributed through different organisational systems. In political science, ‘governance’ has been substituted for ‘government’ (Pierre 2000) under the recognition that the organisational functions of the state are (increasingly) undertaken by “self-organising, interorganisational networks” (Rhodes 1996, p. 652). These networks, according to Rhodes (1996, p. 657), are made up of a variety of state and non-state actors and can take many forms including “self- and co-regulation, public-private partnerships, co-operative management, and joint entrepreneurial ventures”. However, while governance does not necessarily emanate from the state, it is often just as much about the governance of the self as it is the governance of others (Foucault 1991; Lemke 2001).

Traditionally, discussion about how international development should best be implemented focused on the relative merits of hierarchal (mostly expressed as state regulation) and market governance. There is a long tradition of debate between those who advocate market liberalisation (Dollar and Kraay 2004) and those who perceive a stronger role of the state

(Chang and Grabel 2004; Wade 1990). As this debate has been extended to the consideration of sustainable development, the spectrum has persisted – although new integrative efforts have emerged. In his specific discussion of “governance for sustainable development”, Meadowcroft (2007, p. 303) argues that there is “an important role for public authorities at all levels – including local and regional governments, national states, supranational unions, and international bodies”. This perspective is justified on the basis that:

“Above all, their mechanisms of representation and democracy allow states to claim to act legitimately for the common good. Sustainable Development involves the deliberate adjustment of the conditions of social life; and if it requires an interactive and participatory element, it also requires formal structures to consider options and to provide for closure and authoritative decisions. Thus states provide both a means to shape ‘society’, and a framework through which ‘society’ can influence the orientation of that shaping” (Meadowcroft 2007, p. 303).

This position respects the liberal view of the state by seeing government institutions as a neutral environment in which the specifics of sustainable development can be debated, constructed and reconstructed. It is in this light that ‘environmental economics’ has attempted to contribute to the debate about what (and how) environmental resources should (and can) be valued in order for these factors to be represented in market organisation and economic decisions (Howarth and Norgaard 1992).

Another form of governance particularly prominent in the literature (and important for this thesis) has been the rise of “private interest governance” (see Lee et al. 2009), “private authority” (see Hall and Biersteker 2002) or “private regulation” (see Vogel 2010). These forms reportedly emerged where private sector interests respond to perceived risks and problems (2000), and contribute towards a hybrid public-private model of regulation (Lee et al. 2009). Elsewhere, it is noted that private governance has largely emerged from coalitions of activists and NGOs that have established private ‘certification’ systems to improve economic, social and environmental practices by national and international companies (Gereffi et al. 2001a; Gugerty 2008). Generally, these private systems of regulation have two components: a set of rules, principles or guidelines that set out requirements, and a reporting or monitoring mechanism to ascertain whether these requirements are met, and, whether endorsement or certification should be issued. Gereffi (2001a, pp. 57-58) has divided such initiatives into four categories, depending on the actors involved as shown in Table 2.

Type of Governance Initiative	Details
First-party	Most common. Individual companies set own rules and report compliance.
Second-party	Involves industry or trade association which sets rules and implements reporting mechanisms.
Third-party	Involves third-parties, often NGOs imposing rules and compliance methods onto particular firms or industries.
Fourth-party	Involves government or multilateral agencies, such as the United Nations – and their Global Compact for responsible corporate activities.

Table 2: Classification of Governance Initiatives based on Gereffi et al. (2001a, pp. 57-58).

NGO led governance regimes are particularly notable in the sectors of garment production (Locke and Romis 2010), forestry (Gulbrandsen 2004), and, significantly for the focus of this research, the agrifood industry (Buller and Morris 2009). Prominent examples of the private regulation in agrifood include organic certification (Ward et al. 2004) and so-called ‘ethical trade’ and ‘fair trade’ certification (discussed in more detail below).

Returning to the discussion about the respective roles of private and public initiatives, while the debate about the relative merits of each approach will likely continue, the reality is that the state already plays a strong role in mediating what sustainable development is taken to mean. This is true both in terms of state policy itself and, furthermore, of the way in which policy interacts with various private initiatives – and given the focus of this thesis, these issues will now be discussed in relation to the function of public procurement in the UK.

The UK Government: Sustainable development and public procurement

During the so-called Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the international community developed the *Declaration on Environment and Development* and the *Agenda 21* statement. As a signatory to both these two documents, the UK Government established both binding and non-binding commitments to embed sustainable development into UK policy and practice

(Thomson and Jackson 2007, p. 422), and by 1994, had published the first of a series of sustainable development strategies.

A critical analysis of this document testifies to the value of classification tools and it can be noted that, despite international commitments, the document placed emphasis on economic futurity with less consideration for environment and social equity issues (Munton 1997; Palmer et al. 1997). This perspective shifted in 1997 when the European Treaty specifically requested EU member states to integrate social justice objectives and environmental concerns into their economic decision making (Morgan and Sonnino 2007, p. 35). Indeed, by 2000, 93 percent of Local Authorities had *Agenda 21* policies containing broad interpretations of sustainable development as well as concrete plans for promoting them (Thomson and Jackson 2007, p. 422). In reality however, this only resulted in environmentally focused regional and local development approaches (see Warner and Ryall 2001) that were still categorised as a weak eco-centric response to policy requirements (Gibbs 1998; Gibbs et al. 1998).

Following devolution of the UK, in which sustainable development became a matter for localised state institutions, a jointly agreed set of sustainable development principles (DEFRA 2005) and further unified strategies were published (H.M. Government 2005). Having taken such prominence in UK policy a large number of practical mechanisms for both horizontal and vertical integration, and policy planning tools, indicators and monitoring mechanisms have been developed – and as a result it is considered by some that “the United Kingdom is at the vanguard of European Union states pursuing strategies for sustainable development” (Russel 2007, p. 189).

Perhaps one of the prime examples, and one that has become of significant interest to academic analysts, has been the changes seen in the sphere of public procurement – or the public purchase of goods and services by the state. Indeed, although governments (including in the UK) have always used procurement policy to promote wider social issues (McCrudden 2004), in 1997 the UK’s second sustainable development strategy specifically called for the integration of environmental and social costs into the public purchasing process (Thomson and Jackson 2007, p. 422).

This explicit introduction of such issues into the area of public procurement has significant importance for the sustainable development agenda, especially in the light of the state's purchasing power, which in the UK amounts to around £150 billion per annum (Preuss 2009, p. 214). While such purchasing power has been considered as a general tool for promoting innovation (Edler and Georghiou 2007), the function is also considered important as a means to promote more widespread sustainable development goals (Arrowsmith and Kunzlik 2009). While government provides a range of services that are directly meaningful in terms of sustainable development – such as economic growth and waste disposal (Wilson and Game 2006) – on the other hand, the purchase of goods and services can also act as a market signal to the rest of the private sector (Dawson and Probert 2007; Preuss 2009, pp. 213-214). Beyond these practical characteristics, state institutions are expected to adhere to a higher level of ethical responsibility than private actors whose primary responsibility is perceived to be to their shareholders (Fridell 2004, pp. 148-149).

One intrinsically important factor in the development of more strategic government purchasing in the UK has been the reform of wider political and legal frameworks in which procurement is practiced (Thomson and Jackson 2007, p. 423). All state institutions are obliged to respect international agreements on procurement signed by their governments (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 30) and it is argued that reform of these frameworks has enabled sustainable procurement by “dismantling barriers” (Thomson and Jackson 2007, p. 423). On this basis, before specific UK procurement practices are discussed, it is important to summarise this wider regulatory context in order to understand some of the fundamental issues at stake in this investigation.

The Legal Framework of UK Public Procurement

Governments throughout the world have traditionally followed protectionist practices in public procurement by reserving contracts for national suppliers (Arrowsmith 2009) – either as an overt tool of national development or a more nefarious practice of private gain (Krueger 1990). These practices have a significant impact on the patterns of international trade and investment, and are significantly criticised under the rise of the neoliberal perspective at the

global level (Raza 2008). For example, at the highest legal jurisdiction, the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) *Agreement on Government Procurement* (GPA), of which all European Union countries are signatories, sets the framework for EU government buying (Thomson and Jackson 2007, p. 422). Broadly speaking, this agreement establishes rules for competitive tendering that promote transparency in government buying in order to reduce discrimination and ensure value for public money (Weber 2009). The primary intention is to open as much government procurement business as possible to international competition and make specific efforts to ensure that the location of production and nationality of the supplier are not relevant factors in procurement decisions (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 31). As far as Weber (2009, p. 188) is concerned, "the integration of environmental and social policies in procurement contracts cannot be considered as incompatible with the GPA, as far as it does not affect the Agreement's primary aims of competition, non-discrimination and transparency".

A further framework is established by the European Union (Arnould 2004) and the European Procurement Directives which provide detailed rules and procedures where purchases exceed specific value thresholds (Bovis 2008, p. 86)⁸. Directives require that all tenders are subject to open, transparent and non-discriminatory competition, to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all suppliers and contractors, and above all, promote economic efficiency through competition (Weber 2009).

A tradition of pursuing social objectives, or non-economic considerations (often referred to as 'secondary policies'), has always been present within European Directives, and especially since the 1990s (Arnould 2004, p. 188). Indeed, during the Gothenburg European Council in 2001 the EU formally committed to sustainable development and in the process officially required public procurement managers to broaden their understanding of value and formally consider environmental and social factors as part of procurement decisions (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 35). As a result of these actions, the EU introduced two new Procurement Directives in 2004: 2004/18/EC, for public works, supply service contracts, and 2004/17/EC

⁸ Under the European framework, those purchases falling below financial thresholds do not require the application of full European Procurement Directives, although they must still comply with the principles of the European Treaty and specifically, the free movement of goods (Article 28), freedom of establishment (Article 43), and freedom to provide services (Article 49) (Bovis 1997, p. 23).

for so-called special sectors of public utility functions such as water and energy (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 33).

Reflecting on these documents, some offer a very positive account of how reforms have enabled the incorporation of sustainable development principles into public procurement processes. For example, Morgan and Sonnino (2008, p. 34) point out that under these directives authorities are not obliged to choose the “lowest price” but can instead award the contract to the most “economically advantageous tender”; as long as the criteria used to assess tenders relates to the subject matter of the contract and does not include extraneous requirements. For example, it is noted that the environmental performance of final products can now be a consideration in their initial purchase (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 35). Furthermore, it is noted that authorities are able to increase the opportunity of smaller companies more likely to provide additional social and environmental components, to win government contracts by disaggregating large tenders into smaller lots⁹.

Such a positive view is echoed to some extent in the interpretative legal literature which, for example, agrees that the new Directives clarify “how the contracting authorities may contribute to the protection of the environment and the promotion of sustainable development, whilst ensuring the possibility of obtaining the best value for money for their contracts” (cited by Weber 2009, p. 187). Indeed, a number of possible opportunities to render procurement more supportive of sustainable development are discussed; and it is agreed that the best way to refer to such environmental and social characteristics is to draft the subject of the contract with an eye to these additional requirements – a stage which is still considered within the political realm and not yet subject to the conditions of Procurement Directives (Arrowsmith and Kunzlik 2009, pp. 59-60)¹⁰.

Nevertheless, specialist legal literature does not consider the possibility of incorporating sustainable development into public purchasing to be straightforward, and it is emphasised that many approaches will carry “legal risk” until interpretations are further clarified through

⁹ This strategy has also been noted in other countries such as Canada (Hayes 2007).

¹⁰ For example, a government is free to choose between building a library or using the money for another purpose, or perhaps purchasing helicopters rather than lifeboats for sea rescue (Arrowsmith and Kunzlik 2009, pp. 59-60).

appropriate legal proceedings (see Arnould 2004). This is because interpretation of how environmental and social criteria relate to the subject matter of the contract is poorly elaborated and ambiguous. For example, once the product required by the contracting authority has been described, this description must be translated into “Technical Specifications” – which describe what is required by the contracting authority –and/or the Award Criteria – where the authority stipulates how submissions will be evaluated (Weber 2009, p. 198). In the case of “Technical Specifications”, the Directives provide an “exhaustive” list of possible evidence that government authorities can request from contractors in order to demonstrate their ability to provide what is required. This places a limitation on the characteristics that can be specified as part of the subject matter of the contract in the first instance – and indeed the aim here is to prevent the use of criteria that discriminate against potential bidders (Bovis 1998, p. 228).

Some of these possible sources of evidence are considered to be straightforward – including the requirements for ‘eco-labels’ or European Union certified Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) (Thomson and Jackson 2007, p. 422). Beyond these straightforward cases however, the literature suggests that there remains a degree of ambiguity; for instance, while case law has established that the specification of ‘low emission’ buses is possible, the requirement that electricity should be environmentally friendly is not as straightforward. The reason for this is that while the fundamental characteristics of goods can be specified in the subject matter of the contract, those relating to production conditions which do not affect the nature of the final product cannot be specified (Arnould 2004).

Another issue raised in the mainstream legal literature is that the intentional disaggregating of contracts is expressly prohibited by the EU frameworks as this reduces financial economies of scale (Bovis 2008, p. 71). It is of course a whole separate question if government institutions actually observe such procurement rules and indeed, there is evidence to suggest that the degree of compliance is limited (Martin et al. 1999).

The UK's 'Creative' Public Procurement Agenda

Despite the potential leverage for sustainable development identified in the function of public procurement, there is still a scarcity of academic work on the subject (Peck and Cabras 2010, p. 1). What research there is has tended to concentrate on the integration of environmental issues into public purchasing in the UK (Thomson and Jackson 2007; Warner and Ryall 2001) and further afield (Parikka-Alhola 2008; Swanson et al. 2005). This focus might well be an appropriate representation of the actual procurement practices as governments continue to place strong emphasis on the environmental sphere of sustainable development (Walker and Brammer 2009); arguably because this is seen as being more straightforward to integrate than social factors (Morgan 2008, p. 1238).

Having said this, there is evidence to suggest that some procurement initiatives have adopted a more holistic approach, although these can also be seen as the interpretation of sustainable development in the light of specific sectoral and local interests. For example, in a survey of procurement for sustainable development in the UK, Preuss (2009, p. 216) notes “an increase in contracting with local business emerged as an important aim of local authorities...[a]s procurement managers were acutely aware of the economic benefits that contracting with local firms can bring to the local economy”. This narrative of sustainable development has been a prominent one (Cabras 2011; Peck and Cabras 2010; Walker and Preuss 2008), and particularly in the public purchase of food (as discussed below). Further social initiatives used include “Community Benefit Clauses” where suppliers are required to provide apprentice programmes (Preuss 2009, p. 217), or interaction with social enterprises and third sector organisations (Thompson and Doherty 2006, p. 372).

Beyond this limited empirical treatment of a wider interpretation of procurement for sustainable development, some academics adopt a strong normative line in promoting an integrated approach. Morgan (2008) argues that the “greening of the state” should reflect a broader interpretation of sustainable development that includes the preservation of social and human capital, and a strengthening of the social justice agenda in meeting people’s basic needs. This is especially true for the “public plate” (or the public purchase of food for

consumption in public institutions such as schools, hospitals and prisons), which is considered as a “litmus test for the state’s commitment to sustainable development in the fullest sense of the term” (Morgan 2008, p. 1238). The rationale for this proposition is not only that government procurement has the possibility to promote innovation in supply, but in the case of food, the state also has the power to promote more healthy living amongst its citizens. This sector is certainly significant in monetary terms: for example, with schools spending £1 billion, universities up to £500 thousand, and the NHS £300 million (DEFRA 2009, p. 6) per annum. In this context, the procurement of public food as a tool of sustainable development policy has spawned a “fairly new, but rapidly spreading” (Renting et al. 2003, p. 1) collection of academic literature (Morgan and Sonnino 2008; Renting et al. 2003; Sonnino 2009).

The Public Plate: A more holistic account of sustainable development?

According to Morgan (2006, p. 379), concern for the principles of sustainable development has precipitated the re-politicisation of food procurement systems. Specifically, it is considered that an economic utilitarianism triumphed over specific prescriptions for the public good, and the example of the Thatcher government’s retraction of school milk is viewed as a pertinent vignette of this process (Morgan 2006, p. 380). While the health benefits of school milk are disputed – and indeed, the policy is argued to have been more concerned with promoting the sectoral interests of the UK dairy industry (Atkins 2005) – cost-cutting by the Conservative government dramatically reduced the nutritional range and physical quality of school food (Morgan 2006, pp. 380-381). Indeed, the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) and the 1980 Education Act, in which food provision was jettisoned as a legitimate public function, led to a nadir in the public provision of school food in the UK. Many point to the health implications of such policies (Mikkelsen et al., 2005, p. 7 cited in Morgan and Sonnino 2007, p. 19), while others go further and argue that the eventual cost to treat diet-related illness has far eclipsed the short term savings that were made (Morgan 2006, p. 381).

In addition to health concerns, reforms of public food provision have also been subject to the influence of a variety of other independent yet discursively related narratives. Perhaps the

most influential has been the advocacy of food localisation as a means to promote sustainable development. Indeed, in a landmark point for the re-politicisation of public procurement, the 2002 government report covering the ‘foot and mouth’ epidemic presented procurement as an opportunity to assist beleaguered primary producers (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 27). These recommendations were then taken forward in the 2003 Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (PSFPI) in which, interestingly, public sector managers were encouraged to “concert with farmers, growers and suppliers to ensure that public canteens purchased from sustainable sources” (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 27). In this context, sustainable procurement was expected to increase consumption of nutritious food and reduce adverse environmental impacts, but also to increase tenders from small and local producers¹¹, as well as increase the capacity of small and local suppliers to meet more exacting standards (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 27). In short, government policy demonstrates a continued use of public procurement to support national agricultural interests and therefore promote new ‘sustainable’ rural development; an approach which closely mirrors wider government discourses on sustainable development and a longer history of supporting national farming interests such as in the dairy sector (noted above).

This specific connection of public procurement to the localisation agenda is also prevalent in the continued reform of school food. Responding to the problems identified above, the devolved administration of Scotland assembled a panel of experts to suggest how mistakes of the past could be avoided. The resulting publication *Hungry for Success* (2002) is described as “a seminal report that called for radically better school meals service” (Morgan 2006, p. 381). Not only did the review call for better quality and nutritionally beneficial food, it also provided a “whole school approach” that would reinforce the provision of healthier food with learning activities of the classroom, and furthermore, spill over into everyday life as “enlightened forms of consumer behaviour” (Morgan and Sonnino 2007, p. 19) specifically concerned with healthier eating (Burke 2002).

¹¹ It should be noted that the term “local” has no agreed and consistent definition and as a consequence is open to a wide range of interpretations across this literature. As this issue is not central to the question here, and acts only as a context, local should be taken to imply “localising” food systems in that production become more geographically proximate to consumption (Bellows and Hamm 2001, p. 272).

Following this first report, other contributions soon followed from the Welsh and English administrations – the narratives of which closely followed broader patterns in the interpretation of sustainable development. By the time *Turning the Tables* was published in 2006, it was noted that “far from being purely concerned with the environment”, the government approach was “predicated on one of the core principles of sustainable development—to render visible [all] the costs and connections that have been externalised, and rendered invisible, by conventional cost-benefit analysis” (Morgan 2006, pp. 380-381). In this way, creative public procurement was to more fully rethink what constitutes “value for money” when justifying spending from the public purse (Morgan and Sonnino 2008; Sonnino and Morgan 2007). However, despite the widening of policy language, the document also suggested that as a means to be “consistent with sustainable development principles” it was important that “schools and caterers should look to local farmers and suppliers for their produce where possible” (cited in Morgan 2006, p. 382).

For many practitioners and scholars, “the contribution of food to sustainable development is inextricably linked to the implementation of re-localisation strategies that increase local food production and local consumption” (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 7). According to some, “locally-sourced nutritious food offers a number of benefits – what we call the multiple dividend – including healthier diets, local markets for local producers¹², lower food miles as well as a better understanding between producers and consumers” (Morgan and Morley 2002, p. i). It is on this basis that “local food should be more forcefully integrated into the “healthy schools’ programme” (Morgan and Morley 2002, p. ii)¹³.

This policy advice is not isolated however, but instead grounded in the wider discourses of sustainable development and more sustainable food systems. For example, in the case of the former, because community-control and shared access to resources feature in discourses of sustainable development, decentralisation, self-sufficiency and subsistence have also become embedded in these narratives (Feagan 2007, p. 24). In agrifood studies, “place based”

¹² While these can be seen as gathering force in national legislation, the EU too has registered such a view; for example, by proclaiming the creation of vibrant local business communities as important for achieving social objectives, particularly employment, and for reducing environmental impacts through buying locally (Thomson and Jackson 2007, p. 423).

¹³ For a similar narrative see Bridger (2004).

characteristics are a strong component of the so-called “alternative” (see Sonnino and Marsden 2006) or “integrated territorial” food paradigm (see Wiskerke 2010). This approach to food production and processing builds on an understanding of ‘quality’ as not just based on the physical attributes of food, but also on other characteristics such as the farming systems involved, the cultural traditions and consumer preferences (for example see Goodman 2003). The approach to more sustainable food provision also advocates the shortening of distances between production and consumption, closing of regional nutrient cycles and the use of variety in farming practices as a means to promote environmental sustainability (Nosi and Zanni 2004). Indeed, ‘local food’ is often assumed to be fresher, riper and more nutritious than food that travels over greater distance (Born and Purcell 2006).

This preoccupation with the local as a means to promote more sustainable development trajectories in the agrifood system has also been identified in academic investigations of food procurement initiatives. As in general Local Authority purchasing, Preuss (2009, p. 217) finds a specific desire to procure ‘local food’ but there is no statistically representative evidence how widespread this narrative has been embedded in government procurement. What is available is a range of case studies, such as those from South Gloucestershire (England), Carmarthenshire (Wales) and East Ayrshire (Scotland) which are “acknowledged to be the pioneers of school food reform in their respective parts of the UK” (2008, p. xix). Here it is noted that reforms have facilitated the “delivery of healthy school food which is locally sourced wherever possible” (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 113). In this context, as in other international examples (Sonnino 2009), the emphasis on local food is justified on the basis of the freshness; the social links that are created between producers and consumers; and the impact of such procurement on the local economy. Indeed, referring back to the legal frameworks of public procurement it is these characteristics that must be used in the evaluation of public tenders to supply food, since a geographically defined set of criteria would be illegal under European Procurement Directives – despite testimony of those responsible for public procurement wishing they could do more to support local interests (Standfast 2011).

Despite this strong emphasis on the procurement of local food, the conflation of sustainable development with localisation of supply has been significantly criticised; and as such also

treated critically in the public procurement literature. From wider agrifood studies, the very concept of local food and associated process of food localisation has been deconstructed at the conceptual level, as it has been pointed out that in reality food systems are a “complex organisational puzzle, consisting of multiple and partially overlapping worlds” (Storper 1997, p. 255). Food that is produced and consumed within the Scottish Highlands, for example, often travels through lengthy and so-called ‘conventional supply’ chains, which questions many of the assumptions grounded in the categorisation of these goods as ‘local food’ (Ilbery and Maye 2006). This blurring of allegedly ‘alternative’ and ‘conventional’ food system is seen as a widespread reality as ‘conventional’ agrifood actors have tended to co-opt ‘alternative’ food products and weaken their more radical characteristics (Sonnino and Marsden 2006).

Beyond this it is recognised that the localisation of food sourcing has often been driven by a political and not a objective and pragmatic agenda (Bellows and Hamm 2001), which might well carry wider environmental and social risks. For example, a critical investigation of the concept of “food miles”, which has been a strong part of the re-localisation agenda (Morgan 2010), reveals that such a tool is highly inappropriate as a rule of thumb for environmental impact. The carbon output of the food system is not reflective of the broad range of ecological problems associated with food systems, and this narrow tool of analysis also fails to account for carbon release outside of transport (Smith et al. 2005). Indeed, various case studies identify that under ‘life cycle analysis’, food grown less carbon intensively but shipped over greater distance can have a lower overall footprint vis-à-vis locally grown produce (Edwards-Jones 2010).

The literature also shows that in the area of social justice, local food can still contribute to inequalities that have implications for wider stakeholders (Born and Purcell 2006). Indeed, when large scale retailers began to incorporate the matrix of “food miles” into decisions about the sourcing and marketing of food, the international development community responded with considerable anger (Morgan 2010, p. 1855). This was because the majority of the world’s poorest people rely on, or are fundamentally connected to, livelihoods associated with the export of agricultural produce to wealthier consumer countries, and removing potential markets would impose significant losses on an already fragile existence (Brenton et al. 2009;

Edwards-Jones et al. 2009). Indeed, with significant limitations on their ability to undertake structural economic change, mainstream policy identifies the importance of further integration into the global economy through agricultural exports (Collier 2008; World Bank 2008).

At this stage it is also pertinent to reflect back on the original discourse of sustainable development, and particularly the argument that the concept emerged as an attempt to reconcile longstanding international development concerns with the environmental agenda. In the light of this perspective, the localisation of food sourcing within the richer more developed countries looks somewhat out of place against a concept which set out to “meet the basic needs of all”, but moreover “the essential needs of the world’s poor to which overriding priority should be given” (WCED 1987: 43).

These criticisms and problems have not all been entirely ignored by those interested in the use of public food procurement to promote aims and objectives associated with sustainable development. For example, as well as the localisation of food in the case studies of Gloucestershire, Carmarthenshire and East Ayrshire (discussed above), other categories of food including “conventional”, “organic” and “fair trade” are also mentioned as a means for public procurement to contribute to sustainable development (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 119). In other international examples, such as the city of Rome, “organic” and “fair trade” foods have also been included as part of more sustainable procurement practices (Sonnino 2009). Finally, at the more theoretical level, Morgan (2008, p. 1244 my emphasis) argues that “sustainable food chains are generally thought to be synonymous with local food chains though a more robust definition would include *fairly traded* global food chains as well”¹⁴.

In contrast to critical engagement with conventional food sourcing and the localisation of food supplies in the public procurement literature, these other narratives of sustainable development have not been critically appraised. Despite the existence of significant literature on the debate about organic food – which has questioned health benefits (Williams 2002) and highlighted both a process of conventionalisation (Jaffee and Howard 2009) and the existence of barriers to entry for developing world producers (Barrett et al. 2002; Garcia Martinez and

¹⁴ It should be noted that the term “fairly traded” offers a more open policy proposition than many authors contributing to this literature (as discussed below). Indeed, the thesis explores the use of the term “fairly traded” in opposition to more specific references to particular systems of governance and certification.

Bañados 2004) – this has not been considered in the evaluation of public procurement. This situation leaves an important area for future research and analysis to contribute to the academic understanding on public procurement as a tool to promote sustainable development.

Likewise, the category of “fair trade” is referenced as a means to augment the “local and green” approach to food sourcing with practices which promote global and fair characteristics (see Morgan 2010). However, this normative position fails to reflect on literature that has problematised the assumptions that underlie this narrative (reviewed in the following chapter). Instead, “fair trade” is considered by analysts of creative public procurement to be beneficial in terms of opening Northern markets to Southern agricultural goods (Morgan 2010, p. 1856), redistributing value within supply chains and consequently reducing negative impacts on southern producer communities while increasing the positive gains (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 4). There is little elaboration of what is actually implied by the terminology of “fair trade” with most work identifying the procurement of “Fairtrade” labelled goods (Morgan 2010, p. 1857; Preuss 2009, p. 217). Indeed, Preuss (2009, p. 217) specifically suggests that local authorities are influenced by the “Fairtrade Town scheme” (discussed in the following chapter), which “compel Local Authorities to serve Fairtrade produce during their meetings and promote Fairtrade produce in their area”. While these references imply an association with sustainable development, they also suggest the involvement of other stakeholders in government procurement decisions. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this is problematic, since the critical literature 1) identifies that the Fairtrade label is one among a number of possible approaches to ‘fair trade’ and 2) questions its direct identification as the most appropriate governance system to promote social justice in the international economy. Indeed, the inclusion of fair trade within narratives about more sustainable public procurement has been accompanied by the recognition that “more impact assessments need to be conducted” (Morgan 2010, p. 1857) into the empirical effects of this governance.

The UK Government and “Fair Trade” Public Procurement

While sustainable development has entered many general and more specific policy sets, the concept has also become embedded in a more internationalist perspective; and arguably one that is focused more holistically on the original thinking of the Brundtland report (see above). Specifically, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) began to integrate the narrative into its agenda during the 1990s (Gardner and Lewis 2000). Indeed, the department's most recent white paper of 2008, entitled *Eliminating World Poverty: Building Our Common Future* (DFID), directly mirrors the title of the Brundtland report, which established the concept of sustainable development in widespread usage (see above). The report explicitly raises the need to promote international development that is environmentally sustainable and also promises that the government will “act with confidence and determination to protect the world's poorest and to deliver real global justice” (DFID 2009, p. 5).

As part of this discussion, the document noted that poor countries are disadvantaged in international trade due to “unfair trade rules” which prevent market access (DFID 2009, p. 23). As a response, the government has “significantly” expanded funding and support for “fair” and “ethical” trade over the last decade (DFID 2009, p. 43)¹⁵, as demonstrated by the more recent White Paper by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2011, p. 67). In both these papers, the government has been directly supporting “fair trade” initiatives, but also “ethical trade”, including the Ethical Trading Initiative (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2011, p. 67), which are not mentioned in the public procurement literature – but which are also discussed in the following chapter. Furthermore, it is noted in the White Paper on Development that “the government is committed to supporting fair trade through its procurement” (DFID 2009, p. 45) and as evidence it is pointed out that in 2008 “the Office for Government Commerce published guidance on how government departments can support fair trade through public procurement, consistent with EU procurement directives” (DFID 2009, p. 45). The reference to European Procurement Directives is instructive as it reminds those responsible for implementing them that procurement must

¹⁵ Given that the definition of fair and ethical trade is not a straightforward issue, this is discussed at length in the next chapter.

remain consistent with the legal framework discussed above (and, more specifically, in the following chapter).

In *The Office for Government Commerce Guidance on Fair Trade and Public Procurement* (2008), it is confirmed that the UK Government has committed nearly £12 million to “fair” and “ethical” trade schemes since 1997, and that “in addition to funding direct initiatives, there is scope for the Government to support fair trade through public procurement” (OGC 2008, p. 2). The OGC also provides a definition of “fair trade” goods, which are described as:

“A range of activities aimed at helping producers and workers in developing countries. One important objective is to help excluded and disadvantaged producers – including independent small farmers – to access international markets and receive a fair price for their products. Other objectives are to encourage: traders to buy as directly as possible from producer groups and to develop long term relationships; the transparency of supply chains; and the empowerment of producer groups and workers. Another vital goal is to ensure decent working conditions and fair wages for workers on plantations and in factories” (OGC 2008, p. 2).

Given the somewhat vague nature of this description, the OGC (2008, p. 2) identifies that “there are various fair trade labels which demonstrate that products have been produced in accordance with internationally recognised fair trade standards” and cites examples – although it is stressed that this list is non-exhaustive and does not imply endorsement. It is notable that this document once again compliments fair trade with ethical trade by referring to “*Fair and Ethical Trade Organisations*” (OGC 2008, p. 5) and lists three private certification systems: The Fairtrade Foundation, which awards the Fairtrade Mark; the Rainforest Alliance which offers the Rainforest Alliance, Certified Seal; and UTZ Certified Good Inside, which offers a worldwide certification and traceability programme.

In providing such information, this document clarifies that the UK Government is encouraging its constituent departments to purchase goods certified by private sector organisations providing standards of operation apparently agreed at the international level. However, what is not clear is if the government distinguishes between “fair” and “ethical” trade, or what definitions constitute both categories of labelling. Wider government discourse on investment in fair and ethical trade (such as the DFID website) likewise fails to clarify if these terms should be considered distinct and on what bases they are defined – and other

documents also introduce the terminology of fairly traded and ethically traded goods (DEFRA 2009, p. 12).

In this sense then, critical investigation into the role of “fair trade” governance in the creative procurement process will require elaboration on the meaning of these central terms by reference to other academic literature (as discussed in the following chapter). Furthermore, given the ambiguity and open-ended nature of publicly available government policy on this subject, it will be of critical importance to develop an understanding of how such policy discourse is interpreted by those responsible for the development of this agenda in practice. Indeed, empirical research (presented in Chapter Four) indicates that this is a highly relevant issue in the actual operationalisation of these initiatives.

This is a particularly important issue as the literature on private governance has increasingly turned its attention to how such systems interact with traditional state authority (Haas 2004; Peters and Pierre 1998). One of the emerging themes of this work is that while private governance initiatives derive legitimacy and potentially increased take-up from a variety of sources, interaction with the state allows each side to use resources that would not be at the disposal, were it to remain on its own side of the presumed divide between the two sectors (Peters and Pierre 1998). More specifically it is noted that where different approaches to a sustainability theme exist, government endorsement can provide a significant legitimisation of one approach over another – irrespective of whether the approach in question is the most appropriate option vis-à-vis the policy aim (Smith and Fischlein 2010). In a sense, there is a significant flip-side to the argument that the state should play a role in setting the aims and mechanisms of sustainable development (Meadowcroft 2007; Morgan and Sonnino 2008). Indeed, this perspective can be seen to rely on a very optimistic view of democratic institutions which is often challenged by empirical experience in which power relationships run counter to democratic ideals. As is noted by an evaluation of Fairtrade certification mentioned in the public procurement literature, “the preferred certification organisation(s) is (are) likely to be the most vocal and activist one(s), but not necessarily the most representative or inclusive of all the different tendencies existing within domestic society and/or the broader international community” (Berghe 2006, p. 4). As such, other factors

which influence the concretisation of procurement policy are of even more importance in establishing its relationship with sustainable development.

Some Conclusions

Overall this chapter has charted the rise of sustainable development as a key concept in policy and planning during the last thirty years. It has been argued that the concept of sustainable development has been specifically concerned with the integration of long standing international development issues with the newly emerging environmental agenda of the later part of the 20th Century. Tracing the integration of sustainable development within UK policy and practice, it is suggested that for the most part, this agenda has tended to draw on weak eco-centric interpretations of the original concept. Furthermore, with the operationalisation of sustainable development in the UK, policy has lost much of its original concern with traditional, intra-generational development issues.

Based on a review of the academic literature, the chapter suggests that the public procurement of food represents an opportunity to more widely embed the principles of sustainable development within public action (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 4). Such a proposition identifies this component of government activity as an important area for academic research and it has even been suggested that procurement for the public plate represents a litmus test for the UK Government's commitment to sustainable development.

Within the practices identified as more creative approaches to the public purchase of food, a wider localisation narrative of food supply has been a dominating influence. However, recent work has held such an association to critical account by identifying both theoretical and empirical limitations to this policy direction. As such it is strongly argued that sustainable procurement also requires an emphasis on other food classifications such as "organic" and "fair trade" goods.

The review has shown the literature on public procurement has not yet engaged critically with work specifically concerned with the theme of "fair trade". This is particularly critical as while actual procurement strategies of UK state institutions have already begun to integrate

“fair trade” purchases, it was identified in the closing section of this chapter that the central government has also created policy support for these activities – even though such discourse contains a significant degree of ambiguity.

Overall, this background raises important questions about the relationship between sustainable development and the public procurement system in the UK. Should the assumption of the procurement literature that so-called “fair trade” goods are part of a more sustainable procurement agenda be accepted? In the light of central government policy, what is the relationship between ‘fair trade’ and ‘ethical trade’ goods, and how is any such distinction operationalised in actual procurement practice? Furthermore, as has been identified by Sonnino (2009, pp. 425-426), with the recognition that “quality” is actively contested in the public procurement of goods, it is essential to understand the factors that influence this process – and especially where such contests intersect with the ecological, social and economic factors of sustainable development. In this light, it is also important to ask questions about the concrete factors that shape public procurement policy, its interpretation and practice, and it is towards a greater understanding of these issues that this thesis now turns.

Chapter Two: A Critical Exploration of Fair Trade Governance

Much depends on the debates and contests that accompany the expansion of the fair trade movement. While the outcomes of these contests are not predetermined, it must be pointed out that they happen on an uneven playing field. The process and institutional formations within which they happen, and the social technologies of power and knowledge on which they depend, create a context that sets limits on what can and cannot happen” (Kruger and Toit 2007, p. 215).

The last chapter identified a growing interest in government procurement for the public plate as a tool to promote a holistic interpretation of sustainable development. However, while academic analysis has questioned the food localisation agenda, critical thinking has not been applied to the category of ‘fair trade’ – proposed as a means to incorporate social justice concerns.

The purpose of this chapter is to hold this position to critical account by conducting an in-depth review of the existing knowledge about ‘fair trade’. The result of analysis is that, contrary to assumptions, the term ‘fair trade’ is problematic for both academic and policy discourses, since it represents a heterogeneous collection of actual governance practices. As discussed below, the literature broadly classifies different approaches as either more “radical” or “reformist” interpretations of fair trade (see Low and Davenport 2006). Perhaps most problematically, the certification system administered by FLO, and specifically mentioned by both UK Government policy and the academic literature (above), currently accredits both approaches. This situation stands alongside the practice of more radical interpretations, which do not carry any formal certification, as well as a parallel system of accreditation, which only applies to 100 percent dedicated fair trade organisations.

Given that these latter approaches to fair trade are not mentioned by Government policy, there is a concern in the fair trade literature – which mirrors the wider discussion presented in the previous chapter – that state interactions with fair trade could well be legitimising less radical and less effective versions of the concept (Fisher 2009). The limitation of this argument, however, is that normative typologies of fair trade are not sufficiently grounded in rigorous empirical investigation – and

indeed, any universal claim that fair trade governance necessarily promotes sustainable development is difficult to support.

Complications are intensified by the simultaneous mention of ‘ethical trade’ alongside ‘fair trade’ in UK Government policy. Although discourse conflates these two terms, relevant academic analysis identifies them as fundamentally different (Smith and Barrientos 2005); and argues that fair trade is more likely to promote social justice (Raynolds et al. 2007). Despite these differences, all these governance initiatives are now in competition with one another (Renard 2010, p. 289).

The final section in this chapter adds a further twist to this complex dynamic of competition. Here it is noted that the National Licensing Initiative (NLI) of FLO in the UK, the Fairtrade Foundation, has developed certification for consumption (Fisher 2009). Pertinently, the Fairtrade Town, School and University schemes are considered to be actively encouraging local government authorities to favour FLO certified goods over other accreditations (Malpass et al. 2007). Furthermore, this system has become the basis of another programme developed by Wales and Scotland to recognise themselves as FTNs – and the Scottish Government has incorporated this programme into their international development policy. Ultimately, the chapter argues that in order to critically analyse creative procurement in the UK, it is necessary to develop an empirical understanding of how exactly these programmes have influenced government procurement practices.

The History of Fair Trade: A multifaceted beginning

It is widely agreed that what is today referred to as “fair trade” began in the post World-War Two era under the predominant label of “alternative trade” (Gendron et al. 2009, p. 67; Low and Davenport 2006)¹⁶. Despite this unitary terminology, it is also well established that “the origins of the fair trade movement are diverse and somewhat contested” (Reed 2009, p. 4). For example, Dolan and Blowfield (2010, p. 6) consider that the early fair trade movement had “its roots planted in a mixed

¹⁶ Although, some contributors provide an even more longstanding history (Rosenthal 2011, pp. 158-159).

compost of socialism, theology, and international development”, and several other authors describe the disparate motivations and practices of the organisations involved (Gendron et al. 2009, pp. 64-65; Low and Davenport 2006)¹⁷.

What was common to the early fair trade movement was the commercialisation of mainly handicraft goods (although also an increasing amount of agrifood products (Rosenthal 2011, p. 106)), sourced from Southern producers marginalised from the global economy, and sold to wealthy Northern consumers. Supply chains were composed of mission-driven, Northern ‘alternative trade organisations’ (ATOs)¹⁸ – responsible for the purchase and import of goods – and southern producer organisations – which provided a variety of services to their members, including marketing, product development and commercialisation (LeClair 2002, p. 950). In this light, alternative trade developed supply networks isolated from conventional trade activity (Rosenthal 2011, p. 159). Northern organisations did not carry any form of accreditation for their activities, but instead relied on the social orientation of their reputation to justify their claims to fairness (Tran-Nguyen and Zampetti 2004, p. 391).

The rationale for the collective label of ‘alternative trade’ has been that ATOs rejected the competitive trading interaction of profit orientated companies – where southern producers were expected to defend their own interests – and instead incorporated the interests of southern suppliers into their own operating decisions and procedures. To refer back to Gereffi’s (2001a, pp. 57-58) typology discussed in the previous chapter, ATOs employ first-party governance. To draw from another typology developed by Gereffi (1995, p. 84), fair trade is considered to involve “relational governance” where interlocutors recognise their mutual interest and consider perspectives of others in their trade operations (Smith and Barrientos 2005) – as contrasted to “captive governance” where trade is ‘oligopsonistic’¹⁹.

¹⁷ It was also noted by the Trading Director at Oxfam during an interview, that everyone has a different account of how the fair trade movement started. Interview with David McCollough 31/03/2011.

¹⁸ Examples of which include Oxfam, and TWIN in the UK, SERRV and Ten Thousand Villages in the USA, Bridgehead in Canada and Nepali Bazar in Japan.

¹⁹ Oligopsonistic is the technical term used to describe a situation in which there are only a few buyers and a large number of sellers. See Brown (1993) for this understanding of fair trade governance.

Some accounts (Brown 1993; Littrell and Dickson 1999) of the early fair trade movement give the impression that such governance arose from a somewhat homogenous set of specific practices, such as:

1. The payment of 'fair prices' set through transparent negotiation where the aim was to return as much as possible, rather than as little as possible.
2. Shortening supply chains to remunerate more of the final retail price to original producers.
3. Promoting stability of demand by spreading orders across time.
4. Providing up-front credit to improve cash flow.
5. Providing information and capacity for southern producers to improve their business practices and reduce environmental impact.
6. Supplying the end consumer with information about production and producers.

Having said this, others question the idea that practices were so homogenous. For example, Anderson (2009) argues that ATOs in the UK simply sold goods in order to invest profits in charity and relief efforts, and did not operate to benefit suppliers directly through trade relationships until the mid-1970s. For this reason, the presentation of 'fair trade' as a homogenous 'black box' of positive governance needs to be questioned.

Indeed, the trust-based and mutually interdependent approach to fair trade had a limited reach and also began to contract in the 1980s due to greater competition for 'ethnic goods' (LeClair 2002) and an increasing pressure from consumers that the social nature of operations be more formally legitimised (Low and Davenport 2006, p. 319). Owing to these pressures and limitations, stakeholders within the movement developed the idea of third-party certification in order to expand the reach of alternative trade governance – and this had the effect of adding even greater diversity to the fair trade movement (Bowes 2011).

From Alternative to Fair Trade: The institutionalisation of fair trade in FLO certification

As a response to the limitations of first-party governance practices, a Dutch NGO and a Mexican coffee farmers' cooperative developed a "third-party" governance and certification approach (Fridell 2007, pp. 186-187). The Max Havelaar system,

launched in 1988, guaranteed coffee had been produced and traded under similar conditions to those offered by the Dutch ATO, *SOS Wereldhandel* (Fair Trade Original no date), founded in 1959: for example, being bought direct from cooperatives for a bottom line price of up to 10 percent higher than world market price, up to 60 percent pre-financing had been extended and long term relationships were being constructed (Brown 1993, p. 162).

The most important facet of this new certification was that it derived legitimacy from an independent body that set and audited standards (Nguyen and Zampetti 2004: 392). As such, Max Havelaar certification facilitated the migration of fair trade products out of 'alternative' supply chains operated by social economy actors and into those provided by conventional profit orientated companies (Davies 2010, p. 463). By 1993 the Max Havelaar mark had a three percent share of the Dutch market (Brown 1993, p. 182). The success of this certification resulted in its expansion and institutionalisation in a way that has come to dominate the fair trade movement.

The Growing Institutionalisation of FLO Certification

Given the success of Max Havelaar certification, similar systems soon grew up in other European consumer countries such as Belgium in 1990 and Switzerland in 1992 (Nicholls and Opal 2005, p. 10). A similar certifying initiative, TransFair International, was organised by the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) and TransFair Germany in 1992, with new Transfair organisations established soon after in Luxembourg, Japan, Canada and the United States (Reed 2009, p. 5; Rosenthal 2011, pp. 163-166). Organisations also appeared in Sweden, Finland and the United Kingdom, where Oxfam, Traidcraft, CAFOD, Christian Aid, New Consumer, and the World Development Movement, set up the Fairtrade Foundation in 1992 (Brown 1993, pp. 180-184; Nicholls and Opal 2005, p. 10).

While initial expansion came in the form of independent National Labelling Initiatives (NLI), these began to coordinate in 1993 by agreeing criteria and maintaining a register of certified producer organisations (Renard 2005, p. 425). This process was consolidated in 1997, when the various national organisations merged to

form the Fairtrade Labelling Organisations (FLO) – subsequently renamed to Fairtrade International in February 2011 but still abbreviated to “FLO”. This “higher stage of institutionalisation” (2005, p. 425) reconciled different standards of national certification systems and created a mostly unitary certification mark under the brand of *Fairtrade* (Raynolds 2000, p. 301)²⁰. In order to develop the legitimacy of the certification system, FLO established a separate independent certification unit, FLO-cert GmbH (Tallontire 2009, p. 1006), and obtained ISO65 and EN45011 accreditation (Renard 2005, p. 425). In this way, while the now 21 NLI are responsible for monitoring the supply chains and licensing buyers to use the Fairtrade Mark, FLO sets the standards and FLO-cert interpret these standards, carry out audits and provide certification (FLO, p. 27).

As well as this geographical expansion and institutionalisation, NLI and FLO as a central organisation have increased the number of product categories for which certification is available. Although certification began with coffee, by 2010 the FLO Mark was applicable to food products of: Bananas, Cocoa, Coffee, Dried Fruit, Fresh Fruit, Fresh Vegetables, Fruit Juices, Herbs & Spices, Honey, Nuts/Oil Seeds, Quinoa, Rice, Sugar Cane, Soya Beans & Pulses, Tea and Wine Grapes; and non-food products of: Gold, Cut Flowers and Plants, and Cotton (FLO 2010b WS).

In order for these products to be certified, FLO has evolved to administer a number of different standards: Generic Standards for 1) the producer organisation where the product originates and 2) the trade organisation that makes the initial purchase from the producer. Furthermore, there are Product Standards which mainly apply to the producer organisation but also outline specific details relevant to the relationship with the buyer. While certification was originally only applicable to products from Small Farmers’ Organisations (SFOs), following the lead of Transfair in Germany, it has subsequently also become available for plantation or Hired Labour (HL) production (Reed 2009, p. 5) – a move that, as discussed below, has been highly controversial.

Both SFO and HL certification require compliance with a number of minimum economic/business, social and environmental standards, all of which are designed to

²⁰ In the USA and Canada Transfair refer to the FLO governance with the term “Fair Trade” and the certification system is demarcated with a different mark (Dolan and Blowfield 2010, p. 10).

promote social justice and environmental sustainability and ensure that labour conditions meet International Labour Standards (FLO 2007a, 2007b). These are summarised in Table 3 below. As well as minimum standards, which must be met in order to obtain certification in the initial instance, FLO standards contain “Process Requirements” that promote continual change and development within certified producer organisations (Courville 2003, p. 280).

Small Farmers’ Organisation	Hired Labour
Organisation must be commercially viable and able to deliver a product ready for export.	
Democratic cooperative structure	Workers are democratically organised
Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining, Conditions of Employment and Occupational Health and Safety	
Environmental standards: Avoid prohibited agro chemicals and take precautions in their use, deal appropriately with waste, take measures to conserve soil and water etc	

Table 3: Minimum FLO Requirements

Once producers are registered, buyers seeking to enter into FLO certified relationships can select potential supply partners from the FLO registry. In order for a product to be eventually certified as Fairtrade, the buyer must fulfil a number of requirements:

Minimum Prices	A Minimum Price set for each product at a level which is considered to at least cover the cost of sustainable production, and means that producers will always be guaranteed that price even if the market price is below that level. Where the world price is higher than the minimum price, buyers are required to pay whichever is higher.
Social Premium	The Social Premium must be paid in addition to the Minimum Price and is set as a percentage of the unit price. This component of the remuneration must be spent by the producer group on developmental projects which enhance the capacity of the organisation and/or the surrounding community. As such FLO issues guidelines on what is considered to be appropriate investment of these funds.
Up-front Credit	On request by the producer, buyers are required to extend up to 60 percent of the final price as up-front working credit so that producer organisations can alleviate cash flow problems typical of the sectors in which Fairtrade certification is available.
Long-term, stable relationships	Buyers should attempt to engage in long term relationships but this long requires that buyers provide some sense of future demand for some products.

Table 4: FLO Requirements of Buyers

The above developments have led to a huge widening of the fair trade movement. In line with the objective of the system, FLO certification has facilitated the increasing involvement of profit orientated actors such as supermarkets and food multinationals in the commercialisation of FLO certified goods (Huybrechts and Defour 2010, p. 4).

As a result of this involvement, the global retail market for FLO Fairtrade certified products has recently grown by 40 percent per annum, and in 2009 had an overall value of US\$ 3.8 billion (FLO 2010a WS). The expansion of retail sales has also meant that in 2010 there were almost 800 Fairtrade certified producer organisations in Latin America, Africa, and Asia (FLO 2010a WS). The growth of FLO certified goods is strongest in the UK market where certified sales have grown 40 percent to reach an overall value of £1 billion in 2010 (Fairtrade Foundation 2011 WS). This makes the UK the most well developed and physically largest fair trade market in Europe (Davies 2010, p. 455).

Despite such impressive expansions, however, the institutionalisation of fair trade has engendered some significant tensions relevant in the critical analysis of the relationship between FLO certification and sustainable development. The root of these tensions has come from the very aim of FLO certification to facilitate greater involvement of profit orientated actors in fair trade supply chains. Indeed, although the Fairtrade Foundation initially aimed to ‘provide the certification mark to small and medium organisations with a particular interest in the developing world’ (Davies 2010, p. 465), the volume of potential sales offered by large commercial players has led to a revision of these commitments. The Foundation has subsequently encouraged the involvement of even the large brands who were initially “reluctant to support fair trade activities” (Tallontire 2007, p. 39) and now licenses use of its mark to companies such as Starbucks and Nestle (Davies 2010, p. 465).

In the view of many, this corporate involvement has also turned FLO into a site of “negotiating, establishing, enforcing and reformulating the standards and certification” (Jaffee 2010, p. 268) in which an increasing amount of concessions have been granted to commercial players (Jaffee 2010; Renard 2005, p. 421 & 424). This is viewed to have “weakened” (Jaffee and Howard 2009; Renard 2010, p. 290) or even “corrupted” (Doppler and González 2007, p. 190) the principles and practices

promoted, in a way that is detrimental to the interests of southern producers (Reed 2009; Tallontire 2009). Indeed, the involvement of profit orientated companies is seen to be “contingent entirely on corporate profitability and the need to protect their corporate image, not on the needs of southern producers” (Fridell 2004, p. 153).

As evidence that there is a trade-off between corporate involvement and the strength of fair trade standards, there have been considerable changes to the practices of governance²¹. In terms of the prices paid to producers, FLO certification has shifted the emphasis from buyers aiming to pay as much as possible, to requiring payment of a minimum α world market price, depending on which is higher. While there is evidence that profit orientated buyers treat minimum prices also as a maximum, others suggest that they have influenced the setting of minimum levels and are generally feared to threaten a lowering of these prices (Barrientos and Dolan 2007, p. 18; Tallontire 2009, p. 1011). Indeed, it is noted by Renard (2010, p. 290) that FLO was considering the elimination of minimum prices altogether as a means of increasing overall sales. Supermarkets are known to have intentionally sourced from areas where FLO minimum prices are lower (Smith 2010b). In his analysis of minimum coffee prices (which did not change between 1988 and 2007), Bacon (2010) identifies that in real terms, returns no longer cover the cost of sustainable production in some contexts. This investigation also highlighted the issue that FLO policy is heavily influenced by NLI, who have a strong incentive to promote the interests of commercial stakeholders – and as such, the extent to which producers views are taken into account is seen to be very minimal (Berghe 2006).

Another principle of fair trade weaker under FLO than other approaches to fair trade is in the area of technical support and capacity building. Under FLO this function is delegated to the producer organisation and funded out of Social Premium payments. While some profit orientated actors involved in FLO certified supply chains have made additional and direct contributions to enhancing the capacity of suppliers (Smith 2010b), analysis suggests that this is more likely to be aimed at meeting the commercial needs of buyers, rather than the development needs of producers

²¹ For a comparison of specific practices as fair trade governance has been institutionalised with FLO certification see Appendix 4.

(Macdonald 2007; Tallontire 2009, p. 1009) – see below for other comparative investigation.

Another reason the FLO system draws criticism, is the expansion of certification beyond small farmers' organisations to also cover plantation style production. Although, this was initially only applicable to products, like tea, which were not produced by small farmers' organisations (Renard and Perez-Grovas 2007, p. 150), after 2003, certification has been extended to other products where plantations compete with certified small farmers (Goigoi 2008) (see Appendix 1 on page 243 for details of certification availability). Here there is concern that unless differentiated prices are set, as with Rooibos tea (Raynolds and Ngcwangu 2010, p. 76), estates will marginalise the demand for small farmer products on the basis of differences between quality and stability of supply. It has also been noted that plantation production maintains traditional capitalist ownership structures and does not require worker participation in decision making (Renard and Perez-Grovas 2007, pp. 150-151).

For these reasons, the automatic assumption that FLO certification will promote the interests of poor southern farmers needs to be questioned. This is particularly important as while fair trade has expanded with the integration of profit motivated actors commercialising FLO certified goods, more longstanding developmentally oriented approaches have still remained.

Parallel Approaches to Fair Trade²²

The importance of the certification approach and specifically that of FLO is well recognised (Nicholls and Opal 2005; Tallontire 2009, p. 1005). Indeed, in 2007, the last year for which comparative statistics are available, FLO certified goods accounted for €2.381 million of sales, whereas non-certified products were only valued at €265 million (Krier 2007, p. 8). However, despite this domination, overall growth has still

²² The alternative schemes discussed in this section are pertinent to the issue of public procurement in the UK. There are however, other certification and governance initiatives in producer countries such as "Comercio Justo" in Mexico (Renard and Perez-Grovas 2007; Smith 2008b; Smith and VanderHoff Forthcoming), various initiatives in Brazil (Wilkinson 2007b) and indeed, throughout Latin America (Fretel et al. 2009), which can also be seen as parallel interpretations of fair trade.

required a growing range of products, approaches and also “standards and certification” (Fisher 2009, p. 985).

As well as a growing number of profit motivated companies commercialising FLO certified goods, original pioneering ATOs (such as Oxfam, Equal Exchange, TWIN²³ Trading, Traidcraft and Ten Thousand Villages) have continued to operate in a more professional manner (Fichtl 2007, pp. 15-17) – and have been joined by an increasing number of other such socially orientated actors (Barrientos and Dolan 2007, p. 10). Although these organisations have taken on FLO certified goods, they have also continued to stock items which remain outside the certification system (Barrientos and Dolan 2007, p. 10; Tallontire 2007, p. 42 & 54). These organisations continue to rely on direct contact with consumers to uphold their claims of fairness (Raynolds 2009, p. 1086) and establish legitimacy by generating trust (Bezençon 2011, p. 61). ATOs have also joined in partnerships to launch dedicated fair trade processing companies that produce finished fair trade goods under brand-names such as Cafédirect (Tallontire 2000; Wright 2004) and Divine Chocolate (Doherty and Tranchell 2005; Tallontire 2007, pp. 37-38). While these goods are mostly certified by FLO they are considered to have executed a “radical mainstreaming” (see Doherty and Tranchell 2007) that bridges social justice goals with a commercial strategy of sales growth.

Because of their social orientation, many of these ATOs expressly aim to go beyond FLO requirements – or in other words, operate a fair trade plus model (Murray 2011, p. 207). In the example of Oxfam, the organisation has aimed to “*reflect more precisely Oxfam’s vision of how fair trade may function as a tool in development*” (Mayoux and Williams 2001, p. 3), and has specifically identified that the “proper function of fair trade” is “for producers to learn to compete on open markets” (Mayoux and Williams 2001, p. 4). Likewise, TWIN Trading has invested with others to develop numerous dedicated fair trade companies (Brown 2007, p. 272). All these organisation operate what TWIN refers to as a “gold standard” (Brown 2007, p. 272) that goes above the requirements of FLO certification to: finance producer partnership

²³ TWIN stands for the Third World Information Network and was founded in 1985 with the help of the Greater London Council (Bowes 2011). This is an early example of a politically active Local Authority taking action to support southern farmers.

programmes; support producers to control more of the supply chain and involve producer representatives in ownership and decision making²⁴:

This so-called ‘gold standard’ can be seen in the discourse and practice of TWIN’s spin-out companies themselves. Cafédirect coffee (founded in 1991 in partnership with Oxfam, Traidcraft, and Equal Exchange Trading²⁵, and one of the first products certified by the Fairtrade Foundation) is noted to have gone “beyond” (2004, p. 669) the requirements of certification, by extending ownership to producers themselves (Tallontire 2000). Likewise, Divine Chocolate²⁶ (started in 1998 with the Kuapa Kokoo cocoa growers’ collective in Ghana) has made the expansion of producer ownership a key element of its empowerment strategy (Doherty and Tranchell 2005; Tiffen 2002) and is now 45 percent owned by the producer organisation (Doherty 2008, p. 206). Such ‘up-grading’ of producer involvement in the supply chain is expected to allow them to capture more value of the final sale via dividends, as well as have more power in the decision making processes that affect them (Raynolds and Ngcwangu 2010, p. 80). It is for these reasons that Davies (2009) concludes that ATO orientated fair trade has an ideological commitment to maintaining close relations with their suppliers and to improve their conditions and income.

As a result of this mission driven effort to do more than is required by FLO certification, there has been an ongoing concern of how ATOs can differentiate themselves from less producer focused operations (Davies 2010; Murray 2011). Indeed, of particular concern has been how non-certifiable products, such as craft goods, can be legitimised in a competitive market place (Gendron et al. 2009, p. 68). Looking into the issue in the 1990s, a DFID investigation suggested that “this is a particular problem for Traidcraft and Oxfam in the UK” (DFID no date, p. 11 footnote 14).

In response to this situation, there has been the parallel development of an alternative system of certification specifically designed to accredit 100 percent fair trade

²⁴ Also see Renard and Perez-Grovas (2007, p. 152) and Raynolds (2009, p. 1087)

²⁵ An organisation which itself “goes well beyond FLO requirements” (Raynolds 2009, pp. 1086-1087).

²⁶ Which changed its name from the Day Chocolate Company in January 2007 as a means to more closely align the company name with that of the leading brand.

organisations dealing with both handicraft and agrifood products. In the view of some, this is a more radical approach to the certification of fair trade (Rosenthal 2011, p. 168), and it is to a discussion of this certification that the chapter now turns²⁷.

The Rise of WFTO Certification

The WFTO came into existence in 1989 as the first networking organisation to directly link producers in developing countries with retailers operating in Northern markets (WFTO 2009a WS). Throughout its history the organisation has been composed of members which are “100 percent authentic fair trade” or dedicated socially orientated organisations (Davenport and Low forthcoming, p. 5) – and thus their approach has sharply contrasted with that of FLO whose strategic intention has been to involve profit orientated companies in the fair trade movement.

While there is very little academic discussion of the WFTO, the organisation is composed of farmers, growers, producers, and supporters working through cooperatives, networks, brands and businesses to deliver US\$2.2 billion in fair trade sales worldwide (WFTO 2011 WS). The WFTO is made up of regional Chapters as described in Table 5 – a structure that reflects the organic development of the organisation (Ullrich 2007, pp. 7-8) – and is a multi-level membership organisation in which each member has one vote within their respective community (Davenport and Low forthcoming, p. 5).

Chapter Name	Created	Head Office	Members
IFAT LA: Asociacion Latino Americana de Comercio Justo	(not available)	Areguá, Paraguay	(not available)
AFTF: The Asia Fair Trade Forum	March 2001	Manila, Philippines	70 organisations 9 countries ²⁸
World Fair Trade Organisation Europe	February 2007	Cordoba, Spain	96 organisations ²⁹ (not available)
COFTA: Cooperation for Fair Trade in Africa	2004	Nairobi, Kenya	70 organisations 20 countries ³⁰

²⁷ It should be noted that another system of accreditation available to UK based organisations is administered by the British Association of Fair Trade Shops (BAFTS). However, because this accreditation is grounded in FLO and WFTO governance, it is described in Footnote 83 below.

²⁸ Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal, Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.

²⁹ As of December 2008.

³⁰ As of December 2008.

Table 5: The Chapters of IFAT

In response to requests by its members, the WFTO has also slowly developed an accreditation function in parallel to that of FLO (Davenport and Low forthcoming, p. 6); and as such, has initiated what some explicitly see as competition in the provision of fair trade certification (Smith and Fischlein 2010, p. 516). Starting in 1997, the WFTO now has a formal monitoring process for its members which is composed of self-assessment, mutual review and external verification (Davenport and Low forthcoming, p. 6) against Ten Fair Trade Principles. These can be found in full in Appendix 2, but cover the areas of:

1. Creating Opportunities for Economically Disadvantaged Producers
2. Transparency and Accountability
3. Trading Practices
4. Payment of a Fair Price
5. Child Labour and Forced Labour
6. Non Discrimination, Gender Equity and Freedom of Association
7. Working Conditions
8. Capacity Building
9. Promotion of Fair Trade
10. Environment

Unlike FLO certification, the WFTO system is “not as certification for the products of organisations but rather the organisations themselves” (Gendron et al. 2009, p. 69). As such, the WFTO mark, which became available in 2004, can only be used as part of an organisation’s identity, and is not licensed to appear on products (Davenport and Low forthcoming, p. 10). This condition has reinforced the organisation’s objective that “The Fair Trade Organisation Mark serves to distinguish Fair Trade Organisations from commercial traders, such as Starbucks, that are involved in fair trade only through the purchase of products labelled under the FLO certification system” (Ullrich 2007, p. 16)³¹. The membership system also offers third-party certification to those who fall outside the FLO system, either because of produce type or geographical position – as there is no such limitation on WFTO membership.

In addition to this membership system, the WFTO is developing product certification, the Sustainable Fair Trade Management System (SFTMS), which can be applied to

³¹ Also see Barrientos and Dolan (2007, p. 10).

individual product packaging. This development has been partly motivated out of the perceived marginalisation of the WFTO's approach by FLO certification (Ullrich 2007). The SFTMS is also designed to be more cost effective – being based on the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) for small and medium organisations – and less bureaucratic for developing world producers (Davenport and Low forthcoming, p. 11). Perhaps most interestingly for the current study, the WFTO (2010, p. 2) notes that the new certification:

“anticipates future global and European Union initiatives following the development of Fair Trade voluntary regulations in several EU member states...[and] also supports sustainable public procurement [as]...voluntary standards are becoming de facto mandatory in some countries and market segments”³².

Unitary Discourse and Heterogeneous Practice of Fair Trade

As was noted in Chapter One, academic literature and the government policy concerned with creative public procurement presents ‘fair trade’ as an unproblematic means to promote sustainable development. These constructions can be well understood given the efforts of fair trade organisations to collectively present their diverse activities under the same signifying label. Indeed, in 1987 the biggest eleven European *alternative trade* organisations, including CTM in Italy, Gepa in Germany, and Oxfam in the UK and in Belgium, joined together in the European *Fair Trade* Association (EFTA) (Huybrechts and Defour 2010, p. 8). Two years later, the International Federation of Alternative Trade (IFAT) began to refer to itself as the International *Fair Trade* Association (Ullrich 2007, p. 1 footnote 2) – to which it officially changed its name in 2003 (Davenport and Low forthcoming, p. 2), before finally becoming the World *Fair Trade* Organisation (WFTO) in 2008. Indeed, even though there was a parallel existence of ‘fair’ and ‘alternative’ trade discourses in the 1980s, there has been a further subtle shift (Tallontire 2009, p. 1006) to the predominance of fair trade in the 1990s (Gendron et al. 2009, p. 67).

³² It should be noted that the WFTO is schedule to hold its AGM in Mombassa just after submission of this thesis in May 2011. As part of the programme the organisation will discuss a number of critical documents, presented to members for action, “including a serious update of our membership and monitoring system, plus some work done on the SFTMS”. Personal Communication with Paul Meyers.

Furthermore, in 1998 the four biggest European fair trade organisations – the Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO), International Fair Trade Association (IFAT) World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO), Network of European World Shops (NEWS) and European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) – came together to form FINE – the acronym comprised of the first letter of the name of the respective members – reportedly as a means to harmonise their approaches, monitoring, information and communication systems, advocacy work and campaigns (Reed 2009, p. 6; Ullrich 2007, p. 5). In 1999, FINE also publicly agreed a shared definition of fair trade which was revised in 2001 and currently states that:

‘Fair trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalised producers and workers – especially in the South. Fair trade organisations (backed by consumers) are engaged actively in supporting producers, awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade’.

In the view of some, these developments have facilitated a more strategic direction for the fair trade movement as they have created greater homogeneity in terms of discourse and advocacy (Wilkinson 2007a). For example, this statement is often cited by academics (e.g. Moore et al. 2006) and provides much of the definition offered by the UK Government presented in the previous chapter. In addition, the FLO and the WFTO published a *Charter of Fair Trade Principles* which aims to “provide a single international reference point for Fair Trade through a concise explanation of [five] Fair Trade principles” (WFTO 2009b WS) (see Appendix 3).

Despite these efforts to generate unity, some view that the variation of governance approaches has resulted in tensions within the fair trade movement (Reed 2009, p. 6). Indeed, a longstanding theme in the academic literature is that with the development of FLO certification, the movement has been divided into two distinguishable practical interpretations of the concept (Bacon 2010; Reynolds 2000; Renard 2003, p. 91): the “reformist” and the “radical” or “reformer” and “transformer” interpretations.

The first version of fair trade perceived by analysts is a “softer and more commercial”, “reformist version”, which promotes more equitable trade through existing structures

and channels, and in particular mainstream retailers (Gendron et al. 2009, p. 64; Hira and Ferrie 2006, p. 108). This model seeks to work with existing profit orientated organisations (Rosenthal 2011, p. 158) by certifying their operations to facilitate the internalising of externalities into pricing and developing consumer consciousness—presumably in justification of the added cost (Barrientos and Dolan 2007, p. 7). In contrast to ATOs, some scholars suggest that mainstream commercial organisations have no social objectives (Davies 2009) and that they do not alter their structures to incorporate fairness or venture far into fair trade advocacy (Raynolds and Ngcwangu 2010, p. 80). More importantly, it is viewed that producers do not benefit in a fundamental way from this version of fair trade (Neilson and Pritchard 2010, p. 1848; Utting 2007), and in some cases less than northern stakeholders (Johannessen and Wilhite 2010).

The second is argued to be a more longstanding, more radical or even ‘militant’ (Gendron et al. 2009, p. 64) version of fair trade. This interpenetration is considered to be seeking a whole new way of trading (Moore et al. 2006, p. 74) and to challenge orthodoxy in business practice by campaigning and acting as a tool for modifying the dominant economic model (Renard 2003). The basic core of this model is the facilitation of close links between producers and consumers through the working of dedicated fair trade enterprises (Goodman 2004), that operate according to “civic norms” (Raynolds 2009, p. 1085) and accept responsibility to work in genuine solidarity and partnership (Tallontire 2002) with producers to expand their capacity. Such an approach is seen to promote cooperation, deliberative decision-making, mutual accountability and income redistribution (Tiffen 2002). While this category might include social economy actors with product lines that are FLO certified, this more radical approach is also associated with the certification of the WFTO for dedicated fair trade organisations (Raynolds 2009, p. 1085) – and, as such, is seen by some as an attempt to “reassert the power of the transformative approach” (Rosenthal 2011, p. 168) in the face of dominance by more reformist labelling initiatives.

Beyond this binary interpretation, Reed (2009) identifies different types of commercial fair trade supply chains. This analysis suggests that where fair trade operates a) without corporate participation and b) with corporate retail participation, governance is relational, while supply chains with c) corporate licensees are modular

and d) those with plantation production are also a type of relational governance. However, ultimately, supply chains operated entirely by ATOs are identified as producing preferable development outcomes. Reynolds (2009, p. 1083) adopts a “commodity network approach”³³ and also identifies differences between “mission-driven”, “quality-driven” and “market-driven” buyers; the continuum of which increasingly represents an interest in “traceability” rather than “partnership”. Elsewhere, Reynolds and Ngcwangu (2010, p. 82) differentiate between supply chains involving ATOs, fair trade brand companies, new socially responsible companies and conventional companies. However, ultimately both these studies conclude that the sharpest divide is between “mission-driven” organisations, fully committed to fair trade, and market-driven enterprises, which have more self-orientated objectives.

In this context, the generic portrayal of ‘fair trade’ governance as a mechanism through which creative public procurement can necessarily contribute to intra-generational social justice must be problematised. Not only is this governance highly differentiated, but it is argued that some interpretations will be more developmentally beneficial than others – and therefore, the interaction of the state with private governance becomes a more complicated issue³⁴. Given the various arrangements (ranging from self-governed ATOs to certified organisations of various orientations and motivations) that are subsumed under the term fair trade, the incorporation of such governance into public procurement cannot simply be assumed as positive (Fridell 2004). Indeed, Fisher (2009, p. 995) argues that while state involvement might raise standards, “because some companies supplying the public sector can be categorised as ‘market driven buyers’ (Reynolds 2009) or ‘corporate licensees’ (Reed 2009), [it could equally be] associated with the more worrying dimensions of mainstreaming”.

³³ Such an approach is virtually identical to the subject matter central to more longstanding literature concerned with “agricultural marketing” (see for example Abbott 2009, p. 1).

³⁴ Indeed, from personal interaction with representatives of various fair trade institutions, it emerges that the issue of what constitutes legitimate fair trade practice, and how this is represented to consumers and producers, is an issue of significant concern.

Empirical Understanding of Fair Trade Typologies and Sustainable Development Outcomes

Despite the normative arguments made above, the evidence base on which discussion of fair trade governance is significantly limited. On one hand, in the only comparative investigation so far conducted, Reynolds and Ngcwangu (2010, p. 81) discovered that where profit-orientated tea processing companies retain blending and packing functions, ATOs have assisted with the development of southern capabilities in this area. This lack of 'up-grading' requirements within FLO certification has been criticised even by those who are otherwise supportive of this system as a development intervention (Smith 2009b). Also, while pre-financing was always found to be offered by socially orientated buyers, and usually by FLO licensees, in some instances producers reported that this was not the case, and some refuse to buy when credit is requested (Reynolds 2009, p. 1089). When FLO governance is considered, buyers are required to provide some estimate of future demand, although this varies across products and is sometimes little different to conventional interaction (Smith 2010b). Another issue is that because licensing is only required for organisations involved in the production or packaging of a product, retailers are under no obligation to adopt stable purchasing practices (Barrientos and Dolan 2007, p. 18).

Having said this, there is little comparative evidence from uncertified and differently accredited fair trade governance arrangements – and indeed, impact assessments have tended to concentrate on FLO certification and not on ATO activity (Bezençon 2011) where the use of relational governance is more assumed than empirically verified (Tallontire 2009, p. 1009). While there are positive case studies from socially orientated supply chains – for example Cafédirect (Tallontire 1999; Wright 2004), Divine Chocolate (Doherty and Tranchell 2007) and TerrEspoir (Bezençon 2011) – these are not rigorously comparable to either conventional or alternative fair trade supply chains (Bezençon 2011, p. 63). Indeed, in some cases ATOs are found to gloss over less than morally acceptable practices (Davies and Crane 2003; Smith 2007a). A particularly significant gap in understanding is the lack of direct empirical investigation of WFTO membership or the effects of SFTMS certification.

Assumptions about the homogeneity of market-driven organisations are also more extrapolated from a narrow range of investigation than rigorously verified through wide ranging empirical research. Indeed, while some commercial players treat these goods in exactly the same way as conventional products, others – particularly those attempting to appeal to the more exacting buyers – have been keen to pursue strong direct relationships with the producers of their own brand goods (Smith 2010b; Smith and Barrientos 2005, p. 196). Again, these differences in supply chain governance have not been empirically investigated at the level of outcomes in the developing world.

Perhaps the most pertinent issue here is that the current evidence is not sufficient to rigorously support the claim that “fair trade...contributes to sustainable development” (FINE 2001, p. 1). This is not to say that there is not relevant case study evidence that fair trade principles can be seen to contribute positively to the economic, social and environmental spheres of sustainable development (Strong 1997) – and for this reason extreme criticisms of fair trade governance, including calls for consumers to “quit buying fair trade” (Henderson 2008, p. 64) are not justified either (Smith 2009a). Indeed, there is a growing volume of independent and often comparative investigations that fair trade governance brings positive benefits to producer communities³⁵. However, not all the evidence and analysis is positive. The relationship between fair trade governance and sustainable development is thus questionable for a number of reasons, although it will suffice to discuss those that are most significant.

Firstly, sustainable development requires a general expansion of welfare for all and there is a specific focus on the world’s poorest (see previous chapter). However, FLO certification is only available for certain product categories in certain countries, and despite the growing scope of this system, there are hundreds of thousands of producers in the developing world who are excluded (Davenport and Low forthcoming, p. 11). While criticisms that most FLO certified producers do not live in

³⁵ For a recent positive summary of the available impact evidence see Le-Mare (2008). For individual studies that generally support the argument that fair trade contributes positively to elements of sustainable development see: Bacon (2005), Becchetti and Costantino (2008), Hudson and Hudson (2003), Murray et al. (2003) Pariente 2000 (2000), Raynolds (2002), Ronchi (2000), Ruben et al. (Ruben et al. 2009), Utting-Chamorro (2005).

the poorest countries (Henderson 2008) might be irrelevant given more localised inequalities (Smith 2009a), there is empirical evidence that certified producers are not necessarily the most needy (Neilson and Pritchard 2010, p. 1834). Indeed, it has been suggested that access to fair trade markets tends to be chosen on the basis of market and retailer demands rather than producer need (Fridell 2004, p. 153). Furthermore, given the way that minimum prices are mediated between their payment and the producer receiving their income for produce, it is not always the case that selling through this system returns more than selling to other buyers.

Another consideration is that the financial and bureaucratic costs of acquiring FLO certification are potentially prohibitive for many organisations (Dolan 2010b, p. 39; Renard and Perez-Grovas 2007, p. 148). Producer groups wishing to obtain FLO certification are required to pay an up-front fee of €250 and are also required to bear the costs of inspection and verification, levied at €50 per day (Neilson and Pritchard 2010, pp. 1847-1848). For this reason, in some cases the financial costs of FLO certification are not outweighed by the benefits (Janvry et al. 2010, p. 3; Tallontire and Vorley 2005, p. 10); and as a general rule, the FLO system is more accessible for larger organisations (Neilson and Pritchard 2010, p. 1848). It is also noted that women in particular are pushed out of FLO certified organisations due to a variety of costs (Lyon et al. 2010). Such a view of certification is also echoed in the wider literature, where it is identified that “private standards can also work as a barrier to market access [particularly] for smallholders, therefore forcing them to downgrade their activities or exit the market” (Lee et al. 2010, p. 2). This differentiated access to fair trade also exists at the local level, where a wide range of mediating factors produce narratives of positive inclusion (for example see Moberg 2010, p. 53) as well as negative exclusion and obstruction (for example see Arce 2009).

For these reasons, FLO certification is seen by some to provide “shaped advantage” in a system where “a limited number of producers enter the world market under more favourable conditions, utilising enhanced institutional capacity and marketing skills to tap into a growing niche market” (Lyon and Moberg 2010, p. 8). Indeed, evidence appears to suggest that FLO certification *might, in some situations*, even inadvertently exasperate social economic inequalities and existing tensions (Neilson and Pritchard 2010, p. 1834).

One of the largest limitations on all forms of fair trade is that outcomes are mediated by the volumes of goods sold under these governance arrangements (for example, Bassett 2010). According to FLO, the average certified producer sells 20-30 percent of their output under Fairtrade governance (FLO 2007c), although it can also be as low as one per cent (Lamb 2008, p. 134). In some cases, compliance with certification has also been identified to leave producers worse off in financial terms (Moberg 2005)³⁶.

A final issue prominent in the discussion of fair trade and development is the degree to which such governance promotes diversification out of low commodity production and into functions of higher value. Those who have applied economic theory suggest that governance distorts the price mechanism and promotes inefficient production (Collier 2008; LeClair 2002), possibly at the expense of local food security (Brown 2007, p. 275). On the other hand, it is also argued that economic theory is an inappropriate benchmark with which to evaluate fair trade governance (Hayes 2008) and that fair trade might in fact stimulate diversification by relieving capability constraints (Smith 2009b). It has also been argued that export production is actually unlikely to impede local food security in places like Africa, given the amount of productive resources still available (Brown 2007, p. 275) – as well as the fact that capacity developed through fair trade can in fact enhance the production of food for the local markets (Mathew 2011).

In addition to the existence of evidence that questions if fair trade governance will necessarily promote sustainable development, there are a number of methodological issues of importance. For example, while the above discussion focuses on the economic and social spheres of sustainable development, there is little consideration of environmental issues (Tallontire 2007, p. 44) – and the emphasis on sustainable development suggests that these should be equally considered in evaluation. Furthermore, while numerous studies have noted the material benefits of Social Premium payments provided by FLO certification (Smith 2008a) this is rarely qualified. For example, Dolan (2010, p. 167) points out that while the Social Premium can be used to build dispensaries and health clinics, this only improves access to

³⁶ In the example cited by Moberg however, an alternative interpretation could be that with the improvement of environmental sustainability, governance had contributed to sustainable development.

healthcare when the necessary personnel and supplies are also available. Indeed, investigations have tended to provide static pictures of outcomes, and while effects will often require time to accumulate and manifest, the varying volumes of fair trade sales over time (Valkila and Nygren 2009, p. 328) will also lead to fluctuating outcomes that are rarely identified.

Furthermore, other impact assessments often reference external support³⁷, but do not investigate their contributions³⁸. In some cases, as in that investigated by Utting-Chamorro (2005, p. 592), the producer organisation is certified by a number of different schemes (the availability of which is discussed below) and therefore it is impossible to know what is specifically achieved by fair trade. Finally, it must be noted that current evidence relies on case study examples which cannot acceptably support universal claims or assumptions about the benefits of fair trade governance (Griffiths 2010; Smith 2010a), especially if these studies have tended to concentrate on more successful examples (Smith 2007b) where causation might run from successful organisations to certification – rather than in the opposite direction. Indeed, comparative investigations reveal the importance of local conditions in mediating the implementation of fair trade governance and problematise the assumption that standardised governance will produce standardised outcomes irrespective of the context (Pirotte et al. 2006, p. 442).

In summary, despite the heavily normative typologies presented in the fair trade literature, these constructions have not been rigorously grounded in empirical impact assessments. Indeed, the evidence which supports government policy and academic assumptions about the role of fair trade in promoting sustainable development is significantly limited. Unfortunately, however, there are still additional complicating factors which are pertinent to this investigation and these are now discussed below.

³⁷ For examples see Neilson and Pritchard (2010, p. 1844), Raynolds and Ngcwangu (2010, p. 78) and Utting-Chamorro (2005, p. 592)

³⁸ As a side issue, empirical investigation has identified that fair trade governance can and should be complimented with external support to maximise the benefits of such trade models (Tallontire 1999).

“Ethical Trade”: Background and competition with fair trade

As the UK Government mentions the term “ethical trade” alongside that of fair trade, it is important to develop an understanding of this concept. Arguably mirroring the government’s discourse, Robinson (2009, p. 1015) sees ethical and fair trade initiatives as “being based on similar ideologies”. However, other literature argues that these terms signify qualitatively different systems of governance that have their own distinct beginnings, aims and scope for implementation (Barrientos and Dolan 2006).

In comparison to fair trade (discussed above), ethical trade emerged during the 1980s as a result of campaigns by a variety of social actors concerned with poor worker welfare and environmental situations arising in the supply chains of large scale, profit-orientated companies (Hopkins 2004; Jenkins et al. 2002). In response to this activism, the majority of companies developed first-party governance systems based on Codes of Conduct (COC) that were applied to some of the companies in their supply chains (Gereffi et al. 2001a). Most commonly, COCs establish and monitor the implementation of minimum requirements by producers in the supply chain (Hughes 2005, p. 1146) and have normally coalesced around core standards established by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (Hale and Shaw 2001).

While some conditions did genuinely improve, there was continuing concern that not all schemes were sufficiently effective or credible, and a series of scandals prompted more developed mechanisms to be introduced (Locke and Romis 2006, p. 3). These more complex schemes include bilateral partnerships with NGOs as well as ‘Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives’ (MSI) which include a diverse range of partners such as third party auditing firms, unions, factory managers and worker representatives (O’Rourke 2006). These third-party schemes have been adopted in both manufacturing and also agrifood food sectors as their arms length nature is considered by stakeholders to be more impartial than first or second party self-governance and certification (Hatanaka and Busch 2008). It is this COC-based approach to the regulation of the social and environmental conditions of production that has come to be known collectively as “ethical trade” (Blowfield 1999). Defining ethical trade more precisely, however, is even more difficult than locating specific principles to identify fair trade. According

to Courville (2003, p. 269), there is now a “dazzling array of initiatives to integrate social justice issues into business practices”, and this is certainly true in the agrifood sector (Busch and Bain 2004).

Despite this vast array of available governance systems, the literature has specifically differentiated between fair and ethical trade approaches. The key difference is that while ethical trade is concerned with the social and environmental conditions at the site of production only, fair trade extends its concern up the value chain to also set requirements for initial trade interactions (Smith and Barrientos 2005). For example, whereas the ETI Base Code and SA 8000 draw on the core International Labour Organisation conventions to focus on labour standards, FLO certification is also concerned with the provision of support for producers marginalised by the global trade system (Barrientos and Dolan 2006; Dolan and Blowfield 2010). However, importantly for this investigation, Jaffee and Howard (2009, p. 8) note that while there are a range of schemes which purport to be part of the fair trade movement (ranging from the genuine to the fraudulent), Rainforest Alliance and Utz – the two other schemes expressly mentioned by UK Government procurement policy – do not claim to be part of the fair trade category. This might well explain the use of the separate terms “fair trade” and “ethical trade” by the UK government – although not entirely why discourse blurs them together.

An important point about the proliferation of standards is that where systems of private certification cover the same areas or products, they are placed in competition with one another as corporations choose among a range of options (Busch and Bain 2004). Furthermore, Smith and Fischlein (2010, p. 514) identify that where companies find themselves isolated from a certain governance system they are motivated to develop other rival approaches which set different standards. Renard (2010, p. 289) finds similar tendencies as agrifood companies have responded to the growth of fair trade by involving themselves with other governance and certification systems. Interestingly, among the prominent examples which Renard (2010, p. 290) notes are identified to “compete” with fair trade certification, are the Rainforest Alliance and Utz Certified labels mentioned by UK procurement advice³⁹.

³⁹ Also see Rosental (2011, p. 169).

This situation is relevant to those interested in public procurement as different initiatives often have a different focus and accompanying principles – and it is useful here to refer back to the understanding of sustainable development elaborated in the first chapter. As was pointed out in Chapter One, there is also a multitude of perspectives on what elements of sustainable development should be given greater emphasis – and these are best represented as a position on a map sketched between social, environment and economic concerns. With this in mind, it can be noted that after a comparative analysis of different standards available for the certification of coffee, Reynolds et al. (2007) conclude that while ‘Fair Trade has by far the strongest social justice and development standards across the commodity chain’ (154), ‘Rainforest Alliance’s environmental standards are the broadest’ (156), and ‘Utz Kapeh’s social standards are similar to Rainforest Alliance’s – although environmental criteria are ‘less stringent’” (156). Although it is concluded that these ethical trade standards uphold “minimum requirements”, “private certifications can and should do more” (Raynolds et al. 2007, pp. 159-160). Unfortunately, however, while there have been impact assessments of various ethical trade schemes in the agrifood sector (Barrientos and Smith 2006; Tallontire et al. 2005), there is not sufficient evidence to draw universal conclusions about how these governance systems actually impact the empirical world.

In summary then, the qualitative difference between fair and ethical trade, as well as the differences between the specific requirements of all third-party certification schemes, raises important questions for the focus of this investigation. While the government policy discourse blurs fair and ethical trade as governance schemes which contribute to sustainable development, it can be hypothesised that different concentrations will result in different empirical outcomes. For this reason, the issue of how top line government policy is translated into local procurement practice is of considerable importance in opening the black box of government procurement. Before this chapter concludes however, it is important to discuss one final theme which is likely to have a significant bearing on this issue: the rise of certification for the sphere of consumption, and specifically, the Fairtrade Town scheme and Fair Trade Nation (FTN) programme in the UK.

Certification for Consumption: The rise of a Fairtrade monopoly?

The growth of fair trade governance is naturally highly dependent on demand from Northern consumers and has been greatly assisted by both activist campaigns to promote such products (Fridell 2004, p. 142) as well as the promotional work undertaken by the various NLIs⁴⁰. While various components of the private sector have been targeted, there have also been specific initiatives to encourage public institutions to purchase fair trade goods – although this is not something that has been discussed by the creative procurement literature reviewed in the previous chapter. One specific aspect of these efforts which has developed in the UK is the Fairtrade Foundation's scheme of geographically defined certification for consumer communities (Fisher 2009, p. 995).

The Fairtrade Town scheme arose from an independent initiative of the Oxfam Group based in Garstang, Lancashire, who had been campaigning on issues relating to global poverty and particularly international trade justice (Crowther and Human 2011, pp. 89-90). After the launch of Fairtrade certification in the UK in 1994, the promotion of FLO certified goods became a prominent element of these activities (Garstang Fairtrade 2010 WS). In 2000 the group obtained a pledge from 95 percent of local businesses, all the churches, as well as the council and all the local schools, that they would sell Fairtrade certified goods (Crowther and Human 2011, p. 90; Fairtrade Foundation 2009d). This was an important juncture in the history of the public procurement of fair trade in the UK as, reportedly, the council and the local schools accepted the Oxfam Group's view that "the Fairtrade MARK as the best vehicle for bringing the alternative fair trading system into the mainstream" (Crowther and Human 2011, p. 91). Indeed, the state recognition of FLO certification was more extensive. The status of the world's first Fairtrade Town was initially bestowed by the Parish Council in April 2000 following a vote at a public meeting (Garstang Fairtrade 2010-2011 WS) and the community received further congratulations from Hilton Dawson, MP for Lancaster and Wyre and then George Foulkes, the then Under Secretary of State for International Development (Garstang Fairtrade 2010-2011 WS).

⁴⁰ While NLI engage in a range of promotional initiatives, one example is the co-ordination of an annual Fairtrade Fortnight when the organisation facilitates widespread campaigning designed to increase the knowledge and consumption of FLO certified goods.

It is also relevant to note that one of the first replications of the Fairtrade Town idea, was instigated by Linda Fabiani, a Scottish MSP who would play a significant role in expanding the movement in Scotland (as discussed later in Chapter Four) (Crowther and Human 2011, p. 93).

Despite this political endorsement, the Fairtrade Foundation was initially reserved about their ability to integrate this initiative into their own operations. Retrospectively, however, they note that Garstang “inspired the Fairtrade Foundation to develop the Fairtrade Town campaign” (Fairtrade Foundation 2009d WS). Indeed, in September 2001 the Fairtrade Foundation launched a scheme (Garstang Fairtrade 2010-2011 WS) to give other communities the opportunity to be recognised as a Fairtrade Town. In order to obtain such a status, the Fairtrade Foundation state that towns have to comply with the requirements listed in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Requirements for Fairtrade Town

1. The local council passes a resolution supporting Fairtrade, and agrees to serve Fairtrade products (for example, in meetings, offices and canteens).
 2. A range of Fairtrade products are readily available in the area’s retail outlets (shops, supermarkets, newsagents and petrol stations) and served in local catering outlets (cafés, restaurants, pubs).
 3. Local workplaces and community organisations (places of worship, schools, universities, colleges and other community organisations) support Fairtrade and use Fairtrade products whenever possible. A flagship employer is required for populations over 100,000.
 4. Media coverage and events raise awareness and understanding of Fairtrade across the community.
 5. A local Fairtrade Steering Group is convened to ensure the Fairtrade Town campaign continues to develop and gain new support.
- (Fairtrade Foundation 2009b WS)
-

The Fairtrade Town scheme, as it is known, is also applicable to villages, cities, islands, boroughs and counties, as well as zones for all other geographical locations not fitting into one of the above categories (Crowther and Human 2011, p. 93; Fairtrade Foundation 2009b, p. 93). This is the case in Scotland, for example, where the term “zone” is used in place of “county” as the administrative system does not technically include the latter. By 2010 the UK had 400 accredited towns and cities (Fairtrade Foundation 2009b WS) and the idea had spread to other European countries

(Alexander and Nicholls 2006, p. 1245), as well as the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Crowther and Human 2011, p. 94).

As well as the Fairtrade Town scheme, other institutions are also able to apply for Fairtrade accreditation. While many of these organisations such as churches and airports (Crowther and Human 2011, pp. 93-94) are private, accreditation also includes state funded Universities and Schools which are required to meet similar goals in order to be recognised as having Fairtrade status (Fairtrade Foundation 2009a WS) (For a list of criteria see Appendix 6 on page 249). Although no evidence is provided, Fisher (2009, p. 995) notes that the “campaign has stimulated demand for fair trade products because it incorporates public purchasing requirements” – and particularly because the certification requires councils and other public institutions to serve FLO certified beverages.

This requirement of public authorities is particularly interesting: “because fair trade is based on social criteria, concerning the conditions of production and trade, rather than qualities integral to the product, European procurement regulations do not permit it to be part of the subject matter of a contract” (Fisher 2009, p. 995). Furthermore, while recognised certifications can be included as part of public procurement procedures, fair trade labels are not yet considered to carry such international recognition – although FLO have joined with other accreditation and labelling organisations to form the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance (ISEAL), as a means to generate recognition for their members with international trade bodies (Fridell 2004, p. 148). At the current time however, while government institutions might desire FLO certified goods in order to meet the Fairtrade Foundations criteria for accreditation, the UK Office of Government Commerce states that procurement officers cannot demand this. Instead, state institutions are able to make it clear that “fair trade options are welcome as part of the products supplied to meet the departments requirements” (OGC 2008, p. 3). However, “particular labels, marks or trade names are not specified to the exclusion of others” although it is possible to refer to “products bearing the Fairtrade Mark ‘or equivalent’ as a helpful way of demonstrating that fair trade standards are being met” (OGC 2008, pp. 3-4). Once suppliers’ offers have been judged on the basis of best value for money, irrespective of if they include fair trade options or not, the authority can then request

that any fair trade options mentioned in the offer should then be supplied (OGC 2008, p. 3). In this way, some of the mechanisms by which local authorities have encouraged the inclusion of fair trade goods – for example, by awarding some points for such social characteristics (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 131) – are directly discouraged by this procurement advice.

Despite these issues and the prominence of the Foundation's Town scheme in the UK and elsewhere, there has been very little academic interest in the subject. Indeed, the only direct study of this phenomenon is Malpas et al.'s (2007) discussion of Bristol's involvement with Fairtrade accreditation. Here the primary consideration of this research has been the interaction of accreditation with spatial and community identity, although it is noted that such governance has promoted the inclusion of Fairtrade certified goods within the Local Authority's public spend – and, as a consequence it is suggested consumers unknowingly support the fair trade movement. If this is the case in Bristol, an important area of research is to explore if the Fairtrade Foundation's accreditation is promoting such purchasing elsewhere. Indeed, such an issue has international importance as learning from the UK initiative is shared with other NLI through the Fairtrade Towns in Europe network (Fairtrade Foundation 2006, p. 4).

Furthermore, the Fairtrade Town scheme has reportedly influenced another initiative, the "Fair Trade Nation" programme shared by the Welsh and Scottish governments (Royles 2007; Townley 2009). This programme is not administered by the Fairtrade Foundation but, like the initial scheme described above, has instead arisen from civil society activism (Royles 2007). While Wales was declared the world's first FTN by an independent panel of experts in 2008, Scotland continues to work towards the objectives and has gone as far as to embed the aim in its formal International Development policy (Scottish Government 2008a). This is a pertinent initiative as Fisher (2009, p. 994) identifies that the FTN programme "drew on the Fairtrade Town initiative and builds on certification of individual towns/cities and counties...by the Fairtrade Foundation". However, as no additional details are provided, it remains an object of investigation to assess to what degree this programme also encourages the public procurement of FLO certified goods – and to what extent this governance approach is prioritised over others as a result.

Such an investigation is particularly important given the strong objection made by some commentators to the Fairtrade Foundation's Town scheme. Indeed, Mohan (2010, p. 94) has argued that despite the multitude of private certifications available in the market place (discussed above), the Fairtrade Town scheme promotes "Fairtrade absolutism" by seeking to obtain "a monopoly" for FLO certification; both to the exclusion of non-certified fair trade goods and differently certified goods such as that offered by the Rainforest Alliance (Mohan 2010, p. 98) – which importantly, is also mentioned as desirable by the OGC guidelines (see Chapter One). The specific reason for this concern echoes the findings above that there is insufficient evidence to make a universal claim that FLO certification is necessarily the most appropriate form of private governance with which to promote the interests of southern producers (Mohan 2010, p. 98), or the wider requirements of sustainable development. This need for a critical approach is also raised by Fridell (2004) who asks if the purchase of fair trade goods might also mask the growing prominence of economic considerations by state institutions to the exclusion of social justice priorities.

Some Conclusions

This chapter has undertaken the task of elucidating the meanings of the term 'fair trade' employed in both UK Government procurement guidelines and also wider academic and practitioner parlance. In reviewing the history of the discourses and practices associated with the term, it is clear that its meaning is both highly variable and moreover, somewhat politically contested.

The term fair trade was originally applied to partnerships between socially motivated northern buyers and southern artisan groups and small farmer organisations. The aim was to return as much of the final retail price back to the producer, and engage in long term supportive relationships which enhanced the capacity of producer groups. Such governance has stood apart from ethical trade governance, as it has been targeted at organising the trade relationship between north and south, rather than just the conditions of production.

However, with the desire to expand the markets for fair trade goods, independent certification facilitated the entry of these goods into mainstream supply chains. Growing popularity of certified goods then attracted the interest of mainstream, profit orientated organisations and catalysed the extension of certification to hired labour conditions. As such, a huge variety of approaches to operationalising the concept of fair trade now exist, ranging from independently certified goods to those produced and traded according to internal governance norms. With the development of WFTO accreditation and now the SFTMS, different certification systems are available for fair trade products. Finally, even within specific certification options, the standards vary to impose different responsibilities on different actors. As a result, there is now a range of ethical trade certification, such as Rainforest Alliance, which do not purport to be part of the fair trade movement, as well as other “fairly traded” alternatives (ranging from the genuine to the fraudulent) which do (Jaffee and Howard 2009, p. 8)⁴¹.

For this reason, it is impossible to make rigorous universal statements about the outcomes of ‘fair trade’ as a huge range of differing practices might be implied. Indeed, as the review of the impact literature demonstrates, outcomes from just one certification option, such as the FLO, are hugely varied and cannot be assumed as positive – especially given some of the macro issues around democratic organisation and economic diversification. Finally, as evidence is based on case study analysis, universal statements about the average outcome for certified Fairtrade producers are impossible to substantiate – let alone how this might interact with the requirements of social justice to specifically improve the lives of those most in need. While the literature generally suggests that supply chains involving profit-orientated organisations will yield less benefit to the developing world when compared to those comprised of socially motivated actors, there is little or no rigorous empirical verification for this.

⁴¹ While this thesis explores an example of where the term “fairly traded” to refer to an arguably genuine effort to promote social justice, a similar technique of drawing on the legitimacy generated by terms such as “fair trade” and “Fairtrade”, could also be employed by less socially orientated intentions.

The overall conclusion of this chapter has to be that the most pertinent issue to the primary question of this study is: what nature of fair trade do practitioners actually engage with? In this context, Fisher (2009, p. 994) points out that the public sector procurement involvement in fair trade thus has the possibility to strengthen the standards of fair trade or contribute to what many see as less radical and less effective approaches.

Furthermore, other questions have arisen such as how are the choices of public authorities shaped? Specifically, does the Fairtrade Foundation's Town scheme have an impact on procurement decisions? And does this mean the adoption of a less political or radical version of fair trade? These are certainly essential questions as while the contestation of fair trade has been considered within certain certification organisations, the role of other actors (such as the NLI, governments and local fair trade groups) in negotiating the broad collective understanding of the concept has remained beyond the scope of academic investigation. Reflecting on the contestation of fair trade practice Bacon (2010, p. 142) asks: "will there be a slow and gradual decline in the standards and price premiums as fair trade adjusts its standards in favour of market growth as it becomes subsumed into the same markets it originally set out to transform?" In response he suggests that "*The answer will be found in the standards of day to day relationships and the discursive politics*" (Bacon 2010, p. 142) of the fair trade movement; and it is towards a better understanding of this issue that this thesis will attempt to contribute.

Chapter 3: Research Approach and Methodological Reflections

“Method must suit the object of investigation as well as the purpose of it: method, object and purpose must be considered simultaneously and in relation to each other, and must also inform all other choices in the set-up of the investigation; including techniques of data collection and analysis...How we understand our objects however, depends on our ontological and epistemological assumptions” (Danermark et al. 2005, p. 27).

“To have mastered ‘theory’ and ‘method’ is to have become a *conscious thinker*, a man at work and aware of the assumptions and implications of whatever he is about” (Mills 1959, p. 27).

The aim of this chapter is to describe the theoretical grounding and research methodology adopted in the research. The intention is to provide a “logical model of proof” (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1996, pp. 77-78) that allows the reader to trace a “chain of evidence” (Yin 2009, p. 123) from research questions, via an epistemological stance, data ‘collection’ and ‘creation’⁴², analysis, and finally to the explanation of findings and final conclusions. The chapter also discusses issues of research ethics.

Problems of Defining Fair Trade as a Research Concept: The importance of exploring the meaning of fair trade in context

The review of current knowledge associated with the primary question of this dissertation offered a number of directions for possible research. One avenue would have been to conduct an empirical investigation into the impact of public purchases of fair trade goods by tracing specific products from a government institution (such as a Local Authority) to the producer community. Such an approach could complement existing investigations into the procurement of local and organic food by public authorities (Morgan and Sonnino 2008; Sonnino 2009) with value chain and

⁴² Given the ontological and epistemological stance adopted in this thesis (as well as some of the issues raised with the use of interviews as part of the investigative process), while the verb ‘collection’ is used to refer to incidences where raw data is discovered in existing documents and webpages, more active verbs are used with the interview process in recognition of the inter-subjectively constructed nature of the information obtained.

commodity network methodologies employed in the fair trade literature (Raynolds 2009).

However, the preceding two chapters have identified significant complications for such an approach. Primarily, selecting supply chains based on their connection to public purchasing would not provide the opportunity to draw rigorous conclusions about the isolated impact of public policy. This is because the identification of causal pathways through which fair trade governance affects producer organisations is notoriously problematic (Eberhart and Smith 2008; Paul 2005; Ruben et al. 2009). Furthermore, “it is not easy to measure the impact of fair trade on the incomes of producers who have diversified their production and *commercial partners*” (Pirrotte et al. 2006, p. 450) – let alone when there is a concern for the specific impact of a final end-user such as the public sector.

In addition to these problems the literature on fair trade identifies an equally important theme: how the meaning of the term ‘fair trade’ is being actively negotiated and contested by different stakeholders. Indeed, given the ambiguous definition of fair trade offered by the UK Government (and its blurring with the parallel concept of ‘ethical trade’), those directly responsible for government procurement are relatively free to operationalise this term in a variety of ways. While their approaches are likely to be shaped by personal perspectives and motivations (Malpass et al. 2007), other wider institutional factors have also been identified. Specifically, the Fairtrade Foundation’s Town scheme (See Chapter Two) and the FTN programme are both noted to make requirements of public procurement (Fisher 2009, p. 994). However, the question of how these schemes are shaping the understanding of fair trade and the practices of procurement is a significant gap in current knowledge⁴³.

In this context, this thesis has identified four main research questions:

1. How is the concept of fair trade interpreted by different stakeholders in the sphere of public procurement?

⁴³ The study primarily explores the way that the concept of Fair Trade has been operationalised in public procurement. However, following the argument of Yin (2008: 29) that even such an exploratory investigation requires a rationale for direction or a proposition, an underlying hypothesis of the investigation is that the Fairtrade Foundation’s Town scheme is shaping the interpretation of Fair Trade to imply the purchase of FLO certified goods.

2. Why have these interpretations been adopted?
3. How does the existence of multiple interpretations of the concept of fair trade impact the actual procurement strategies of public institutions?
4. How do the interpretations of fair trade and the associated choice of procurement practices interact with the interests of southern producers in the pursuit of sustainable development?

Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

All research clearly requires a discussion of epistemology, or the “theory of what constitutes valid knowledge” (Johnston et al. 2000, p. 226), as it is this position that underlies all claims to truth made in relation to empirical research. This is of course a highly contested issue and a discussion could run to considerable length. However, in the context of the current investigation it is primarily important to establish the basis on which data, analysis and findings have been presented, and thus provide the reader with an opportunity to judge the validity of research practices and conclusions appropriately.

The primary interest of this investigation is how different actors interpret, construct and negotiate the meaning associated with the term ‘fair trade’ in both its discourse and practice. This thesis takes discourse as any form of communicative medium, but will concentrate on textual constructions composed of formal language (policy documents, websites etc) and verbal discussion (derived from firsthand interactions with stakeholders). This research interest reflects the ontological position (concerned with the categorisation of entities in human reality) that the meaning of language is not unitary, naturally given or fixed. Such a perspective draws on the view of language primarily established by Saussure ([1916] 1983, p. 67) who proposed that pairing of “signifiers” (images/words/sounds) and the “signified” (concepts that they represent) are “arbitrary” or “unmotivated”⁴⁴. Based on this view, it is argued that signified concepts are created within the perceiver/user, and while individuals are acknowledged to share concepts, they do so only via signifiers to leave meaning

⁴⁴ It should be noted that at other times, the signified concept is labelled as the “referent” (for example Jackson 1988, p. 50).

reliant on individual “ontologically subjective”⁴⁵ understanding (Searle 1996) and “local conventions” (Gergen 1999, p. 15). This constructivist position is particularly associated with what John Searle (1996) has called “social kinds” or abstract nouns – such as “democracy”, a “cocktail party” or, to add another example, “fair trade”. These concepts “are only facts by [the] human agreement” made possible through the existence of a communicative medium (Searle 1996, p. 1)⁴⁶.

While early structuralists postulated that the signified meaning of all words would become increasingly fixed over time (Lévi-Strauss 1972, p. 91; Saussure [1916] 1983, p. 69), this is evidently not necessarily the case. The first two chapters of this thesis have already provided examples of singular terms that have a simultaneous array of different meanings and work elsewhere demonstrates the “fuzziness” (see Lakoff 1973) of meaning associated with concrete nouns such as cups and bowls (Labov 1973). For this reason, post-structuralist thinkers posit that meanings are never fixed, always open to degrees of modification and always temporary (Mills 1997, p. 53). While some have gone as far as to argue that “meaning is always contestable...[where] the meaning of a term, a passage in a book, or a question addressed to us is always ‘up for grabs’” (Burr 2003, p. 54), clearly arbitrariness “applied without restriction...would lead to utter chaos” (Saussure [1916] 1983, p. 131). It follows that existing understanding must form the starting point for any modification of meaning (Searle 1996; Toulmin 1972) – and where individual concepts have multiple dimensions, some can be emphasised while others backgrounded or disregarded to provide different understandings and interpretations of their meaning (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

⁴⁵ Searle (1996, pp. 7-9) differentiates between ontologically and epistemically subjective-objective knowledge. The latter comprise the interpretation in which the notions of objectivity and subjectivity are traditionally applied: namely the difference between empirical and normative statements. For example: the difference between noting that Rembrandt is a better artist than Rubens (normative), and stating that Rembrandt lived in Amsterdam during the year of 1632 (empirical). The former category however, parallels the difference between social and brute facts in ascribing modes of existence: either as entities independent of the human consciousness (such as mountains), or those dependent upon it, such the fact that they are called mountains, as opposed to hills or something totally different. The difference between epistemic and ontological objectivity-subjectivity can be underscored by the ability to make epistemic subjective/objective statements about both ontologically objective and subjective entities. For example, “‘Mt Everest is more beautiful than Mt. Whitney’ is about ontological objective entities, but makes an epistemically subject judgement. On the other hand, the statement ‘I now have a pain in my lower back’ reports an epistemically objective fact that is not dependent on any stance, attitude, or opinion of observers. However, the phenomena itself, the actual pain, has a subjective mode of existence” (Searle 1996, pp. 8-9).

⁴⁶ Also see Anscombe (1958).

The ability to shape meaning within a given community introduces the question of how the ability, or power, to influence change is distributed between actors. For Saussure ([1916] 1983, p. 68), “any means of expression accepted in a society rests in principle upon a collective habit, or on convention”. However, many argue that some actors within a community of language will have more ability than others to influence what meanings are accepted into collective usage and that, in turn, this ability rests on both linguistic resources – for example, the status attributed by certain labels/titles (Searle 1996) – and non-linguistic resources – such as preferential access to spaces where discourses are constructed and financial capability to fund the projection of certain interpretations (Van Dijk 1993).

As research explicitly recognises that the meaning of language is open for negotiation – or a continuous and gradual process of give-and-take in which the meaning of terms shifts between interlocutors (Wenger 1998, p. 53) – a complementary theory of knowledge is required. At the extreme of the possibilities are those who reject the existence of a reality outside of language (for example Rorty 1980). However, as a compromise between this extreme relative position and that of traditional positivism (which disagrees with the idea that the inter-subjective nature of human understanding generates a problem for empirical investigation, beyond the necessity to use scientific method to minimise subjectivity and arrive at an epistemically objective truth), is the position usually labelled as “critical realism” (see Danermark et al. 2005; Sayer 1992).

This perspective bears out the ontological position that a single term is capable of representing many meanings (Danermark et al. 2005, p. 1). In this perspective, concepts which people develop in their everyday understandings of the social world are socially and inter-subjectively constructed. More specifically, this approach recognises a fundamental difference between the ‘natural’ and ‘social’ sciences. The former targets the intransitive objects of the natural world (Sayer 1992) – the study of which involves a “single heuristic” relationship to the researcher (Giddens 1993). The social world, on the other hand, is “at every moment a world that others have already interpreted and allocated meaning and significance to, and which they will continually interpret, and reinterpret though often in different ways” (Danermark et al. 2005, p. 34). As such, social sciences involve a “double heuristic” (Danermark et al. 2005, p.

34) where “experience is at once already an interpretation and is in need of [further] interpretation” (Scott 1992, p. 37). While such a position can lead to extreme relativism, critical realism moves beyond the recognition that reality is conceptually and socially mediated to maintain that there are deeper processes of causality which anchor meaning in an independent external reality. Taking this perspective, it is possible to concentrate on the examination of inter-subjective conceptual development and, at the same time, to generate interpretations of other causative processes.

Identifying an ‘Embedded’ Case Study

In order to address the research questions identified, it was important to select a practically manageable case study of how fair trade has been operationalised in its incorporation within public procurement. The case study approach was a natural choice, given its recognised ability to empirically investigate “how” and “why” questions (Yin 2009, pp. 10-11) in order to understand contemporary contextual phenomena in-depth; this is especially the case when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its wider context are not clearly evident (Punch 2008).

Working within the context of the UK, the examples of Wales and Scotland immediately emerged, as both devolved governments have made public pledges to become FTNs (as noted in Chapter Two). The identification of a devolved government also offered both more practical accessibility for research, as well as the opportunity to engage with the hypothesis that devolved administrations have more scope to develop governance for sustainable development (Meadowcroft 2007). However, despite the core involvement of Wales in developing the FTN programme (Royles 2007; Townley 2009), the Scottish Government has actually been embedding a commitment to the FTN programme as part of their International Development policy; and made the country an excellent context for a case study investigation (Yin: 2009 47). Furthermore, it was identified early on in the research process that Local Authorities in Scotland were taking a variety of approaches to operationalise the procurement of fair trade goods, and this offered an excellent opportunity to empirically investigate the emerging research questions.

From this stage it was necessary to identify what data would be gathered, as clearly “social research data must be collected purposefully” (Ragin 1994, p. 26). For this reason, literature concerned with interpretative policy analysis and the identification of a suitable community of stakeholders was drawn upon (for example Yanow 2000, p. 27). In particular, concepts such as Communities of Practice (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) and Discourse Communities were useful – particularly given the centrality of language, and when such groups are viewed as “communities of competing producers, of interpreters and critics, of audiences and consumers, and patrons” (Wuthnow 1989, p. 16 my emphasis) of language.

Practically speaking, it was necessary to gather texts that reflect the understanding of individuals associated with the effort to integrate fair trade governance into public procurement. Conceptualising the scope of research through this lens allowed for the fact that given communities are not static or fixed around formal institutions (Wenger 1998, pp. 99 & 118-119). Indeed, theory proposed that participants constantly engage with other communities to transfer knowledge, meaning and practices between one community and another (Sense and Clements 2006, p. 7). As such the use of this thinking brings focus to the investigation without arbitrarily isolating a group of actors from the other communities that shape knowledge and practice in the realm of primary concern.

With this in mind, the main stakeholders concerned with the public procurement of fair trade goods in Scotland were identified. This process began with an initial informal interview with the Coordinator of the Scottish Fair Trade Forum (SFTF), who acted as a key ‘informant’⁴⁷ as well as a ‘gatekeeper’ – i.e. an individual who provides access to people who share their interest in the issue under consideration. Beginning at this node, a visual map of stakeholders was developed, which included all the relevant information about individuals as well as their relationship to one another⁴⁸. When each stakeholder was interviewed, ‘snowballing’ was employed to identify other potential informants and once no new names were mentioned, it was

⁴⁷ While some distinguish between respondents and informants (Powney and Watts 1987), the terms are used interchangeably in this thesis.

⁴⁸ Unfortunately, this map cannot be provided in the Appendices as issues of anonymity make its reproduction somewhat complex.

assumed that the pertinent community had been identified. Obviously, this approach does not necessarily capture *all* those individuals in the wider population interested in the agenda of fair trade procurement but, through continual cross checking, offers the best approximation possible.

After an initial round of assembling data with key stakeholders in Scotland, it became clear that the policy community had potentially been influenced by the government's involvement in the FTN programme. For this reason – and in-line with the observation that case studies should begin with only a “tentative definition of the unit of analysis” (Yin 2009, p. 30) – the scope of the investigation was expanded to prominent individuals involved in the development of this scheme. Such a research direction was also important in the light of Sonnino's (2009, pp. 425-426) argument that, as creative public procurement strategies entail a definition of quality in their pursuit of the most economically advantageous purchase, it is important to understand the process by which such understanding is constructed by stakeholders.

Investigation into this phenomenon also confirmed the importance of the Fairtrade Foundation's Fairtrade Town scheme in the development of the criteria for the FTN programme. For this reason, it was necessary to draw on the researcher's pre-existing relationships with individuals at the organisation – established through attendance at events and consultancy work opportunities – to setup interviews with prominent individuals⁴⁹. This relationship also opened access to the documents submitted by the nine Scottish areas (see Appendix 11 for a complete list) involved in the Foundation's Fairtrade Town accreditation⁵⁰.

Early on in the examination of public procurement of fair trade in Scotland, it became apparent that the Local Authority in East Dunbartonshire had undertaken particularly interesting work: although most of their procurement of fair trade was comprised of

⁴⁹ It should be noted that work undertaken with the Fairtrade Foundation during the research process concentrated on the development impacts of Fairtrade governance and did not relate to either public procurement or the Fairtrade Town scheme.

⁵⁰ Given the relevance of school and university scheme run by the Fairtrade Foundation, documents pertaining to these could have also been analysed. However, given the need to manage relationships with key stakeholders such as the Fairtrade Foundation, the scope of documentation requested was focused on the Fairtrade Town initiative – and this extending this research scope is a possible direction for future research.

FLO certified products, the authority had also purchased “fairly traded”⁵¹ Malawian rice to use in schools as part of a wider educational project. Indeed, this example was identified during an interview at the Fairtrade Foundation as a standout example of Local Authority procurement. This case was also of interest because at the time of purchase, the rice carried no product or organisational certification and legitimised its status as “fairly traded” based on the social economy nature of the not-for-profit import organisation: Just Trading Scotland (JTS). This procurement arrangement potentially offered an example of what the existing literature characterises as a ‘more radical’ version of fair trade practice (see Chapter Two), and, as such, provided the opportunity to respond to Tallontire’s (2009, p. 1009) request for more in-depth research of dedicated fair trade supply chains.

Furthermore, the example also offers insight into how public procurement might reinforce a more radical and thus less commercial approach to fair trade practice (Fisher 2009, p. 995). Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that exploring examples which deviate from dominant patterns render them more visible – and, as such, generates added research value (Ragin 1994, p. 41). After all, as far as Silverman (2005, p. 125) is concerned “who knows what might become important? Apparently trivial cases may, through good analysis, turn out to have far-reaching implications”. Indeed, in the case of fair trade, Reynolds (2009, p. 1091) observes that the negotiated and contested nature of fair trade practices provide “important openings for alternative enterprises and relations”. As such, the case offers an opportunity for the identification of *potential* best practice for both public procurement and fair trade *per se*⁵².

The decision to focus the investigation on this seemingly marginal example widened the scope of data generation to the alternative trading organisation JTS, as well as to the international development organisation, Imani Development, which was supporting the trade relationship. In this respect, the research attempted to respond to “the need to move away from a focus on fair trade as something that happens to

⁵¹ The term “fairly traded” is used by JTS to reinforce the fact that neither the production conditions of the rice nor the governance of the supply chain are certified by any external organisation.

⁵² It should of course be noted that investigation of marginal examples carries a tendency to promote their benefits (Becker 1967). However, measures to counter this were built into the research design (discussed below) while the overall value of such an investigation was considered to be overriding.

producers, rather as something that producers are part of and can shape” (Tallontire 2009, p. 1009). Finally, it became evident that this type of focus also offered the opportunity to address another gap: “the role of stakeholders in the Southern hemisphere as objects and subjects of private transnational governance” (Dingwerth 2008, p. 607).

For these reasons, the investigation was extended to Malawi and those involved in operationalising the fair trade concept in the producer country. Indeed, the extension of research to a multi-sited study at the international scale is appropriate and indeed necessary, when it is recognised, or suspected, that agency is not fixed in a unitary space or static in time (Hyndman 2001, p. 263). The extension of the research context required data to be obtained from the organisation responsible for the export of the rice, the National Association of Smallholder Farmers in Malawi (NASFAM), as well as the sub-group the Kaporo Small Farmers Association (KSFA), whose members produced the rice. Data was generated through interactions with representatives from these organisations and other stakeholders in Malawi during a 2 month trip at the end of 2009.

Finally, during fieldwork in Malawi it became apparent that the ‘blurring’ of diverse practices under the term fair trade was also a significant issue at the national and regional level in Africa—where a wider community was having a significant influence on practices within the country. For this reason, the investigation was again extended to stakeholders in Malawi and the southern African region by attending the week long Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Cooperation for Fair Trade in Africa (COFTA), which was held in Swaziland in May 2010. It was through this continual reassessment of the scope of research which led to the identification of discrete, yet clearly interrelated and overlapping communities within which the meaning of fair trade was identified to be negotiated by different stakeholders. This process is discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

Research Methods

Given the research focus on the interpretation of meanings associated with fair trade in the local context, the overall data generation method was qualitative; and the suggestion of Yin (2009, p. 37) that “one of the most important sources of case study information is the interview” was followed. This method has been particularly appropriate given the recognition that qualitative interviewing offers the opportunity to “explore the points of view of our research subjects” (Miller and Glassner 2004, p. 127) – especially in terms of the meaning and perceptions that they have with regard to the world (Silverman 2005, p. 96). Qualitative interviewing is congruent with a critical realist epistemology as it allows the researcher to gain insights into both the interviewee’s “ontological subjectivity” and the “epistemically objective” causation behind their interpretations⁵³.

Specifically, the investigation employed semi-structured, ‘elite’ or ‘key informant’ interviews with individuals identified to be either personally influential or who represented institutions that were contributing to the interpretation of fair trade (see interview list of respondents in Appendix 7). These highly knowledgeable individuals are useful interviewees as they offer rapid insight while at the same time showing specific and often technical knowledge of an issue (Aberbach and Rockman 2002, p. 672). Where these individuals are concerned, semi-structured interviews are considered useful as the stream of questions remains fluid rather than rigid (Rubin and Rubin 2005, p. 233), thereby offering a “guided conversation” (Yin 2009, p. 106) which can, in theory, be more directed by the interviewee than the interviewer. However, this is not necessarily a given, and, for this reason, questions must be carefully planned.

It is often considered important to use open ended questions and to phrase prompts in the most general terms possible, especially at the beginning of an investigation (and during individual interviews), in order to allow respondents to guide the exploration of the subject of interest (Robson 2002, pp. 233-234). This is not to say that more

⁵³ For an explanation of ontological subjectivity and epistemic objectivity see footnote 45 in this chapter.

specific questions should not be asked for more specific issues, and as the data gathering process develops, more specific questions can be used to triangulate different specific elements of individual testimonies (Robson 2002, p. 238).

Yin (2009, p. 87) suggests that researchers must ask questions at two levels: those asked of the case as a whole (level 2) and those directed to specific interviewees (level 1). This is important because, although a researcher will have an idea about how events might have unfolded (level 2), the actual questions posed to interviewees should not betray this thinking. In the case of this investigation, while it was specifically of interest if the Fairtrade Foundation's Town scheme had influenced Local Authorities, more general questions were asked about why certain interpretations and practices had been followed. In making this distinction, it is important to prepare an interview schedule of questions to frame the individual interviews with informants (Wengraf 2001, p. 63). Such pre-planning helps to ensure that the correct language is selected (either to be appropriately understandable by informants and suitably technical in the case of specialist respondents), that good use is made of limited access to informants and that the discussion remains focused on the subject of research interest.

Semi-structured interviews were used for the majority of informants and, in most cases, they can be described as formal events as it was necessary to make prior appointments with the individuals concerned (the nature of all interviews is noted in Appendix 7). However, when time was spent in the farming community in Malawi, the farmers themselves were interviewed in a more structured style in order to gather a more general but robust impression of practices and governance arrangements.

Being in Malawi for eight weeks also facilitated a more participatory style of research. Specifically, accompanying one of Imani's consultants responsible for assisting the project, as well as members of NASFAM management and membership on several occasions, allowed for the development of deeper relationships with various informants. In particular, the nine-hour drive from Malawi's capital, Lilongwe, to the AGM held in the Northern region of Karonga, facilitated a building of trust and understanding with Imani and NASAFM representatives – especially since the period was punctuated by two flat tyres, which favoured team work and 'male bonding' over

mechanical discussion as well as some ‘hard earned’ Greens⁵⁴ at the end of the day. Similarly, research within the farming community relied very much on travelling around with the cooperative’s two Field Officers. As a result, an extended amount of time was spent with these men and their driver, including social time out of the hours of the working day.

In this respect, data generation in Malawi also included simple direct observation (of the involvement of Imani Development, the AGM, and the practices of NASFAM’s Field Officers). To some extent this observation offered other sources of data that were useful in triangulating oral testimony from interviews. For example, delivering seed to farmers in the field allowed the observation that scales were indeed used by NASFAM to ensure fair and accurate measures, as well as the fact that farmers expected the process of seed distribution to be correctly documented. This was particularly manifest in one case where the Field Officers were required to return to a previously visited village as its inhabitants complained that their allocation of seed had been based on the wrong number of members. Such direct observation can provide significant assistance in overcoming the “Observer’s Paradox” (discussed below), as unlike interviews, it is not mediated by the prior interpretation of other individuals (Robson 2002, p. 191). These more embedded relationships that were developed with some informants were useful in building rapport and trust for oral discussions, but also allowed the opportunity for a continuous process of informal interviewing. The degree to which this contributed to the triangulation of data is discussed in more detail below.

The final method for assembling the necessary data was the collection of physical and digital (including webpages) documentary material. These documents were used to critically appraise the material obtained in interviews – a process which proved of particular importance in examining the interpretations of fair trade that had been adopted. Access to the documents submitted by all the Scottish Local Authorities who had obtained Fairtrade status by 2010 was particularly important in this regard. Documentary data cannot be accepted as value-free, as these are often framed by their

⁵⁴ “Greens” are the colloquial term for the standard variety of Carlsberg beer (owing to their green glass and label). Other Carlsberg brands include “Brown”, “Super”, “Elephant”, and a speciality beer launched for Christmas, called “Christmas”.

producers often with a particular audience in mind. However, the status/nature of documents is also important, for example, as government policy can be treated as carrying more influence than one-off interviews – which are more representative of individual/subjective, rather than institutionally inter-subjective, interpretations. Likewise, documents which compose governance standards of private governance frameworks (such as the Fairtrade Foundation’s Town Scheme) are useful when compared with informants understanding and knowledge of what such schemes contain.

Analytical Approach

As Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 11) have pointed out, “what is conventionally referred to as analysis is a pervasive activity throughout the life of a research project”. This guide certainly well describes the process of research in this project and it would be inaccurate to suggest that analysis had not been ongoing throughout. However, the analysis discussed below concerns the formal techniques that have been applied mostly after the collection of data.

Yin (2009, p. 127) notes that there are no fixed formulas of analysis for case studies and “instead, much depends on an investigator’s own style of rigorous empirical thinking, along with the sufficient presentation of evidence and careful consideration of alternative interpretations”. Indeed, Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 12) react strongly to the idea that “qualitative research can be characterised in terms of a number of paradigms, that is, more or less incommensurable packages of assumptions subject matter, and technique” as “most, if not all, of those paradigmatic statements are muddled and try to erect barriers and oppositions where none exist, or try to make differences of emphasis into insurmountable epistemological classes”. Building on this view, while analysis draws on ‘interpretive’ and ‘discourse analysis’ – of which there are a huge variety of interpretations – the emphasis has been on mounting a disciplined and cohesive investigation (Coffey and Atkinson 1996, p. 13).

The starting point for this process has been the development of a case study database. All interviews were digitally recorded with the express permission of participants, and

then subsequently transcribed verbatim. The resulting transcriptions were uploaded to NVivo, which allows digital storage and then coding – or categorisation under concepts and themes through the allocation of tags or codes (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 56). This process helps condense the volume of data by organising, managing and isolating the most meaningful elements as well as: 1) identifying relevant phenomenon, 2) collecting examples of those phenomenon and 3) analysing them in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns and structures (Seidel and Kelle 1995, pp. 55-56). Tesch (1990) refers to this process as de-contextualising data from its original context and then re-contextualising it in new orders based on prior material, theoretical frameworks, research questions and/or the data itself (Also see Coffey and Atkinson 1996, pp. 31-32; Kvale and Brinkmann. 2009, pp. 201-203). A combination of such coding sources was used in different instances. For example, where interview schedules overlapped between respondents, data was initially categorised by question. This allowed the distillation of different narratives, for example, about how the FTN programme had been developed, or why the rice supply chain was considered to be a legitimate part of the fair trade movement. After testimonies of individuals were categorised, they were analysed for their specific themes and composition (Laine and Laine 2009, p. 275), and further grouped into overlapping narratives – a discussion of which is presented in the following two chapters.

This process of categorisation is the beginning of the analytical process, but “coding is not a substitute for analysis” (Coffey and Atkinson 1996, p. 26) and “the important work lies in establishing and thinking about...linkages” (Coffey and Atkinson 1996, p. 27). In this way the work of Delamont (2002) is useful in indicating the importance of identifying patterns, themes, and regularities as well as contrasts, paradoxes, and irregularities in the meanings captured during data collection. As such, analysis of discourse recognises that the version of reality projected by the individual entails a selection from many variable renditions and, thus, it is a particular version of reality that is constructed (Gill 2000). As part of this process, what is said is always a way of not saying something else, and therefore, what is not said is often as, if not more important, than what is communicated (Billig 1991). In this sense, Gill (2000, p. 172) proposes that analysis involves “sceptical reading” or searching for meaning behind the ways that something is said or presented.

Research Ethics

Research ethics are of fundamental importance to the investigation of social phenomena (Kvale and Brinkmann. 2009, p. 62). While interaction with all those contributing to the generation of data requires the observation of ethical procedures, research undertaken in the developing world is even more likely to “give rise to a plethora of ethical dilemmas, many of which relate to the power gradients between the researcher and the researched...combined with...complex issues of knowledge generation, ownership and exploitation” (Scheyvens et al. 2009, p. 139).

For this reason, carefully considered steps have been developed throughout the research process to identify any potential harm to participants. Informed decisions have been made about the appropriateness of actions and how the possibility and severity of potential harm can be reduced. The procedures and issues which are most pertinent are discussed below.

Informed Consent

The importance of “informed consent” is perhaps one of the most widely considered issues in the ethics of academic research (Wilson 1992, p. 185). In essence, it must be ensured that participation of informants is given freely and with full understanding of the “aims and process of the research project, what the research will be used for, such as policy formation and publications, and who will have access to the information gathered” (Scheyvens et al. 2009, p. 142). Accordingly, informed consent is essential to ensure that people are aware of their freedom not to participate; consent must not be elicited under coercion or pressure; and informants must be free to withdraw from investigations at any time (Kvale and Brinkmann. 2009, pp. 70-71; American Sociological Association cited in Scheyvens et al. 2009, p. 142). For these reasons, it is recommended that participants are asked to opt-in to the research process using signed consent forms.

A first issue in the context of this study was that the signing of Informed Consent forms tended to generate uneasiness with civil servants and particularly members of Local Authorities responsible for procurement decisions. This was especially true

when themes of investigation concerned regulations and appropriate procedure of the procurement process. Indeed, the practices of public procurement are very heavily embedded in legal frameworks (see Chapter One). Specifically, local authorities have been challenged over their incorporation of fair trade goods (Carey 2008; Max Havelaar Foundation 2007) as the practice can be considered as “pushing the boundaries of established practice and law” (Fisher 2009, p. 995). For this reason, while some of the very first interviews conducted were preceded by the presentation of paperwork, the majority of consent was obtained orally, following a written and spoken explanation. In Scotland and in the case of interviews with literate individuals in Malawi, information sheets were provided, although written information was not used where literacy levels were uncertain.

When obtaining stakeholder involvement in research it is also important to consider power relationships (Kvale and Brinkmann. 2009, p. 71). Where access to research participants is obtained through a gatekeeper, there will be implicit social pressure on individuals introduced to the research to participate in the process. In the case of the investigation in Malawi, as initial access was secured through Imani Development, members of NASFAM might have felt pressure to accept involvement – as they relied on this organisation for facilitating exports to Scotland. Similar feelings might have been precipitated in introductions by NASFAM Head Office to the Regional and Local Officers, and then NASFAM field staff to individual farmers. In these situations, the idealised interpretation of Informed Consent in the absence of pressure can be questioned, even where the appropriate procedures and paperwork have been instigated.

In general, however, IMANI and NASFAM participants involved in this study can be reasonably assumed to have retained some agency to assist with research to a greater or lesser extent, depending on their own personal feelings. Furthermore, a considerable amount of both research-related and social time was spent with interviewees of both organisations, and there was never any indication that they felt pressured to participate against their own wishes. As for the farmers who were interviewed, the structured nature of questions gave less room for individuals to retain control of their level of participation, although naturally, some interviewees elaborated more than others in response to questions. In general, however,

respondents appeared more interested than resistant when asked about their knowledge and opinions.

Issues of Harm and Empowerment

The widely accepted concern of research ethics is to make decisions between one course of action and another with reference to what is morally right or wrong, as opposed to what is expedient or efficient. Primarily, researchers must ensure that participants are not worse off for being involved in the research process (Taylor 1991). However, the moral philosophy associated with research on development arguably takes on an additional realm to that of other research subjects. Indeed, according to Madge (1997, p. 114), in the context of developing communities and countries, “ethical research should not only ‘not do harm’, but also have potential to do good and to involve empowerment”.

In extreme cases, the identification of socially or morally unjust behaviour might be obvious (Taussig 1987), although the decision to ‘take sides’ about how individuals and communities should be empowered is more problematic. Corbridge (1998, p. 42) helps with this dilemma by suggesting that scholars have the obligation to inform development practice – specifically, “to provide plausible alternatives to existing social arrangements or patterns of development”; as noted above, this is an approach that this thesis has adopted in the examination of more marginal and thus alternative practice in the procurement of fair trade goods. Wilson (1992, p. 181) further suggests that, given the fractured nature of narratives captured by the research process, the best option involves “enabling the reader to hear the voices and appreciate the actions of as many of the different people involved as possible”.

While this thesis has attempted to highlight problems and trends, care has been taken not to undermine the contribution of many dedicated professionals but instead to critically reflect on current practices in order to inform future direction (Gardener and Lewis 1996, p. 165). What has been offered is part of “continuous questioning of the process, assumptions and agencies involved in development” (Gardener and Lewis 1996, p. 168), and in terms of the wider epistemological stance, the primary effort has

been to increase the stock of practically useful knowledge available to those concerned (Sayer 1992, pp. 3-4). Overall, it is hoped that interactions in feeding back findings and conclusions have been appropriate and the general comment of one stakeholder, that the researcher is viewed more as a “critical friend”, rather than a “friendly critic”, is shared by all relevant parties⁵⁵.

For example, as noted at the beginning of this chapter, it is important that the presentation of research leaves open the possibility for others to verify findings and additionally to access source material in order to extend the investigation in the future. However, where interviews have been used, this must also be balanced by the necessity to protect informants and institutions from negative consequences of participation. In response to this tension, informants have been offered the opportunity to evaluate the narrative constructed from their contribution – through the production of individually tailored texts highlighting an individual’s contribution but obscuring those of others. As a result, interviewees had the opportunity to comment on the accuracy of the thesis from their perspective (discussed below), as well as decide if they were happy to be connected to their testimony, or if they would prefer to remain anonymous. The only exceptions to this have been those who were not practically contactable, for example the sample of Malawian farmers and those whose new contact details could not be traced; and in which case, testimony has been reported anonymously. The final text of this thesis represents those individual decisions.

Having said this, the research process is clearly more than just an exercise in reflecting social reality. Knowledge generated through research “is the outcome...of transactions with the social world, shaped by our methods of inquiry, and of transactions with the data we produce, shaped in turn by our ideas and our analytical procedures” (Coffey and Atkinson 1996, p. 15). Indeed, the priorities of the researcher heavily inform the specifics of research questions; serendipity contributes to the research process and data discovered; and all manner of subjective stances colour its analysis. As such, the issue of research ethics has an epistemological element, and conversely, issues of epistemology also carry a moral weight. According to Wilson

⁵⁵ Personal communication with an Anonymous Stakeholder.

(1992, p. 182), “the more ethical researcher is not necessarily the most vocal and eloquent advocate for a particular cause...but rather is the one who makes the most rigorous application of methods”. In this sense, a discussion of reliability and representativeness is required.

Reliability and Representativeness

The terms reliability and representativeness, and the concepts that they embody are highly debated and contested (Golafshani 2003) – particularly in qualitative research where terms such as credibility and transferability are preferred (see Guba 1981). However, for the purposes of discussion here, reliability is taken as the extent to which research accurately reflects the ontologically subjective understandings of stakeholders, as well as the epistemologically objective reality in which they are embedded.

To deal with issues that might have shaped the presentation of epistemically objective factors in this study, it is important to mention that significant issues are generated from the mediation of access to data by stakeholders in the research subject. In the case of fair trade in the UK, there have been two issues which have been especially prominent: a guarded attitude of major institutions as a result of public criticisms and debate of their activities (combined with a need to be commercially sensitive), and significant competition among researchers, given that “many academics and students are keen to examine Fairtrade as a new model in trade and development” (FLO no date WS). The culmination of these characteristics is that researchers outside of the necessary social networks find access to individuals and materials exceptionally difficult⁵⁶.

In this context, involvement with key institutions, and particularly the Fairtrade Foundation and WFTO, has been instrumental in shaping the feasibility of the research endeavour. It was through access to Fairtrade Foundation events that the current case study was identified. Furthermore, it was through ongoing work with fair trade institutions that access to individuals and organisations was obtained. Naturally,

⁵⁶ The author has direct experience of encountering difficulty in accessing network of informants before a ‘way in’ has been located.

all these gatekeepers had their own views, agendas and interests on the subject of research, and this had the potential to directly shape the research process – for example, by providing introductions to informants with sympathetic views (Valentine 1997, p. 116) or by indirectly generating sympathy through the provision of assistance.

At the more micro level, researchers have long been aware of the “Observer’s Paradox”, which states that while “the aim of...research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being observed...we can only obtain this data by systematic observation” (Labov 1972, p. 209). Indeed, one long standing limitation identified with interviews as a means to generate data is the potential for discrepancy between what people actually do and think, and what they say when asked (Oskamp 1977). Informants will usually limit the material that is discussed, assuring us that, if we need to know more, they can tell us about it (Becker 1998, p. 90). It is necessary to recognise that the narrative generated by the interviewee “is being told to particular people; it might have taken a different form if someone else were the listener” (Miller and Glassner 2004, p. 125). However, reflecting on the issue, Labov (1972, p. 209) notes, “the problem is of course not soluble: we must either find ways of supplementing the formal interviews with other data, or change the structure of the interview situation by one means or another”.

This is the kind of approach that has been adopted during this investigation. The first practice has been the critical comparison of different data sources to help reduce the possibility that both micro and macro perspectives would unduly shape research outcomes. This technique is often referred to as “triangulation”, where different data sources are used to locate the same information and therefore confirm the knowledge that they provide (Patton 2002, p. 247). However, two issues can be mentioned here. The first is that, as Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p. 14) note, “crude understandings of triangulation often imply that data from different sources, or derived from different methods, can be aggregated in some way to produce a fully rounded, more authentic view of the social world”. Indeed, Yin (2003, p. 98) points out that while multiple sources of data can be combined to produce a “much more convincing and robust account”, it is important that each data source addresses the same question, rather than independently addressing multiple questions (Yin 2003, p. 100).

For this reason, the analytical narrative presented in this thesis provides cross-referencing wherever possible on the same theme. In most cases this is achieved through the comparison of numerous interviews, but is also supplemented by the use of either digital or physical documentary material. In order to avoid networks of similar or cohesive views and knowledge, where possible, stakeholders known to have differing interpretations were questioned – for example, on the differing views of fair trade held by FLO and the WFTO. In order to select farmers for interview about the practices of NASFAM, sampling was dictated by the everyday practices of the Field Officers who were accompanied during their delivery of seed.

As noted above, in some cases it was also possible to employ direct observation as a means of data collection that does not rely on the mediation of an informant (although is obviously still contingent on the interpretation of the observer). There is of course the possibility that again, people might modify their actions in the presence of a researcher (Robson 2002, p. 192). In the case of the scales for example, it could be hypothesised that they had been brought out because there was a researcher present. However, here the skill of the investigator – in detecting if a change of normal behaviour is highlighted by the responses of other actors – can be augmented with other data sources; and in this case was confirmed by a wider sample of individual farmers.

As well as epistemically objective facts, such as events and practices (the reality of which can be triangulated), documentary sources and interviews also provide more epistemically subjective material such as opinions, as well as ontologically subjective material (Adapted from the classification offered by Robson 2002, p. 228). As a result, a second point to be made is that the term “triangulation” invites the perspective that a unitary version of knowledge is always available. In the case of epistemically subjective opinions and ontologically subjective understandings, this might not necessarily be true. The point to illustrate here is that given the research question concerned with understanding how fair trade has been interpreted by different actors, it is obviously important to accept that interpretations might not be consistent, but evidence of this is part of the very phenomenon under investigation – and it is for this reason that techniques of interpretative analysis have been deployed in analysing

inconsistencies, rather than dismissing variation as a product of the “Observers Paradox”.

What still remains pertinent, however, is that as “we start with the experiencing person and try to share his or her subjective view... [o]ur task is objective in the sense that we try to describe it with depth and detail. In doing so, we try to represent the person’s view fairly and to portray it as consistent with his or her meaning” (Charmaz 1995, p. 54). In order to achieve validity and internal reliability, interviews must avoid leading or biased questions, which are likely to increase the chances that a respondent will provide the answers they feel the interviewer would like to hear (Wengraf 2001). By remaining neutral and non-judgemental, the interviewer is more likely to hear the respondent’s more genuine or more widely held interpretations and views, rather than prompting repetition of official lines or an interpretation specifically manufactured for the interview situation (Silverman 2001, p. 87).

Further to this, the epistemological position adopted recognises that any account of other peoples’ *a priori* interpretation of social reality adds an additional layer of subjective interpretation by the researcher. While this is an omnipresent problem, the technique of verifying the overall narrative produced by inviting feedback from informants and stakeholders (discussed above) offers perhaps the best method for ensuring internal reliability and validity (Baxter and Eyles 1997, p. 515). Following, Porteous (1988), each accessible respondent was sent a personalised version of the thesis, with their own contributions highlighted (and the rest anonymised). Each was asked to comment on both the way that their own contribution had been represented and also the wider narrative. While some minor corrections of epistemically objective information were made, there were no disputes over interpretation. Indeed, numerous contributors identified that in their view, research had well captured issues and tensions of the research subject.

Having said this, the research questions identified during a review of the literature were investigated in a very specific context, and particularly through the exploration of a case study of a particular supply chain. As such, the empirical findings of this investigation cannot be rigorously extrapolated to draw general conclusions about how the term fair trade is interpreted in a wider community or other empirical cases.

However, as with all case studies, findings can be used to inform theoretical propositions (Yin 2009, pp. 15, 43) and it is this approach which is reflected in the analytical and concluding chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 4: Scotland and the Fair Trade Nation Programme

“[Fair trade] genuinely is a movement, as opposed to an organisation, and while that means it has tremendous strength, it also makes it really difficult, when you try and manage these contentions that are going on because there is no one structure that you can go to and say well, is this right or is this wrong....Everyone is equal in the fight”⁵⁷.

As discussed in Chapter One, UK Government efforts to develop more sustainable public procurement systems have involved a shift away from *bottom line price* to a wider interpretation of *value for money*. Specifically mentioned by the UK Government has been the procurement of fair and ethical trade products, which are considered to contribute to the social justice agenda of sustainable development.

Despite this headline commitment, it was identified in Chapter Two that the ambiguity of policy allows for the actual procurement of goods produced and traded under a multitude of governance practices. While the specific choices of public sector decision makers might be influenced by individual preferences – both in general (Sonnino 2009) and specifically in the case of fair trade (Malpass et al. 2007) – it was also identified that in the UK, the Fairtrade Foundation’s Town scheme, and the FTN programme, are likely to be influencing public procurement strategies (Fisher 2009, p. 995).

In order to investigate these issues, research was undertaken in Scotland due to the integration of the FTN programme as part of its international development policy (as discussed in the next section). Findings from this investigation suggest that while other studies have treated Local Authorities as isolated sites (where government policy and private certification systems are taken as a given), this is not necessarily the case. In order to present these insights, firstly the Scottish Government’s policy on International Development is discussed, with particular reference to the emphasis placed on promoting fair trade governance through the FTN programme and also

⁵⁷ Interview with David McCollough 31/03/2011.

providing assistance to the country of Malawi. The following section then explores the development of the FTN programme, and particularly the decisions taken on the criteria that would be used. The second part of the chapter discusses the way in which commitments to the procurement of fair trade goods have been operationalised in both discourse and practice at the level of Local Authorities. In particular, the chapter focuses on the embedded case study of East Dunbartonshire, where the interpretation of fair trade has been open and procurement practice has been particularly innovative.

Scotland's International and Sustainable Development Policy

Although the Scottish Government has a considerable degree of devolved executive and legislative powers, there are certain areas explicitly reserved by the 1998 Scotland Act for the jurisdiction of the UK Government (The Scotland Act 1998): and one such area is that of International Development Assistance and Co-operation. Despite these constitutional and legal restrictions, the Scottish Government (2010 WS) proclaims that it is “committed to advancing Scotland’s place in Europe and the wider world” through a variety of possible mechanisms – and has been recognised by an independent report as having done significant work in this area (Anyimadu 2011).

Responsibility for co-ordinating International Development work is vested in the Directorate for Europe, External Affairs and Culture; which outlined its strategy in an *International Framework* (Scottish Government 2008b). The *Framework* establishes that “The Scottish Government’s international engagement is driven by the Government Economic Strategy and the need to place Scotland as a *responsible nation and partner on the world stage*” (Scottish Government 2008b, p. 1 my emphasis). It is also noted that “regard for universal human values and the spirit of *mutuality* will continue to be a vital part of the Scottish identity in the future and our work on international development is a key expression of that outward looking approach” (Scottish Government 2008b, p. 4). In this sense, while the Scottish policy does not expressly refer to it, the emphasis on responsibility and mutuality echoes themes implicit in the concept of sustainable development (discussed in Chapter One).

It is also notable that Scotland has developed links with African countries such as Rwanda, Zambia, Tanzania, Sudan and particularly Malawi. Indeed, in 2005, the then First Minister of Scotland Jack McConnell and President wa Mutharika of Malawi signed the Scotland-Malawi Co-operation Agreement that outlined key areas in which Scotland and Malawi would co-operate (Scottish Government 2005). These areas included civic governance and society, health, education, as well as “sustainable economic development” (Scottish Government 2005, p. 1). This signalling out of Malawi is grounded in the historical precedent of Scottish involvement with the area as early as 1859 (Scottish Government 2007 WS) – when the celebrated explorer, Dr Livingstone, is believed to have contributed beneficially to the area.

Further to these areas of specific concentration, another very prominent tool identified by the Scottish Government to exercise responsibility in the international arena is to foster “fair trade” interactions (Scottish Government 2008a, p. 1). Indeed, in 2006 First Minister Jack McConnell noted that “Our commitment to fair trade is at the centre of our national effort to help make poverty history” (Scottish Executive 2007 WS).

Fair Trade in the Scottish Government’s Development Policy

As in Wales (see Royles 2007), and indeed the rest of the UK (see Fisher 2009), fair trade has been an increasingly overt component in Scottish Development policy in recent years. The theme first entered in a “low key”⁵⁸ way but was heightened in importance with the new *International Development Policy* (Scottish Government 2008a WS) where fair trade was named as one of its six primary elements. The new policy specifically stated that “The Scottish Government is committed to achieving *Fair Trade Nation* status⁵⁹ for Scotland, recognising the effect of our actions on others and our status as a *responsible nation*” (Scottish Government 2008a WS). The Scottish parliament established a cross-party working group on fair trade with the express purpose “to promote the benefits of Fair Trade in Scotland and support the campaign to make Scotland the World’s second Fair Trade Nation by 2011” (Scottish Parliament no date WS). Indeed, it is noted by a Government representative that:

⁵⁸ Interview with Linda Fabiani 03/07/2009.

⁵⁹ The concept of a Fair Trade Nation is defined and discussed at length below.

“We...took a lead from Wales if you like. We heard about the work that Wales were doing, you know the Assembly Government and the Fair Trade Nation criteria that they were developing, and so ended up working in collaboration with the Welsh Assembly Government putting the finishing touches to that criteria; sort of launching it as a joint thing”⁶⁰.

Given that the Scottish policy on fair trade was embedded in an initiative that arose in Wales, it is necessary to focus on this pioneering initiative.

The Development of the Fair Trade Nation Programme

While Oxfam Cymru had been involved with the promotion of fair trade in Wales for some time (Royles 2007), the concept of a FTN started with the ambitions of the Welsh Fair Trade Forum⁶¹. This group was a collection of representatives from various business and NGO organisations (including Fair Do’s a dedicated fair trade shop, Tearfund, Oxfam Cymru, CAFOD, Christian Aid and the Co-op Group) and had been meeting together since 2000 in order to “explain the concepts and benefits of fair trade to the Welsh public, with the aim of extending the use and availability of fair trade products throughout Wales”⁶². While much of this work was done through the campaign to have Cardiff recognised by the Fairtrade Foundation as the world’s first capital city⁶³, the broader aim was specifically phrased using the general principle of fair trade; and this, according to the first Chairperson of the group, was a proactive choice⁶⁴.

Building on this city campaign, it was decided in the summer of 2003 that the next logical step would be to try and achieve fair trade status for the whole of Wales⁶⁵. At the beginning the idea was taken forward by volunteers with some assistance from

⁶⁰ Interview with anonymous interviewee.

⁶¹ Interviews with Robin Samuel 09/09/2009. Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009. Interview with Richard Laydon 25/02/2011.

⁶² Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009.

⁶³ Interview with Robin Samuel 09/09/2009. See Chapter Two and later in this chapter for an explanation of the Fairtrade Foundation accreditation.

⁶⁴ For a discussion of the implications of this decision see Chapter Two on the definition of Fair Trade.

⁶⁵ Interview with Robin Samuel 09/09/2009. Interview with Mark Richardson 24/08/2009. Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009. Interview with Christine Gent 27/08/09.

paid Christian Aid and CAFOD staff⁶⁶. However, the group soon became aware of similar work going on in other parts of Wales, particularly where other towns were campaigning to become Fairtrade accredited, and it was noted that the initiative then “became a different group other than just an NGO coalition”⁶⁷.

Another big change to the FTN initiative came when one of its key members began to work for the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)⁶⁸. Indeed, it was through this connection that the Wales Fair Trade Forum (WFTF) met with some of the Assembly representatives and generated great support among officials and Assembly Members from all parties⁶⁹ – a process which culminated in the formal agreement of WAG to support the campaign on February 4th 2004 (WAG/WOAG 2004, p. 1)⁷⁰. With governmental backing, the FTN campaign was officially launched on 8th May 2004, with government funding allowing the campaign to be catalysed in 2006 with the employment of a fulltime coordinator⁷¹

Negotiating the Criteria for a Fair Trade Nation

When the idea for a FTN programme first emerged, “the group began to think about what a Fair Trade Wales might look like”⁷². Given that many saw the FTN as a natural extension of the Fairtrade Town and City accreditation⁷³, a first move was to enquire if the Fairtrade Foundation would help develop and endorse the programme⁷⁴. However, according to one interviewee, “the Fairtrade Foundation didn’t want anything to do with it, they really didn’t want to know at all...[T]hey said that we can approve status for a Fairtrade Town, but we can’t possibly approve status for a Fair Trade Country”⁷⁵. Indeed, a representative of the Fairtrade Foundation confirmed that

⁶⁶ Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009.

⁶⁷ Interview with Robin Samuel 09/09/2009.

⁶⁸ Interview with Robin Samuel 09/09/2009.

⁶⁹ Personal communication with Jan Tucker 04/05/2011.

⁷⁰ Royles (2007, pp. 116-117) notes that the involvement of WAG was initially stimulated by Oxfam Cymru in their *Call for an Outwards Looking Wales* document published in 2003. It is also argued that personal relationships between Oxfam Cymru and WAG allowed the civil society organisation to have more influence with the government post devolution.

⁷¹ Interview with Mark Richardson 24/08/2009. Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009.

⁷² Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009.

⁷³ Interview with Richard Laydon 25/02/2011.

⁷⁴ Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009.

⁷⁵ This interpretation is also supported by Anne Hemingway.

the Foundation was uneasy about the idea as “that was way beyond our remit, as a relatively small development organisation at the time, and that the granting of any kind of status to nations could only really be done by the Queen [laughing]”⁷⁶.

As a result of this, it was decided that “the WFTF should own this idea and seek to initiate discussions with other organisations in Wales to determine the requirements for the Fair Trade Country” (WFTF 2003, p. 1). Over the following months the group “spent a lot of time looking at the parameters of the campaign” during which “there was a lot of disagreement”⁷⁷. For example, “early on there were some people within the Forum who wanted a three pronged approach. They wanted to look at trade justice; they wanted to look at fair trade goods, wanting people to use them; and at locally procured food”⁷⁸. The desire to include local issues was pushed hardest by the OXFAM representative as they were involved in campaigns on both international and domestic trade justice issues⁷⁹. Ultimately, however, while the Forum was keen to promote local goods alongside the international commodities – for example promoting Welsh milk and butter – this support was not codified in the FTN criteria because: 1) it led to a message that many felt was too complex and; 2) there were no measurable concrete targets that could be specified (WFTF 2003)⁸⁰. Furthermore, one of those involved remarked that:

“The first criteria we thought of, you could have written on the back of a match box... But we realised that it was a lot more, and the Assembly became involved, and they wanted a bigger and more high profile campaign... The Assembly were pushing...[as] it was a big thing for them”⁸¹.

Another issue was that criteria had to be both practical and measurable; and this became a problem as the group tried to translate its broad perspective of fair trade into specific criteria for a FTN. Although the idea for a FTN was grounded in Fairtrade Foundation Town accreditation, the group was initially keen to render the idea of a FTN more complex – and not just base it around principles of the Fairtrade

⁷⁶ Interview with Fairtrade Foundation Representative 30/04/2010.

⁷⁷ This is backed by Robin Samuel who noted that some of those involved had very strong opinions on the subject.

⁷⁸ Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009.

⁷⁹ Interview with Robin Samuel 09/09/2009. Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009.

⁸⁰ Interview with Robin Samuel 09/09/2009. Interview with Mark Richardson 24/08/2009. Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009.

⁸¹ Interview with Robin Samuel 09/09/2009.

Foundation's scheme⁸². Early on in discussion it was suggested that the criteria could incorporate other fair trade governance systems by including, *inter alia*, a requirement for a certain number of shops accredited by the British Association of Fair Trade Shops (BAFTS)^{[83][84]}. This would have led to the recognition that fair trade does not necessarily mean FLO certification and have recognised craft goods – which are not certifiable under the system. However, this approach was rejected as unrealistic given that “you can't force people to open BAFTS shops”, and thus this objective was left as “something they could encourage but not enforce”⁸⁵ by appearing as a non-mandatory requirement to have “a good number of BAFTS or World shops” (see Appendix 9).

Overall, it appears that the main driver behind the final choice of criteria for the FTN programme was the desire to “try and make it as measurable as possible”⁸⁶. As one key stakeholder described,

“we had the number of Fairtrade Towns within the country; we had the number of Fairtrade Cities and Counties, and Fairtrade Schools and various other things like that. All of which could be objectively measured...so it was a way of bringing the Fairtrade Foundation onboard and getting them to acknowledge the achievements”⁸⁷.

Others confirm the practicalities of building the FTN criteria on the model provided by the Fairtrade Foundation:

“We decided that the strength of fair trade in Wales was in local groups, which is what we discovered from the point of view of North Wales, and I think...we came to the agreement that if we were going to have some sort of criteria which we could achieve, we would have to think along the lines of what was happening, and how we could utilise local groups to do it”⁸⁸.

⁸² Interview with Anne Hemingway 20/03/2010. Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009.

⁸³ BAFTS is a membership organisation for retailers and importers which offers accreditation on the basis that fair trade is at the heart of the organisations operation. At least 70 percent of goods must be bought from recognised Fair Trade sources: either by trading FLO certified products, or from members of the WFTO and BAFTS recognised importers. Retailers are required to promote and encourage product quality either through the importers or directly with the producers and have an education and campaigning aspect to shops operation.

⁸⁴ Interview with Robin Samuel 09/09/2009. Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009.

⁸⁵ Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009.

⁸⁶ Interview with Mark Richardson 24/08/2009. Supported by Anne Hemingway 20/03/2010.

⁸⁷ Interview with Mark Richardson 24/08/2009. This point was also supported by Jan Tucker.

⁸⁸ Interview with Robin Samuel 09/09/2009. Also Interview with David McCollough 31/03/2011.

The grounding of FTN criteria on Fairtrade Foundation accreditation was, to some extent, offset by the background of the independent panel convened to evaluate if the requirements “were a good and representative set of criteria”⁸⁹. The group included Paul Chandler and David McCullough, representing Traidcraft and Oxfam (two established and dedicated fair trade organisations), Richard Laydon from CAFOD and Christine Gent from the WFTO.

When asked about the criteria that emerged for the FTN, some members of this group were completely happy with the strong focus on the Fairtrade scheme⁹⁰, although others held reservations. Firstly, in terms of scope, it was felt by one member of the panel that “the idea of being a Fair Trade Nation should have been much, much bigger, there should have been much greater commitment”⁹¹. Specifically, this stakeholder felt that opportunities were missed, saying the “example of the health service is a classic one: large procurement there, how was that going to fit in terms of sourcing?”. On a similar theme, while another member of the panel emphasised the effort to obtain commitments from the state (by making specific requirements for the government and parliament), they felt WAG “could have tried a bit harder...to push their existing caterers into switching to fair trade”⁹².

A stage beyond this, another member of the panel noted that they

“tried to point out that in order to be a Fair Trade Nation it’s not sufficient to say how many cups of coffee are drunk in the government building. It is a bit more than that... you’ve got to look at advocacy, you’ve got to look at changing trade rules, you’ve got to look at the dedicated organisations that do service delivery, so that’s the sort of discussion that came in”⁹³.

While this representative agreed with the practicalities of basing the FTN scheme on Fairtrade Foundation accreditation, they also felt that a FTN should go much further; and pointed out that in the *Charter of Fair Trade Principles* (WFTO 2009b WS), agreed between FLO and the WFTO, fair trade operation is also about raising

⁸⁹ Interview with David McCollough 31/03/2011.

⁹⁰ Interview with David McCollough 31/03/2011.

⁹¹ Interview with Richard Laydon, 25/02/2011.

⁹² Interview with David McCollough 31/03/2011.

⁹³ Interview with Christine Gent 27/08/09.

awareness about trade justice issues, as well as capacity building and empowerment for producers⁹⁴. Based on these principles the individual explained that “the very simple one that I was pushing for was a fair trade shop, a dedicated fair trade shop. And the role of a dedicated fair trade shop [including advocacy and awareness raising]”⁹⁵. They continued that

“even without talking about a label, we already have a way of recognising fair trade organisations, for example, we [the WFTO] have a list of registered Fair Trade Organisations, they are publicly available and anyone can see them. [However,] how many of those are in Wales? None – I don’t think that is good enough, personally... if you are trying to build up industry and initiatives in your country, surely you should have some dedicated fair trade organisations”⁹⁶.

Reflecting back on the process another interviewee noted that

“If I’d been pushing for something it would have been more of a sense of community participation...I thought there was lots of institutional participation and that’s very important, but I do think that most of fair trade has grown because individuals in their various groups have created some movement on things...Now, I don’t know how you set criteria against that, but that for me is the fundamental kind of thing that marks fair trade out from a lot of the other social labelling schemes”⁹⁷.

Despite these personal views however, one of the panel described that

“because we weren’t involved in drawing up the criteria,...it was difficult...at that stage to then try to unpick that and say why have you chosen that and not this, or is that a robust enough measure, to actually proclaim yourselves the high status of Fair Trade Nation, you know, what does that mean? Does that really only mean having fair trade coffee and tea at meetings?”⁹⁸.

Despite these open questions however, one interviewee reported that in “early 2008, people were saying, are we fair trade or are we not? You’ve got to say that we are”⁹⁹. While not all stakeholders agreed that WAG applied pressure for a decision to be made¹⁰⁰, others in the group also felt that things were moved along¹⁰¹ and one of them summarised that,

⁹⁴ For a discussion of the *Charter of Fair Trade Principles* see Chapter Two.

⁹⁵ Interview with Christine Gent 27/08/09.

⁹⁶ Interview with Christine Gent 27/08/09.

⁹⁷ Interview with David McCollough 31/03/2011.

⁹⁸ Interview with Richard Laydon, 25/02/2011.

⁹⁹ Interview with Christine Gent 27/08/09.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with David McCollough 31/03/2011. Personal Communication with Jan Tucker.

“not that I think Wales was not up for it in the sense that all the hurdles had been crossed and could be [ultimately] evidenced ...but having set yourself a set of criteria do you compromise at the last ditch because it doesn't quite fit with what is coming to you in evidence terms, or do you stick to your guns...I think there was a degree of compromise which was driven by a feeling that if you going to do it, let's get on and do it”¹⁰².

For this reason, while stakeholders see the merits of the initial concentration on promoting FLO certified products¹⁰³ – as it allows an easy lifestyle choice through which it is hoped that consumers will be prompted to ask more questions about trade justice¹⁰⁴ – a number of them feel that the criteria were “heavily weighted towards Fairtrade one word”¹⁰⁵ and that this should be broadened in the future¹⁰⁶, as “unless we get change in...other systems, obviously it's a drop in the ocean”¹⁰⁷.

Scotland and the Fair Trade Nation Programme

From the perspective of Wales, the organisers of the FNT had always tried to establish links with similar organisations in both Northern Ireland and Scotland¹⁰⁸. For this reason, the interest from the Scottish Government in the idea was welcomed, particularly as it made the Welsh group less isolated – which they felt was important after their failure to entice the Fairtrade Foundation to be involved – and even introduced an element of competition to promote media interest¹⁰⁹.

Since Scotland only joined discussion of the FTN programme towards the end of its development, there were brief discussions over the final wording of the criteria but no further major changes to its content¹¹⁰. With this smooth integration, the final criteria were endorsed by the respective First Ministers of Scotland and Wales in 2006 (WAG

¹⁰¹ Interview with Richard Laydon, 25/02/2011. with Anne Hemingway 20/03/20010. Interview with Christine Gent 27/08/09.

¹⁰² Interview with anonymous interviewee.

¹⁰³ Interview with Anne Hemingway 20/03/20010. Interview with Christine Gent 27/08/09. Interview with Fairtrade Foundation Representative 30/04/2010.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Richard Laydon, 25/02/2011.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009. Also raised by Richard Laydon, 25/02/2011 and Christine Gent 27/08/09.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Anne Hemingway 20/03/20010. Interview with Christine Gent 27/08/09.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Richard Laydon, 25/02/2011

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Robin Samuel 09/09/2009.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Mark Richardson 24/08/2009. Interview with Jan Tucker 05/08/2009.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Robin Samuel 09/09/2009. Mark Richardson 24/08/2009.

No date). In June 2008 the independent panel of experts, convened to evaluate progress, agreed that Wales should be named as the first FTN and thus the ambition to emulate that success became part of the Scottish Development policy (WAG No date).

To operationalise this, a group of stakeholders obtained funding from the Scottish Government's International Development Team (IDT) to found the Scottish Fair Trade Forum (SFTF) in February 2008¹¹¹. In the view of the IDT, the SFTF is "an arms length body...taking forward the Fair Trade Nation Campaign on our behalf"¹¹². While the SFTF has been the main organisation to carry forward the programme, it is acknowledged that both past and present Ministers for Europe, External Affairs and Culture have also taken a personal interest in fair trade¹¹³. As has been noted previously (see Chapter Two), Linda Fabiani was among the first to take on the idea of a Fairtrade Town after it was developed in Garstang. Furthermore, the minister also took the decision to write to all the Scottish Local Authorities about becoming involved in fair trade. According to one stakeholder, three different letters were written: one congratulating councils that held Fairtrade accreditation; one to councils who were working towards status; and one to those councils that had showed little interest in the issue¹¹⁴. A government representative certainly felt that this had a marked effect on the practice of some Local Authorities:

"I think on the back of that a lot of them just got their act together...One in particular just kind of gathered information and said 'We can do this!' and became a Fairtrade Zone - probably as a result of that, so it really did help to actually push people a bit to say, this isn't just some organisation that has nothing to do with us; they are also actually really working with the Scottish Government"¹¹⁵.

Indeed, informants suggest that interest in fair trade shown by Scottish Local Authorities has come in two waves¹¹⁶. In the first wave "some local authorities became involved in fair trade of their own accord...[and] have actually had fair trade status for a number of years now"¹¹⁷. The second wave began when "the [central] Scottish Government started doing a bit more on fair trade" by launching the Forum

¹¹¹ Interview with Government Representative 19/06/2009. Interview with Betsy Reed 19/06/2009.

¹¹² Interview with Government Representative 19/06/2009.

¹¹³ Interview with Betsy Reed 19/06/2009.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Government Representative 19/06/2009. Interview with Betsy Reed 19/06/2009.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Government Representative 19/06/2009.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Government Representative 19/06/2009. Interview with Betsy Reed 19/06/2009

¹¹⁷ Interview with Government Representative 19/06/2009.

and Fair Trade Scotland campaign, as “part of that criteria, obviously fair trade criteria re Local Authorities, has really spurred them to become involved and start thinking about it”¹¹⁸. In explaining this, a government representative suggests that “I feel there is more kudos to it now that it has become a part of our criteria and it’s something we have to do to become a Fair Trade Nation”. Having said this, they were clear to point out that “we’ve not been dictating to local authorities that you must do this, you must do that,...it has to be a mutual thing and local authorities have to be willing and cooperative”¹¹⁹.

This is certainly true of the Local Authorities in East Dunbartonshire, Renfrewshire and Edinburgh; and this is a view shared by representatives of those councils who emphasise the importance of local individuals in driving the fair trade agenda¹²⁰. Asked if the Local Authority has developed an interest in fair trade as a result of central government initiatives, an interviewee in Renfrewshire responded that “I think in the main it’s been more an internal desire and drive as far as the council’s concerned...The leader of the council, Derrick Mackie, is very, very active and very keen”. Indeed, members of the Local Authority involved in pushing this agenda made little reference to central government policy when explaining why fair trade has been strongly promoted¹²¹. In other cases, however, Local Authority involvement has been less proactive. In Glasgow, for example, stakeholders report that it has been harder to get councillors involved and that the initiative has been more community-led¹²².

Fair Trade Procurement in Government Policy

According to its website (see Figure 2 below), the Scottish Government sees fair trade as “a way to support producers in developing countries by ensuring they receive a fair price for their goods, better terms of trade and decent working conditions”; and that this “in turn provides a opportunity for the producers and their families to work their way out of poverty and have better quality of life” (Scottish Government 2009a WS).

¹¹⁸ Interview with Government Representative 19/06/2009.

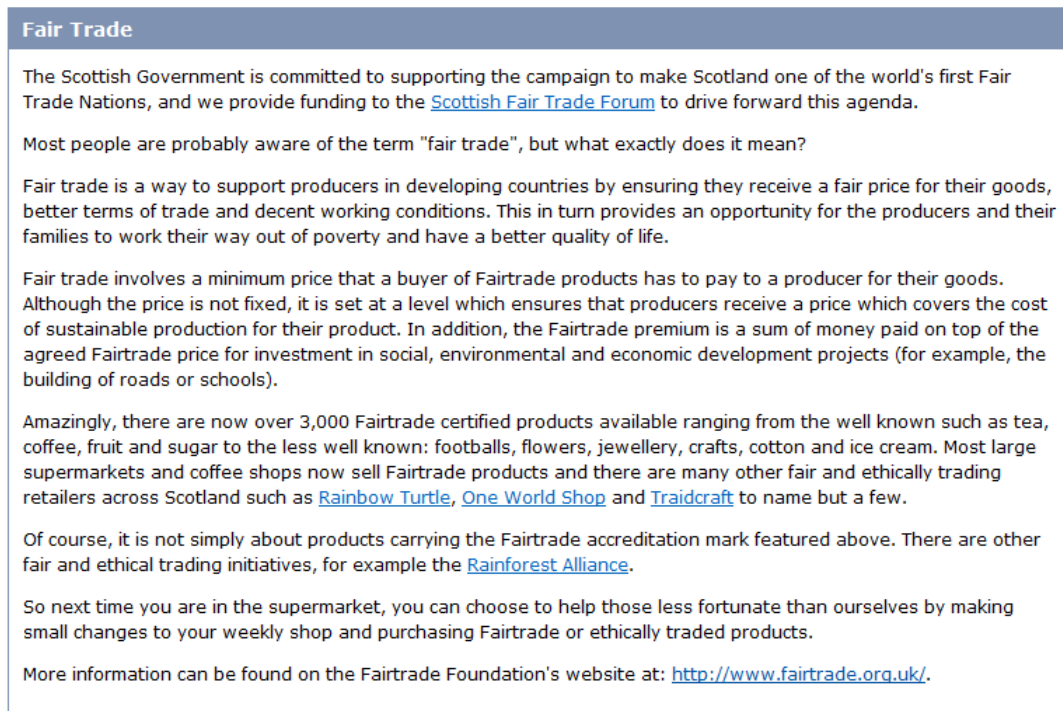
¹¹⁹ Interview with Government Representative 19/06/2009.

¹²⁰ Interview with Sylvia Grey 16/06/2009. Interview with David Elder 16/06/2009.

¹²¹ This is also potentially the pattern that can be seen in Wales. Interview with Mark Richardson 24/08/2009.

¹²² Interview with anonymous interviewee.

However, definitional complications quickly enter this explanation where it is noted that “fair trade *involves a minimum price* that a buyer of *Fairtrade products* has to pay to a producer for their goods” (my emphasis). Here, the broad concept of fair trade is instantly associated with FLO certification, both by interchanging the signifying words and specific mention of the need for minimum prices – even though not all fair trade contains such a requirement (see Chapter Two).



Fair Trade

The Scottish Government is committed to supporting the campaign to make Scotland one of the world's first Fair Trade Nations, and we provide funding to the [Scottish Fair Trade Forum](#) to drive forward this agenda.

Most people are probably aware of the term "fair trade", but what exactly does it mean?

Fair trade is a way to support producers in developing countries by ensuring they receive a fair price for their goods, better terms of trade and decent working conditions. This in turn provides an opportunity for the producers and their families to work their way out of poverty and have a better quality of life.

Fair trade involves a minimum price that a buyer of Fairtrade products has to pay to a producer for their goods. Although the price is not fixed, it is set at a level which ensures that producers receive a price which covers the cost of sustainable production for their product. In addition, the Fairtrade premium is a sum of money paid on top of the agreed Fairtrade price for investment in social, environmental and economic development projects (for example, the building of roads or schools).

Amazingly, there are now over 3,000 Fairtrade certified products available ranging from the well known such as tea, coffee, fruit and sugar to the less well known: footballs, flowers, jewellery, crafts, cotton and ice cream. Most large supermarkets and coffee shops now sell Fairtrade products and there are many other fair and ethically trading retailers across Scotland such as [Rainbow Turtle](#), [One World Shop](#) and [Traidcraft](#) to name but a few.

Of course, it is not simply about products carrying the Fairtrade accreditation mark featured above. There are other fair and ethical trading initiatives, for example the [Rainforest Alliance](#).

So next time you are in the supermarket, you can choose to help those less fortunate than ourselves by making small changes to your weekly shop and purchasing Fairtrade or ethically traded products.

More information can be found on the Fairtrade Foundation's website at: <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/>.

Figure 2: The Scottish Government webpage defining fair trade (2009)

The next immediate reference is to the FLO system of certification, as it is noted that “in addition, the Fairtrade premium is a sum of money added on top of the agreed Fairtrade price for investment in social, environmental and economic development projects” (Scottish Government 2009a WS). Again, under the principles laid out by both the WFTO and those agreed in joint with FLO, the payment of a social premium is not *necessarily* a condition of a fair trade relationship. Finally, it is noted that a wide range of “Fairtrade certified products” are available, and while the list includes goods that *are* certified under FLO governance, jewellery¹²³ and crafts feature in the

¹²³ It should be noted that this text was developed before the introduction of FLO certification for gold.

list despite the fact that FLO offer no such option (see Appendix 5 for a list of FLO certifiable goods).

Despite this FLO centred interpretation however, it is then noted that fair trade “is not simply about products carrying the Fairtrade accreditation mark” as, “there are other fair and ethical trading initiatives, for example Rainforest Alliance” (Scottish Government 2009a WS). This discourse then mirrors that of the central UK Government in that fair trade is directly associated with the category of ethical trade governance (and specifically Rainforest Alliance certification) while making no mention of other fair trade accreditation such as that offered by the WFTO or BAFTS.

One possible reason for such a multifaceted approach is that The Scottish Procurement Directorate (SPD) – which is responsible for interpreting and advising on supranational procurement regulations for public agencies in Scotland – follows the interpretation of the UK OGC, according to which: fair trade goods cannot be demanded but only requested if available; evaluations for the best value for money cannot consider the availability of fair trade; and of specific relevance here, the government cannot display a preference for one certification scheme over another (SPD 2005, p. 2)¹²⁴. This final interpretation of EU procurement regulations leads the SPD to recommend that in tender documents when “referring to the possible inclusion of fair trade options, specific marks or trade names should be avoided” (SPD 2005, p. 2), although examples can be provided to give procurement officials an idea of what might be desirable (SPD 2005, p. 2).

Such a view on the part of the SPD led to some intense interactions with the IDT in the Directorate for Europe, External Affairs and Culture¹²⁵ and resulted in the team taking the view that, “we are quite restricted in what we can do [in terms of procurement]”¹²⁶. Indeed, in referencing the department’s own procurement strategy as a best example, a representative notes that

¹²⁴ Interview with David Cook 18/06/2009.

¹²⁵ Interview with Government Representative 19/06/2009. Interview with David Cook 18/06/2009.

¹²⁶ The representative explains that “The catering contract with Sodexo [a large catering supplier] was awarded to them, but we have since worked with them to provide fair and ethically traded products in our staff restaurants and there is actually a number of Fair Trade products, drinks and snacks, in most staff restaurants in most government buildings...and that’s just been purely through working with

“We’ve always been keen to say that its not just about products that have the Fairtrade Mark, we’re talking about *ethically traded, fairly traded* - there are other brands out there as well you know, even thinking about things like the Rainforest Alliance as well, so again its much broader than simply just the Fairtrade Mark” (my emphasis)¹²⁷.

It is further noted that the IDT has always been keen to hear from the SFTF about how they have been spreading this message, and this echoes the view of Linda Fabiani who commented that “I was quite keen that the Scottish Fair Trade Forum shouldn’t be particularly allied to the Fairtrade Foundation” but “that was their view as well”¹²⁸.

Indeed, the SFTF’s (2010) website states that the terms “fair trade” and “Fairtrade” “are not generally interchangeable”. “‘Fairtrade’ (one word)”, it explains, “refers to the mark given by the Fairtrade Foundation to products they can verify adhere to strict Fairtrade standards”, while

“‘fair trade’ (two words) refers to products or organisations that are fair trade or fairly traded and are certified by organisations like IFAT [now the WFTO]. This term is also used to refer to the wider fair trade movement and to the Fair Trade Nation campaigns”.

However, this description is somewhat ambiguous as there is no criterion supplied for judging what other certification standards might be like IFAT/WFTO. For example, no reference is made to the *Charter of Fair Trade Principles* agreed between the FLO and WFTO, or BAFTS accreditation. In this sense, the question of if Rainforest Alliance certification is classed as fair trade by the Forum is not immediately answered. When asked if there is a criterion by which such a judgement could be made, the Coordinator of the SFTF replied that

“That’s actually an issue that we are having at the moment because we need to be able to give an official justification...we need to be able to say why we are supporting something if people start to say this is not Fairtrade marked, but it hasn’t been around long enough to be able to have any sort of certification. I

Sodexo once they have been successful for the contract. Interview with Government Representative 19/06/2009.

¹²⁷ Interview with Government Representative 19/06/2009.

¹²⁸ Interview with Linda Fabiani 03/07/2009.

think we are working with that premise at the moment and if it doesn't have some sort of justification, not necessarily certification but something that we can see and say, this is their supply chain, we are familiar with this, we need suppliers and this is the modern reality of what fair trade is, it's not always a mark"¹²⁹.

This interpretation of fair trade is mirrored to some extent by the criteria of the FTN programme that the Scottish Government has committed to achieve. Indeed, the criteria for the FTN is publicly codified by WAG (No date), the Scottish Government (2009b) and the Scottish Fair Trade Forum's (no date) websites. In listing the aims of the programme, all three texts agree that the intention is to 'increase awareness of Fair Trade and surrounding issues,...the sale of Fair Trade products,...to contribute to greater trade justice...[and] to engender a meaningful commitment to Fair Trade from Parliament and executive bodies".

However, in terms of the details of how these broad aims are to be operationalised, it can be noted that discourse is much more specific – particular in terms of the requirements for public sector purchasing. The Scottish Government and SFTF note that the Scottish Parliament and Government should “use and promote *Fairtrade* products internally including Fairtrade tea /coffee/sugar/biscuits at all meetings” and “ensure *Fairtrade* products are available at all catering outlets” (see Appendix 9 my emphasis)¹³⁰.

Another section of the criteria found on all three websites is reproduced verbatim in Table 6 below¹³¹. While there is an ad-hoc difference in the wording, one consistent variation is that where the two government pages use the signifier “fair trade” (two words) throughout, the SFTF uses “Fairtrade” (one word)¹³². As Fisher (forthcoming, p. 11) points out, such differences are not pedantic as the term “Fairtrade” is the registered trademark belonging to FLO – and indeed, as noted in Chapter Two, the references to the Fairtrade Foundation's Town accreditation are specifically linked to the promotion of FLO certified goods (see Chapter Two, Figure 1).

¹²⁹ Interview with Betsy Reed 19/06/2009.

¹³⁰ It is also stated that Government should promote Fairtrade Fortnight.

¹³¹ A full list of criteria can be found in Appendix 9.

¹³² Note the criteria that “People who know about Fair Trade increasing 5 percent every year to reach 75 percent” is an exception.

Welsh Assembly Government	Scottish Government	Scottish Fair Trade Forum
100% of counties/ local authorities have active <i>fair trade</i> groups working towards <i>fair trade</i> status	100 per cent of counties/local authorities have active <i>fair trade</i> groups working towards <i>fair trade</i> status	100% of Local Authorities have fair trade groups working toward <i>Fairtrade</i> Zone status
55% counties/ local authorities with <i>fair trade</i> status with 10% increase year on year until 100% is reached	55 per cent of local authority areas gain <i>fair trade status</i> with 10% annual increase in following years	55% of our Local Authorities having achieved <i>Fairtrade Zone</i> status. In following years, this must increase 10% per year until all 32 are <i>Fairtrade Zones</i>
100% of cities have <i>fair trade status</i>	100 per cent of cities obtain <i>fair trade status</i>	100% of cities have achieved <i>Fairtrade City status</i>
Minimum 55% of towns have active fair trade groups working towards <i>fair trade</i> status	A minimum of 55 per cent of towns (Based on GROS figures of towns with population of 5,000 or more at 2001) have active <i>fair trade groups</i> working toward <i>fair trade</i> status	At least 55% of towns have fair trade groups working toward <i>Fairtrade Town</i> status
60% of Higher Education institutions to have active <i>fair trade</i> groups working towards fair trade status	60 per cent of HE institutions to have active <i>fair trade groups</i> working towards fair trade status	60% of universities have active fair trade groups working toward <i>Fairtrade status</i>
Increasing by 5% every year the number of people who know about <i>fair trade</i> to 75%	Increase by 5 per cent each year the proportion of the population who know about <i>fair trade</i> (initial target of 50 per cent, ultimately to reaching 75 per cent)	People who know about fair trade increasing 5% every year to reach 75%
75% of people to buy a fair trade product every year	75 per cent of people to buy a <i>fair trade</i> product every year	75% of those people to buy a <i>Fairtrade</i> product every year
40% of people regularly buy a <i>fair trade</i> product	40 per cent of people regularly buy <i>fair trade products</i>	40% of those people to regularly buy <i>Fairtrade products</i>

Table 6: Three Interpretations of the Criteria for Fair Trade Nation

On this basis it appears that to obtain Fairtrade status, Local Authorities must pass a motion that specifically supports the use of products that are certified by the FLO. Indeed, the “Sample Motion” provided by the Fairtrade Foundation (No date-a) uses the Trademarked term “Fairtrade” and makes further explicit references to the “Fairtrade MARK” (original capitalisation – see Appendix 8). This same discursive emphasis is also prominent in the Fairtrade Foundation’s criteria for Higher Education institutions (see Appendix 6). Indeed, the importance of obtaining products with the Fairtrade label is underscored on the university application form where it states in a ‘footer’ that applicants should “remember the FAIRTRADE Mark is your only guarantee of independent certification. Please be wary of companies claiming to provide “Fair Trade” or “ethically traded” foods that do not carry the FAIRTRADE Mark” (original capitalisation, Fairtrade Foundation No date-b).

When asked about the development of these criteria, a representative of the Fairtrade Foundation stressed that “the five goals very much developed from what had happened in Garstang, it was never a very strategic, marketing or campaigning strategy that came from the Foundation, it was something organic that came from the grassroots”¹³³. Indeed, the specific reference to FLO certification derived from a decision taken by the Garstang group which developed the idea of a Fairtrade Town (see Chapter Two). At this time the Fairtrade Foundation was a “fledgling organisation” and the concept of fair trade not well understood by the UK population¹³⁴. For these reasons, a Fairtrade Foundation representative says that the Garstang group “deliberately chose the Fairtrade Mark, and they deliberately chose Fairtrade one word because they felt it was the clearest and most easily understood, most accessible way to bring people on board”¹³⁵. In this way, there has been a pattern of similar thinking through the development of both the Fairtrade Town scheme and the FTN programme.

Even though the Fairtrade Foundation took on Garstang's criteria, a representative of the Fairtrade Foundation testifies that “the wording of resolutions coming through

¹³³ Interview with Fairtrade Foundation Representative 30/04/2010.

¹³⁴ Interview with Fairtrade Foundation Representative 30/04/2010.

¹³⁵ Interview with Fairtrade Foundation Representative 30/04/2010. This also triangulates with the literature on the subject where it is noted that the Garstang group saw “the Fairtrade MARK as the best vehicle for bringing the alternative fair trading system into the mainstream” (Crowther and Human 2011, p. 91).

[from Local Authorities], particularly at a higher level of authorities, so county councils etc, is very clear, it is fair trade two words”. Within this approach local authorities will

“define what they consider to be fair trade... build in those principles of trading fairly that we [the Fairtrade Foundation] share with the World Fair Trade Organisation: so the idea of long term trading relationships, a fair price, an additional amount to invest in your community. *All these factors, are [used]...by local authorities to define what they consider to be a fair trade product*”¹³⁶.

Furthermore, the interviewee notes that across the UK “campaigns cover Fairtrade products, fairly traded goods and local farmers; it’s the whole smörgåsbord¹³⁷ in there, which I personally think is brilliant!”¹³⁸ According to this account, “the people leading these groups are incredibly savvy and incredibly aware”, and as a result, they are “championing [dedicated] F[air] T[rade] O[rganisation]s”¹³⁹. Furthermore, the case of East Dunbartonshire Local Authority in Scotland was singled out (without any prompting from the interviewer) as “one of the best examples” in terms of “the Malawi project and the rice that was traded fairly”. This initiative is considered to “bring it back to the core concept of a Fairtrade Town, which is about raising awareness of trade issues and increasing action for fairer trade”¹⁴⁰.

Contrary to wanting to stifle movement away from the Fairtrade Mark and FLO certification, the inclusion of alternative approaches pleases the representative as

¹³⁶ Interview with Fairtrade Foundation Representative 30/04/2010.

¹³⁷ Smörgåsbord is a type of Scandinavian buffet-style meal and used in English to refer to a diverse collection of something.

¹³⁸ Interview with Fairtrade Foundation Representative 30/04/2010.

¹³⁹ There is further evidence that the Fairtrade Foundation, and indeed FLO itself, is genuinely interested in differentiating between products of progressive fair trade organisations and those of commercial companies with FLO certification. For example, in their response to The Sun’s (2010) story that it is not guaranteed that cocoa and sugar used in certified chocolate bars is actually Fairtrade certified (as due to economic and logistical issues certified and conventional inputs cannot be separated), it was noted that, “some Fairtrade pioneering brands have full physical traceability of Fairtrade cocoa because they have set up supply chains this way and can use batch manufacturing techniques which are suitable for smaller scale production needs” (Fairtrade Foundation 2010). Furthermore, the response noted that the “Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International is currently looking at ways for these companies to be able to differentiate what they are doing so they can communicate this, if they wish, to consumers”.

¹⁴⁰ It was also noted by other interviewees that the Fairtrade Foundation had previously identified this initiative as a valid part of East Dunbartonshire’s submission for Fairtrade status. For example, Interview with John Riches 26/04/2011.

“for us as the Fairtrade Foundation it can be something quite hard to articulate and communicate as obviously we have a relationship with all these businesses [100 percent fair trade organisations and those dealing with individual lines of certified goods] and we have a partnership with all these businesses, but campaigners have the autonomy if you like to start making a distinction”¹⁴¹.

For this reason, they note,

“the goals are around Fairtrade and the Fairtrade Mark, again because the scheme has been managed, developed and supported by the Fairtrade Foundation, [although] the feedback, the way applications are treated, the way groups are treated, the way renewals are treated, is much more open; its much broader and it does recognise what groups are doing across the board. We are quite careful not to say, that’s no good, that doesn’t count, has it got a mark on it, it’s not done like that”¹⁴².

Indeed, a representative from the Fairtrade Foundation is keen that groups differentiation between 100 percent Fair Trade Organisations and Fairtrade certified product lines with low standards and is “looking at...how we can potentially start to do things like flagging up F[air] T[rade] O[rganisation]s and the work that they do”. However, they note that “it’s all, quite sensitive, and I think you have to work kind of carefully not to leave people behind as well”¹⁴³. In the same vein they note that “as far as our communication goes, that is likely to stay Fairtrade one word”, although “we need to look very carefully at the wording of the resolution, because of the issues around specifying Fairtrade one word”¹⁴⁴ as part of state discourses about their procurement. This issue is also represented at the international level, where there is a Fair Trade Town Working Group, and a senior FLO representative noted that, “I would stress that it’s Fair Trade, two words, Towns, Working Group”¹⁴⁵. Ultimately, a representative from the Fairtrade Foundation reflects that “I think regardless of what our communication on Fairtrade Towns say, groups do what they do, and most of

¹⁴¹ Interview with Fairtrade Foundation Representative 30/04/2010.

¹⁴² Interview with Fairtrade Foundation Representative 30/04/2010.

¹⁴³ Interview with Fairtrade Foundation Representative 30/04/2010.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Fairtrade Foundation Representative 30/04/2010. It is noted that while this issue is currently more prominent in continental Europe, it is likely to emerge as something which will have to be addressed in the UK.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with senior FLO representative 29/04/2010. It is also noted that the meaning and purpose of accredited towns is under discussion at the international level.

them go way beyond the Fairtrade Mark”¹⁴⁶. Representatives of FLO also project this view, and one comments that

“I don’t think that Fairtrade is under the illusion that we own the concept, that we own all that is fair trade, obviously we have a lot of tools and resources that can help promote the idea, so I think we will start to see Fairtrade as becoming more thorough leaders in how these towns move and work, but we also need to work with the realisation that there is a bigger movement...[although] we also want to be leaders in that bigger movement, because we have the capacity”¹⁴⁷“.

Something of specific concern, both to the Fairtrade Foundation and Fairtrade International, is that a distinction is recognised between fair trade governance and that of other ethical governance and certification systems. This is particularly the case as these organisations perceive increasing discussion within local Fairtrade Steering Groups and local councils about if Rainforest Alliance certification counts towards Fairtrade Town status. According to a representative of the Fairtrade Foundation:

“I don’t think Rainforest Alliance is about the same thing as Fairtrade in terms of the standards, so it is not about saying one is better than the other, but...fair trade is the only concept system that is specifically designed to change the terms of trade, and other ethical labels and environmental labels have their own objectives, some of which cross, some of which are totally different, but fair trade is quite unique in many ways”¹⁴⁸.

Another senior FLO representative agrees:

“I think the big issue in public procurement is whether they can endorse the FLO approach as opposed to those like Rainforest Alliance, and there I do think we have got a battle on our hands and it is one that we need to fight because those schemes are not what we do...You can argue about whether they are better or worse, but they are not the same”¹⁴⁹.

These ideas of flexibility can be contrasted, to some extent, with the obvious influence that the Fairtrade Foundation has had in the UK. For example, a member of the IDT states that “the guidelines on how to become a Fairtrade Zone that comes from the Fairtrade Foundation have obviously been very useful”¹⁵⁰. Likewise, the

¹⁴⁶ This is corroborated by a number of other interviewees with direct experience of Steering Group operations – discussed below.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with senior FLO representative 29/04/2010.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Fairtrade Foundation Representative 30/04/2010.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Ian Bretman 29/04/2010.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Government Representative 19/06/2009.

Coordinator of the SFTF noted that, “I’m so glad that the Fairtrade Foundation oversees the administration of these awards, because if not otherwise: nightmare...But they’re the building blocks of everything we are trying to do so it’s essential to what we are doing”¹⁵¹.

However, this is not to say that stakeholders feel the FTN programme is, or should be, only concerned with promoting the consumption of FLO accredited goods. In this sense too, the testimony of interviewees in Scotland reveals that they do not hold exactly the same views as the Fairtrade Foundation. For example, the representative of the IDT said that:

“I don’t think it should be exclusively Rainforest Alliance or exclusively Fairtrade, but I think to have a combination of everything, you know something that’s fairly traded, ethically traded, but perhaps doesn’t necessarily have a mark; they all play a part”¹⁵².

Finally the representative offers the view that “although the Fairtrade Foundation are saying, well ok that’s very good that you have Rainforest Alliance, but it doesn’t count towards your Fairtrade Zone status, but that’s no reason to stop buying Rainforest Alliance products”. However, while this might be the view expounded by central government representatives, this is not necessarily the case at the Local Authority level; and it is this more local perspective that is examined in the next section.

Fair Trade in Local Government Policy and Practice

While the central Scottish Government discourse on fair trade and public procurement is somewhat muddled, it is important to understand how local authorities are interpreting government commitment to procure fair trade goods. As noted above, while the specifics of the FTN programme adopted by the Scottish Government portray a tendency towards the consumption of FLO certified products, this is not the interpretation projected by either the Scottish Government or its representatives. To some extent, this more holistic approach is also shared by those who have been

¹⁵¹ Interview with Betsy Reed 19/06/2009.

¹⁵² Interview with Government Representative 19/06/2009.

responsible for transplanting the commitment of the FTN programme to the Local Government level.

As was noted above, the sample motion for ratification by Local Councils as part of their submission to the Fairtrade Foundation to obtain Fairtrade accreditation carries explicit reference to the consumption of goods bearing the “FAIRTRADE MARK”. However, empirical investigation reveals that far from employing this exemplar document, none of the Scottish councils currently registered as Fairtrade Zones have adopted the motion verbatim (For a summary of motions adopted by Scottish Local Authorities see Appendix 11). Indeed, all the motions that have been passed have avoided the specific signifier of “FAIRTRADE MARK”.

Having said this, half of motions (four out of eight) which include general commitments use the term “Fairtrade” and four out of nine motions which make procurement commitments specify “Fairtrade certification” – with five of the nine motions phrasing such strategies in terms of “fair trade (such as the Fairtrade Mark)” or “fairly traded goods”. Of specific interest is the motion passed by Aberdeen City Council which tautologically pledges to “use the option of Fairtrade goods, particularly those carrying the Fairtrade Mark” and suggests that the exact wording of this motion has not been scrutinised. Also of interest are the motions passed by Peebles & Tweeddale, East Dunbartonshire, Renfrewshire, Dundee and Edinburgh, which employ the more general term “fair trade” or “fairly traded” in both general and specific procurement commitments.

While in many cases the choice between signifiers of Fair Trade, fair-trade, Fairtrade etc can be more down to stylistic choice or automatic spell-checkers¹⁵³, in the case of East Dunbartonshire and Edinburgh this has been very deliberate. When asked why the motion had been penned using the term Fair Trade, a representative of Edinburgh City Council replied that:

“It’s a very fundamental question...When we were applying for Fairtrade city status...obviously the council had to pass the policy there was no real mention, I think I’m right on this, in terms of use of the mark etc. So we went down the sort of exemplar policy statement that the Fairtrade Foundation had advised us

¹⁵³ Interview with Sylvia Grey 16/06/2009.

along the lines of...[However] we were advised by our fair trade, well, activists here in Edinburgh, people who had been working in the fair trade area for a long, long time, [who] were saying that two words when you are talking about fair trade in general, or as in I'm going to buy fair trade chocolate, but if you are talking about anything that the Foundation talk of, like Fairtrade Fortnight, Fairtrade Cities, Fairtrade Zones, Fairtrade schools, it's two words—one word, I mean one word...But that's what our local BAFTS shop, that's what they advised"¹⁵⁴.

Based on these examples, it appears that some stakeholders are engaging critically with the accreditation and discourse of the Fairtrade Foundation. This is also a tendency which appears in the consumption behaviour of Scottish Local Authorities; and such a position is borne out by the experience of East Dunbartonshire when they were identifying a local business to nominate as a flagship enterprise. When interviewed the Sustainability Officer noted that initially the council wished to put forward one company as the Flagship Employer in their application. However, because this company served Rainforest Alliance and not FLO certified hot drinks, they were not accepted by the Fairtrade Foundation. In the end another business which could switch from non-certified to Fairtrade drinks was nominated and in this way, there was a shift to arguably more sustainable procurement without prioritising one certification system over another. However, a representative from the Local Authority noted that, “in general, the Steering Group follows the Fairtrade Foundation’s advice that other certification schemes are better than nothing *but not as good as the Fairtrade Mark*”¹⁵⁵.

Such a preference for the FLO Mark, especially over Rainforest Alliance certification, however, has led to direct substitution in other cases. For example, an official in another Local Authority was unhappy to discover that coffee was Rainforest Alliance and not FLO Fairtrade certified. “We always insist that if we are taking on one of these [coffee] machines, that they can provide Fairtrade stuff” they say, “but I was in the canteen the other day, and it says that it's not Fairtrade and it's Rainforest Alliance that we're buying. And I said no, it's got to be Fairtrade. The council has an ambition to become a Fairtrade council”¹⁵⁶. Likewise, a representative from another Local Authority recalled an incident where someone had telephoned to say that the

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Council Representative 05/01/2010.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Council Representative 05/01/2010.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Council Representative 09/07/2009

company tendering to supply tea and coffee to the café/restaurant in the council headquarters was offering Rainforest Alliance certified products, and asked if this was acceptable. After consulting the Fairtrade Steering Group, they were informed that “because we are a Fairtrade City under the Fairtrade Foundation scheme, we should only be using tea or coffee with the FLO Mark”¹⁵⁷. This later case suggests that the qualitative distinction between the FLO and the Rainforest Alliance drawn by the Fairtrade Foundation is applied even where Authorities have committed to support the general principle of Fair Trade in council motions.

Despite the practical prioritisation of FLO marked goods, both these informants remained reflective about this interpretation. In the first case, when the interviewee recalled their reaction to the supplier’s suggestion that Rainforest Alliance was “just the same”, they comment that “I’m not sure it is just the same...but I don’t know”¹⁵⁸. As in the second case, the interviewee then followed up by asking the interviewer for their opinion: “If I’m buying because I want to buy certain values that I associated with the accreditation of [FLO] Fairtrade, how does that fit in with the Rainforest Alliance and other accreditations like that?”¹⁵⁹ In discussing this issue, the interviewee goes on to question the policy themselves and highlight its confusion:

“Wales wants to be a Fair Trade Nation, as does Scotland, as does this council, as do lots of wee towns all over the UK. Then you get on to what does that actually mean? Does that mean that they want to link themselves with...an accreditation, a system like the soil association and organic, but then you have the values and concept of it. So do they actually want to link themselves with the values and the concepts of the thing? So does Wales or Scotland want to become Fair Trade accredited? Or is it the values, it’s really a bit woolly isn’t it?”¹⁶⁰.

This wider concern also fits with other signs that some decision makers within Local Authorities take a nuanced approach. According to one account, those compiling Stirling’s new Fair Trade guide

“did a lot of research and ...did a lot of fair trade soul searching and have chosen to use fair trade two words. They’re a Fairtrade City but now they are recognising that there is more to fair trade than the Fairtrade Mark, and it was

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Council Representative 05/01/2010.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Council Representative 05/01/2010.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Council Representative 09/07/2009.

¹⁶⁰ Interviewee with Council Representative 09/07/2009.

really interesting to see that and I'm starting to run into that a lot more as I travel and talk to fair trade groups. They are starting to realise that there are other things going on besides the Fairtrade Foundation which I think is a really great thing for everybody because it means that they are open to the next step"¹⁶¹.

Such a reflective approach can also be identified in other Local Authorities and, in the case of two in particular, this extends to their actual public procurement activities.

Fairly Traded Kilombero Rice in East Dunbartonshire

According to East Dunbartonshire Council's website, there has been civil society activism promoting fair trade in the area since the 1980s (East Dunbartonshire Council No date). This activism has been spearheaded by Campsie Parish Church which has been central in the official East Dunbartonshire Fairtrade Steering Group (East Dunbartonshire Council 2005). While this is a civil society organisation, there have been strong links into the Local Authority from the time it was started by an ex-member of the local council¹⁶². When the group succeeded in becoming one of Scotland's first Fairtrade Zones in October 2007, a representative from the group noted that they had "been greatly aided by the support of East Dunbartonshire Council, in particular the services of the Sustainable Development Officer [SDO] and the Purchasing Officer for the Council's catering services have made it possible for so much to be achieved" (Scottish Fair Trade Forum no date-b WS).

Overall, the Local Authority in East Dunbartonshire has gone a significant way to meet the requirements of the Fairtrade Foundation's scheme. The council has passed a resolution to support fair trade and has also purchased a wide range of fair trade goods for use by various public institutions. These purchases have included one of particular interest which, as noted above is considered by the Fairtrade Foundation's, Fairtrade Town team, as a particularly outstanding example of Local Authority procurement (see above). The product in question is "fairly traded"¹⁶³ Kilombero rice, which is

¹⁶¹ Anonymous Interviewee.

¹⁶² Interview with Grace Irvine 16/06/2009.

¹⁶³ According to a key representative at JTS, their Kilombero rice is described as "fairly traded" in order to emphasise that it does not carry FLO certification. Interview with John Riches 19/03/2009. See next chapter for an explanation of why the rice was considered to be "fairly trade". Interestingly, this is

produced by the Karonga Smallholder Farmers Association (KSFA), a sub-group of the National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM)¹⁶⁴ which sells to a dedicated fair trade importers organisation called Just Trading Scotland (see Figure 3). As such this initiative is considered to have allowed the Local Authority to contribute to both the national policy in support of fair trade and also the specific development objective to assist the country of Malawi (as discussed above)¹⁶⁵.

Figure 3: Kilombero Rice Supply Chain

The initial import of Kilombero rice into Scotland arose from the promotion of the rice by NASFAM at *Trade Connections* – a central Scottish Government funded Malawian trade fair, held at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC) in Glasgow in November 2007 – which was organised by Imani Development – an international development NGO with ten offices across three continents and in nine countries (Imani Development 2011)¹⁶⁶. The management of NASFAM were particularly keen to find an importer for the Kilombero rice as they identified it as a potentially high value export product which could contribute to the development needs of Malawi in general, as well as to the wellbeing of the producer community who grow the rice¹⁶⁷. However, NASFAM had encountered problems in obtaining a mainstream commercial partner, since most organisations tend to perceive producers, processors and exporters in Malawi, as having problems in meeting the required quality and service standards¹⁶⁸. As it happened, a longstanding and dedicated fair trade organisation, The Balmore Coach House (located in East Dunbartonshire and well known for its activities among local fair trade activists, many of whom had volunteered there), was simultaneously seeking to widen their product range. It was from a meeting at the *Trade Connections* that a relationship with NASFAM

the same term employed by long standing fair trade organisations after they withdrew from Transfair certification in protest of minimum price setting procedures (Jaffee 2010, p. 280).

¹⁶⁴ See Chapter Five for a discussion of NASFAM's structure.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Grace Irvine 16/06/2009.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Senior IMANI Representative 22/06/2009. Interview with John Riches 19/03/2009.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Senior IMANI Representative 22/06/2009. Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009. Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Senior IMANI Representative 22/06/2009.

developed and a new organisation, Just Trading Scotland (JTS) was setup to import and distribute the rice¹⁶⁹.

Before a trade relationship could develop, however, it was necessary for JTS to locate a sufficient market in order to justify the amount of rice that would need to be imported. Specifically, it was not possible to consolidate less than 18 tons of rice in a container of mix-goods, although, as the individual now responsible for the daily management of JTS noted, at the time “we weren’t sure we could sell 18 tons of rice”¹⁷⁰.

As it happened, a member of East Dunbartonshire’s Fairtrade Steering Group had heard a prominent member of the Balmore Coach House speak about their involvement with fair trade and particularly the desire to import Kilombero rice¹⁷¹. At the same time, the Local Authority had the ambition to develop their educational programme around the issues of fair trade as part of the citizenship curriculum¹⁷². Indeed, in the previous year, the Authority had used FLO certified pasta in schools during Fairtrade Fortnight¹⁷³. However, the SDO thought that, given the nature of the product and the way it was used, there was little opportunity to highlight the difference between fair trade and “non-fair trade” ingredients to the children¹⁷⁴. For this reason, it was decided that the council should partner with JTS to develop a more holistic educational package, to be delivered during Fairtrade Fortnight, and which would contain: materials on the conditions of Malawian producers; information about the concept of fair trade; and a practical example in the form of “fairly traded” rice accompanied by material explaining its nature and the benefits that could potentially accrue.

A representative of the council explained that “this is where the [steering] group pays dividends...It took the group to deliver this...[as] it was the educational spokesman

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Senior IMANI Representative 22/06/2009. Interview with John Riches 19/03/2009.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with John Riches 19/03/2009.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Silvia Grey 16/06/2009. Interview with John Riches 26/04/2011.

¹⁷² Interview with John Riches 19/03/2009. Interview with Grace Irvine 16/06/2009.

¹⁷³ Interview with John Riches 19/03/2009. Interview with Grace Irvine 16/06/2009. As was noted in Chapter Two (footnote 40), Fairtrade Fortnight is an annual campaign organised by the Fairtrade Foundation.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Grace Irvine 16/06/2009.

that would push the educational side, the citizenship, but as a catering supplier it fitted my needs as well”¹⁷⁵. Specifically, one of the problems was that many fair trade products appropriate for communicating educational issues are confectionary products (and thus have space to embed information in the packaging), although these have been restricted under new government guidelines on health and nutrition in schools¹⁷⁶. The broader package developed by the Fairtrade Steering Group on the other hand, met both the Council’s healthy eating requirements and the objective to integrate education on global citizenship into the catering experience.

Despite the identification of mutual advantages, the procurement of rice also had to be compatible with UK Government and European Procurement regulations. Indeed, East Dunbartonshire’s SDO commented that any purchasing is naturally “bound by the council’s procurement rules” and furthermore, that they “generally buy through a buying consortium” which contracts suppliers via a Framework Agreement. Given the unique nature of the fair trade educational initiative, the internal view was that no procurement regulations or principles were broken as 1) the nature of the overall product meant that it was not technically a substitution for anything previously agreed with the current suppliers, and 2) the value of the contract did not require the application of the full EU Procurement Directives¹⁷⁷. Furthermore, as a representative from the Local Authority explained, as long as “we could match the price or close to the price”¹⁷⁸ of the existing contracted suppliers for rice, there would be no detriment to the Local Authority’s financial standing. As it happened, the price of the Kilombero rice from Malawi was actually cheaper than FLO certified rice available through the Framework Agreement, and thus allowed a margin for any additional cost of the education project¹⁷⁹. In summary then,

“The Council was able to purchase the rice competitively, highlighting their support of the project financially. The rice project was a justifiable proposal, complementing existing Council contracts, and adding value through feeding

¹⁷⁵ Indeed, the informant feels that their “core concept has always been to get as many sectors as possible from the local community to get involved in the way that they can be”. Interview with Fairtrade Foundation Representative 30/04/2010.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Grace Irvine 16/06/2009.

¹⁷⁷ As discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Grace Irvine 16/06/2009.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Grace Irvine 16/06/2009. Interview with John Riches 19/03/2009.

back into the local economy and adding educational value to local schools”
(Scottish Fair Trade Forum no date-a, p. 1).

Some Conclusions

This chapter has presented findings about the International Development focus of the Scottish Government, and particularly the policy to achieve FTN status. As part of this investigation, the history of the FTN scheme was examined in order to understand how the meaning of fair trade has been interpreted by the programme. Analysis revealed that the development of this initiative was highly complex. Interestingly, the process involved a significant negotiation and reconciliation of a desire to embrace a more holistic interpretation of the fair trade concept, against the practical need to render the criterion measurable. As a result, and despite a lack of involvement by the Fairtrade Foundation, the FTN programme is heavily based on Fairtrade Town accreditation. The consequence of this is that despite initial intentions, the requirements of FTN programme adopted by the Scottish Government are primarily concerned with promoting the consumption of FLO certified goods.

Despite this concentration of the FTN criteria, representatives of the Scottish Government still maintain that government procurement is about more than FLO certified goods. The reasons for embedding the FTN programme in wider discourses of ethical procurement were suggested to derive from the limitations imposed by European Procurement Regulations and their interpretation by the Scottish Procurement Directorate. Whatever the reason for this contradictory discourse however, debate about what constitutes fair trade in the context of public procurement has remained at the Local Authority level.

Indeed, examining the involvement of Local Authorities in the Fairtrade Foundation’s scheme, it is apparent that many of them strongly mirror the discourse of this governance, and have made political commitments to procure FLO certified goods. However, this pattern is not without nuanced difference across Authorities, and in particular, East Dunbartonshire has engaged with a particularly innovative initiative to procure rice from a dedicated fair trade importer – based on the social standing of the

organisation. As such, this example offers an opportunity to respond to the call made in fair trade academic literature for research that enhances knowledge of social economy actors and the active role of producers (Tallontire 2009, p. 1009). It is for this reason that the second part of the empirical investigation turned to the role of other stakeholders in negotiating what it means to be exporting fair trade goods; and it is to the context of Malawi that the following chapter now turns.

Chapter Five: Who Shouts the Loudest? Negotiating the Meaning of Fair Trade in Producer Countries

“The most pressing constraint to growth in Malawi continues to be the regime of exchange rate management. Despite good progress, there is compelling evidence that the rate is still substantially overvalued” (Lea and Hanmer 2009, p. i).

As discussed in the first two chapters, the meaning of fair trade is not a clear cut issue, and there is evidence to suggest that this multiplicity of meaning is international in nature¹⁸⁰. For this reason, it has been important to investigate how fair trade is conceptualised and practiced within the Kilombero rice supply chain.

In order to present the findings of this investigation, the section below explores the development context of Malawi in order to provide background for the later discussion of fair trade in the country. Section two then reports on the history and structure of NASFAM – the organisation growing and exporting Kilombero rice to Scotland. Given that the understanding of fair trade held by southern stakeholders is influenced by external networks, the third section steps back to explore the wider development of fair trade in Malawi and the surrounding region. The final section discusses NASFAM’s interaction with both FLO certification and the alternative approach adopted in the case of their interactions with JTS.

Malawi: The development context

Malawi is situated in south-eastern Africa bordering Zambia (West), Tanzania (North & East) and Mozambique (South East) (see Appendix 12). The country is among the poorest and least developed in the world (World Bank 2009) – despite the absence of current or recent violent conflict (OECD 2007, p. 331). Malawi ranked 160th out of 182 countries surveyed by the United Nations Human Development Index (2009a, p. 145): 90 percent of the population earn under \$2 a day; 95 percent of the population are not educated past lower secondary standard; and there is a 33 percent chance that

¹⁸⁰ See both the discussion in Chapter Two and also elsewhere (Raynolds and Ngcwangu 2010; Renard and Perez-Grovas 2007).

individuals will not survive past 30 years of age (United Nations 2009b WS). Malawi was approved for relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) programme in 2006 (IMF 2006) and in December 2007 was granted eligibility to receive financial support within the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) initiative by the US government (CIA 2010 WS).

History, geography and politics combine to make the pursuit of poverty reduction and sustainable development a formidable challenge in Malawi (Ellis et al. 2003). The small country is landlocked, densely populated with poor infrastructure and heavily dependent on agricultural exports (Booth et al. 2007, p. 6; OECD 2008, p. 401). Agriculture represents 34.7 percent of GDP, generates over 53 percent of the country's export earnings and 87 percent of total employment (Harrigan 2003, p. 847; Tsutomu 2009, p. 358). The sale of tobacco provides the biggest single income of foreign exchange at about 70 percent as well as generating 30 percent of GDP (Malawian Government 2009 WS; Orr 2000, p. 348). This situation generates considerable vulnerability to external price shocks, as well as declining terms of trade (especially against imported inputs such as oil based fuel and fertiliser). Indeed, as Malawi has to import all its fuel products, inflation is strongly linked to both international petroleum and diesel prices, as well as vulnerable agricultural production (OECD 2008, p. 405). For these reasons, as well as tense relations with neighbours who have access to the sea, Malawi can be considered a country in which some of the world's billion least capable individuals might live (Collier 2008).

The Political Economy of Agriculture in Malawi

The agricultural sector in Malawi is mainly subdivided into two sub-sectors, smallholder production and larger scale estate (Harrigan 2003, p. 847)¹⁸¹. The smallholder sector accounts for about 70 percent of agricultural output and involves nearly 90 percent of the population—working at a subsistence level to produce a combination of maize, beans, rice, cassava, tobacco and groundnuts (Action Aid International 2006, p. 2).

¹⁸¹ Although some scholars divide smallholder farmers into those who are subsistent and those who engage in commercial production (Lele 1990).

A combination of a single short farming season, shrinking farm size (due to limited land and an expanding population) and declining yields, has often resulted in 70-80 percent of rural households running out of home produced flour – the staple food – up to five months before the next harvest (Chinsinga 2008, p. 1). Indeed, low agricultural productivity has been a serious issue for many years and key causes are a lack of traction, fertiliser and irrigation (Booth et al. 2007, p. 7) – and while many rural people are generally aware of standard modern inputs, such as fertiliser and improved seeds, their cost is prohibitive. A further problem is limited access to credit for rural farming families (Diagne and Zeller 2001) – although the development of the much discussed fertiliser subsidy is credited with a vast improvement in food security in recent years (discussed below).

Smallholder Agriculture in Malawi: A Context for fair trade?

As it is presented in the secondary literature, the history of Malawian agriculture is characterised by significant marginalisation of smallholders. To begin with, between the late 1890s and 1920, a substantial proportion of the land which now constitutes Malawi was appropriated by British settlers for the cultivation of cash crops and particularly tobacco (Milner 2005, p. 46) – first through ad-hoc agreements with tribal chiefs and later the development of privatised land (Sahn and Arulpragasam 1991). Furthermore, from 1926, the colonial administration began to restrict what and how much of certain crops smallholder farmers were able to grow – particularly with maize, cotton and tobacco (Hazarika and Alwang 2003, p. 100; Kydd and Hewitt 1986, p. 1208) through agricultural marketing boards which also began to set prices (Kandoole et al., 1988).

After independence in 1964, Malawi's first president, Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, continued to pursue an outward orientated strategy that prioritised estate-based agriculture (Ellis et al. 2003, p. 3). While the approach produced impressive macro-economic performance, with strong growth and relative stability (Chilowa 1998, p. 554; Lele 1990, p. 1209), it also maintained and exacerbated existing inequalities between estate and smallholder farming (Booth et al. 2007; Orr 2000, p. 349). This

was because as well as continued restriction on cropping patterns, other factors which upheld the dualistic economy were: the continued transfer of customary smallholder land to the estate sector; finance was siphoned from the smallholder sub-sector by the state marketing board, with most of the resulting profits channelled into estates; estates remained virtually untaxed; and smallholders were relied upon to provide a marketable surplus of the staple food crop to feed estate and urban workers (Kydd and Christiansen 1982; Lele 1990, p. 1208; McClintock 1985; Sahn and Van Frausum 1994). As a result of these processes, although the average growth was 5.5 percent between 1964 and 1977, this was primarily accumulated by the estate sector, which grew by 17 percent, while smallholder agriculture expanded less than 3 percent per annum (Harrigan 2003, p. 848).

However, at the end of the 1970s the marginalisation of smallholder agriculture began to be reversed to some extent. Economic troubles – catalysed by the oil price shock of 1979 and the Mozambican civil war, which cut off major routes to international sea ports (Chilowa 1998, p. 558) – forced Malawi to appeal to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) for financial assistance (Harrigan 2003, p. 849). As typical of such interactions, the international financial institutions insisted on a raft of conditionality, particularly reform of the state's role in the agricultural sector.

The first element of adjustment concentrated on the “correction of prices” in the agricultural sector and aimed specifically to reduce the bias against smallholder farmers (Lele 1990, p. 1207). Key reforms focused on raising producer prices for smallholders; eliminating consumer and fertiliser subsidies; exchange and interest rate adjustments; cuts in public expenditures; and, within agriculture, a shift away from the National Rural Development Programme (NRDP) toward agricultural research and extension (Lele 1990, p. 1211). A specific target for reform was the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (Malawi) (ADMARC), which, in 1987, ceased to be the sole marketing agent for smallholder food crops (Tsutomu 2009, p. 359). By the mid-1990s, licensing was no longer required to trade in smallholder crops and in 1993, the marketing of hybrid seeds was liberalised, with the subsidies removed in 1994 (Tsutomu 2009, p. 359).

In terms of tobacco production, the World Bank suggested a deconstruction of regulation as part of the Agricultural Sector Adjustment Programme 1990-1993 (Harrigan 2003, p. 851). After the Bank had established a pilot project in 1990, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) took over the programme in 1991 (Hirschmann 1995, p. 25) and, in so doing, initiated a US\$55 million, seven-year Agricultural Sector Assistance Programme (ASAP) intended to:

“Restructure the agricultural sector in such a way that smallholders on customary land and agricultural labourers and tenants have available to them the opportunities, mechanisms, and resources to participate in and help drive sectoral growth and development (Cited in: Tobin and Knausenberger 1998, p. 409).

While smallholders had been unofficially selling into the regulated system for some time (Tobin and Knausenberger 1998, pp. 102-103), this *de facto* liberalisation was now slowly formalised. For the 1990-1991 growing season the government issued licences for smallholders to produce 3.5 million Kg of burley tobacco and marketing quotas were offered to tobacco growers' clubs to sell produce at auctions (Hirschmann 1995, p. 25). In 1993 non-members were also allowed to sell tobacco to registered traders (Hazarika and Alwang 2003, p. 100) and later the government agreed to increased quota allotments for smallholders further still (Tobin and Knausenberger 1998, p. 410).

Unfortunately, over all these liberalisation programmes are not viewed to have greatly benefited the smallholder sector. According to one analyst, “the removal of...[input] price subsidies... together with the depreciation of the Malawian Kwacha (Mk) in the 1990s resulted in sharp price increases for seeds and fertiliser with severe repercussions on smallholder livelihoods and food security” (Tsutomu 2009, p. 359). The reason for this is believed to lay in the limited capacity of the private sector to respond to the new opportunities. For example, in 1988 only 387 private traders were licensed, and while the number rose to 948 in 1989, it declined by 43 percent in 1990 (Milner 2005, p. 53). Since then, investigation has suggested a further decline in such commercial activities and Chirwa et al. (2002) report that most rural areas still have difficulties accessing markets for agricultural produce. Although the study did find private trading, most was by unlicensed vendors who move from village to village buying produce at very low prices and tampering with scales (Chirwa et al. 2002).

This situation is widespread in discourses explaining the need for fair trade (Brown 1993; Nicholls and Opal 2005) and during interviews with farmers in Malawi, many expressed a perception that vendors were exploitative (as discussed below).

In terms of tobacco production, while reforms increased smallholder participation (Jaffee 2003, p. 15) and some have benefited (Takane 2008), the extent of improvement is questioned. According to Tobin and Knausenberger (1998, p. 410), less than five percent of Malawi's smallholders were the direct beneficiaries of increases in tobacco sales, and those that did gain were likely to have been the more capable. This situation has had serious effects on the food security of the rural population as, with little benefit from reforms, the intention that cash crops would deliver the ability to purchase food have not been realised. Indeed, with a substitution effect from growing food crops to export production, coupled with the removal of fertiliser subsidies, endogenous production of food has been seriously reduced (Harrigan 2003, p. 849). By 1987 Malawi faced a food crisis resulting from both the decline in maize production per capita – particularly of improved maize (Sahn et al., 1990, Table 24) – and a collapse in ADMARC's ability to purchase the crop. Overall, Malawi was hit by a series of famines in 1991/1992, in 2001/2002 (when, between January and April, some 500-1,000 people died of hunger or hunger-related diseases in the southern and central regions of the country) and again in 2004/2005 (when more than 4.7 million out of a population of 12 million experienced food shortages) (Chinsinga 2008; Menon 2007).

Fortunately, in recent times Malawi has been much more food secure. This is largely attributed to favourable weather conditions and also the interventions of the most recent president Dr Bingu wa Mutharika (elected in 2004 and then re-elected in 2009). At the time of fieldwork in 2009 the president was largely considered as a positive replacement for his predecessor. Bingu has guided Malawi into new relationships of financial support with a range of donor institutions (OECD 2008, p. 404; World Bank 2007) although tensions over some policies are increasingly evident. In 2010 the OECD (p. 180) noted that Malawi's

“macroeconomic policy performance has been generally consistent and strong...[although] an escalation in domestic debt which increased domestic interest payments and expansion of the fertiliser subsidy well beyond initial

budget plans offset the benefits of the strong revenue performance, widening the fiscal deficit to 5.4 percent of GDP in 2009”.

Indeed, numerous policies of President Bingu have drawn considerable criticism (Khanje, p. 5). The first is a continued reliance on a pegged exchange rate, which is widely recognised to overvalue the Malawian Kwacha (MK) (Jomo 2011; Nyasa Times 2009). While the policy maintains Malawi’s ability to afford basic imports such as oil based fuel and fertilisers, it also results in reducing the competitiveness of exports in international markets. A related policy has been the reintroduction of fertiliser subsidy which, according to the OECD (2008, p. 402), allowed “*all rural households* to buy 50 kg of chemical fertiliser for MK 900.00...approximately a quarter of the retail price” in 2006/2007. In subsequent years the subsidy has risen, and in the 2008/2009 growing year, 1.7 million beneficiaries obtained fertiliser at a cost of 800MK — at a total cost to the government of MK 29 billion (NASFAM No Date, p. 11). The 2008/2009 growing season coincided with a global spike in fertiliser prices and, as a result, the cost of the subsidy as a percentage of GDP rose from three and a half to 16 percent (Dorward and Chirwa 2011, p. 8) – although it later returned to the previous level.

The current government has also introduced minimum prices based on the cost of production for certain agricultural goods, including tobacco, maize, cotton and also rice (Khanje 2009, p. 5). While food supplies have been good in recent years, the cotton price of MK75 per Kg was rejected by international buyers, and in 2009 much of the crop was left standing in the fields (Langa 2010)¹⁸². This withdrawal of cotton buyers is likely to have contributed to a serious shortage of foreign exchange currency (FOREX). The most obvious symptom of this was a shortage of oil-based fuel types, including petrol, diesel and paraffin (The Daily Times 2009), which was subsequently estimated to have cost the economy some 727 million US dollars according to the Economic Association of Malawi (All Africa 2010). Overall, this shortage comes as a result of high spending, and although many see subsidies on fertiliser as a significant factor in achieving food security (OECD 2008; Riungu 2009, p. 401), the policy

¹⁸² Despite the minimum set prices, there still remains a considerable level of trading below the official level, for example in tobacco and cotton (Jomo 2010).

naturally strains government finances and depletes FOREX supplies (Governor of the Reserve Bank of Malawi quoted in Malawi News 2009, p. 8).

Thinking beyond fuel imports, Malawi holds trade deficits with most of regional and international trading partners and it is considered that the President has failed to achieve his promise to improve the country's trade balance (Chiyembekeza 2010). Indeed, there is still widespread need for Malawi to reduce reliance on external resources and to increase foreign exchange earnings through exports. According to a government official interviewed during fieldwork¹⁸³, the country needs to 'switch from being reliant on exports to generating export led economic growth... [which is acknowledged to] require diversification into non-traditional exports and also the building of endogenous capacity of Malawian producers'. The Malawi Export Production Council (MPEC) stated in February 2011 that a quick "diversification drive" into other agricultural goods was essential to reduce reliance on tobacco exports (Chiyembekeza 2011). Against this background, the chapter now returns to the history of NASFAM and its involvement in fair trade and the marketing of Kilombero rice to Scotland.

History of the National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi: An emerging commercial interest in fair trade

The National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM) was developed in 1997 by USAID in response to the liberalisation of the tobacco sector during the 1990s¹⁸⁴. While the expectation was that liberalisation would provide a mechanism for evening out income distribution, in reality smallholder farmers still faced problems in accessing the opportunities offered through deregulation. According to a NASFAM representative, smallholder farmers had difficulties in producing good quality leaf and found themselves with little individual bargaining power against large buyers¹⁸⁵. NASFAM was set up to offer a collective voice for farmers, to allow them to lobby on policy issues, and to help smallholder farmers access the markets in the same way as commercial operators. Ultimately, NASFAM promotes the idea that the

¹⁸³ Interview with Government Representative 4/11/2009.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009.

farmers should ‘take farming as a business’ in order to develop livelihood portfolios and increase their standards of welfare¹⁸⁶: their motto is that ‘the future belongs to the organised’.

Over time, USAID and other donors funding the work of NASFAM have aimed to reduce the emphasis on tobacco production as well as render the organisation more independent and self-sustaining¹⁸⁷. According to senior figures in the organisation, this situation has led NASFAM to focus on business management principles and as part of this process, NASFAM became an incorporated entity in 1998, with ownership held by its 100,000 smallholder farmer members themselves (NASFAM No Year, p. 3). Within this national structure, farmers form clubs of between 10 to 20 members, which come together in groups of 14 to form Management Association Committees (MACs). Several MACs then comprise a Local Association (NASFAM No Year, p. 3). All Associations are registered as separate co-entities and provide the primary hubs for agricultural extension¹⁸⁸. The national organisation is run as a trust and each level or organisation elects representatives to the next tier, and ultimately each Association sends representatives to the national board. Within the organisation each member has one vote. It is on this basis that NASFAM claims to be “founded on the principles of collective action and...democratically governed by its members” (NASFAM No Year, p. 2). For a visual representation of NASFAM’s structure and power flows see Figure 4 below.

Alongside the membership structure, professional managers and administrators are employed to undertake the day-to-day running of the organisation. This component of NASFAM is comprised of a national secretariat based in the head office in Lilongwe, with a northern and southern regional office, and then permanent staff in each Association office – which include an Association Business Manager, Field Officers (extension workers) and administrative support staff.

In the year 2000 the secretariat was divided into two divisions: NASFAM Commercial, which is a Limited Liability Company responsible for business

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Francis Chiwaya 30/11/2009. Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009. Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009.

operations, marketing inputs to and buying produce from members; and NASFAM Development, a registered trust, which coordinates associated social projects (NASFAM No Year, p. 3). The aim of this move has been to facilitate independence by the commercial operations and thus prevent the charge of market distortion: “Because NASFAM Commercial is registered as a for profit company, it cannot touch donor money”¹⁸⁹.

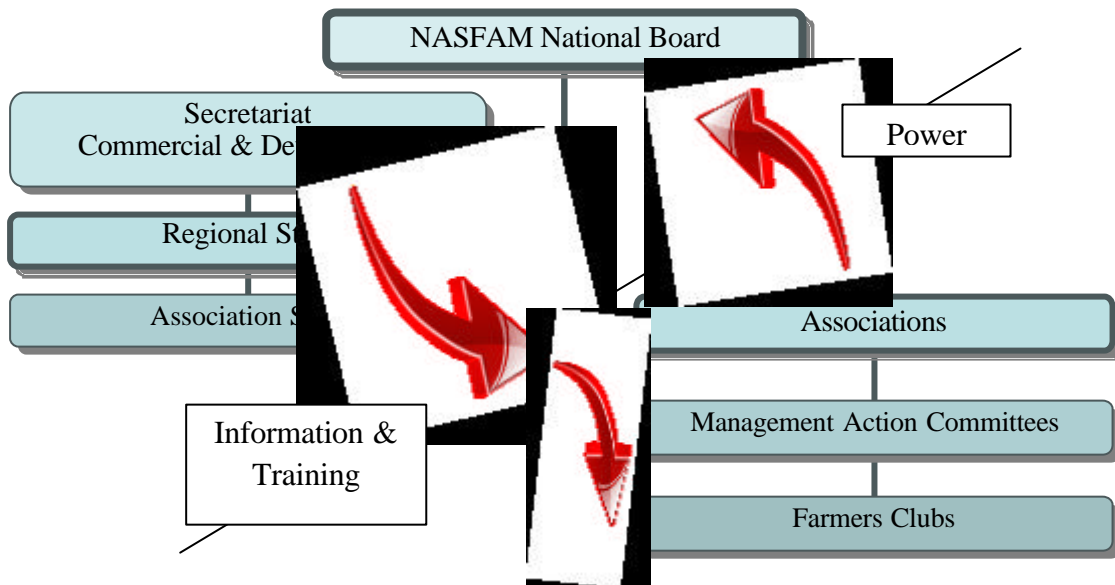


Figure 4: Theoretical Structure and Operation of NASFAM

Overall, NASFAM offers a number of services to its members, and a primary function of the commercial operation is to provide a guaranteed market for members’ crops. The organisation now pays farmers for their produce when they take delivery, as opposed to making them wait until goods have been sold on to further buyers¹⁹⁰. At the same time, NASFAM undertakes other work that is considered to promote the ability of members to “take farming as a business”¹⁹¹. At the beginning of the growing season, farmers are distributed seed under a credit arrangement for the primary crop that they grow. In the case of rice distributed to members of KSFA at the time of fieldwork, each member was allocated 20 Kg of rice seed, and would be expected to return 40Kg of rice at the end of the season – in order to maintain and expand the stock. The reason behind this intervention is to promote the sustainability of farming,

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Richard Petauchere 03/12/2009.

¹⁹⁰ Interview with KSFA Employee 12/12/2009.

¹⁹¹ This perspective was reflected by a wide number of interviewees.

primarily because it is common for poor households to consume all their rice in the hungry season, and thus not have the means to replant the following year¹⁹².

Another function of the professional employees of NASFAM is to provide training through educational modules that are developed by the national secretariat and then passed down through regional management to the individual Associations¹⁹³. From this point, information is disseminated by resident Field Officers to a selected group of farmers who then act as farmer-to-farmer trainers¹⁹⁴. Training modules cover the basic skills such as “Good Agricultural Practice” and “Gross Margin Analysis”¹⁹⁵. Training also focuses on issues of environmental sustainability by teaching agro-forestry and conservation agriculture, as well as those of gender, HIV/Aids and child labour sensitivity training¹⁹⁶. In addition, Field Officers are charged with delivering project-specific initiatives organised by NASFAM Development and funded by external organisations such as the European Union¹⁹⁷.

In order to fund its general operations and reinforce the concept of a member organisation each club contributes 4,000 MK per annum as a membership fee. Commenting on this situation, one of the Field Officers at the Kaporo Association said that:

“This thing [gesturing to the office in which he was sitting], it’s owned by farmers, so the owner of the association are farmers, so the farmers have to pay their staffs, because it is farmers who employ us, so it belongs to the farmers and the farmers...have a board, so they have that sense of ownership to say this thing is ours. So actually, that money helps for mobility of the association, although it is not enough, but other funds come from head office; our salaries they come from head office”¹⁹⁸.

¹⁹² Interview with Francis Chiwaya 30/11/2009. Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009. Interview with senior NASFAM representative 28/11/2009. Interview with KSFA Employee 12/12/2009.

¹⁹³ Interview with Francis Chiwaya 30/11/2009. Interview with senior NASFAM representative 28/11/2009. Interview with John Masangali 10/12/2009.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Francis Chiwaya 30/11/2009. Interview with senior NASFAM representative 28/11/2009. Interview with John Masangali 10/12/2009.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with senior NASFAM representative 28/11/2009.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with senior NASFAM representative 28/11/2009. Interview with John Masangali 10/12/2009.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Francis Chiwaya 30/11/2009.

Indeed, NASFAM Commercial pays for the professional staff and covers administrative costs. In order to finance these expenses, the Commercial division sells on the accumulated produce of its members for a higher price. For this reason,

“the support from head office to the Associations is still on the higher side, but the thinking is, over time, the support should be reducing; the associations should be developing their own revenues so the support from head office to the association should be reducing to the time when associations are independent”¹⁹⁹.

According to its General Manager, NASFAM Commercial broke even for the first time in 2005, “with the first real profit” emerging in 2007²⁰⁰. In 2008 profit was about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and in 2009 the prediction was a surplus of three hundred or three hundred and fifty thousand. However, at the time of fieldwork it was impossible to “completely de-link the development and the commercial operations as revenue generation has not been enough to remove donor funding”²⁰¹. This situation is partly caused by the fact that the profits are, in the view of one interviewee, still coming “from the wrong side: the tobacco and the fertiliser [sales], which means that we are subsidising the commodity sales and value addition”²⁰².

With this in mind, the Commercial Manager is responsible for ensuring the smooth running of the tobacco operations but also to introduce diversification initiatives, for example by “send[ing] tobacco farmers to grow sunflower, because we have established the market, we have established the processing etc”²⁰³. Indeed, one of the functions of NASFAM is to “promote... diversification away from dependency on maize and tobacco, and thus support production and marketing of crops such as groundnuts, chilli, rice, soya beans, sunflower and others as appropriate to market demand” (NASFAM No Year, p. 2)²⁰⁴. As a concrete example, at the Kaporo association one of the Field Officers emphasises that although maybe 70 percent of members’ output is rice

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009. It was noted by an anonymous KSFA employee that the strategic plan required their association to be independent by 2011.

²⁰⁰ Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009.

²⁰¹ Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009.

²⁰² Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009.

²⁰³ Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009.

“We also advise them to diversify into groundnuts and the tobacco, so that during the times when we experience low rainfall that at least farmers should not suffer. Because as you know....rice requires a lot of water, it’s a crop that needs a lot of water as compared to tobacco and maybe maize and groundnuts”²⁰⁵.

As well as local diversification strategies, NASFAM is also concerned with varying agricultural production at the national level away from tobacco²⁰⁶. This strategy echoes that of the National Government²⁰⁷ and responds to wider criticism of the liberalisation policies that increased reliance for both individual households and the country as a whole on a capricious and oligopolistic tobacco market (Tsutomu 2009). This policy is also increasingly important given that international donors are retracting from support of tobacco projects as competition increases due to shrinking markets in richer countries (Tobin and Knausenberger 1998)²⁰⁸.

For this reason the Kaporo Smallholder Farmers’ Association (KSFA), located in the north of the country and whose 3,848 members (broken into 215 clubs and 58 MACs in the 2008/09 season²⁰⁹) concentrate on the production of Kilombero rice, has been of particular interest to NASFAM’s management. A representative of Imani Development noted that even “when NASFAM set it up...[Kilombero rice] was always looked at, as being an export crop”²¹⁰. Even before a question was asked to the General Manager of NASFAM’s Commercial Division, he began to complain about the shortage of FOREX in the country, noting the considerable detriment to both the national economy and the operations of his organisation. He continues:

²⁰⁵ Interview with Francis Chiwaya 30/11/2009. The Association has also invested in acting as a distributor or the national soft drinks chain SOBO; a strategy that fits well with the observation that high incomes tend to come from off-farm opportunities facilitated by the necessary education and skills to be self-employed (See Orr 2000, p. 360).

²⁰⁶ This outlook reflects the views of those who identify the need to locate high value cash crop exports, other than tobacco burley, which could be grown by smallholder producers (Kydd 1989, p. 349; Orr 2000).

²⁰⁷ Interview with Government Representative 4/11/2009.

²⁰⁸ Indeed, towards the end of 2010 there has been specific concern in Malawi over the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) which has been signed by 170 countries and the European Union (Reuters Africa 2010); and has led to the discussion of "guidelines" to ban burley variety of tobacco which goes into the cigarette tobacco preferred by smokers in most Western markets.

²⁰⁹ Figurers obtained from official KSFA records.

²¹⁰ Interview with Murdoch Gatward 22/06/2009.

“Yes the FOREX needs sorting out, by exporting more rice to Scotland! That’s one of the reasons that we want to make it work...I mean, we are yet to get the market figures, but for argument sake if Scotland imports 10,000 tons of rice and we supplied 20 percent of that, that would be quite an interesting market, in terms of the numbers of farmers that we can serve and the value of the FOREX that we can generate. So we need to move away from the traditional exports, tobacco 500, 600 million dollars, that is more than half of the FOREX, I think, and a sane country should be running away from that situation. We can still maintain it at 600 million but that shouldn’t be 50 percent of our exports. We need to look at how we can create a 300 million export, a 200 a 100 etc”²¹¹.

One of the constraints on the operation of NASFAM is that all their agricultural products are bulk commodities and traditionally only competitive on the basis of price²¹². However, even physically “identical products” can be “differentiated” to become unique “goods” if they are socially constructed in a way that resonates with a particular consumer (Callon et al. 2002). This is clearly recognised by the commercial management, and indeed others have also noted that certain projects have “enabled NASFAM associations to use grades and standards as a tool for product differentiation” (Siambi et al. 2007, p. 124). Specifically, in terms of the Kilombero rice, NASFAM believes it already has a natural advantage as it has “got a story behind it: small scale farmers behind a rift valley lake, where the dinosaurs used to live, you can create a good story, you can brand it”²¹³.

Furthermore, while Scotland is the first market in which NASFAM hopes to promote Kilombero rice, this is also seen as a means to an end: “If you can supply to Scotland it means that you have met the right quality conditions, etc, it means that you can easily go elsewhere to sell as well”²¹⁴. This view is also shared by Imani Development where Scotland is viewed as a learning experience which will enable NASFAM to then target other European and international markets. One of Imani’s Directors explained that the project is about “looking at the broader export potential through

²¹¹ This perspective is supported by the Malawian government (noted on page 138) that greater exports are needed to improve the availability of foreign exchange and also shared by an anonymous employee of KSFA.

²¹² Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009.

²¹³ Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009.

²¹⁴ Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009.

Scotland, Scotland being a conduit through which they can do some learning and get things into a market first of all”²¹⁵.

It is this overall strategy to increase exports through differentiation and diversification that has led NASFAM to be interested in the fair trade market²¹⁶. Indeed, a representative commented that “fair trade was viewed as one of the other sources of revenues for smallholder farmers...to generate extra income for either the association or the community”²¹⁷. This is a view shared by other international marketing experts in Malawi²¹⁸ as well as the senior management at Imani. For example, when discussing the *Trade Connections* project (see previous chapter), it was noted that within the wider agenda to build supply chains between Scotland and Malawi “obviously fair trade provides a great market angle”²¹⁹.

Under this motivation, NASFAM first became involved with fair trade when the organisation identified the opportunity to obtain FLO certification for groundnuts: and indeed, the CEO of NASFAM feels that they would have never entered the British market if it were not for the opportunity offered by fair trade²²⁰. In 2003, NASFAM Commercial began the application to certify the Mchinji Area Smallholder Farmers Association (MASFA) as a producer cooperative and itself as a registered Fairtrade exporter (Fairtrade Foundation 2008b WS)²²¹. With certifications being ratified in 2004, MASFA sent its first shipment of 64 metric tons of groundnuts to the UK in 2005; and subsequently 36 metric tons in 2006, 450 metric tons in 2007 and was expected to have sent around 1,170 metric tons in 2008²²².

As is established in the existing literature on fair trade (see Chapter Two), the volume of goods sold under certified conditions has certainly affected the level of benefit

²¹⁵ Interview with Senior IMANI Representative 22/06/2009.

²¹⁶ Given the centrality of diversification to the involvement of NASFAM in fair trade, the case study has great potential to contribute empirical material to the debate on fair trade governance and diversification (Sidwell 2008; Smith 2009b) as noted in the literature review above.

²¹⁷ Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009.

²¹⁸ Interview with Nicholas Evans 24/11/2009.

²¹⁹ Interview with Senior IMANI Representative 22/06/2009.

²²⁰ Presentation by Dybon Chiabonga at the Big Food Debate: Fair Trade, Sustainable Food and Climate Change in a panel of Value Chain Upgrading.

²²¹ Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009.

²²² Interview with Richard Petauchere 03/12/2009.

perceived by NASFAM representatives²²³. However, one of the commercial staff commented, that in general, certification has been beneficial in providing market access and generating additional revenue through the Social Premium system²²⁴. Indeed, the Commercial Manager went as far to say that because

“fair trade is a very important market, the brand recognition side, if you are supplying to fair trade in Europe, any other conventional buyer will know that you are able to comply with the standards and that you are probably not able to cheat the farmers, otherwise Fairtrade would end up deregistering you, so, it’s an endorsement of good business practices that benefit farmers, and therefore, even if it doesn’t pay for itself, on its own, I feel it is a worthwhile expenditure, and to join the Fairtrade to stay there and to grow with Fairtrade”²²⁵.

On the basis of this experience and opinion, NASFAM Commercial subsequently sought FLO certification for other Associations – particular one at Mzimba, which also produces groundnuts. However, at the time of fieldwork it was noted that while this Association was in theory eligible for certification, there was not currently the funds to pay the necessary fees. The Commercial Manager explained that “we have an association, a very productive association—we just don’t have on any of the budgets around 3,000 Euros to certify them. We have already paid a bit for the audit, if we don’t certify this year we have to start from scratch”. This view is supported by other interviews conducted in Malawi²²⁶ that in some situations FLO certification is prohibitively expensive, time consuming and complex, especially for small farmers.

The inability to certify the Association at Mzimba raises a wider issue for the NASFAM administration about the cost of FLO certification – an issue that has attracted strong criticism in the literature (see Chapter Two). In reference to the case of Mzimba, a senior manager in NASFAM’s Development wing explains:

“We did everything but the certification fees are quite high and management was of the view that it is like we are subsidising fair trade. When you analyse it you realise that NASFAM is paying a lot of...the costs regarding Fairtrade,

²²³ Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009. Interview with Richard Petauchere 03/12/2009.

²²⁴ Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009.

²²⁵ Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009.

²²⁶ Interview with Anonymous Stakeholder 16/11/2009.

and yes the farmer members maybe benefiting in one way or another, but from a corporate point of view we are subsidising Fairtrade²²⁷.

The General Manager of the Commercial division puts the problems differently by suggesting that the system

“acts as if you are telling somebody without shoes, ok, I can get you shoes later on, but can you give me your slip-ons. So the guy has to look around for the money to buy the slip-ons, so when they now donate the slip-ons, they are now promised a pair of shoes”²²⁸.

This situation appears to be widespread in Malawi and an independent consultant working in the country recounted that:

“Over the past months I would still see the Fairtrade Foundation or FLO certification as a big dominant figure, and in a way, it has been a very big challenge to work round that big block staring at you all the time”.

Indeed, the Imani representative goes on to note that the influence exerted by the Fairtrade Foundation in promoting the use of FLO Fairtrade certification has produced tensions of interest at the national level as well – and it is to this wider context that the chapter now turns.

The Varying Interpretations of Fair Trade: The wider Malawian context

While public criticism of fair trade has highlighted the concentration of FLO certification in Latin America and particularly Mexico (Sidwell 2008, p. 11), the Fairtrade Foundation has specifically sought to increase the numbers of African groups certified by the FLO (Fairtrade Foundation 2006, p. 3; FLO 2007c, p. 19). In order to facilitate this, there has been significant investment in administrative and network infrastructure in Africa.

²²⁷ Interview with Richard Petauchere 03/12/2009.

²²⁸ Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009. The Commercial Manager goes on to say, “so, I wish the barriers to entry were less. Register now, pay later is an option...you join but you pay us later so we sign, 3,000 Euros, when we start trading, 1000 Euros per year...we are trying to help these farmers that are far away, we have broken down motor cycles, fuel problems, no electricity etc, to get 3000 Euros is a big issue to us. Because that will not have been budgeted for using the big Norwegian budget, because we are risking loosing, because the Norwegians will say, we give you money for HIV aids, and now you are diverting it to Fairtrade certification”.

According to a senior representative of the African Fairtrade Network (AFN)²²⁹, these developments started with a grassroots initiative of East African coffee growers in 2003-2004, who began to communicate as a means to strengthen their voice in the FLO community²³⁰. As was noted in Chapter Two, in order to have their interests considered, certified producers have found it necessary to be organised²³¹. In this early stage the Vice-Chair of FLO's Board of Directors feels that "the networks have been almost sort of virtual, they haven't had any operational role"²³². However, from here the networks were expanded to give them operational capacity. According to the Fairtrade Foundation (2003, p. 7), they set up the East African Fairtrade Network – comprising producers in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. A formal West African Network for West and North Africa appeared in November 2005, In August 2006 the Eastern African Network was formalised and the Southern African Network launched in October 2007 (Fairtrade Foundation 2007b WS). Alongside this process of regional formations, the overarching AFN was set up in 2004 and formally constituted in 2005 (AFN 2005). Later in 2008, a Comic Relief grant allowed the development of local offices from which to administer the organisation²³³ as well as the employment of a Director and a number of other staff²³⁴.

While some have argued that the development of FLO's networks is more orientated towards standards conformity than towards their participation in standards setting (Berghe 2006, p. 8), the official aims of these network are three fold: to provide a forum for discussion and the sharing of best practice among producers; to enable "the perspective of the member producers and workers to feed into the governance system of Fairtrade Labelling and international trade debates" (Fairtrade Foundation 2007b WS); and to expand the number of African producers certified under the FLO system (Fairtrade Foundation 2008a, p. 4; Law 2006). While the third function specifically prioritises the promotion of FLO certification, the second role of the networks in feeding into FLO governance also potentially limits the discussion and sharing of

²²⁹ Since fieldwork was conducted, the AFT has been renamed to Fairtrade Africa. Although, for easy of presentation, the organisation is still referred to as AFN in this thesis.

²³⁰ Interview with Ian Bretman 29/04/2010.

²³¹ Interviews with Benjamin Gatland and Marcela Guerrero Casas 26/05/2010.

²³² Interview with Ian Bretman 29/04/2010.

²³³ Interviews with Benjamin Gatland and Marcela Guerrero Casas 26/05/2010.

²³⁴ Interview with Ian Bretman 29/04/2010.

knowledge that might be expected. Indeed, while the constitution of the AFN does mention fair trade organisations not certified under the FLO system, as well as the fair trade movement in general, the primary aims of the network explicitly refer to those that are FLO certified. Furthermore, while all Fairtrade certified organisations in the region have automatic “Core Membership” rights, others – who support the principles of fair trade but are not FLO certified – are only able to join as Associate Members (Fairtrade Foundation 2007b WS; Law 2006, p. 1). While this makes sense in fulfilling the function of the network as a feedback mechanism on FLO policy²³⁵, it suggests that discussion and debate will centre on this particular certification system.

It is also the intention that FLO affiliated regional networks will be more fully connected to individual producers through the development of national initiatives such as those developed in Latin America (see CLAC No Date). At the time of fieldwork, there were networks in Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and, of fundamental importance to this research, also Malawi. The idea is that the country networks elect representatives to the regional boards, all of which have further elections for two representatives each to make up the pan-African Board²³⁶. Malawi is of particular importance as it has been identified by the Fairtrade Foundation as a test ground for such an initiative (Fairtrade Foundation 2008a, p. 4), possibly because of the additional objective to stimulate more Fairtrade certified production in the country²³⁷. For this reason, the Foundation provided seed financing for a national network, as well as funding for a FLO Liaison Officer to be based in the country’s capital, Lilongwe²³⁸. To begin this process, the Fairtrade Foundation funded a two day workshop in November 2008²³⁹. According to one informant:

“The idea was just to get producers in contact with one another... just get the producers to meet each other, to talk to each other, be able to interact, share ideas, best practices, experiences. If they have standards issues that they find common amongst themselves...If there are support opportunities available we can then say look here you have access to all the Fairtrade certified producer groups”²⁴⁰.

²³⁵ Indeed, it was noted by a representative of the AFN that this was the primary reason for the development of this network. Interview with Marcela Guerrero Casas 26/05/2010.

²³⁶ Interview with Benjamin Gatland 26/05/2010.

²³⁷ Interview with Nicholas Evans 24/11/2009.

²³⁸ Interview with MFN Representative 17/11/2009.

²³⁹ Interview with MFN Representative 17/11/2009.

²⁴⁰ Anonymous Interviewee.

However, as it happens, those involved have taken the network in a more formal direction. The view of the informant is that:

“We didn’t really intend for it to become this big, complicated: have general assemblies and AGMs and have election and board members. But that’s what the guys wanted and we didn’t stop them. I mean, we wouldn’t want to curb the enthusiasm and cap the development of the network but that is just the way it was done”²⁴¹.

During the initial session funded by the Fairtrade Foundation, “the participants nominated a Task Force of representatives who had the specific task of defining and mapping out how the network would become operational”²⁴². Even at this stage one of the major concerns was what type of fair trade the proposed network would include²⁴³. As was discussed in Chapter Two, the umbrella term ‘fair trade’ can imply a huge variety of practice – and specifically it was noted that as well as FLO, the WFTO also provides membership and accreditation services. This dual possibility was manifest in the development of Malawian network as the original name of the network was to incorporate the word “Fairtrade” – the Trademarked signifier of FLO certification. However, this precipitated significant objections from members who saw this as an indication that the community would be solely concerned with FLO’s interpretation of fair trade²⁴⁴ – and not the broad values of fair trade or parallel accreditation systems such as that offered by the WFTO.

This problem arises specifically because the African chapter of WFTO, Cooperation for Fair Trade in Africa (COFTA), is also attempting to integrate producer groups into regional networks through the creation of national initiatives. In 2009 COFTA was composed of over 70 member organisations from 20 African countries, including Malawi – and for this reason, there have been aspirations for a COFTA associated national network in the country.

²⁴¹ Anonymous Interviewee.

²⁴² Taken from summary document written on the MFTN by the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

²⁴³ Interview with Andrew Parker 23/11/2009.

²⁴⁴ Interview with Benjamin Gatland 26/05/2010. Interview with COFTA Representative 25/11/2009. Interview with Andrew Parker 15/11/2009.

This interest in developing local connections to COFTA partly explains the concern that the proposed network in Malawi would not be solely relevant to FLO certified producers. Indeed, while the name of the network ultimately preserved discursive reference to fair trade as a more general concept, being named the Malawi Fair Trade Network, in 2009, the first AGM voted on the proposals for a Task Force, and to elect those who would oversee the implementation of the agreed objectives ²⁴⁵ . Subsequently, it was noted by one stakeholder, effort was made so that “each product category was represented”²⁴⁶:

Organisation	Product(s)	Certification
Mzuzu Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union	Coffee and Honey	FLO
Kasinthula Cane Growers Limited	Sugar	FLO
Satemwa Tea Estate	Tea	FLO
Eastern Outgrowers Trust	Tea	FLO
Kotton Development and Investments (sic)	Cotton	FLO

Figure 5: Make up of MFTN Board

However, such a view of fair trade as being divided into product categories derives primarily from FLO certification where such distinctions are made – in contrast to WFTO where there are not such official categorisations although differentiation between craft and food producers is acknowledged²⁴⁷ . Furthermore, while the network includes all the products in Malawi that are currently FLO certified, there is no representation on the board of an organisation that is either WFTO accredited or a member of COFTA – despite the fact that there was one candidate who was a representative of COFTA producers. While various individuals present at the meeting noted that this was a democratic decision²⁴⁸ , it was also pointed out that “at that initial meeting, it was predominantly FLO producers...[it] just so happened that there weren’t a lot of COFTA producers”²⁴⁹ .

²⁴⁵ Interview with MFN Representative 17/11/2009. Interview with Bernard Kaunda 28/11/2009.

²⁴⁶ Interview with MFN Representative 17/11/2009.

²⁴⁷ This point mainly derives from the author’s experiences of interactions with WFTO institutions, and particularly at the COFTA regional conference in Swaziland.

²⁴⁸ Interview with Benjamin Gatland 26/05/2010. Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009. Interview with MFN Representative 17/11/2009.

²⁴⁹ Interview with Benjamin Gatland 26/05/2010.

Unfortunately, this eventual exclusion of the COFTA representative has generated division among the fair trade community. According to one of the stakeholders, “they try to come in to say that we have to have a Malawi Fair Trade Network, let’s encompass all the fair trade groupings. But people say, no, this was a vote, if you are out, you are out”²⁵⁰. When the individual who stood to represent COFTA was asked about these events, they replied that they had not been included in the network, which was very much about FLO certification²⁵¹. For this reason, they would set up a separate initiative, called the National Fair Trade Network, as a means to redress the perceived bias and involve other groups such as the Economic Justice Organisation²⁵²: “We want to move as a voice, rather than a standard”²⁵³, they remarked.

In contrast with this version of the events, one informant suggested that “COFTA had already planned a trip the week after [the FLO meeting] to Malawi, and they’ll say they were planning on linking into our group, but I think if that was the case, they would have come a week earlier”. Alternatively, another interviewee felt that the formation of the Board was played out in the shadow of “sentiments from [the] African Fairtrade Network, which is FLO, that probably the COFTA members are not real fair trade organisations, and should not join”.

After the election of the Board of the MFTN, seven individuals met in October 2008 to elect a Chairperson. According to some present at the meeting, another significant issue discussed was again the relationship of the network to WFTO accreditation and COFTA membership²⁵⁴. Indeed, the NASFAM representative noted that “this is what the Malawi network has to decide: to listen to FLO or to say that no, fair trade is fair trade as we are establishing value chains of small scale based farmers and weavers etc, that is fine, that is what we have to decide”²⁵⁵. This broader view is expressed by a prominent stakeholder of MFTN, who noted that “there are lots of forms of fair trade, it’s not only FLO, it’s not only COFTA, there are others as well. So I think it was a

²⁵⁰ Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009.

²⁵¹ Interview with COFTA Representative 25/11/2009.

²⁵² Interview with COFTA Representative 25/11/2009.

²⁵³ Interview with COFTA Representative 25/11/2009. Interview with Benjamin Gatland 26/05/2010.

²⁵⁴ Interview with MFN Representative 17/11/2009.

²⁵⁵ Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009.

problem, a misunderstanding from the very beginning, but we have always believed, the network, is embracing all types of fair trade”²⁵⁶.

In this way, the meaning of fair trade can not only be seen as heterogeneous in nature, but also embedded in a process of development and change. Some stakeholders note that developing the MFTN has already started to open up the issue of what it might mean to be involved in the movement. Asked about references to WFTO accreditation or COFTA membership, one member of the network remarked that:

“At first we didn’t even understand how these others [like COFTA] were meshing in to the whole [fair trade] set up, but after the first meeting, and then the second meeting is where we got a chunk of information that we need to put these things together. Otherwise, previously, we were so blind to it [the existence of COFTA membership]”.

A prominent stakeholder in the network stressed that an even bigger issue is helping stakeholders to understand “what each type of fair trade represents, what are their values and...how do they fit into the wider fair trade umbrella, so that no type of fair trade should probably not be undermining the other in anyway”²⁵⁷. However, a number of interviewees who have been involved with the MFTN either demonstrated or confessed to have a limited knowledge of COFTA membership. Most pertinently, one individual stated that “when I talk, I talk about FLO, because that’s what I’m very familiar with. I’m not very familiar with the COFTA system”; later they referenced the “COFTA inspector”, before checking, “if there is a COFTA inspector [that is]?”²⁵⁸.

Asked about the parallel development of networks across Africa, the WFTO President felt that the current situation between the WFTO and FLO “generates some jealousy”²⁵⁹:

²⁵⁶ Interview with MFN Representative 17/11/2009.

²⁵⁷ Interview with MFN Representative 17/11/2009. This is mirrored in testimony from a more senior FLO representative who notes “it is important that producers understand our standards and having some sense that it is right for them...[because] its not right for everybody”. Interview with Ian Bretman 29/04/2010.

²⁵⁸ This comment might also be read as a subtle highlight that that process of accreditation associated with COFTA might not be as rigorous as that administered by the FLO system.

²⁵⁹ Interview with Paul Myers 26/05/2010.

“COFTA as you can tell here [at the regional meeting in Swaziland]...it’s not perfect, it’s not complete, but it has a strong network across Africa, what a positive thing. FLO until very recently hasn’t had a network in Africa, but they got a lot of money: 12 million from DfID or something and something from Comic Relief, and they’ve got to spend it on something. So what are they doing? Creating a network, the AFN in Africa. Maybe there are good reasons for it”.

From the FLO perspective, there have been good reasons for this development. Traditionally FLO and WFTO have concentrated on different sectors. As WFTO/COFTA affiliated producers tend to be craft based, and FLO certification mainly applies to agricultural goods, the two groups have often had totally different needs and agendas²⁶⁰. As discussed above, FLO certified producers need to feedback to FLO especially about standards:

“FLO have minimum prices which need revising, FLO have liaison officers which need chasing up, they have auditors which they need clarification from.... that has nothing to do with the WFTO...So the needs from a producer level are different, and there are very different markets as well”²⁶¹.

Another AFN representative reflects on their time with another national network where it proved difficult to maintain connections between many COFTA affiliated craft organisations and a few FLO certified food producers²⁶². Speaking about a FLO certified fruit company, the representative discussed a product design workshop, which while “in theory all members should have benefited...the reality is what has [this company] got to do with a handcraft design?”.

The president of the WFTO agrees that “while we both [WFTO and FLO], as organisations have legitimate parent rights to fair trade, we don’t automatically fit together very well”²⁶³. Indeed, while WFTO representatives do not see why FLO has attempted to replicate the organisation’s networks (above), FLO representatives are not comfortable with the WFTO decision to develop a product label (in the form of the SFTMS – discussed in Chapter Two), as they see this as replication of their

²⁶⁰ Interview with Benjamin Gatland 26/05/2010.

²⁶¹ Interview with Benjamin Gatland 26/05/2010.

²⁶² Interview with Marcela Guerrero Casas 26/05/2010.

²⁶³ Interview with Paul Myers 26/05/2010.

system²⁶⁴. While most interviewees felt that cooperation was better in some areas than others (for example local advocacy)²⁶⁵, there was a general feeling that “we can’t figure out how to work together very well, because we both have our own models, we have our own goals, we have our own partners and relationships, and some of it just doesn’t fit together very well: like apples and oranges”²⁶⁶. Reflecting on the different interests of the two groups, some interviewees saw the separation as a natural and acceptable thing as long as personal relationships were able to reduce the “suspicion or mistrust or these subtle misconceptions and rumours or corridor conversations”²⁶⁷; others, on the other hand, feel that “we haven’t quite decided, agreed between us yet if that [separation] is ok”²⁶⁸.

While the macro actors confessed that they were unable to comment on specific situations, the Imani representative in Malawi feels that the FLO approach to fair trade is becoming dominant while others are being sidelined. Indeed, they go as far as to comment that:

“Maybe this is an ugly comparison to make...but as a Christian I would say I believe in 80 percent of what the Catholic church has to say, but, I think you have to protest sometimes, and say well you can’t just have that as the only voice on Christianity... there is almost the direct parallel in the fair trade debate. There is the monolith and then there are the dissenting voices, or alternative voices, and I don’t think they are even that dissenting, they are just saying well you are 80 percent right and here is the other 20 percent”.

Interviewer: “Especially when that other 20 percent concerns saying if you are getting into heaven or not?”

Imani Representative: “Exactly, exactly, yes, yes”.

Other interviewees alluded to this growing dominance in noting that those connected to FLO have prioritised the promotion of its certification in their contact with producer groups²⁶⁹. In this light, a COFTA representative notes that “it’s going to be

²⁶⁴ Interview with Ian Bretman 29/04/2010.

²⁶⁵ Interview with Paul Myers 26/05/2010. Marcela Guerrero Casas 25/05/2010

²⁶⁶ Interview with Paul Myers 26/05/2010

²⁶⁷ Interview with Benjamin Gatland 26/05/2010.

²⁶⁸ Interview with Paul Myers 26/05/2010.

²⁶⁹ Interview with Anonymous Stakeholder 16/11/2009, and as such provides evidence for the unsubstantiated comment of Janvry et al. (2010, p. 3) that local certifiers seek to maximise income by promoting certification as widely as they can.

about who shouts the loudest” in terms of which approach to fair trade is taken up by producers²⁷⁰. Responding to this idea, a senior FLO representative confessed to be “surprised in the sense that people were pushing certification”²⁷¹ and explained that:

“The Business Unit is actually quite jealous of its role in not being like a sales force for Fairtrade, it’s not our job to go out and sell Fairtrade to producers, it’s our job to try and go and understand producers’ contexts and if Fairtrade is right for them, then, help them access it”²⁷².

However, an independent actor noted:

“As an outsider I can understand why the WFTO fair trade crowd are so frustrated and do sort of agitate, although they say they don’t, they say no, no, no we are all trying to bring ourselves together... in reality they are agitating. ...well certainly in Malawi they are not trying to make friends with FLO Fairtrade... they jump on any little thing they can find where they [FLO] have slipped up or gone wrong, they go and bang them over the head with it, you know, that is not how you draw people together”²⁷³.

Speaking more practically, after noting the great benefits of FLO Fairtrade, this stakeholder concludes that “what worries me is that [th]is has given them a monopoly on fair trade and their policies and the way they work, especially from Germany from the standard setting side of it”²⁷⁴. On a similar note the Imani representative said “I think if people only see fair trade as FLO certification there is a great danger..., because I think it limits the number of products that can be considered in a fair trade relationship”. Indeed, it is this limitation that has emerged in the project that Imani are currently developing with NASFAM, and it is to the specific of this case that the chapter now turns²⁷⁵.

²⁷⁰ Interview with COFTA Representative 25/11/2009.

²⁷¹ Interview with Ian Bretman 29/04/2010.

²⁷² The interviewee also notes that Liaison Officers have been keen that their performance is not judged by the amount of new producers that they “sign up”. Interview with Ian Bretman 29/04/2010.

²⁷³ Interview with Anonymous Stakeholder 16/11/2009.

²⁷⁴ Interview with Anonymous Stakeholder 16/11/2009.

²⁷⁵ It should be noted however that the AFN are currently undertaking a strategic review as part of which changes are expected, possibly focusing on “product networks”. Interview with Benjamin Gatland 26/05/2010.

NASFAM and COFTA: A way around the problems of FLO?

While the formation of the Malawian Fair Trade Network has involved debate about which approaches to fair trade should be included, NASFAM is taking more concrete steps. The motivation for these actions comes partly from the perception of management that there are problems with the FLO system and not least from the high certification costs involved²⁷⁶. This situation has led NASFAM to consider alternative accreditation to provide legitimacy for a fair trade marketing strategy. Indeed, speaking about the problems of certifying the Mzimba groundnut Association, a member of the senior management notes that “fair trade is not only FLO, because at the moment we are trying to go maybe the route of COFTA, register with COFTA, because we find that to be a cheaper alternative”²⁷⁷. Indeed, it is the high cost of FLO certification that leads some to view WFTO membership and certification as an important contribution to the fair trade movement. Asked about the development of the SFTMS, the WTO President noted:

“The FLO Board said to me, why are you doing this? And I said well it’s for two reasons: one, no one offers anything that is available to certify crafts, not even FLO the best in the world, so they said ok well, we agree, and I said number two, our focus within WFTO is on small producers, you’re catering for the Starbucks and the Nestles and some others, and your cheapest versions costs a group \$4,000, and most of our people can’t even think about that, so it’s not affordable”²⁷⁸

While FLO and the Fairtrade Foundation see WFTO certification as a replication of the existing system, the WFTO president feels that FLO licensees will be concerned about the competition for their investments. It is also predicted that they will claim another certification system will cause confusion – and this has indeed been the case in statements from representatives of the Fairtrade Foundation (Director of Producer Relationships quoted by Dinkovski 2009). Pre-emptively responding to this position, the WFTO’s President says that “my response to them is a simple one because it

²⁷⁶ Interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009. Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009. Interview with Richard Petauchere 03/12/2009.

²⁷⁷ Interview with Richard Petauchere 03/12/2009.

²⁷⁸ Interview with Paul Myers 26/05/2010.

comes back to mission. You are not going to tell me that you are going to keep all these small WFTO producers out of the market, to protect your interests are you?”²⁷⁹.

Despite these discussions, even if NASFAM could afford to certify the production of Kilombero rice under the FLO system, this is understood by stakeholders to be difficult and currently impossible²⁸⁰. The reason for this is that while FLO have a Product Standard applicable to Small Farmers Organisations producing rice, not all Product Standards are currently available in all countries (see Chapter Two). In the case of rice, only producer groups located in Thailand, Laos, India and Egypt can readily apply for certification (FLO 2009a) and only for certain varieties grown under certain production methods. As a result, before KSFA or any organisation in Malawi could have their rice certified by FLO, it would first be necessary to arrange for the product standard to be extended to the country.

This issue of exclusion is something that has been addressed in the most recent Strategic Review, in which FLO recognised that “one of the challenges that we face is that there are a lot of producers around who don’t fit into the current model”²⁸¹. Indeed, this aim is acknowledged by a senior FLO representative as an issue of credibility in that FLO needs to extend its model from the one million producers that it currently includes, to more of the three billion people in the world living on less than two dollars a day²⁸². Even at the current time, however, this senior FLO representative feels that there “shouldn’t be a barrier now. In terms of things like minimum price, for a lot of the core commodities there is a global price. Where we do have national prices there is now a mechanism for setting that much more quickly”²⁸³. Questioned specifically about the limitation of rice certification to four countries, the Vice-Chair of FLO’s Board of Directors responds that “it’s not a barrier at all at the moment” as another method exists in which prices are set from a bilateral agreement between a northern buyer and a southern producer: “FLO doesn’t need to get in there and adjudicate when it’s a bilateral thing” the representative says, “what we do is we

²⁷⁹ Interview with Paul Myers 26/05/2010.

²⁸⁰ Interview with Andrew Parker 23/11/2009.

²⁸¹ Interview with Ian Bretman 29/04/2010.

²⁸² Interview with Ian Bretman 29/04/2010.

²⁸³ Interview with Ian Bretman 29/04/2010.

take that price and try to make sure the producer is happy”²⁸⁴. However, while this is the case in theory – and is supported by the FLO documents explaining the process of geographical extension – IMANI Development and NASFAM approached the local FLO Liaison Officer about initiating this process and no mention of this possibility was made. Indeed, the request was met with the response that nothing could be done until the next price review meeting, and no preparatory measures were suggested²⁸⁵.

Since the time of fieldwork in 2008, a number of stakeholders have brought pressure to bear on the FLO Liaison Officer through other FLO associated representatives (such as the AFN) to be more proactive in seeking the extension of the FLO rice standard²⁸⁶. While developing a Fairtrade minimum price through comparison with other countries where the standard is currently used was not appropriate, the method of working with an agreed price between buyer and seller is an option. However, at this point stakeholders are waiting on NASFAM management to operationalise this course of action. At the time of the last communication, there was some suggestion that NASFAM are resisting this avenue due to expected cost and uncertain returns in the initial trading period²⁸⁷.

Due to these issues, stakeholders in the Kilombero rice project see that their ability to market the produce as fair trade is limited despite the fact that it fulfils the core characteristics of such an approach to international trade (Just Trading Scotland no date)²⁸⁸. According to one of the Imani directors, the rice “is from smallholder farmers through a reputable smallholder organisation so the general framework is there”²⁸⁹. In this regard, and as mentioned above, it can be noted that farmers are democratically organised in an association through which they negotiate yearly prices with representatives of NASFAM Commercial. Asked about this, one of the Field Officers says that the process

“starts from us field staff...[as] we move around and...do cost of production analysis, so the information comes from farmers, how much have you spent on

²⁸⁴ Interview with Ian Bretman 29/04/2010.

²⁸⁵ Personal communication with an anonymous informant.

²⁸⁶ Personal communications with anonymous informants.

²⁸⁷ Personal communications with anonymous informants.

²⁸⁸ Interview with Senior IMANI Representative 22/06/2009. Interview with John Riches. Interview with Andrew Parker 23/11/2009.

²⁸⁹ Interview with Senior IMANI Representative 22/06/2009.

labour, how much have you spent on fertiliser, how much have you spent on when you are harvesting. So, we come up with a cost of production. That is when the NASFAM staff comes in and meet with the board members and they discuss, per hectare a farmer spent maybe 40 kwacha per KG, so what do you think the price should be”.

This procedure was also noted in the majority of the twenty interviews carried out with member farmers²⁹⁰. For example, one farmer commented that “we do sit down and count everything which we used on the farming, and we find the net, and try to calculate...how it is cost per KG”²⁹¹. At the next stage the club officials start “asking the members this year how much can we sell your rice, and one of the members who is on the board carries the message to the board”, and “the board of NASFAM comes to sit together so that we can make one decision, how much we are going to sell it [for]”²⁹². Since JTS have been purchasing rice from NASFAM, the prices paid to member farmers have been higher than those set by the Malawian government as a state initiative to increase the welfare of agricultural producers (see above)²⁹³.

Furthermore, what is known is that JTS pay NASFAM a price based on that arrived at in discussion between NASFAM Commercial and the member farmers²⁹⁴. At the time of fieldwork, this agreement was paying in excess of the FLO minimum price for rice coming from other countries²⁹⁵. In this way, at the macro level, price conditions in the value chain are similar to those under FLO certified alternatives – as even when products are FLO certified, there is no guarantee that individual farmers receive a higher price than selling to local alternatives (as was discussed in Chapter Two)²⁹⁶.

²⁹⁰ Out of 20 interviews with NASFAM member farmers, 19 were asked about the price setting procedure and 17 of them noted the process of negotiation. Two members referred to the price being dictated from the central office in Lilongwe.

²⁹¹ Interview with Farmer 10.

²⁹² Interview with Farmer 5.

²⁹³ Interview with John Riches 26/04/2011. Interview with senior NASFAM representative 28/11/2009.

²⁹⁴ Interview with John Riches 19/03/2009. Interview with Andrew Parker 23/11/2009. Interview with Joshua Varela 18/12/2009.

²⁹⁵ Interview with Andrew Parker 23/11/2009.

²⁹⁶ Unfortunately, research was not able to evaluate if price negotiation actually results in higher prices for NASFAM members – vis-à-vis selling into other formal and informal supply chains. Farmer interviews returned a mixed picture, greatly complicated by a number of issues. In the previous year, money for the purchase of rice was stolen and as a result, NASFAM employed an independent buyer to gather the produce the following season. However, the individual encountered problems raising capital and NASFAM reverted to using a member of the regional management; all of which took considerable time to organise and resulted in very late buying (interview with Kingsley Makiyoni 5/11/2009). Also, changing prices over the agricultural season and the reported falsification of weights and measures by other buyers (interview with Farmers 5, 7, 8, 10 & 12) leads to great complexity in interpreting farmers’ testimonies. Another issue is that farmers omit other benefits cited by NASFAM (interview

Stakeholders in the Kilombero rice project also consider adding as much value as possible in the country of origin as one of the main fair trade principles. According to an Imani representative, “fair trade is trade for the development of poorer countries” and “really it’s getting them through the first step and then they can take it on”²⁹⁷. Indeed, the representative goes on to say that

“A lot of emphasis on fair trade is your buyers working with suppliers and being in a relationship and taking the recognition that it’s not going to be a Tesco type model, where you pay you deliver and that’s it, [but] that it is a development process as well, so you are getting producers that need to have their hands held or have some kind of assistance to get to a place where they have entered the market and from there then hopefully they will be able to take things forward”.

Based on this understanding, Scottish partners have invested in new equipment including a new milling machine, de-stoner and a magnet to ensure the removal of any metallic matter, the installation of which was witnessed at the time of fieldwork²⁹⁸. At the current time, rice from KSFA is packaged and labelled at a processor in Blantyre, Malawi, although there are plans for an additional investment for a large processing plant in the capital, Lilongwe²⁹⁹. This will help as much of the retail value of the end product remain in Malawi, and at the time of fieldwork, testing undertaken in the UK showed that rice satisfied UK standards – although it was noted that further measures would be needed as grains were less aesthetically appealing than other rice imports³⁰⁰.

Because of these attributes, NASFAM, Imani Development and JTS feel they are justified in referring to their product as “fairly traded” and, given the barrier to the FLO system, have sought to have it recognised as such through the “easier option”³⁰¹

with Francis Chiwaya 30/11/2009, KSFA Employee 12/12/2009 and Farmer 8) – although the empirical evaluation of NASFAM services such as training, seed credit and a guaranteed market have fallen beyond the scope of this research due to the specific research questions.

²⁹⁷ Interview with Senior IMANI Representative 22/06/2009.

²⁹⁸ Interview with KSFA Employee 12/12/2009. Interview with John Riches 26/04/2011.

²⁹⁹ Interview with John Riches 26/04/2011.

³⁰⁰ The first container of rice was delivered via Cambridge where it underwent an SJS test to ensure compliance with European food safety standards and was not a substandard product that would be rejected by consumers. Interview with Andrew Parker 23/11/2009.

³⁰¹ Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009.

of COFTA membership³⁰². Having said this, there is some concern that “in the minds of the consumers...[COFTA membership] is not a well developed brand, and therefore, while it looks free, or mostly free to join, you may not get the full benefits of fair trade, unlike with the more recognised FLO brand”³⁰³. Such a perspective is supported by the view of a senior FLO representative who noted in general that “fair trade only works if consumers have trust in the offer”³⁰⁴ and was a concern of the WFTO President with the SFTMS³⁰⁵. For this reason, Imani are still keen to obtain FLO certification in the long run as “that is where the major market is”³⁰⁶. In the short term, however, NASFAM’s Commercial Manager has requested assurances from JTS that COFTA membership will provide a suitable marketing advantage, and further that the Scottish government recognise the system:

“We need our customer to say that COFTA is ok. If that is done then we will register immediately with COFTA, we will fill out the forms...If the answer is no, and the certifier is to be FLO, then we would ask John [Riches]’s help to register KSFA. If we have to pay back later then fine, but at the current levels of exports we cannot do FLO, we cannot manage to do FLO. That is our situation”³⁰⁷.

The concern that COFTA might not be as well recognised was echoed by a senior manager at a dedicated fair trade organisation in the UK, who, while acknowledging the problems of FLO, comments that “the challenge with all of these things when you are talking about consumer branding, is you know, people only have so much head space”³⁰⁸. However, as far as JTS are concerned it is important to obtain greater legitimacy for the sale of the rice product and on this basis have decided to support the COFTA membership. Indeed, given the target market, the Managing Director feels that COFTA membership would be adequate³⁰⁹ and this is largely echoed by the Imani representative:

“It is not necessarily likely that the products that we are marketing in Scotland will be ending up on a supermarket shelf... [and thus the rice doesn’t]

³⁰² Interview with anonymous KSFA employee 12/12/2009.

³⁰³ Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009.

³⁰⁴ Interview with Ian Bretman 29/04/2010.

³⁰⁵ Interview with Paul Myers 26/05/2010.

³⁰⁶ Interview with Senior IMANI Representative 22/06/2009.

³⁰⁷ Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009.

³⁰⁸ Interview with David McCollough 31/03/2011.

³⁰⁹ Interview with John Riches 19/03/2009

absolutely require a [FLO] Fairtrade logo if it is to stand a good chance of selling. We are going to be working with people who understand the Malawi relationship, church groups, schools' groups...and COFTA membership would be sufficient we felt, to demonstrate the fair trade credentials of those products"³¹⁰.

Some Conclusions

In the previous chapter it became apparent that the meaning of the term 'fair trade' is far from stable or given. Instead, the general concept of fair trade is being interpreted in a variety of ways both with international supply chains and in producer countries, connected to public procurement policy and practice.

Tracing the supply chain of Kilombero rice from East Dunbartonshire Local Authority in Scotland has revealed that this negotiation is also underway in Malawi. At the macro level, it is suggested by some that there is competition between representatives of FLO and WFTO to promote their particular approach to fair trade. The schism in the fair trade movement is perhaps most manifest in the failure of the COFTA representative to secure a place on the board of the National Fair Trade Network and the ensuing decision to initiate a separate group for COFTA members. In the view of one interviewee, the relationship between FLO and WFTO backed fair trade systems is more competitive than co-operative, and "it's going to be about who shouts the loudest"³¹¹ in terms of which version is taken on by practitioners.

In the specific case of NASFAM, and particularly KSFA, whose members produce Kilombero rice, strategic decisions are being made about which system of accreditation would be most suitable. Given the broader context, this approach can be interpreted as an effort to negotiate around the dominance of discourse which prioritises FLO certification – both within Malawi itself and also at the international level. This is because the structure and governance of NASFAM leads management to see fair trade as a natural marketing angle for the Kilombero rice, and the difficulty of obtaining FLO certification has led to an application for COFTA membership.

³¹⁰ Interview with Andrew Parker 23/11/2009. The Imani representative also mentions that "there were a lot of products that we had hoped to include in this project [to increase exports from Malawi and Scotland] that would be outside the FLO list as it were".

³¹¹ Interview with COFTA Representative 25/11/2009.

However, this decision has not been without concern, given the perception that the target market in Scotland might not be as sensitive to WFTO accreditation as is required to render this approach effective. With this international context in mind, the next chapter draws together findings in both Scotland and Malawi to more overtly suggest that one of the key themes in the fair trade movement is the negotiation of meaning about what exactly should be involved in fair trade practice.

Chapter Six: Public Procurement, Fair Trade and Sustainable Development

“Governance...continues to be a deeply contested, socially embedded process, subject to an array of political and economic constraints, personal convictions and path-dependent contingencies” (Bacon 2010, p. 112).

The previous two chapters presented empirical findings from both Scotland and Malawi which further supports the argument made in previous chapters, that the meaning of the term fair trade is both multifaceted and fluid. This final chapter of the thesis now reinterprets this material in the light of the constructivist theory of language (presented in Chapter Three) and argues specifically that the meaning of fair trade is embedded in a multi-sited process of negotiation and contestation.

Referring back to the existing literature on fair trade, while the negotiation of the meaning has not featured prominently, there has been implicit suggestion of such a process. Looking specifically at FLO institutions, some scholars (Bacon 2010; Jaffee 2010; Renard 2005) have identified that various interest groups have directly contested the specifics of FLO certification: such as price and which institutions can be certified in which produce categories (see Chapter Two for more details). However, this chapter aims to provide empirically grounded analysis that supports the assertion in the literature that there are also wider communities that “debate, and create new meanings within fair trade” (Bacon 2010, p. 140). Indeed, tracing the integration of fair trade governance and public procurement in Scotland reveals that the meaning of the term is being actively negotiated in a variety of contexts. This adds important empirical support to the further argument that despite the problems and limitations identified with fair trade as an approach to supply chain governance, in contrast to other certification approaches, fair trade is more than a top down organisational system (Bacon 2010, p. 140).

Importantly, in contributing to this aim, the study has moved past the isolated examination of either northern or southern interests – and has involved the two

spheres through empirical investigation of a specific supply chain that links them³¹². Likewise, analysis has been extended beyond the supply chain and even supply network approaches (as discussed in Chapter Two).

Investigation reveals that the negotiation of what legitimately counts as fair trade activity is, in fact, a transnational multi-sited process – the understanding of which allows important critical reflection on the automatic association between fair trade (and specifically FLO governance) and the aims and objectives of sustainable development. Despite the diffuse and global nature of the negotiation process, there are still significant power relationships emanating from FLO, its NLI and producer country networks. Ultimately, however, it is argued that the process of negotiation prevents the development of a literal form of “Fairtrade absolutism” (Mohan 2010, p. 94) as networks of meaning can develop around the edge of FLO domination; and as a result provide alternative markets and supply chains through which producers can promote their interests.

In order to present this analysis, it is suggested that a number of discrete yet interrelated communities can be identified in which the meaning of fair trade is being actively negotiated by stakeholders. This argument draws on interpretative policy analysis literature, and particularly analytical concepts such as communities of meaning, communities of practice and discourse communities (see Chapter Three). However, in place of identifying groups primarily on the basis of shared meaning (Yanow 2000, p. 27), specific communities are highlighted through institutional cohesion (for example, as a collection of individuals working on a single self-defined issue within a government department, or to develop the FTN criteria for example) with specific effort to identify different and conflicting conceptual understandings that need to be reconciled. The next section will discuss each community in turn, before the second part of the chapter widens the focus to consider more macro and interrelated issues in the way that northern and southern interpretations interact.

³¹² It should be noted that the parallel investigation of both consumer and produce communities connected by specific supply chains was influenced by the work of authors such as Fridell (2007).

Negotiating the Meaning of Fair Trade: Discrete, interrelated communities of inter-subjectively constructed meaning

Reflecting on the empirical material presented in the two previous chapters, the six communities that have been identified on the basis of institutional arrangements in the development of this research are: 1) the FTN programme 2) Scottish Government Policy/discourse 3) the Fairtrade Foundation's Town scheme 4) East Dunbartonshire Local Authority 5) JTS, Imani Development, and NASFAM, and finally 6) Malawi and beyond. Figure 6 below illustrates the interconnected nature of these communities.

The diagram is not intended to illustrate the degree to which communities are interconnected or influence one another. Likewise, while these communities have arisen from empirical study, the ontological position of this thesis recognises that other communities could be identified as any such categorisation is “arbitrary” in the Sausurian sense (see Chapter Three). For example, the various networks which are treated as contributors to communities of negotiation identified in Malawi and beyond, could well be investigated as spaces of contested meaning in their own right – and is an area of understanding to which future research might well make a useful contribution. Another issue in the interpretation of language might well be the multi-lingual nature of fair trade activity and indeed, the operationalisation of fair trade in French (in West Africa) may well have produced other communities of meaning. This idea is certainly supported by work which has analysed fair trade discourse in the Spanish language – where a multitude of differences can be identified between the English based FLO approach for example, and “Comercio Justo” certification (Smith 2008b; Smith and VanderHoff Forthcoming).

Figure 6: Discrete, Inter-Related Communities of Negotiation over the meaning of ‘fair trade’

Discrete yet inter-related communities of contestation over the meaning of ‘fair trade’:

1. FTN Programme
2. Scottish Government Policy
3. Fairtrade Town Scheme
4. East Dunbartonshire Local Authority
5. JTS, Imani Development and NASFAM
6. Malawi and beyond.

The arrow in the diagram represents the physical supply chain for Kilombero rice running from NASFAM, via JTS to the East Dunbartonshire Local Authority.

1) The Meaning of a ‘Fair Trade’ Nation

In discussing negotiation and contestation internal to the FLO system it has been suggested that profit orientated and commercial interest have lined up against mission orientated actors and social movements (Bacon 2010; Jaffee 2010). In the case of the FTN programme (and paralleling the development of the first Fairtrade Town in Garstang) the process has not involved commercially orientated interests. Instead, it was driven by civil society concerned with fairer and more socially just international trade practices. Although the Welsh Assembly Government also became engaged, evidence suggests that at least in the beginning, the initiative was not top down, but a grassroots project organised by a wider (if not a limited group of) civil society. Even the Fairtrade Foundation maintained distance as they felt unable to be involved. As a result, the programme has not been influenced by corporate interests in the way that has been identified in studies of fair trade institutions such as FLO (See Chapter Two).

Despite the lack of involvement from profit orientated interests however, research suggests that the meaning of a FTN has still been actively negotiated by stakeholders with differing perspectives. Among those involved in developing the FTN programme, some were determined to maintain an open perspective of what should be implied by such a status. This was partly reflected in an insistence on keeping references to the concept of ‘fair trade’ at a generic level. For some of those involved, the question of what was to be legitimately considered as part of fair trade activity was not up for

discussion³¹³. Instead, these individuals were most concerned with how broadly the consumption of FLO certified goods by government authorities would be required³¹⁴.

On the other hand however, others in the group pushed hard for the criteria to move beyond setting targets for the consumption of FLO certified products, and to include other elements considered to be important components of fair trade practice. For example, some of those involved felt that a FTN required a certain number of dedicated fair trade shops, which explicitly recognised the validity of BAFTS governance and in turn reinforced a wider meaning of the term fair trade. Furthermore, and perhaps more radically, some of the group held the expectation that the title of a FTN should not simply be about consumption, but also about the proactive construction of fair trade infrastructure and, in particular, dedicated Fair Trade Organisations – which could be immediately identified with reference to WFTO accreditation.

On the other hand, as with the community in Garstang who developed the Fairtrade Town scheme, it was also considered that FLO certification was the most effective tool with which to promote greater understanding and action on trade justice issues. Furthermore, many considered that the FTN criterion needed to be quantitatively based – especially after the decision for Scotland to enter the programme, which offered some competition around the achievement. For this reason, it was decided that, by basing the FTN on the Foundation's existing scheme, it would be possible to count the number of accredited towns, schools and universities as a measure of progress. Another factor which appears to have been significant was that with support of the Welsh Assembly, there was an added pressure to develop the programme as quickly as possible. As a result, the final decisions of what a FTN would mean were largely based on practical priorities, and ultimately drew heavily on the pre-existing Fairtrade Town scheme. Therefore, at the discursive level, the Nation programme became largely about measuring increased consumption of certain FLO certified goods – and this was particularly true for requirements made of public institutions.

³¹³ David McCollough 31/03/2011.

³¹⁴ David McCollough 31/03/2011. Interview with Richard Laydon 25/02/2011.

Through this inquiry, it emerges that there has been an active and at times intensive discussion between stakeholders with different views on what it should mean for a nation to claim Fair Trade status. Indeed, the very idea came from grassroots activists; the Fairtrade Foundation had inputs but little decision making power; and an independent panel of experts representing different approaches to the fair trade concept were convened to moderate the programme. As a result, it can be suggested that the FTN programme provides some evidence to support the argument that the fair trade movement is characterised, to some extent, by democratic processes – and that decision to promote the use of fair trade goods in public institutions has some sense of popular mandate. Indeed, reflecting on the process, one of the members of the expert panel brought in to assess the criteria noted that:

“I think this [the way that the criteria emerged] was a good thing and in the spirit of fair trade, that it wasn’t some sort of higher authority passing or failing you, but...more about a community deciding to try and live up to a set of standards, trying to reach a goal together, rather than submitting themselves to some sort of examination”.

On the other hand however, given the resources already developed by the Fairtrade Foundation – in terms of the ex-ante existence of the certification system and geographical Fairtrade accreditation scheme – as well as the political intervention of the Welsh Assembly Government – power relations still pervaded this process and ultimately shaped the outcome. While a further point of contention for some stakeholders is the limited extent to which the FTN programme demands the consumption of FLO certified goods, this evidence also supports the argument that despite the open ended nature of UK Government policy, “Fairtrade absolutism” (Mohan 2010, p. 94) *is on the rise*.

At the more practical level, the preference for FLO certification in the Fairtrade Town scheme, and thus their promotion under the FTN programme, raises important questions. Specifically, this situation invites critical reflection on the extent to which FLO certification is actually prioritised by those responsible for government procurement. This is important as wider literature on governance identifies that, by obtaining such government support, certain private governance approaches to promoting sustainable development can generate widespread acceptance – even if they are not necessarily the most effective (Smith and Fischlein 2010). In the case of

FLO certification, worries about ‘absolutism’ arise for many reasons, and one major concern is that many producers are already being isolated from fair trade markets due to their inability to obtain FLO certification (see Chapter Two).

2) Fair Trade Governance in Scottish Government Policy

Investigation into the discourse that constructs the specific requirements of the FTN programme (primarily through critical analysis of the Fairtrade Foundation’s Town certification) suggests that the programme is primarily concerned with the consumption of FLO certified products. However, when representing the details of this initiative, the Scottish Government avoids specific reference to Fairtrade certification and instead uses the terminology of “Fair Trade” (two words). Furthermore, in explaining the concept and practice of fair trade, the government mixes and matches principles from different interpretations (for example, by making specific reference to minimum prices which are only necessarily required under FLO certification), as well as making reference to ethical trade certification such as that offered by the Rainforest Alliance and Utz. In this way, the interpretation of fair trade projected by the Scottish Government mirrors that of central UK Government policy in projecting support for a range of certification schemes; even those not necessarily claiming to be part of the fair trade movement (see Chapter Two). In this sense, despite the technical criteria of the FTN programme being already agreed, there is discursive resistance to the specific identification of a singular interpretation.

Informants testify that this multifaceted approach is viewed as what the Scottish government find most desirable. However, it can also be suggested that this formal projection has been formed through intensive negotiation with the Scottish Procurement Directorate. In this sense, it has not been possible to ascertain the true desires of government decision makers as interactions require them to project a discourse that minimises legal risk, and thus prevents them from favouring particular certification schemes over others. What this does demonstrate is that whatever the true desires of government, the negotiation of how fair trade procurement is constructed is heavily influenced by the power of European legal frameworks – as

these are interpreted to prohibit the specification of particular certification schemes not relating to the fundamental characteristics of the final product.

3) “Fairtrade Absolutism” or Flexibility from the Fairtrade Foundation?

Examining the criteria of the Fairtrade Foundation’s Town, School and University certification reveals that, in order to achieve this status, these institutions must demonstrate the availability of “Fairtrade”, and thus FLO certified products (see the Fairtrade Foundation’s requirements in the appendices) – and particularly in some product areas such as hot drinks like tea and coffee. This is particularly pertinent to the current investigation as these relate directly to public institutions.

In the perspective of those working at the Fairtrade Foundation, such an ‘absolutist’ focus has not been a strategic marketing programme. Instead, interviewees echoed the account found in existing literature that, like the FTN programme, geographical accreditation evolved from the grassroots development in Garstang. Given the timing of this development, specific reference was made to the FLO certification mark because of the incipient nature of the movement, and moreover, the view that fair trade was more easily explained by reference to the certification system. Again, this situation highlights the power of influence that establishing ex-ante resources will bring to the wider inter-subjective interpretation of meaning. Also, because the Fairtrade Foundation is the UK’s National Labelling Initiative for FLO, representatives expect that the discourse will continue to project a specific concern with this certification.

Having said this, according to those responsible for appraising applications, the strong focus on FLO certification is not carried through to the actual process of accrediting communities and Local Authority procurement practices – and again another space is generated in which meaning associated with fair trade can be negotiated. Indeed, representatives of the Foundation say that they welcome the promotion and consumption of goods which are seen to contribute to greater fairness in the international system – a narrative that opens up space for other actors to negotiate and

contest absolutist discourse. Asked if such flexibility would allow the submission of Rainforest Alliance certified goods, it was noted that there are limits. According to senior informants, this is not because the Fairtrade Mark is “better”, but because these separate schemes are not compatible in terms of their aims and objectives. This perspective mirrors the academic differentiation between fair and ethical trade where the defining quality of fair trade is seen to be in its regulation of trade relationships – over and above that concerned with structuring conditions at the site of production. In this sense, it might be more appropriate to suggest that it is a form of *fair trade* absolutism which is on the rise – as while Fairtrade certification might provide the core of stakeholders’ understanding, other practices are clearly accepted by the central power in this system of meaning.

4) The Meaning of Fair Trade for Scottish Local Authorities

Research conducted within the Fairtrade Foundation suggests that despite the specific proscriptions used in discourse concerning the Fairtrade Town scheme, exact compliance with these is not necessarily required for accreditation. Indeed, empirical investigation of the practices of actual Local Authorities reveals some support for the idea that local Fairtrade groups are actively negotiating around the specific discourse of the Fairtrade Foundation in order to operationalise their own agenda.

When the discourses of Scottish Local Authorities are analysed, it is discovered that some do mirror Fairtrade Foundation texts by making statements of support specifically for the consumption of FLO certified goods. Furthermore, it is also empirically verified that Authorities are demonstrating a preference for FLO certified goods over those which carry other accreditation – and especially that offered by the Rainforest Alliance. The reason for this is that local actors take the clear position that these goods are not acceptable to the Fairtrade Foundation in submission for Fairtrade accreditation. This was not to say that Local Authority representatives did not recognise the legal barriers to demanding goods with certain certifications in public tenders – and, in this respect, legal frameworks again stand out as powerful resources in the collective construction and reconstruction of what fair trade can be taken to mean by public institutions. As such, there is evidence that, despite these formal

barriers, individuals were able to use social relationships with suppliers to ensure that goods supplied were acceptable to the Fairtrade Foundation³¹⁵.

Unfortunately, the focus on FLO certification by Scottish Local Authorities cannot be taken as an insight into whether public procurement in Scotland is incorporating either a softer more commercial or more intensely radical approach to fair trade (2009). This is because, as was explained in Chapter Two, FLO certification is carried by products which are produced and commercialised through a variety of supply chains. Therefore, although the governance employed by JTS might be argued as an example of radical fair trade operation (below), it is not known what alternatives are available. However, in the future it is proposed that such a specific research question could be explored in order to directly respond to this area of missing knowledge.

Moving beyond this limitation of the current investigation, there are a number of examples of more reflexive and critical thinking about what fair trade procurement involves – and as such represent a much more radical contestation of what fair trade is taken to mean by stakeholders in the public sector. In line with the conclusions of Malpass et al.'s (2007) study of Fairtrade status in Bristol, empirical evidence from Scotland demonstrates that while efforts to procure fair trade goods have received support and encouragement from central Scottish Government policy and ministerial persuasion, many local authorities are driven by grassroots motivation and support. This was noted by central government actors as well as evidence from the embedded case study investigation of East Dunbartonshire.

Indeed, it was discovered that grassroots contributions to the local Fairtrade Steering Groups brought wider knowledge about the broader concept of fair trade; this suggests that local steering groups are also a site at which a shared understanding of the meaning of fair trade is negotiated – although, for the purposes of this investigation, steering groups are considered part of Local Authority community³¹⁶. Where council representatives are willing to act as conduits from Fairtrade Steering

³¹⁵ The importance of social relationships between procurement officers and suppliers in obtaining specific products which cannot be official requested has also been found during other research by the author in Wales. As such, there is scope for further research to investigate the way that fair trade motivates a wider negotiation of legally imposed market relationships in public procurement processes.

³¹⁶ This area is being explored by Anthony Samuel based at the BRASS research centre at the university of Cardiff.

Groups, these communities offer the opportunity for wider stakeholders to shape the nature of fair trade that is adopted in their local area by the public sector. Such a finding is important as it provides empirical support for Bacon's (2010, p. 140) view that the creation of meaning in the fair trade movement can be considered as a more diffuse and democratic process, coming from an "active society" not found with other certification systems.

To enhance understanding of this process of negotiation, investigation focussed on an embedded case study in which activities were identified to be significantly different from the norm of other Fairtrade accredited Local Authorities in Scotland³¹⁷. The uniqueness of this case was identified through analysis of Local Authority discourse as well as being identified by other prominent stakeholders such as the Scottish Government, the SFTF and the Fairtrade Foundation. Indeed, the example of East Dunbartonshire Council was of particular interest as it had undertaken the purchase of "fairly traded" Kilombero Rice: a product which was firmly seen as a fair trade good, but that did not carry external certification and instead relied on the development of trust in socially orientated suppliers and intermediaries. For these reasons, the case offered not just an example of negotiation around Fairtrade dominance, but also of the dominant trend for authorities to equate fair trade with certified goods.

Focusing in on this specific example has significant relevance because it demonstrates the scope of possibilities for circumventing assumptions about the restricted nature of procurement activities. Indeed, Authority representatives explicitly recognise that all practices have to comply with local frameworks, national laws and international directives. In order to remain consistent with these, procurement has been undertaken outside standard frameworks as a purchase below the value at which full EU Procurement Directives need to be applied (Bovis 2008, p. 86). Indeed, according to the European Commission (2006), "contracts without a potential for cross border interest are not subject to the standards derived from the basic principles of the EC treaty". In a follow-up Information Note issued by the OGC (2006, p. 3), it is stated that "the [European] Commission confirm that it is the responsibility of individual contracting authorities to decide whether an intended contract award might be of

³¹⁷ For an explanation and justification of the decision to investigate a marginal example of fair trade procurement see page 83 in Chapter Three.

interest to other Member States” and comments that “it is therefore essential that all UK procurers make this decision on a case-by-case basis”. Reviewing documents outlining the expected practice in other UK Authorities, the purchase of the rice was found to be consistent with frameworks across the sector. This concrete example furthers the evidence reviewed in Chapter One that despite the limitations placed on procurement practices, creative strategies are pursued through the space offered by exemptions from the application of the full EU Procurement Directives. In this case, the ability to make purchases at the side of longstanding agreements in small batches of below threshold value has been instrumental in the purchase of fairly traded rice.

This example also supports the testimony of Fairtrade Foundation representatives that non-FLO certified fair trade (although not ethical trade) goods are accepted as part of the Fairtrade Town scheme. Indeed, the Kilombero rice bought by East Dunbartonshire’s Local Authorities is not only accepted as a contributory element of a successful application for Fairtrade status, but is in fact seen by the Foundation as an example of ‘best practice’. However, because the rice was just one small component of East Dunbartonshire’s much wider fair trade procurement (the majority of which is FLO certified goods), there is still an open question about how much negotiation of their requirements the Foundation would allow – for example, if the Foundation would accept submission of non-certified or WFTO accredited tea and coffee, which are specifically mentioned in the Fairtrade Town documents.

Despite this limitation, the fact that the Kilombero rice lacked (FLO) certification and instead relied on trust relationships offers an important example of practice which differs from the majority of such activities – and, as such, it presents itself as an ideal case for an in-depth investigation. Indeed, such a study responds to the observations that there has been limited research of ATOs (Bezençon 2011) and that more empirical material on such organisations should be generated (Tallontire 2009, p. 1009). Perhaps more importantly, by extending the study to southern stakeholders, the example also allowed the investigation of the role southern stakeholders have played in the negotiation of fair trade governance practices – thereby addressing another under-researched subject in the literature on fair trade (Tallontire 2009, p. 1009) and governance initiatives more widely (Dingwerth 2008, p. 607).

5) The Meaning of Fair Trade in the Supply Chain

As has been noted, Kilombero rice purchased by the East Dunbartonshire Local Authority was understood to be ‘fairly traded’ – a claim that was accepted due to the social reputation of the supplier JTS and, specifically, the personal relationship with its management established through the local Fairtrade Steering Group.

The label of fairly traded rice was attached to the rice as an explicit recognition that the product did not carry external verification – although both JTS and NASFAM consider their interactions to be legitimately described as fair trade activity. The first reason for this is that the organisations are proactively facilitating the construction of a supply chain through which a producer community in the developing world, marginalised from involvement with an integrated global economy, has been able to access high value northern consumer markets. In this sense, the fundamental aim of the organisation is to increase the financial capacity of a community in one of the poorest countries in the world – and as such can be seen to contribute towards the economic element of the social justice agenda embedded within the concept of sustainable development (discussed more below).

In line with the existing literature, JTS can be identified as an Alternative Trade Organisation, or mission-driven Fair Trade Organisation, as its primary purpose is to promote the interests of southern smallholder farmers by maintaining “relational” trade partnerships with organisations that represent them. Such an interpretation is grounded in the fact that JTS has attempted to move beyond conventional purchasing where such interaction would be viewed as too risk intensive, and has engaged with NASFAM on their own terms.

Specifically, this has meant taking on the risk of purchasing more rice than could readily be sold, and doing so at a price internally agreed by NASFAM – which is claimed to incorporate the views of farmers as communicated by their representatives. While JTS did not contribute upfront payment for the production of rice (which would not have been possible due to the timing of their introduction to NASFAM at the *Trade Connections* event in Glasgow), they have provided funds for investment in a rice mill at Karonga, which will allow the Association to process and package their

own product³¹⁸. Given this initiative, the governance employed by JTS is arguably characterised as a more radical approach to fair trade as it is proactively seeking to generate as much value in the producer country and community as possible – as opposed to raising the standards under which southern stakeholders simply deliver raw commodity products and thus fail to capture the majority of the income generated in the final sale.

Beyond the role of JTS, KSFA is democratically organised and is designed to maximise the benefits to productive activity for the farmer members. Indeed, as part of the wider farmer owned organisation of NASFAM, KSFA members access a market for their agricultural output as well as support in the form of seed distribution (supplied on credit) and agricultural (such as planting techniques), business (gross marginal analysis) and social (HIV awareness and gender sensitivity) training services.

In this sense, the supply chain established by NASFAM and JTS to link rice producers in northern Malawi and consumers (of state distributed goods) in Scotland can be argued to meet the principles agreed between the FLO and the WFTO (see Appendix 3, page 246) in that:

1. Market access to Scotland has been developed in a way that maximises the value that can be added by the producer community who otherwise lack access to international markets. The producer community is based in one of the poorest countries in the world by international benchmarks, and thus can be considered as highly marginalised from the global economy.
2. Commitment has been made to long term interactions by NASAM vis-à-vis its members and JTS vis-à-vis NASFAM. Prices are calculated by NASFAM in a way that considers the cost of production.
3. NASFAM provide seed and educational input for farmers while JTS has invested in the processing capacity of the Karonga rice mill.
4. JTS have packaged rice along with promotional and educational materials for use in school and the wider market – and have also developed wider information resources through a new website³¹⁹.
5. JTS and NASFAM move beyond conventional market operation to engage in a social contract with producers.

³¹⁸ Although it must be noted that JTS raised this funding from external sources, including the Lorna Young Foundation (Scottish Fair Trade Forum no date-a).

³¹⁹ Interview with John Riches 26/04/2011.

However, while this trade relationship is understood to be a legitimate part of the fair trade movement by those who have been responsible for its construction, research suggests that NASFAM, JTS and Imani Development have had to contribute to the negotiation of expectations that fair trade activity is necessarily FLO certified. Indeed, while FLO Fairtrade is seen as advantageous by NASFAM representatives, certification is not readily available for Malawian rice producers, as the rice standard is only currently available in Thailand, Laos, India and Egypt. This limitation supports the view of numerous commentators who suggest that FLO has accumulated power to demarcate who are the deserving recipients of its intervention (Arce 2009). Although procedures for the extension of certification to new geographical locations do exist, efforts on the part of NASFAM and Imani Development have thus far raised little response from the local FLO representative – who has simply noted that nothing could be done until the next meeting of the FLO Standards committee.

Further to this, NASFAM management feel that the cost of FLO certification is a significantly limiting factor to the extent that they would not be able to afford certification even if it was currently available. For this reason, empirical data also yields important support for the argument that, due to the nature of the FLO system, there are barriers to entry for those without certain capacities – and, as a result, those that otherwise might be eligible for Fairtrade certification are unable to obtain it. Indeed, the decision of NASFAM to pursue membership of the WFTO's African chapter is partly explained by its lower cost.

This attempt to side step the specific requirements of FLO also contributes a further empirical example to the wider view that new systems of governance for sustainability are developed by “excluded parties...when...for example,...an existing system initiates provisions that impose significant costs, or lack sufficient flexibility for adoption” (Smith and Fischlein 2010, p. 514). In most contexts, the development of parallel governance frameworks are viewed as motivated by profit seeking interests, although in the case of JTS, the evidence suggests that alternative attempts can also arise for mission driven reasons.

6) Malawi and beyond

The final community in which this empirical investigation has identified negotiation over the meaning of fair trade – and specifically contestation between the dominance of FLO certification and other approaches to the concept – is in producer countries more widely.

As was reported in Chapter Five, FLO is directing significant resources into the development of a producer network which aims to link organisations across the continent. As with networks of northern consumer organisations (Fairtrade Towns, Universities etc), this activity might well have initially emerged from grassroots farmer activity; although this is an area which requires future research. What is known is that, while one of the official aims of this network is to develop a feedback mechanism for FLO certified producers, it is also intended to expand the number of those organisations holding such certification. At the same time, the WFTO is a membership organisation whose very existence has arisen from the increasing formalisation of national and regional producer networks across the globe (see Chapter Two).

In the case of Malawi, the country has only recently entered the fair trade movement and has become a designated target for both network initiatives. Consequently, it can offer an example of the wider negotiation of what it means to be involved in fair trade. Indeed, as documented in Chapter Five, like in the case of the FTN programme, there has been active discussion about the title of the Malawian network – and the ultimate choice of ‘Malawian Fair Trade Network’ reflects a collective and proactive decision to project an inclusion of a variety of governance approaches. Indeed, evidence from stakeholders involved in the process suggests that the very development of the network has increased participants’ knowledge about the variety of concrete forms which fair trade is understood to take. Underlying these discursive issues however, there have been more fundamental discussions which reflect stakeholders’ interpretation of what it means to be involved in fair trade activity.

Specifically it is noted that in electing a Board of Directors for the MFTN, all members are associated with FLO certification. To some extent this is likely to be a reflection of the knowledge held by stakeholders, and specifically a lack of knowledge about alternative interpretations. However, another possibility is that the elections for Board membership have been conducted under the sentiment that COFTA accreditation should not be afforded legitimate membership of the fair trade movement.

Again, this process can be seen as one in which the meaning of fair trade is being actively negotiated by stakeholders, although within a context of unequal resources backing the projection of different interpretations. This process illustrates the problems of legitimacy which a structurally democratic process can engender, in that while decisions are put to a vote, final decisions also reflect overarching power structures in which formal frameworks are embedded. Indeed, the case of Malawi can be identified as an ideal site for on-going research on this issue as COFTA now intend to set up their own parallel network in the small country. The question of whether negotiation will turn into outright competition could well form a useful central theme for such an enquiry.

Unfortunately, there is little basis on which the example of Malawi can be used for a more representative discussion of the wider African continent. It is true that there are tensions between the two networks as stakeholders appear to recognise synergies but cannot always clearly identify how such positive outcomes can be achieved. Again, this process of negotiating over how the concept of fair trade is presented to producers in the developing world is an important future research agenda.

Negotiating the Meaning of Fair Trade: International issues and the relationship with sustainable development

One of the most important contributions of this thesis is the identification of negotiation over what is understood by the term fair trade, and particularly the diffuse international nature of this process. A further contribution of great importance is the insights generated into the way in which such a process interacts with the needs of

southern producers – and, as an extension, ultimately with the association of fair trade governance and the aims of the sustainable development agenda.

One of the first arguments made in this thesis was that the concept of sustainable development is highly ambiguous and contested. While some have spent time arguing for certain interpretations, others have found it more useful to identify underlying principles around which a common agenda might be developed (see Chapter One). Furthermore, in discussing the operationalisation of the concept through private governance initiatives, other literature identifies both varied practices and competition between such different approaches (Smith and Fischlein 2010). As part of this, it is noted that by obtaining preferences from government procurement, specific governance systems can gain an advantage over competitors (Peters and Pierre 1998). In this sense, the process of negotiation around what legitimately counts as fair trade also implicitly contributes to wider parallel processes of what legitimately comprises sustainable development – and, furthermore, sets actual parameters for governance intervention and thus empirical outcomes.

To begin with, the initial recognition that sustainable development involves attention to the principles of international, intra-generational social justice is part of the negotiation of this concept (see Chapter One). From here, research has observed the growing dominance of FLO certification where fair, and at times ethical, trade governance has been called upon. While a wider variety of governance and certification systems claim to promote sustainable development, the clear finding from this study is that stakeholders in the public sector are prioritising fair trade governance over that of ethical trade – and as a result implicitly promoting the regulation of conditions, not just at the site of production (as is the case with ethical trade), but also of the initial stages of commercialisation (see Chapter Two for the difference between fair and ethical trade). More concretely this involves the recognition that northern actors are also required to participate in southern development by amending their ‘everyday’ activities and engaging with trade in a particular way – as opposed to making specific development interventions in parallel to, or after undertaking business as usual. While a number of stakeholders alluded to the difference between fair and ethical trade (see Chapter Five), one interviewee was more specific and provided an excellent overview by commenting that:

“I think it is interesting too, to make sure that when we are dealing with public procurement that they understand...what the differences are, what it is exactly they are trying to achieve by introducing fair trade and ethical labelling into public procurement so are they doing it because consumers are demanding it, or are they doing it as part of public policy which says we recognise that there is an imbalance in trade, and as a government we want to address the issue of imbalance in trade, and in some cases, obviously at Fairtrade, we feel like we are probably the primary organisation that addresses the imbalances of trade. If they are doing it to meet consumer concerns about climate change or sustainability or some of those different things, they may feel like they don't need such a strong focus [on the trade element]”³²⁰.

While there is evidence that the specific choice of FLO certification can contribute to the social justice element of sustainable development (see Chapter Two), academic insights also warn about the development of a true “Fairtrade absolutism” (Mohan 2010, p. 94). Indeed, the experience of NASFAM with FLO certification for groundnuts adds to the realisation that an important variable in the benefit of certification is the volume of sales. As such, the simple certification of an organisation cannot be taken as sufficient evidence that north-south redistribution is in progress – and in the case of NASFAM, it was noted that initially the conventional part of their production was essentially subsidising fair trade operations given that returns from certified groundnut sales in the first few years did not cover the initial cost³²¹.

Southern stakeholders themselves recognise the pragmatic nuances of this situation. The commercial management at NASFAM still consider FLO certification as useful to increasing international exports in the longer term; and to do so under highly beneficial conditions³²². Indeed, in the time that has elapsed since fieldwork in 2009, sales of groundnuts made by NASFAM into the UK market have hugely increased. In 2010 income from these international sales has more than covered the cost of entry as well as provided extensive benefits for the communities involved³²³. It is the view of

³²⁰ Interview with senior FLO representative 29/04/2010.

³²¹ Interview with Richard Petauchere 03/12/2009.

³²² This is also important information for the methodological understanding of impact investigation as it reaffirms the importance of temporal study in the limitations of diachronic investigation.

³²³ Presentation by Dybon Chiabonga at the Big Food Debate: Fair Trade, Sustainable Food and Climate Change in a panel of Value Chain Upgrading.

the management that such gains would not have been possible without Fairtrade recognition.

It is not, however, possible to adopt such a positive, retrospective evaluation of NASFAM's efforts to find fair trade markets for its Kilombero rice – the other product considered to have long-term potential to contribute to improving Malawi's dire macro-economic problems. As well as the limitations imposed by the cost of FLO certification, there are also more technical barriers to entry as this product category is not yet certifiable in Malawi – or indeed, anywhere outside of Thailand, Laos, India and Egypt. While mechanisms exist for the extension of certification to new geographical contexts, these have not been straightforward to initiate – and even when progress has been made, the issue of certification cost is still holding NASFAM management back from committing to the initiative³²⁴. For this combination of reasons then, there is ground to argue that the rise of “Fairtrade absolutism” (Mohan 2010, p. 94) in the UK public and/or private markets would indeed be highly problematic for producers seeking to use fair trade as a means to access them. Indeed, if East Dunbartonshire had only interpreted fair trade to mean those goods certified by FLO, such an outlet for rice might well not exist – and this is particularly pertinent given the role that this public market played in rendering the general import of Kilombero rice viable in the first instance (see Chapter Four). Indeed, it was this early willingness of the local Authority to accept the fairly traded rice which has facilitated the subsequent import and overall sale of some 86 metric tons of the product³²⁵. In this sense, it is again seen that FLO has accumulated the power to define who is able to access such certification (Renard 2005). As a result of this, even though the UK Government has sought to use fair trade governance as a way to extend the social justice agenda to the current generation of international stakeholders, where FLO certification is expected, the organisation mediates the identification of those entitled to government support under this sustainable development agenda.

The other significant issue identified by the thesis is that while FLO has concentrated significant power, there is also negotiation of domination. This is evidenced by the

³²⁴ Anonymous Interviewee.

³²⁵ In April 2011, JTS were expecting another delivery of rice from Malawi as they had been sold out for some months. Interview with John Riches 26/04/2011.

fact that ultimately, the Local Authority of East Dunbartonshire has been able to accept NASFAM's 'fairly traded' rice as a legitimate part of both fair trade procurement and their activities as a Fairtrade Town. Such an inclusion has also been legitimised, and celebrated, by other institutions such as the SFTF and even the Fairtrade Foundation itself. On this basis, it cannot be agreed that "Fairtrade absolutism" (Mohan 2010, p. 94) has yet fully matured in Scotland or within the wider institutions in which fair trade activity is interconnected. In reflecting on the issues, a senior figure in the fair trade movement summarised the importance of such spaces of negotiation by commenting that:

"The whole FLO system...is very difficult and very regimented for small producers. It exerts costs and pressures on people that often they can't manage, and is in a lot of ways, built around the idea of excluding the people who are not behaving as opposed to supporting the people who might be capable, and so I think it's not a bad thing that there are these slightly elastic alternatives arising"³²⁶.

In this sense, the analysis presented here builds on other responses to the question of how "participatory democratic processes contribute to, or perhaps emerge from, ethical commodity chains", and more specifically, "provides insight into "socio-economic process and how they affect ethical network participation" (Mutersbaugh and Lyon 2010, p. 27). Overall, it appears that despite FLO domination, grassroots action in consumer countries can have a meaningful impact on the way that the scope of fair trade is defined in wider communities of fair trade practice.

It might well be argued that even this process still "scrutinises and gives voice to workers engaged in productive enterprises that supply affluent Western consumers, whilst remaining essentially uninterested in the fate of those who lie outside its [slightly expanded] umbrella of concern" (Neilson and Pritchard 2009, p. 160). Indeed, such a narrative might be extended to suggest that pre-existing, or "neo-colonial", north-south power relationships are reinforced (Mutersbaugh and Lyon 2010, p. 28), despite the democratic nature in which the scope of fair trade is being defined. The problem with the first part of this argument however, is that it ignores the way in which exporting organisations are interconnected with others in the southern economy – and arguably expands the responsibility of initiatives to an unrealistic scope and

³²⁶ Interview with David McCollough 31/03/2011.

scale. In the case of Malawi for example, while the Kilombero rice initiative provides direct assistance to a specific community, it is also recognised to contribute to the wider macro economy by providing much needed foreign exchange.

Furthermore, as part of the identified negotiation of meaning, this initiative incorporates the principle of undertaking a proactive effort to add as much value in a southern economy as possible. As a result, governance can be seen as a fundamental effort to reform a structural division of labour identified as partly responsible for the concentration of resources in already more wealthy areas of the world (Frank 1966); and as a result facilitate the persistence of neo-colonial relationships between the north and the south. Indeed, one criticism of FLO certification is that it does not necessarily encourage the maximising of value in southern countries (Raynolds and Ngcwangu 2010) – and this emphasises the importance of thinking carefully about how this certification comes to dominate the public sector understanding of what fair trade governance should constitute.

Indeed, despite processes of negotiation over the meaning of fair trade, stakeholders should not be complacent about the degree to which a requirement for FLO certification has come to dominate public procurement practice. While there is considerable discursive contestation of Fairtrade dominance, the case study has only identified one practical example of where practice has followed more reflective policy. Also, optimism should be limited by the fact that Kilombero rice is in a marginal product category as far as Fairtrade Foundation promotion is concerned – and it must be acknowledged that the situation might be different where a Local Authority contested the express requirement for FLO certified tea, and coffee, or even cotton (which has become a priority in 2011³²⁷) expressed in the Fairtrade Foundation's geographic accreditation. While a variety of stakeholders and academic analysis agree that there are qualitative differences between fair and ethical trade governance, such as the Rainforest Alliance, the fact that such certification covers hot drinks could theoretically be a factor in its exclusion – where such governance applied to other products might instead be accepted. For this reason, it is even more important that

³²⁷ Indeed, involvement of the author in the renewal process for Fairtrade University status indicates that cotton is being directly prioritised by the Fairtrade Foundation in its geographic accreditation.

independent scholarship works towards the critical and comparative evaluation of competing certification systems that claim to promote sustainable development.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to build such an empirical component into the current investigation – given the *a priori* importance of other issues discussed above – and as such it is not possible to rigorously discuss the degree to which the procurement decision of East Dunbartonshire has resulted in promoting sustainable development – either in isolation or vis-à-vis other options. What can be commented on are some of the more specific issues which have arisen as part of the sustainable development agenda – with the main value being to identify issues for future research and analysis.

Firstly, NASFAM have specifically engaged with fair trade as a further element in building a product identity considered to be appealing to markets in richer consumer countries. In the case of FLO certification with groundnuts, it is believed by NASFAM’s management that this enhances trust in the quality of the product. Where the membership of the WFTO is concerned, it is hoped that the narrative of fairness will build on other geographically embedded characteristics of the Kilombero rice. In this way, the supply chain investigated in this thesis supports the view that fair trade credentials can improve market access where it “has provided an additional point of brand differentiation” (Neilson and Pritchard 2010, p. 1844).

These examples also provide support for the argument that “far from being detrimental [as some have argued], fair trade might actively contribute to diversification by alleviating some of the real-world obstacles that otherwise retard development” (Smith 2009b, p. 457). Indeed, JTS and Imani Development have been keen to ensure that ‘value added’ is not only maximised in country, but also within the producer community, and as a result have invested in the development of rice processing facilities. This is important to both NASFAM and the central Malawian government as they are keen to promote high-value, non-traditional exports in order to increase the availability of foreign exchange and relieve the “balance of payments

constraint” (McCombie and Thirlwall 2004) that Malawi continues to experience³²⁸. Such agricultural diversification is increasingly important as the international market for the primary export of Malawi, burley tobacco, is becoming more competitive in the face of shrinking western demand. In this sense, the empirical investigation of the fairly traded Kilombero rice supply chain contributes another example of “more radical fair trade ventures animated by strong social and place-based commitments” (Raynolds and Ngcwangu 2010, p. 82). Instead of embedding governance in an export-ready southern production organisation, this project has proactively sought to engage with an organisation at a very low level of capability on the margins of the formal economy. Another element to this initiative has been its engagement with the product which, as well as being a valuable ‘cash crop’, is also part of the local diet – and therefore, does not compromise Malawian food security in the same way as previous programmes of tobacco production (see Chapter Five).

Aside from social justice in economic decision making (see Chapter One), another principle of sustainable development discourse has been the promotion of democratic decision making. In this respect the investigation has suggested that while fair trade is definitely mediated by significant concentrations of power, the negotiation of how the concept should be operationalised is democratic in nature. In this vein, NASFAM is a democratic organisation for member farmers and can be seen to support the development of democratic institutions; both in terms of providing producers with a voice in the organisation and operation of NASFAM, and also as a means of lobbying wider political structures with a collective voice (see Chapter Five). However, the presence of democratic structures should not lead to assumptions about the nature of decision making, and nor should they be accepted as a universal good without critical consideration.

For example, the decision for NASFAM to become involved in fair trade, both through the FLO certification of groundnuts and the export of rice to JTS (and application for WFTO/COFTA membership), responds to Arce’s (2009) suggestion that analysis breaks down a homogenous view of harmonious and democratic

³²⁸ Interview with Government Representative 4/11/2009. Interview with Joshua Varela 5/11/2009. Presentation by Dybon Chiabonga at the Big Food Debate: Fair Trade, Sustainable Food and Climate Change in a panel of Value Chain Upgrading.

producer communities. In this case, the strategic decision to become involved in fair trade was made by a group of professional managers. Indeed, empirical research also indicates that at this stage in the development of the project, farmers interviewed had little idea about what it meant to be involved in production where crops were entering a fair trade supply chain – as has been noted elsewhere in the fair trade literature (Dolan 2010). Further to this, some producers expressed dissatisfaction with their actual ability to influence democratic decisions – for example, commenting that while prices were set through collective agreement and bargaining, the central management had the final say³²⁹. Connected with this was the fact that a good number of the farmers interviewed did not see that membership of NASFAM had necessarily helped them improve their incomes or their lives as a whole.

Unfortunately, the limitations on the scope of research (resulting from the primary interest in the way that the term of fair trade was being interpreted by stakeholders related to public procurement activities) meant that such views remain anecdotal and are not rigorous representations of the overall population. The limited amount of time in which KSFA has been associated with governance labelled by others as ‘fairly traded’, and the degree of its development, will also logically hinder the spread of knowledge associated with this issue. However, what is reinforced is that the involvement in fair trade does not come from the producers themselves, but by those employed and sanctioned by individuals to represent their interests in commercial operations. As such, while other communities of negotiation might be identified in Malawi and more widely on the African continent, it can be hypothesised that ‘ordinary’, or non-elite producers might be little involved in such processes.

Finally, sustainable development is also identified to require a consideration of how natural resources are impacted by economic activity. With this in mind it can be noted that while NASFAM’s training activity includes the production and use of *organic* fertiliser, Field Officers stress the importance of using generic fertiliser to produce better and more consistent crops of rice – and many of the farmers testify to the importance of fertiliser in generating enough income to meet the basic needs throughout the year. Such practices might be seen as encouraging the use of artificial

³²⁹ Out of the 18 interviewees that responded to this question, two considered prices to be dictated by NASFAM commercial.

fertiliser and thus indicate that, like other projects with a strong focus on social-economic aspects, environmental issues have been obscured (Dobson 2000). Indeed, intensive use (over 200kg/ha) of non-organic fertiliser is associated with the leaching of nitrogen into groundwater and depositing of phosphorous in surface water (Larson and Frisvold 1996).

Furthermore, such a sustainability blind spot might be said to be reflected in governance arrangements as the WFTO membership, which the Association is applying for, only requires that “the environmental impact of production and trade is minimised as much as possible”³³⁰ (see Appendix 2 on page 244 for a description of WFTO requirements). This can be contrasted with FLO standards which make significant environmental requirements and encourage the adoption of organic production.

Having said this, the debates around the use of fertiliser to increase productivity are complex and intensive – with there being conflicting views on the biological effects of such practices (Dorward and Chirwa 2011; Vanlauwe and Giller 2006). This is even before the discussion moves to the financial sustainability of the practice itself, given Malawi’s ongoing macroeconomic problems, and in particular, its shortage of foreign exchange with which to import synthetic fertiliser (Cleaver and Schreiber 1992; Larson and Frisvold 1996).

As a result, the ability of individual supply chains, governed in whatever way, to promote a more sustainable path of development must be seen as highly contingent on wider institutional and policy arrangements – as has already been pointed out in other empirical research on fair trade (Jaffee 2007). While certain governance approaches might be conducive to sustainable development in consumer countries, empirical reality in producer communities is likely to be significantly more complex. As such, literature which has uncritically promoted fair trade as an automatic means to promote international and intragenerational social justice, might well have to rethink such a straightforward policy position.

³³⁰ Although more criteria are mentioned by the WFTO, these are only phrased in terms of doing as much as possible, as opposed to meeting exact minimum or process standards.

Some Conclusions

The purpose of this final chapter has been to analyse empirical material in a holistic manner. In this way, it is hoped that research will go some way to moving beyond the isolated treatment of northern and southern communities.

Overall, the chapter has drawn on constructivist understandings of ontology, derived from themes emerging from the literature review, to focus empirical material through the lens of negotiation over the meaning of language – and specifically the signifier “fair trade”. Drawing on the concept of discourse and policy communities, analysis has identified six interrelated yet discreetly identifiable communities in which stakeholders engage to negotiate what it means to legitimately practice fair trade. The discussion of these six communities overall shows that while the Fairtrade Foundation has been instrumental in focusing attention on the consumption of FLO certified goods in the UK, there is a multitude of processes which militate against (and thus negotiate around) such influence. For example, EU Directives ensure a wider focus for central and regional government policy. The influence of the Fairtrade Town scheme is also clearly identifiable in Local Authority discourse (in some cases, to the extent that legal risk might be identified by those adopting government interpretations of procurement law). However, in other cases, again, there is a countervailing force that moderates this influence, given that local government interest in the procurement of fair trade goods is embedded in wider networks of knowledge on the issue.

It is this embeddness which has facilitated the public purchase of “fairly traded” Kilombero rice by the East Dunbartonshire Council. Specifically, the acceptance of the product as a legitimate means to promote development in Malawi has played an important function in the generation of markets for producers – and in turn interacted with the international negotiation of what fair trade should require. Indeed, investigation in Malawi itself suggests that again, FLO power is significant in focusing attention on a particular certification approach. However, empirical evidence supports arguments that this process is not without its own limitations, as it creates its own barriers to entry for producer groups. Specifically, the cost of certification and

the limits on its product/geographic availability have reduced the ways in which NASFAM have been able to take advantage of this tool. For this reason, they have sought to export and market rice through JTS and further plan to legitimise this supply chain by obtaining COFTA/WFTO membership for the producer association. While this is seen by stakeholders to be a worthwhile process, only time will tell if such accreditation can yield benefits in a market where FLO certification is increasingly an expected standard. What remains more certain is that, without a more open minded approach to what constitutes fair trade, NASFAM would find it much more difficult to locate markets for Kilombero rice; and as such have their development options reduced in a way that also narrows the scope of socially just distribution at the global level.

Overall Conclusions: Malawian Rice in Scottish Public Procurement

The motivation for this thesis arose from a growing academic interest in the role that public procurement can play in the promotion of sustainable development³³¹. As such, Chapter One began with a brief intellectual archaeology of the concept of sustainable development, arguing that it arose in an attempt to reconcile traditional concerns of international development (such as distributional justice and economic growth) with the newly emergent theme of environmentalism (Wapner 2003). Rejecting the interpretation that sustainable development is an eco-centric concept, the chapter argued instead that the most fundamental principle is one of social justice (Langhelle 2000): where environmental stewardship is a means to sustain intergenerational opportunities and should therefore not be prioritised at the expense of unacceptable intra-generational inequalities. However, the literature on the subject makes it plain that trade-offs will inevitably occur, and proposes that analysts develop mapping tools to identify how this malleable concept is operationalised (see for example Connelly 2007).

Following this theme through the existing literature, Chapter One critically scrutinised sustainable development policy, specifically in the UK. Here it emerged that policy and praxis have been focused on environmental concerns, with issues of social justice (and particularly intra-generation issues) set in softer focus (Thomson and Jackson 2007; Walker and Brammer 2009). Notwithstanding this general trend, however, it was also identified that the procurement function of government has the potential to contribute to governance for sustainable development and that a more holistic interpretation might be achieved. Indeed, the work of Morgan (2008, p. 1238) specifically suggests that the public procurement of food should be seen as a benchmark for government commitment to such a broader interpretation. Examining this suggestion, Chapter One argued that the public purchase of food has been strongly colonised by a narrative that conflates the sustainable development agenda

³³¹ Specifically, as is noted in the Acknowledgements at the front of this thesis, the author has to thank Dr Roberta Sonnino for her identification of this research subject.

with the geographic localisation of food production and consumption (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 7). Speaking against this trend, critics have identified problems with this perspective, partly because the local does not necessarily provide outcomes congruent with sustainable development. Furthermore, the literature on the subject criticises the matrices on which the localisation agenda has been constructed – for example, in concentrating on the issue of food miles, which *inter alia* do not account for all environmental impact (Brenton et al. 2009; Edwards-Jones et al. 2009). Finally, and of particular importance to this thesis, is the argument that greater localisation of food has the concrete effect of reducing demand for producers further afield (Born and Purcell 2006) – and particularly for some of the poorest countries in the world, where livelihoods are heavily reliant on export agriculture (Morgan 2010, p. 1855).

Building on this work, it was further identified that some have specifically suggested that other food quality attributes need to be taken into account if the creative public procurement agenda is to make a genuinely holistic contribution to sustainable development (Morgan and Sonnino 2008, p. 119). In this light, the existing literature notes the importance of both organic food and also fair trade goods as important in balancing the local and green narratives with a greater consideration for intra-generational social justice at the global level (Morgan 2010). Indeed, such a policy position has also been adopted by the UK Government, which has committed to promoting sustainable development through the public procurement of fair trade goods whenever physically and legally possible (See Chapter One).

The limitation of these discourses is that, despite a significant and growing literature on the subject of fair trade, this category of product is treated uncritically by both policy makers and practitioners. As Chapter Two described, while empirical evidence is inconclusive about the relationship between fair trade governance and sustainable development, there are also a multitude of actual practices associated with this term. In reviewing existing analysis, it was reported that many see these differences in terms of a polarity between the preferable option of socially-driven fair trade operation and much less desirable profit-orientated activity (Low and Davenport 2005). While the former is associated with genuine empowerment of southern producers to protect and promote their own interests, the latter is often assumed to require compliance with weak standards through concessions granted to promote

corporate involvement in fair trade activity (Jaffee 2010). For this reason, work that specifically discusses the integration of fair trade governance into public procurement strategies highlights that while such praxis could galvanise stronger interpretations, it might also reinforce a weaker, more commercialised version (Fisher 2009) – and, as a result, make a limited contribution towards sustainable development outcomes. Having said this, while there is empirical evidence to suggest that there are nuances to this stereotyped understanding – for example highlighting differences in levels of corporate commitment to fair trade (Smith 2010b) and also instances when social reputation has masked less than ethical decisions (Davies and Crane 2003) – by and large, critical analysis reveals that these normative narratives are not adequately grounded in the analysis of empirical outcomes (see Chapter Two).

This situation is further complicated by parallel government references to ethical trade certification (such as Rainforest Alliance and Utz Cafe) in government policy. Academic literature on the other hand, differentiates between fair and ethical trade, suggesting that where the latter only regulates conditions of production, the former also applies to the conditions of initial trade (Barrientos and Dolan 2006). Furthermore, based on analysis of governance principles and certification requirements, it is argued by some that fair trade might be more beneficial for southern producers (Strong 2007) – although the empirical support for this position is significantly limited (see Chapter Two). What is well established is that, despite arguable differences in outcomes, parallel governance models are increasingly in competition with one another for the patronage of both producers and consumers (Renard 2010, p. 289).

In this context, it is also significant that the UK NLI for FLO has established a range of accreditation for various communities of consumption (see Chapter Two). Significantly, Fairtrade Town, School and University schemes make specific requirements that state-funded institutions should promote FLO certified goods over and above other labelled and non-labelled fair and ethical trade, as well as conventional goods (Malpass et al. 2007). Given significant criticisms of FLO, and the lack of robust and independent evidence for the benefits of this approach, many are highly critical of what they refer to as a growing “Fairtrade absolutism” (Mohan

2010, p. 94) – and this emerges as particularly important in the public sector, given its physical size and also ability to influence wider practices (Smith and Fischlein 2010).

It was in this context that the thesis set out to investigate how government policy-makers and practitioners are actually interpreting the concept of fair trade and, specifically, what procurement practices they are adopting. As such, it was a natural progression to adopt an ‘interpretative’ approach to language as a theoretical framework – as this recognises the ambiguous and contested nature of meanings and understandings (as discussed in detail in Chapter Three). At the practical level, the case study of Scotland was selected as it offered an excellent research context. The primary reason for this was a standout commitment by the devolved government to incorporate fair trade goods into public procurement through their involvement in the FTN programme. Although it has been identified in the literature that this initiative is grounded in the Fairtrade Foundation’s Town scheme (Fisher 2009), it has never been systematically described or analysed.

While focusing on the exact requirements of the FTN programme, critical attention was paid to investigate the process by which such policies have been defined. In this sense, work responded to the observation that interpretations of what constitutes “quality”, and hence value for money in public procurement, can be actively contested – and, furthermore, that it is an important research objective to reveal how this process occurs (Sonnino 2009, pp. 425-426).

Specific research questions asked how the concept of fair trade is interpreted by different stakeholders in the sphere of public procurement; how such views impacted on actual procurement strategies of public institutions; and also why and how have these interpretations been adopted. A fourth research question sought to move past isolated consideration of northern consumer markets and southern producer communities and investigate how interpretations of fair trade in the area of public procurement, and their associated choice of procurement practices, interact with the interests of southern producers in the pursuit of sustainable development. It was through this last question that the investigation provides empirical evidence that conceptual ambiguity and negotiation is also present in southern producer countries.

Addressing the Research Questions: A summary

In order to provide a summary of the findings from this thesis, the analysis relevant to each research question will now be discussed in turn.

1) How is the concept of fair trade interpreted by different stakeholders in the sphere of public procurement?

Based on empirical research conducted in Scotland and Malawi, it has been argued that a useful analytical approach in the study of interpretation is based on the identification of different communities in which the meaning of language is negotiated – in line with other objectives and power structures. In making this argument, the analysis has identified six discrete yet clearly integrated communities, mostly existing within specific institutions.

The first community in which this process was identified was the development of the FTN programme. Here, although numerous stakeholders were intent on maintaining a broad interpretation of fair trade, analysis of the actual requirements of this initiative reveals that the programme is largely concerned with promoting the consumption of FLO certified goods – and that this is specifically the case in terms of the requirements demanded of public institutions. Indeed, the FTN programme has made extensive use of the existing Fairtrade Foundation's geographical accreditation schemes, which, in turn, specifically require sales of Fairtrade labelled goods to be increased over time. Interestingly, however, as the FTN programme has been embedded in Scottish Government policy, discourse has shifted to remove specific references to FLO certification; and in explaining the government strategy for procurement, representatives blur a desire for FLO certification with other initiatives such as the Rainforest Alliance.

Drilling down to the level of local authorities in Scotland, it was discovered that while in some instances a FLO-centric understanding has been re-established in policy commitments, there are examples of more reflexive thinking. Some authorities phrase policy aims in more general terms and the stand out example has been the case of East Dunbartonshire. Here the inclusion of the term “fairly traded” has made a specific effort to open up understanding beyond FLO certification.

While such efforts to negotiate around the Fairtrade Foundation's specific requirements for the consumption of FLO labelled goods might be expected to provoke resistance, this has not been the case. Indeed, while representatives of the Foundation testify that their discourse is likely to remain focused on FLO certification, 'absolutism' in textual representation is not translated into practice. In fact, the example of East Dunbartonshire is celebrated as a progressive case, and the empirical reality that such negotiation is occurring is used to justify the discursive focus on FLO products.

Returning to Scotland, the identification of interrelated but discrete communities of negotiation is supported by reference to the concrete relationship developed between JTS and East Dunbartonshire Council. It was through connections made by the local Fairtrade Steering Group that these organisations developed their relationship, but the mission of JTS, informed by international partners of IMANI Development and NASFAM, has also influenced the local understanding of fair trade in the Scottish Authority. Indeed, JTS and IMANI see fair trade primarily as trade that promotes the interests of southern stakeholders as the core of its mission. This is not just in the sense that certain principles are upheld in the trade relationships, but that proactive efforts are made to maximise the amount of value added in producer countries and communities. It is for this reason that while the Kilombero rice supplied to East Dunbartonshire's Local Authority is not FLO certified, the product is seen to be a genuine part of the fair trade movement.

Finally, moving to the producer context, NASFAM has viewed fair trade as a component of its marketing strategy, devised to help them promote Malawian exports, and particularly those that support micro and macro diversification into non-traditional products. As such, while NASFAM has adopted FLO certification for some groundnut exports, it has sought alternative accreditation for Kilombero rice, which they see as a legitimate endorsement of their producer-focused activities. Interestingly, these actions have been played out in a wider context in which southern stakeholders are constantly developing their understanding of what it means to be engaged in fair trade. While there is reasonably widespread knowledge of FLO certification among representatives of export interests, alternative and broader

understandings are filtering through. This dynamic is shadowed by the proactive efforts of both FLO and COFTA, which have different approaches to fair trade, to develop formal parallel networks – and, as such, influence producer understanding of what fair trade governance involves. While the relationship between these organisations appears to be integrated and synergistic at times, in other situations the interaction can be seen as oppositional and potentially competitive. On ultimate reflection, only time will tell how the interaction between these different approaches will be played out.

2) Why have these interpretations been adopted?

Reflecting on the reasons why certain understandings of fair trade have been adopted, there is evidence to support the ‘interpretative’ theories of language that subjective meaning is strongly mediated by power relationships – emerging from both linguistic (Searle 1996) and non-linguistic resources (Van Dijk 1993). During the development of the FTN programme, while stakeholders wanted to maintain an open interpretation of fair trade, the pre-existing resources established by the Fairtrade Foundation were central to its development. The Fairtrade Town, University and School schemes were in part the inspiration for the Nation programme, and the macro initiative was specifically designed to build on the existing understanding of fair trade established by other activities.

As this regime of private governance is translated into government policy and action, however, other power systems are brought to bear on the interpretations that have arisen from community actors. In the case of headline government policy, specific reference to FLO certification has been minimised and, indeed, mentioned alongside other certification mechanisms, such as the Rainforest Alliance, under the umbrella of “fair trade”. While government representatives give the impression this is what the state sees as most desirable, other testimony suggests that this has also been heavily influenced by European Public Procurement Directives, and specifically the restrictions that are placed on the specification of social labelling.

At the level of individual Local Authorities, there is clear indication that some actors are strongly influenced by the discourse of the Fairtrade Foundation – since policy

mirrors the specific references to FLO certification. As some local authorities were requested to participate in the Fairtrade Town scheme, rather than electing to do so voluntarily, it could be hypothesised that these are more likely to simply reproduce texts than reflect critically about their meaning. However, the scope of research does not allow for comment on this possibility. What is clear is that some Authorities have paid specific attention to the wording of their policies. In particular, again, East Dunbartonshire has opened up the language of its objectives to accommodate non-FLO certified fair trade goods, and in particular the fairly traded Kilombero rice supplied by JTS. In this sense, it can be noted that unique local conditions have affected understandings of fair trade – in this case, the space provided by the Fairtrade Steering Group has been instrumental in facilitating this process.

Research into the perspectives of representatives from the Fairtrade Foundation indicated that, far from being unhappy with the negotiation and reinterpretation of their discourse, such critical thinking was readily accepted. As the NLI for FLO certification in the UK, the Fairtrade Foundation naturally has a strategic aim to promote Fairtrade products, and it was noted that licensees of the mark would expect this to remain the case. In this instance, corporate actors might be argued to have an influence³³², although this is more a hypothesis to test with further research and analysis. What has also been identified is that the Fairtrade Foundation also express a desire to differentiate between ‘more’ and ‘less’ radical approaches to their governance. Aside from this, representatives of the FLO system profess to draw a genuine difference between fair trade certification that governs the conditions of trade and production, and ethical trade, which is exclusively concerned with the latter.

At the other end of the supply chain, producer understanding of fair trade is equally influenced by power structures generated by a variety of resources. In the broad context, the longstanding nature of the WFTO has established networks of understanding within which the meaning of fair trade is developed. In contrast to this, FLO has recently raised considerable finances which it has chosen to invest in the development of formal networks. Although research did not investigate the process of negotiation within these organisations, empirical material has identified a dynamic of

³³² It should also be born in mind that licensees also include mission driven organisations, such as Divine Chocolate for example.

negotiation between such alternative approaches. Here the ability to project knowledge about different governance initiatives has been highlighted as significant in influencing the understanding of what it means to be involved in fair trade. Having said this, the example of NASFAM also indicates that where multiple options for the operationalisation of fair trade are identified, cost benefit analysis is also a key issue in deciding which one to adopt.

3) How does the existence of multiple interpretations of the concept of fair trade impact the actual procurement strategies of public institutions?

Investigating the actual procurement activities of Local Authorities in Scotland, it was revealed that the majority of goods purchased in line with understandings of fair trade were FLO certified. Indeed, in some instances where items for the public plate, bought under the desire to obtain Fairtrade Foundation certification, were found not to be FLO certified, suppliers were requested to replace them with FLO labelled goods.

Here, the example of “fairly traded” Kilombero rice stands in stark contrast to the rest of purchasing activities. In this case, the active negotiation of what it means to procure fair trade goods has allowed the expansion of purchasing activities – a strategy that should be seen as a significant part of the negotiation process itself. In response to this action, as has been noted above, representatives of the Fairtrade Foundation indicated that they saw such creativity as a positive initiative. In this sense, it could be concluded that the existence of parallel understandings of fair trade has the potential to open up space for a variety of actions that are not reliant on the Fairtrade mark. For this reason, the argument that Fairtrade Foundation accreditation schemes “compel Local Authorities to serve Fairtrade produce during their meetings and promote Fairtrade produce in their area” (Preuss 2009, p. 217) is not entirely accurate. As such, the associated argument that the UK is characterised by a form of “Fairtrade absolutism” (Mohan 2010, p. 94) can be questioned.

However, there are limitations to this position. East Dunbartonshire is a single case study from the entire UK and while it has adopted a radical procurement strategy in terms of Kilombero rice, the rest of their fair trade purchasing meets specific requirements to buy FLO labelled goods. In this context, future research would do

well to investigate if other examples of radical purchasing practice exist and further if any other examples cover product categories such as hot drinks – where Fairtrade Foundation discourse has been particularly strong.

4) How do the interpretations of fair trade and the associated choice of procurement practices interact with the interests of southern producers in the pursuit of sustainable development?

Empirical investigation has revealed that the understanding of what constitutes fair trade in public procurement has a direct effect on the opportunities afforded to southern producers seeking to access northern markets.

Firstly, the differentiation between fair and ethical trade made by those actually responsible for operationalising wider policy directly affects which producer groups are able to enter supply chains feeding the public sector. In this way, it is argued (in Chapter Six) that such decisions structure the scope of who is entitled to support under the overall agenda of sustainable development. For example, southern stakeholders that are connected with Rainforest Alliance certification will see their market in the public sector decline if the de facto requirement for FLO certified goods becomes increasingly widespread.

In addition, and building on the identification that the operationalisation of sustainable development involves tradeoffs between different underlying principles (Chapter One), it is significant that different governance frameworks have different approaches (Chapter Two). Therefore, choices made by procurement officials between these competing systems implicitly involve a decision about which principles of sustainable development are prioritised (Chapter Six); although, as the question of how governance frameworks are translated into action on the ground is clearly a fundamental variable in outcomes (Pirrotte et al. 2006), the agency of decision makers close to the point of consumption is highly tentative.

Another point that can be made on the basis of the empirical investigation presented above is that if southern actors want to maximise their opportunity to sell into public sector institutions subscribing to the Fairtrade Foundation's geographical

accreditation, FLO certification would certainly be beneficial. However, this is not to say that such a strategy is necessarily possible or ultimately advantageous, and it should not be overlooked that this is not the only option for legitimising a claim to fair trade operation. Indeed, the example of negotiation around FLO dominance highlighted by this thesis testifies to the possibility for producers and other stakeholders to pursue alternative avenues to access fair trade markets in the public sector. Unfortunately, again, the focus of this research does not allow for any substantial discussion of the empirical effects of either FLO or WFTO/COFTA governance regimes – or that of NASFAM with which these interact. What can be noted is that, in the experience of NASFAM, even if FLO certification is adopted to maximise the opportunity to reach the UK public sector, there is no guarantee of financial returns – as this is mediated by the volume of goods which can be sold, and is off set to a proportionate degree by the initial certification costs.

Notwithstanding these observations, there is evidence that professional managers representing the commercial interests of producer communities see beyond static financial analysis to the longer-term potential of FLO certification – which they view as a means to demonstrate supply performance as part of a wider marketing strategy. Furthermore, where volumes are sufficient, these stakeholders testify to the material benefits of such certification.

Beyond Empirical Findings: Some theoretical propositions

As was noted in Chapter Three, the use of case study based methodology significantly limits the ability of research to extrapolate empirical findings to report generalised trends. However, this situation does not preclude the possibility to offer theoretical propositions that can inform future research and hypothesis testing (Yin 2009, pp. 15, 43).

As has been suggested elsewhere (Malpass et al. 2007), an important factor in the integration of fair trade products into public procurement systems is the involvement of personally committed individuals. The role played by various members of East Dunbartonshire's council has certainly been instrumental in the development of their

fair trade policy and purchasing activities – and can be contrasted with other councils where less progress has been made despite the same macro policy environment.

Furthermore, in the case of the East Dunbartonshire Steering Group, it appears that the presence of representatives from a mission driven ATO has contributed to a more reflective understanding of fair trade. On this basis, it can be suggested that alternative and non-certified approaches to fair trade are likely to be more accepted in geographies where such organisations are involved in the community.

Finally, a similar role of information provision was played by Imani Development in the context of their work with NASFAM, in that they have researched and provided information about alternative fair trade models. Again, it can be suggested that where independent organisations are involved, producers and managers will be more likely to have a wider understanding of the possibilities for fair trade practice. In addition, where these organisations have good knowledge of development processes, interpretations of fair trade are more likely to involve a fundamental restructuring of commercialisation activities – and in particular efforts to capture greater levels of value added within the producer community.

Limitations of the Current Study, Future Research Possibilities and Policy Recommendations

The fact that the term fair trade is subject to varying interpretations and is embedded in an ongoing process of negotiation is intrinsically important. Indeed, while the assertions that the UK is characterised by a form of “Fairtrade absolutism” (Mohan 2010, p. 94) can be questioned with reference to the negotiation of such domination, there are certainly issues which deserve attention for future research and critical reflection in policy making circles. As such, this section presents some specific issues which emerge from the research and analysis discussed above.

Starting with the literature on which this investigation has been based, existing knowledge suggests that there is a strong need for further critical analysis of all narratives within the drive for sustainable development – particularly, that of the

localisation of food and organic production. There are also other research avenues open for the investigation of other factors relevant to the integration of fair trade and ethical trade certification. For example, while this study has concentrated on an case of alternative practice, knowledge about more mainstream supply chains is important – and in particular the role of large established public sector suppliers (such as Brake Bros³³³) in mediating fair trade procurement down the supply chain.

One of the major boundaries of this investigation has been the focus on certain stakeholders/institutions connected to public procurement in Scotland – and specifically one example of alternative procurement practice by a local authority. Future research could undertake wider analysis of the UK, and/or extend the research theme to other government institutions such as Universities and Schools³³⁴ (where an added dimensions would be to consider how education resources supplied by various stakeholders such as the Fairtrade Foundation are influencing the understanding of fair trade), as well as more central government departments³³⁵. Specifically, research should seek to ascertain if the inclusion of non-certified fair trade options is reproduced in any other part of the public procurement system.

Finally, the theme of negotiation over the meaning of fair trade could be taken beyond the public sector and into other communities. Specific studies of Fairtrade Steering Groups, such as the one in East Dunbartonshire, would enhance understanding of how these institutions can negotiate the meaning of fair trade at the very micro level and investigation of macro institutions, such as alternative trade organisations like TWIN Trading and funding institutions such as the Lorna Young Foundation, would provide additional examples of spaces where such processes might be played out³³⁶.

³³³ Interestingly, the brochure published by Brake Bros (2011) currently highlights producers that are certified Red Tractor and British, but not those goods which are fair trade or ethical trade certified or otherwise

³³⁴ See Footnote 50 for an explanation as to why this was not part of the current study.

³³⁵ It can be noted that mirroring other central government discourse, central UK government departments tends to be much more open in terms of its interpretation of what constitutes fair trade purchasing. For examples see (Fairtrade Foundation 2007a).

³³⁶ As noted in footnote 34 above, representatives of such institutions show a considerable concern for this issue. Representatives of the Lorna Young Foundation have expressed particular concern with the domination of Fairtrade in the fair trade movement, and are considering Kilombero rice from JTS as a medium for a UK entrepreneurship initiative targeted at underprivileged youngsters. Interview with John Riches 26/04/2011.

In focusing on the conceptual understanding of fair trade in the public procurement sector, current research has not touched upon the issue of whether government institutions are promoting more or less radical approaches. This issue is greatly complicated by the huge range of diversity that exists in fair trade activity. However, such research would be possible as a case study, or potentially a comparative investigation, to analyse the specific product range of a purchasing authority. Unfortunately, this would only provide an impression of the empirical outcomes of such purchasing. For this reason, one of the most significant gaps in existing knowledge would be filled by building on the work of Reynolds and Ngcwangu (2010) in providing rigorous, empirically grounded comparative analysis of different approaches to fair trade – as well as between fair and ethical trade governance (where other variables are held constant).

In terms of developing an empirical understanding of impact, an immediate extension of the case study presented above would be to undertake research on how trade in Kilombero rice impacts on the Malawian producer community and wider stakeholders. As the very small sample of interviews among farmers indicated, it cannot be assumed that the work of NASFAM is necessarily beneficial – and there are likely to be a myriad of associated variables in determining outcomes for individual members that would also need to be explored (some of which are discussed in Chapter Two).

Stepping back to the issue of how the meaning of fair trade is being interpreted and projected by various stakeholders, the dynamic in producer countries also stands out as critically important for future investigation. Specifically of interest would be to investigate how the various networks established by fair trade institutions continue to develop and interact with one another. This issue could be researched across the whole spectrum of producer geographies, paying particular attention to how grassroots initiatives interact with top down structures developed by external investment. Based on this study's findings about the lack of involvement of 'ordinary' producers (as opposed to professional managers and social elites), future work could critically investigate the degree to which these actors participate in the negotiation of meanings. Ultimately, research should aim to critically assess the position that fair trade is different from other top-down governance and certification systems due to widespread stakeholder involvement in shaping it. In short, the simple identification

of formal democratic structures cannot remain a substitute for in-depth analysis of genuine stakeholder empowerment.

Despite these limitations and clear scope for much wider exploration of the subject area, it is suggested that some important policy and practice relevant issues can be raised. Firstly, the overarching finding is that the interpretation of fair trade by stakeholders in consumer countries such as Scotland directly interacts with the opportunities open to southern producers.

Comparing the emerging conflation of fair trade with FLO certification in Scottish Local Authorities with the experience of NASFAM in interacting with such governance, evidence suggests caution on how ‘absolutely’ such certification becomes a de-facto requirement. This case illustrates how producers in poor countries might be isolated from supply chains that feed into public markets where FLO certification is specifically required. As such, it is suggested that northern actors take care to ensure that such isolation is not a fundamental component of initial policy positions – which are worded in general terms to diffuse the automatic association between fair trade purchasing and FLO certification. Thinking specifically about the FTN programme, which was designed to be an on-going process as opposed to a unitary and static achievement, future developments should pay careful attention to how key actors interpret the concept of fair trade and, as a result, how they structure the development of the movement.

This widening of understanding would also be beneficial given the stance of European Procurement Directives on the use of such social labelling – where it is suggested that phrasing remains general with illustrative examples provided where appropriate. Beyond this, if procurement is to be used as a means of promoting international and intra-generational social justice (and, indeed, any identifiable aspects of sustainable development) it is essential that those involved in the operationalisation of this aim are provided with the knowledge necessary to carry out this policy (also see Morgan 2008).

Final Thoughts

At the time this thesis is submitted in 2011, some hold the view that the agenda for sustainable development has been greatly weakened in comparison to its strength in the first decade of the second millennium (Carrington 2011). Indeed, as the effects of the recent financial crisis continue to be discussed, there is considerable pressure on government to increase income and reduce expenditure.

In this context, balancing value for money against “*values* for money” in government procurement is more important than ever (Morgan and Morley 2011, p. 11). For this reason, it is of significant importance that academics continue to subject the actions of both central and local government to critical scrutiny. This includes the narratives that have emerged within the context of more creative procurement strategies – in particular, those that have widespread traction, perhaps most accurately summarised as “local and green” and “global and fair” (Morgan 2010).

Overall, FLO certification has presented northern consumers with the powerful opportunity to promote the interests of some southern producers. As such, the initiatives of the Fairtrade Foundation and the FTN programme which have utilised these resources in building wider knowledge and action for the benefit of stakeholders might well be seen as positive contributions. It is also likely that as retail markets grow the opportunity for others to involve themselves in this specific governance regime will continue to increase. However, as more nuanced knowledge about the nature and impact of these organisations is developed, the limitations of this model for environmentally sustainable, socio-economic change must be acknowledged. If the concept of fair trade is to provide the intellectual underpinning of positive concrete actions, it is essential that the resources capable of disciplining widespread understanding of its meaning are appropriately deployed. Moreover, as concepts such as fair trade increasingly shape the actions of public and private actors, it is crucial that understanding and definitions are as firmly grounded in empirical understanding as possible. It is very much hoped that this thesis will be one component of such analysis, and will go some way towards assisting stakeholders to think carefully about the integration of fair trade governance within the power of public procurement.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Applicability of Product Standards

Product Standard	Applicable to:	
	Small Farmers’ Organisations	Hired Labour
Bananas	X	X
Beauty products		
Cocoa	X	
Coffee	X	
Dried Fruit	X	
Flowers & Plants		X
Fresh Fruit	X	X
Fresh Vegetables	X	X
Fruit Juices	X	
Gold	X	
Herbs & Spices	X	
Honey	X	X
Nuts/Oil Seeds/Oil	X	
Quinoa	X	
Rice	X	
Seed Cotton	X	
Soya Bean/Pulses	X	
Sports Balls		X
Sugar	X	
Tea	X	X
Timber	X	
Wine Grapes	X	X

Information taken from FLO (2010b).

Appendix 2: Ten IFAT/WFTO Fair Trade Principles

Standard One: Creating Opportunities for Economically Disadvantaged Producers	<p>Poverty reduction through trade forms a key part of the organisation's aims. The organisation supports marginalized small producers, whether these are independent family businesses, or grouped in associations or co-operatives. It seeks to enable them to move from income insecurity and poverty to economic self-sufficiency and ownership. The organisation has a plan of action to carry this out.</p>
Standard Two: Transparency and Accountability	<p>The organisation is transparent in its management and commercial relations. It is accountable to all its stakeholders and respects the sensitivity and confidentiality of commercial information supplied. The organisation finds appropriate, participatory ways to involve employees, members and producers in its decision-making processes. It ensures that relevant information is provided to all its trading partners. The communication channels are good and open at all levels of the supply chain.</p>
Standard Three: Trading Practices	<p>The organisation trades with concern for the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of marginalized small producers and does not maximize profit at their expense. It is responsible and professional in meeting its commitments in a timely manner. Suppliers respect contracts and deliver products on time and to the desired quality and specifications. Fair trade buyers, recognising the financial disadvantages producers and suppliers face, ensure orders are paid on receipt of documents and according to the attached guidelines. A pre payment of at least 50 percent is made if requested.</p>
Standard Four: Payment of a Fair Price	<p>A fair price is one that has been mutually agreed by all through dialogue and participation, which provides fair pay to the producers and can also be sustained by the market. Where fair trade pricing structures exist, these are used as a minimum. Fair pay means provision of socially acceptable remuneration (in the local context) considered by producers themselves to be fair and which takes into account the principle of equal pay for equal work by women and men. fair trade marketing and importing organisations support capacity building as required to producers, to enable them to set a fair price.</p>
Standard Five: Child Labour and Forced Labour	<p>The organisation adheres to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and national / local law on the employment of children. The organisation ensures that there is no forced labour in its workforce and / or members or home workers. Organisations who buy fair trade products from producer groups either directly or through intermediaries ensure that no forced labour is used in production and the producer complies with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and national / local law on the employment of children. Any involvement of children in the production of fair trade products (including learning a traditional art or craft) is always disclosed and monitored and does not adversely affect the children's wellbeing, security, educational requirements and need for play.</p>
Standard Six: Non Discrimination, Gender Equity and Freedom of Association	<p>The organisation does not discriminate in hiring, remuneration, access to training, promotion, termination or retirement based on race, caste, national origin, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, union membership, political affiliation, HIV/Aids status or age. The organisation provides opportunities for women and men to develop their skills and actively promotes applications from women for job vacancies and for leadership positions in the organisation. The organisation takes into account the special health and safety needs of pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers. Women fully participate in decisions concerning the use of benefits accruing from the production process. The organisation respects the right of all employees to form and join trade unions of their choice and to bargain collectively. Where the rights to join trade unions and bargain</p>

	<p>collectively are restricted by law and/or political environment, the organisation will enable means of independent and free association and bargaining for employees. The organisation ensures that representatives of employees are not subject to discrimination in the workplace.</p> <p>Organisations working directly with producers ensure that women are always paid for their contribution to the production process, and when women do the same work as men they are paid at the same rates as men.</p> <p>Organisations also seek to ensure that in production situations where women's work is valued less highly than men's work, women's work is re-valued to equalize pay rates and women are allowed to undertake work according to their capacities.</p>
Standard Seven: Working Conditions	<p>The organisation provides a safe and healthy working environment for employees and/or members. It complies, at a minimum, with national and local laws and ILO conventions on health and safety. Working hours and conditions for employees and / or members (and any home workers) comply with conditions established by national and local laws and ILO conventions. fair trade organisations are aware of the health and safety conditions in the producer groups they buy from. They seek, on an ongoing basis, to raise awareness of health and safety issues and improve health and safety practices in producer groups.</p>
Standard Eight: Capacity Building	<p>The organisation seeks to increase positive developmental impacts for small, marginalised producers through fair trade. The organisation develops the skills and capabilities of its own employees or members. Organisations working directly with small producers develop specific activities to help these producers improve their management skills, production capabilities and access to markets – local / regional / international / fair trade and mainstream as appropriate. Organisations which buy fair trade products through fair trade intermediaries in the South assist these organisations to develop their capacity to support the marginalized producer groups that they work with.</p>
Standard Nine: Promotion of Fair Trade	<p>The organisation raises awareness of the aim of fair trade and of the need for greater justice in world trade through fair trade. It advocates for the objectives and activities of fair trade according to the scope of the organisation. The organisation provides its customers with information about itself, the products it markets, and the producer organisations or members that make or harvest the products. Honest advertising and marketing techniques are always used.</p>
Standard Ten: Environment	<p>Organisations which produce fair trade products maximize the use of raw materials from sustainably managed sources in their ranges, buying locally when possible. They use production technologies that seek to reduce energy consumption and where possible use renewable energy technologies that minimize greenhouse gas emissions. They seek to minimize the impact of their waste stream on the environment. Fair Trade agricultural commodity producers minimize their environmental impacts, by using organic or low pesticide use production methods wherever possible.</p> <p>Buyers and importers of fair trade products give priority to buying products made from raw materials that originate from sustainably managed sources, and have the least overall impact on the environment. All organisations use recycled or easily biodegradable materials for packing to the extent possible, and goods are dispatched by sea wherever possible.</p>

Appendix 3: Five Core Principles of Fair Trade Established by the Charter of Fair Trade Principle

Market access for marginalised producers

Many producers are excluded from mainstream and added-value markets, or only access them via lengthy and inefficient trading chains. Fair Trade helps producers realise the social benefits to their communities of traditional forms of production. By promoting these values (that are not generally recognised in conventional markets) it enables buyers to trade with producers who would otherwise be excluded from these markets. It also helps shorten trade chains so that producers receive more from the final selling price of their goods than is the norm in conventional trade via multiple intermediaries.

Sustainable and equitable trading relationships

The economic basis of transactions within Fair Trade relationships takes account of all costs of production, both direct and indirect, including the safeguarding of natural resources and meeting future investment needs. Trading terms offered by Fair Trade buyers enable producers and workers to maintain a sustainable livelihood; that is one that not only meets day-to-day needs for economic, social and environmental well-being but that also enables improved conditions in the future. Prices and payment terms (including prepayment where required) are determined by assessment of these factors rather than just reference to current market conditions. There is a commitment to a long-term trading partnership that enables both sides to co-operate through information sharing and planning, and the importance of these factors in ensuring decent working conditions is recognised.

Capacity building & empowerment

Fair Trade relationships assist producer organisations to understand more about market conditions and trends and to develop knowledge, skills and resources to exert more control and influence over their lives.

Consumer awareness raising & advocacy

Fair Trade relationships provide the basis for connecting producers with consumers and for informing consumers of the need for social justice and the opportunities for change. Consumer support enables Fair Trade Organizations to be advocates and campaigners for wider reform of international trading rules, to achieve the ultimate goal of a just and equitable global trading system.

Fair Trade as a “social contract”

Application of these core principles depends on a commitment to a long-term trading partnership with producers based on dialogue, transparency and respect. Fair Trade transactions exist within an implicit “social contract” in which buyers (including final consumers) agree to do more than is expected by the conventional market, such as paying fair prices, providing pre-finance and offering support for capacity building. In return for this, producers use the benefits of Fair Trade to improve their social and economic conditions, especially among the most disadvantaged members of their organisation. In this way, Fair Trade is not charity but a partnership for change and development through trade.

(WFTO 2009b)

Appendix 4: The Transition of Practices in the Development of FLO Certification

“Alternative Trade”	Max Havelaar	Fairtrade Foundation (pre FLO reforms)	Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International
Mutually agreed prices, buyers paying as much as possible.	Mutually agreed prices, often up to 10 percent higher than world market price	Mutually agreed prices for each harvest cycle and not following the ups and downs of commodity exchanges	Minimum prices ³³⁷ – specified for each product type by product certification
Direct purchases from producer groups	Direct purchases from producer groups	Direct purchases from producer groups	Direct purchases from producer groups
Commitment to stable relationships to allow for business development	Commitment to stable relationships to allow for business development	Commitment to order a certain guaranteed amount from one source, preferably over a number of years	Long term relations encouraged with some commitment to purchase predicted amounts for some products
Up to 60 percent of the final retail value supplied up front as working credit	Importers underwrite legitimate additional costs and provide pre-financing of up to 60 percent of the final price	Guaranteed advance of payment agreed before purchase made	60 percent of payment to be paid upfront on request
Information freely available on technical and marketing, in order to improve quality and delivery markets	Information missing	Information freely available on technical and marketing, in order to improve quality and delivery markets	Social Premium paid for investment in business and community capabilities
Information missing	Information missing	Quality commitment to the quantities agreed and adhered to delivery times specified.	Quality requirements specified and agreed between buyers and sellers

³³⁷ As of 1995, FLO Minimum Prices under the FLO framework are calculated as a ‘fee on board’ (FOB) price, which includes the cost of transporting the product to the port of origin (Bacon 2010, p. 129).

Appendix 5: FLO Requirements to Promote Stable Trading Relationships (Taken from FLO Product Standards 2010)

Product	Binding Arrangements			Estimation
	Other	6 months	12 months	
Bananas	Weekly order or quarterly sourcing plan (no notice)		Max vol/week (2 weeks)	Quarterly (2 weeks)
Cocoa			Binding Letter of Intent (3 months)	None
Coffee	First half of the season (no notice)			Second half of the season (no notice)
Dried Fruit	Standard purchasing agreements: min and max vol. No duration specified (none)			Seasonal Plan (none)
Fresh Fruit	Standard purchasing agreements: min and max vol. No duration specified (none)			Quarterly or seasonal plan (no notice)
Fruit Juices			Binding Letter of Intent (3 months)	None
Herbs and Spices	At the beginning of the season (no notice)			None
Honey			Minimum order	None
Nuts and Oil Seeds	First half of the season (no notice)			second half of the season (none)
Quinoa			Binding Letter of Intent (3 month notice)	None
Rice	At the beginning of the season(no notice)			None
Cane Sugar			Binding Letter of Intent (3 month notice)	None
Tea	None Specified			Quarterly plan
Wine grapes	At the beginning of the season (no notice)			None
Seed Cotton	At the beginning of the season(no notice)			None
Flowers		(25 percent margin of error fixed max and min vol)		6 month plan
Sports balls	None Specified			None Specified

Appendix 6: Requirements for Fairtrade Universities and Schools

In order to become a Fairtrade accredited University or College:

1. The Student Union (or equivalent) and the university or college authorities both create a Fairtrade policy incorporating these five goals.
2. Fairtrade foods are made available for sale in all campus shops. Fairtrade foods are used in all cafés/restaurants/bars on campus. Where this is not possible, there is a commitment to begin to use Fairtrade foods in these establishments as soon as it becomes possible to do so.
3. Fairtrade foods (for example, coffee and tea) are served at all meetings hosted by the university or college and the Student Union (or equivalent), and are served in all university or college and Student Union management offices.
4. There is a commitment to campaign for increased Fairtrade consumption on campus.
5. A Fairtrade Steering Group is established.

(Fairtrade Foundation 2009c)

In order to become a Fairtrade accredited School:

- Our school has set up a Fairtrade School Steering Group (or committee). At least half of us are pupils or students and we meet together at least once a term.
- Our school has written and adopted a whole-school Fairtrade Policy. We have the support of the board of Governors and our Policy is signed by the Head teacher.
- Our school is committed to selling, promoting and using Fairtrade products as much as possible. If we have problems, we can at least show that we have tried and will continue trying.
- Our whole school learns about Fairtrade In at least three subjects in each of two year groups.
- Our school promotes and takes action for Fairtrade at least once a term in the school and once a year in the wider community. This way it becomes a regular part of what we do, and allows everyone to take part in helping to bring about a fairer world.

(Fairtrade Foundation 2009b)

Appendix 7: Interview Respondents

Interviews in Scotland

Name	Position/Organisation	Date	Location	Type of Interview
Betsey Reed	Coordinator of the Scottish Fair Trade Forum	19/06/2009	Cafe, near Scottish Fair Trade Forum Office, Edinburgh	Formal, semi-structured, in person
David Cook	Scottish Procurement Directorate	18/06/2009	Interview Room, Scottish Government, Glasgow	Formal, semi-structured, in person
Council Representative	Renfrewshire Council	16/06/2009	Meeting Room, Renfrewshire Council	Formal, semi-structured, in person
Grace Irvine	Head of Assets and Property Services, East Dunbartonshire Council & member of East Dunbartonshire Fairtrade Steering Group	16/06/2009	Interview Room, East Dunbartonshire Council	Formal, semi-structured, in person
		04/03/2009	NA	Formal, semi-structured, telephone
Council Representative	Stirling Council	28/08/2009	NA	Formal, semi-structured, telephone
Council Representative	Edinburgh City Council	06/01/2010	NA	Formal, semi-structured, telephone
John Riches	Director, JTS & Member of East Dunbartonshire Fairtrade Steering Group	19/03/2009	Front Room, John's House	Formal, semi-structured, in person
		16/06/2009	NA	Formal, semi-structured, telephone
		26/04/2011	NA	Formal, semi-structured, telephone
Linda Fabiani	Minister for Europe,	03/07/2009		Formal, semi-structured,

	External Affairs and Culture (17th May 2007 and 10th February 2009), Scottish Government		NA	telephone
Murdoch Gatward	Consultant, IMANI Development	22/06/2009	IMANI Offices, Oban	Formal, semi-structured, in person
Council Representative	East Ayrshire Council	09/07/2009	NA	Formal, semi-structured, telephone
Scott Erwin	Green City Whole Foods	18/06/2009	Office, Green City Whole Foods	Formal, semi-structured, in person
Silvia Grey	Officer for Sustainable Development at East Dunbartonshire Council & Member of East Dunbartonshire Fairtrade Steering Group	16/06/2009	Interview Room, East Dunbartonshire Council	Formal, semi-structured, in person
		02/03/2009	NA	Formal, semi-structured, telephone
Senior IMANI Representative	IMANI Development, UK	22/06/2009	IMANI Offices, Oban	Formal, semi-structured, in person
Government Representative	Team for International Development, Directorate for Europe, External Affairs and Culture, Scottish Government	19/06/2009	Interview Room, Scottish Government, Edinburgh	Formal, semi-structured, in person
Tracy Mitchell	Project Manager, JTS & Member of East Dunbartonshire Fairtrade Steering Group	18/05/2009	John Riches' House	Formal, semi-structured, in person

Interviews in Malawi

Name	Position/Organisation	Date	Location	Type of Interview
“Mr Manza”	Driver, NASFAM	Various	Various	Ongoing, informal, unstructured, in person
20 Member Farmers of NASFAM	Kaporo Smallholder Farmers Association (KSFA), NASFAM, Malawi	Various	Farmers Homes/Farms	Formal, structured, in person
Andrew Parker	Consultant, Imani Development	15/11/2009 23/11/2009	Imani Development, Blantyre	Formal, semi structured Formal, semi structured + regular informal unstructured, in person
Senior Representative of the Malawian Government	Ministry of Industry and Trade	26/11/2009	Malawi Government, Lilongwe	Formal, semi structured, in person
MFN Representative	MFN, Malawi	27/11/2009	Imani Development, Blantyre	Formal, semi structured, in person
Senior Government Representative	Ministry of Labour, Malawi Government	05/11/2009	Malawi Government, Lilongwe	Formal, semi structured, in person
Francis Chiwaya	Field Officer, NASFAM	10/12/2009	NASFAM, Karonga Office	Formal, semi structured + ongoing, informal unstructured, in person
Government Extension Worker	Karonga Agricultural Development Division, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security	11/12/2009	Agricultural Development Division, Regional Office, Karonga	Formal, semi structured, in person
Senior NASFAM Representative	NASFAM	04/12/2009	NASFAM Regional Office, Muzuzu	Formal, semi structured + ongoing informal

				unstructured, in person
John Masangali	Field Officer, NASFAM	10/12/2009	NASFAM, Karonga Office	Informal, semi structured + ongoing, informal unstructured, in person
Joshua Varala	Commercial Manager, NASFAM	18/12/2009	NASFAM Head Office, Lilongwe	Formal, semi structured, in person
Kingsely Makiyoni	Business and Institutional Development Manager, NASFAM	02/12/2009	NASFAM Head Office, Lilongwe.	Formal, semi structured + ongoing informal unstructured, in person (in Malawi and at COFTA conference)
Anonymous Stakeholder	Anonymous	16/11/2009	Imani Development, Blantyre	Formal, semi structured, in person
Nickolas Evans	Independent Consultant	24/11/2009	Mabuya Camp, Lilongwe	Formal, semi structured, in person
Richard Petautchere	Programme's Coordinator, NASFAM	03/12/2009	NASFAM Head Office, Lilongwe	Formal, semi structured, in person
COFTA Representative	COFTA, Malawi	25/11/2009	Imani Development, Blantyre	Formal, semi structured, in person
Laurence T. Kanjira	Business Manager, KSFA	10/12/2009	NASFAM, Karonga Office	Formal, semi structured, in person
KSFA Employee	NASFAM	12/12/2009	KSFA Rice Mill, Karonga	Formal, semi structured, in person

Interviews at COFTA Conference, Swaziland

Name	Position/Organisation	Date	Location	Type of Interview
Benjamin Gatland	African Fairtrade Network	26/05/2010	Dining room, COFTA	Formal, semi structured, in

	(now called Fairtrade Africa)		Conference	person
Bernard Outa	Deputy Regional Director, COFTA	27/05/2010	Dining room, COFTA Conference	Formal, semi structured, in person
Marcela Guerrero Casas	African Fairtrade Network (now called Fairtrade Africa)	26/05/2010	Dining room, COFTA Conference	Formal, semi structured, in person
Mike Naholi	Independent Consultant, Innovative Concepts	27/05/2010	Dining room, COFTA Conference	Formal, semi structured, in person
Paul Myers	President, WFTO	26/05/2010	Dining room, COFTA Conference	Formal, semi structured, in person

Other Interviews in the UK

Name	Position/Organisation	Date	Location	Type of Interview
Andrew Emmott	TWIN Trading	29/09/2009	Meeting room, TWIN Trading, London	Formal, semi-structured, in person
Anne Hemingway	Chair of Fair Trade Wales	20/03/2010	Meeting room, BRASS, Cardiff	Formal, semi-structured, in person
Christine Gent	External Affairs Office for the World Fair Trade Organisation. Fair Trade Nation panel of experts	27/08/09	NA	Formal, semi-structured, telephone
David McCullough	Trading Director, Oxfam GB	30/03/2011	NA	Formal, semi-structured, telephone
Fairtrade Foundation Representative	Fairtrade Towns Team, Fairtrade Foundation	30/04/2010	Meeting Room, Fairtrade Foundation, London	Formal, semi-structured, in person
Ian Bretman	Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors, FLO	29/04/2010	Pub, London	Formal, semi-structured, in person

Jan Tucker	Chairperson, Welsh Fair Trade Forum (until 2006)	05/08/09	Chapter Arts Cafe, Cardiff	Formal, semi-structured, in person
Senior FLO Representative	FLO	29/04/2010	Pub, London	Formal, semi-structured, in person
Mark Richardson	Employed by Welsh Fair Trade Forum and the Welsh Assembly Government to develop the Fair Trade Nation	24/08/09	NA	Formal, semi-structured, telephone
Richard Laydon	Head of CAFOD Wales	25/02/2011	Office, CAFOD Wales, Cardiff	Formal, semi-structured, in person
Robin Samuel	Treasurer, Wales Fair Trade Forum	09/09/2009	Meeting Room, BRASS, Cardiff	Formal, semi-structured, in person

Appendix 8: Early Day Motion for Fairtrade Town

S3M-7192# Linda Fabiani: We Would Make 500 Fairtrade Town—That the Parliament congratulates the *Fairtrade Town*, including Scotland's first towns to achieve this status, Strathaven and Aberfeldy, for their commitment *to fair and ethical trade*; thanks local supporters, activists and decision makers across the country for what it believes is their hard work and dedication in making the *Fairtrade Town* movement a success in Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland; anticipates that the 500th Fairtrade Town will be named this autumn, and praises those involved in and supporting the 500 Miles for 500 Towns Bike Ride, including Graeme Obree and the Proclaimers.

(Scottish Parliament 2010)

Appendix 9: Full Requirements of the Fair Trade Nation Programme

Aims

- To increase awareness of Fair Trade and surrounding issues
- To increase the sale of Fair Trade products
- To contribute to greater trade justice
- To engender a meaningful commitment to Fair Trade from Parliament and executive bodies

Measurable Countrywide Criteria

- 100 percent of counties/local authorities have active Fair Trade groups working towards Fair Trade status
- 55 percent Local Authority areas with Fair Trade status with 10 percent annual increase in following years
- 100 percent of cities with Fair Trade status
- Minimum 55 percent of towns (Based on GROS figures of towns with population of 5,000 or more at 2001) have active Fair Trade groups working toward Fair Trade status
- 60 percent of higher education institutions to have active Fair Trade groups working towards Fair Trade status
- Increase by 5 percent each year the proportion of the population who know about Fair Trade (initial target of 50 percent, ultimately to reaching 75 percent)
- 75 percent of people to buy a Fair Trade product every year
- 40 percent of people regularly buy Fair Trade products

Parliament

- Annual statement of opinion in support of fair trade
- Use and promote Fairtrade products internally including Fair trade tea / coffee / sugar / biscuits at all meetings
- Ensure Fairtrade products available at all catering outlets
- Actively promote Fairtrade Fortnight each year

Government

- Use and promote Fairtrade products internally including Fairtrade tea / coffee / sugar / biscuits at all meetings
- Ensure Fairtrade products available at all catering outlets
- Actively promote Fair Trade (sic) fortnight each year
- Annual public report on progress of Fair Trade country campaign
- Actively support the promotion and development of Fair Trade including:
 - Seek to develop pro fair trade public sector procurement guidance and promote fair trade public sector procurement wherever possible.
 - Promote Fair Trade in schools through the curriculum, procurement and any other means possible

- Promote Fair Trade at an international level (Where appropriate, a nation should also seek to promote Fair Trade through its international trade agreements)
- Acknowledge the role of Fair Trade in economic development policies

Other Desirable Objectives

These are targets which are not easily measurable but which should also be promoted and where possible measured as part of the Fair Trade Nation campaign.

- Resolutions of support, and pledges to use and promote Fairtrade products from major faith groups across the country
- Schools and further education institutions across the country to sign Fair trade pledges or become Fair Trade Organisations and pledge to promote and use Fairtrade products internally
- Trade unions to support and pledge to use and promote Fairtrade products internally and to members
- Resolutions of support from Chambers of Commerce or business networks to include pledge to use and promote Fairtrade products
- National Festivals
- A good number of BAFTS or World shops
- A good number of Fair Trade or BAFTS suppliers

(Taken verbatim from Scottish Government 2009)

Appendix 10: Sample Motion Suggested by the Fairtrade Foundation

Why

[Name of council], as an important consumer and opinion leader, should research, develop, and *support a strategy to facilitate the promotion and purchase of foods with the FAIRTRADE Mark* as part of its commitment to [document/advise paper] and in pursuit of sustainable development and to give marginalised producers a fair deal.

Aim

To be recognised by the residents and business community of [name of city/town], suppliers, employees and other local authorities, as a city/town that actively supports and promotes Fairtrade *and to increase the sale of products with the FAIRTRADE Mark. [name of council] resolves to contribute to the campaign to increase sales of products with the FAIRTRADE Mark by striving to achieve Fairtrade status for [name of council] as detailed Fairtrade Foundation's Fairtrade Town Initiative.*

The initiative involves a commitment to:

Widely offer FAIRTRADE Marked food and drink options internally and make them available for internal meetings

Promote the FAIRTRADE Mark using Fairtrade Foundation materials in refreshment areas and promoting the Fairtrade Town initiative in internal and communications and external newsletters

Use influence to urge local retailers to provide Fairtrade options for residents

Use influence to urge local business to offer Fairtrade options to their staff *and promote the FAIRTRADE Mark internally*

Engage in a media campaign to publicise the Fairtrade Town initiative

Allocate responsibility for progression of the Fairtrade Town initiative to a member or group of staff

Organise events and publicity during national Fairtrade Fortnight - the annual national campaign to promote sales of products with the FAIRTRADE Mark.

(Fairtrade Foundation No date-a Emphasis is mine)

Appendix 11: Fair Trade Motions Passed by Scottish Local Authorities

County Council	General Commitment	Procurement Commitment
Peebles & Tweeddale	“pursue a Fair Trade designation”	“Support the use of Fair Trade products within the Council so far as is compatible within procurement rules”
Motherwell Area	Missing	
Mid-Formartine	“support Fairtrade and the aim of the Mid-Formartine Fairtrade Area Steering Group to make and maintain Mid-Formartine as a Fairtrade Area”	“encouraged to use Fairtrade products”
Kilmacolm and Quarriers	“support Fairtrade”	“agrees to serve Fairtrade coffee and tea at meetings”
East Renfrewshire	“welcomes the work of the Fairtrade Foundation”	None
East Dunbartonshire	None	“encourage use of fair trade goods, for example products carrying the Fairtrade Mark, when catering for Council meetings and functions”
Falkirk	“Council resolves to continue the work to take the business community along with the Council and reaffirms the commitment to the Fairtrade movement”	None
Renfrewshire	None	“encourage use of fairly traded goods, for example products carrying the Fairtrade mark”
Shetland Islands ³³⁸	“supports the principles of Fairtrade”	“agrees that when it offers beverages at its meetings, these will include Fairtrade drinks”
City Council	General Commitment	Procurement Commitment
Aberdeen	“promote awareness of Fairtrade issues”	“Use the option of Fairtrade goods, particularly those carrying the Fairtrade Mark”
Dundee	None	“promote the use of fair-trade products”
Edinburgh	“supports the Edinburgh Fair Trade City initiative”	promote the use of fair trade products”

³³⁸ The Shetland Islands are technically registered as a Fairtrade Island.

Appendix 12: Map of Malawi



(CIA no date)