The "Fair Trade Nation": Market-Oriented Development in Devolved European Regions

Eleanor Fisher

Scholars have largely ignored the roles played by government and public sector institutions in the fair trade movement. This article addresses the knowledge gap through examining government involvement in fair trade networks in the context of European devolution and the localization of international development action. Proposing a relational view of fair trade networks, and considering the Fair Trade Nation as a social category for development, it highlights how power sources outside the centralized nation-state permit a political community to associate itself with fair trade. Research from Wales demonstrates that government acts in a leadership role rather than as regulator, conferring political voice and finance while enhancing its international credentials and contributing to the politics of nation-building. Our conclusion is cautious; campaigners celebrate political commitment to fair trade embodied within the category of the Fair Trade Nation, but evidence suggests that government reliance on the market as a vehicle for decentralized development action is limited by how the Fair Trade Nation is currently executed.

Key words: fair trade, government, Europe, devolution, development anthropology

Introduction

In 2006, the First Ministers of Wales and Scotland, devolved regions of the United Kingdom, announced a campaign to win fair trade status for their nations at the first anniversary of the Gleneagles Summit for the Group of Eight (G-8) heads of the powerful industrial nations. At this Summit, world poverty had been top of the agenda; half a million people formed a human chain to "make poverty history" and a final communiqué acknowledged the success of the global fair trade movement (Fairtrade Foundation 2006).[1] The symbolism of the announcement is striking, regional leaders from the United Kingdom portraying their countries' contributions to global poverty reduction as "Fair Trade Nations" (FTNs), linking new iterations of regional identity, civic value, and nationalism to fair trade. Two years later, Wales was declared the world's first FTN (BBC 2008a/b).

International action by European regional (sub-state) governments is important to identity formation, stateless nation-building, and goals of independence (Royles 2010). This is despite powers over international development re-

Eleanor Fisher (e.fisher@reading.ac.uk) is a Senior Lecturer in International Rural Development affiliated with the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development at Reading University, United Kingdom. The author wishes to thank everyone interviewed for the research, as well as Elen Jones, Hannah Sheppard, Alastair Smith, Alberto Arce, and the anonymous reviewers. Views expressed are solely the author's responsibility.

maining the preserve of the nation-state in many European countries. Thus, in regional contexts, instead of government-to-government development aid, emphasis is placed on mutuality in international relations, partnership with civil society, and place or institution-based links between the global north and south (Smith n.d.). Fair trade, with its potential for poverty reduction, partnership, and closer producer-consumer linkages, is seen as an ideal vehicle for this decentralized development action, as demonstrated by European regional and local government fair trade initiatives that have support from the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, and European fair trade advocacy networks.[2]

Reflecting wider European processes, regional devolution in the United Kingdom in the 1990s created political space for the emergence of the FTN in the 2000s.[3] United Kingdom devolution is "asymmetrical," being fundamentally different and with divergent timescales in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales (Leeke, Sear, and Gay 2003). However, the 1997 election of a new national government, the Labour Party, stimulated devolution processes. The implications for configuration of responsibilities between central and regional governments differed: following decades of violence, Northern Irish devolution was bound to peacemaking; while devolution was strongest in Scotland, with its powerful nationalist party and greater economic strength, the new Scottish Parliament being identified as a claim of right for a historic nation. In contrast, devolution was weakest in Wales, with its small population of three million, limited economic competitiveness, and struggles to be given political importance. Here, devolution was portrayed as a process of local

government reform to establish greater political and economic voice for the Welsh people (Morgan 2007; Wyn Jones and Royles 2012). Despite these differences, constitutional change repositioned citizens in emergent political arenas with new opportunities for democratic engagement (Morgan 2007) linked to nation-building agendas (Royles 2010). This stimulated regional policies on international action, including fair trade (NI-CO CADA 2010; SG 2005; WAG 2006c). These policies were an unintended outcome of devolution and are surprising given that powers over international development remain non-devolved.

Incorporation of fair trade into international action in European regional contexts coincided with fair trade being transformed from its origin as a market alternative through a process of corporate mainstreaming (Tallontire 2006). Mainstreaming has led to contemporary narratives that highlight paradox and tension. Fair trade's paradoxical nature is seen to emerge from the way it acts, in an oft quoted phrase, in and against the market, linked to perceived contradictions between a social movement challenging global trading relationships and a commercial vehicle in pursuit of profit maximization (Moberg and Lyon 2010: 7). These contradictions have come to the fore with success, creating "inescapable tensions" (Edward and Tallontire 2009: 828) as fair trade becomes more reductionist and instrumental, moving from the politicizing aspirations of the movement's founders towards depoliticized neo-liberal market relations. A question repeatedly raised is where these market dynamics are taking the fair trade movement (Raynolds and Murray 2007; Renard 2005), with a growing divide between those embracing corporate involvement and activists who see mainstreaming as a disregard for reform of the international trading system (Moberg and Lyon 2010).

Much has been written about corporate mainstreaming for fair trade, but little attention is paid to how connections are built to government through political endorsement and initiatives to incorporate fair trade into public policy and procurement (Fisher 2009; Wilkinson 2007). Debates referring to these issues incline towards abstraction and a traditional view of the regulatory state as a counterbalance to market dynamics (e.g., Dine and Shields 2008; Renard 2005; Wilkinson 2007). However, case studies suggest that government, especially regionally, locally, and in the global south, is playing diverse non-regulatory roles in fair trade (Low and Davenport 2009; Malpass et al. 2007; Wilkinson and Mascarenhas 2007). Work on public procurement also demonstrates the complex process of integrating private agri-food standards into public governance (EFTA 2010; Fisher 2012; Smith 2011).

This article examines how European regional devolution has generated a new social category for development—the Fair Trade Nation. It focuses on the process of developing a FTN, to consider how and why fair trade became relevant to a political community and what implications a focus on government involvement has for debates on the direction of the contemporary fair trade movement. When the political leaders of Wales and Scotland announced the FTN campaign,

they signaled that fair trade could play a symbolic role for communication and action on international development; but why fair trade? Moreover, what strategies render a FTN "real" through shared symbolism, material practice, and lived experience (cf. Alonso 1994)? These questions lead us to reflect on the capacity of fair trade to frame representation and action on international development based on "social justice," "fairness," or, a Welsh expression, *chwarae teg* ("fair play"). Exploring the Welsh FTN campaign contributes to a seriously under-research area concerning the character of government involvement in fair trade networks and its implications for a market-oriented social movement; it also feeds into debates on the political and collective dimensions of ethical consumption in preference to emphasis on consumer choice (Barnett et al. 2005; Goodman 2004).

The research design utilizes a case study methodology appropriate to an in-depth analysis of the complexity of local circumstances and relationships and as a basis for generating grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 2010). It is intended as an exemplifying case (Bryman 2004) that will be explanatory but not predictive (Davies 2008). The methods combine information from unpublished reports, proceedings from the National Assembly for Wales, Scottish Parliament and United Kingdom Parliament, participant observation from public events, and data from semistructured interviews with key informants involved in the FTN campaign (conducted in 2006, 2008, 2009, and 2010). Between 2005 and 2008, the author was assigned to the Welsh Government, tasked with leading baseline research on fair trade public procurement to contribute to the FTN campaign. This data is not presented here; however, engagement with the campaign informs an in-depth knowledge of the research context. In generating "ethnography from within" (Mosse 2005:11), the positionality of the author is recognized, a frame considered valuable for eliciting understanding of network politics within fair trade.

Framing Fair Trade Within the Category of the Nation

Processes of globalization, neo-liberalism, and the transnational movement of people, resources, and ideas have transformed established orthodoxies on the state, market, and society. The changing power of supra and sub-state authorities, and the influence of NGOs and companies mean a multiplicity of social actors and power regimes come together beyond the monopoly of the sovereign nation-state (Grande and Pauly 2005). These processes shift thinking away from notions of the market versus vertical integration through the nation-state, to embrace the heterogeneous actors, multiple contested meanings, and varied social practices that surround governance and civic participation (Arce 2010). The nation-state and nationalism remain relevant but lose their "epistemological monopoly position," becoming embedded within new forms of political organization and societal ordering, creating fluctuating coalitions of cosmopolitan actors (Beck and Grande 2010:427).

For contemporary social movements, changing governance contexts generate new opportunities for civic action (Gaventa and Mayo 2009), creating different spheres of influence for the transnational fair trade movement (Gendron, Bisaillon, and Rance 2009). The FTN campaigns in Wales and Scotland are within these spheres of influence, with opportunities molded by more participative and decentralized forms of governance. These campaigns are currently unique to the Welsh and Scottish regions,[4] but they draw upon other campaigns, as typified by the Fairtrade Towns Scheme, where grassroots action in the United Kingdom in 2000 has led to orchestrated initiatives in 890 European towns, with expanding initiatives in the Americas and Antipodes (Human and Crowther 2011; Taplin 2009).[5]

The (re)negotiation of civil society-market-state relationships within the fair trade movement raises the question of how to conceptualize the incorporation of government into fair trade networks. Research has typically seen the expansion of fair trade in terms of consumers who exercise individual choice and sovereignty in the market (e.g., Nicholls and Opal 2005; Michelleti 2003). However, Malpass, Cloke, Barnett, and Clarke (Barnett et al. 2005; Clarke et al. 2007a, 2007b; Malpass et al. 2007) challenge this by arguing that the fair trade movement "through the mediating action of organizations, coalitions, and campaigns, makes claims on states, corporations, and international institutions" (Malpass et al. 2007:586). They accord with Goodman (2004:901; cf. 2010), who locates fair trade as "more of a consumer-dependent movement for change...[built by activist groups]...rather than a consumer-led movement." A strength of these studies is their emphasis on fair trade as a political and collective phenomenon, incorporating government actors in non-regulatory roles within wider communities of action.

Building on this work, I want to engender a relational view of the way social actors, power regimes, and different forms of knowledge, practice, and symbolism are brought into fair trade through local networks and political action (Arce 2009). Following Arce, this is a view of fair trade networks that owes less to actor network theory (Whatmore and Thorne 1997) and more to a relational sociology (Emirbayer 1997) and Kapferer's (1972) notion of emergent properties, which places emphasis on the primacy of context and process over structure. Taking this view of networks permits us to approach a political community in terms of seeing how social relationships specific to the regional context mediate and rework abstract ideas on fair trade, shaping an emergent form. In considering this form, I draw on Pigg (1992) to reflect on how the FTN becomes a social category in the context of regional devolution.

Anderson (1991:6-7) uses the term "imagined" to describe a political community as a nation because "members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." The FTN emerged within the Welsh and Scottish fair trade movements as a social category able to generate communion in the context

Figure 1.

Figure 1. Campaigning for Fair Trade at the Welsh Parliament (2010). Left to right: a representative of the Assembly Government's Wales for Africa Program, the Director of Fair Trade Wales, the Councillor General and Leader of the Legislative Program, fair trade campaigner, children from Fair Trade schools, and the Welsh Minister for Environment, Sustainability, and Housing.

of nation building as part of regional devolution (cf. Royles 2010; Wyn Jones and Royles 2012). In the process, nationalism is linked to new political forms and societal ordering, with feelings of nationhood and civic value built around fair trade as a powerful symbol of an (alternative) nation while through the actions of people within local fair trade networks, fair trade is anchored within everyday life.

Figure 1, taken at the Welsh *Senedd*, the Parliament building, reveals the powerful symbolism of how the fair trade movement connects to government within representations of a nation: Welsh Assembly Members, a civil servant, school children, and activists stand together; giant campaign mugs are juxtaposed against a tablecloth made by Welsh children.

Welsh fair trade communities identify with the FTN as a social category for development, imbuing it with locally connected meanings and significance that may be different from ideas held by actors in differently situated fair trade networks. Here, recognizing the symbolic dimensions of fair trade frames how people come together to incorporate ideas of nationhood within international development in a regional context. By the same token, it can create exclusion for those who do not seek to be part of fair trade or to recognize its purported significance, reinforcing social boundaries. Sovereignty rests in the power of Wales to call itself a FTN and to be recognized as one internationally (cf. Anderson 1991). As speeches by the First Minister, statements in the

Welsh *Senedd*, and a panel of experts seek to testify; this sovereignty has nevertheless been contested by the wider fair trade movement.

Wales: An "Outward Facing" Nation

Historically the United Kingdom government has been heavily centralized, despite initiatives to devolve decision making, including establishing a Scottish Office in 1885 and Welsh Office in 1965 (Leeke, Sear, and Gay 2003). In 1998, the Scotland Act permitted the Scottish Parliament to pass primary and secondary legislation on matters not reserved by the central government. In Wales, a referendum gave rise to the Government of Wales Act of 1998 and established the National Assembly for Wales[6] in 1999. However, unlike the Scottish Parliament, Wales only had executive powers until 2007 and only gained the ability to pass primary legislation in all devolved areas in 2011.

Despite devolution, international development remains a "reserved matter" under the central Department for International Development (DFID) (PMO 2009). Nevertheless, both Scotland and Wales have developed international policies (SG 2005; WAG 2006c).[7] For Wales, this harnesses a tradition of radical internationalism, with political discourse repeatedly referring to an "outward facing nation" (e.g., NAW 2010a). This leads the Welsh government to stress mutuality and "relationship-based" development, supporting organizations with a global reach, including partners in the FTN campaign (NAW 2010a; WAG 2006c).

Due to legal restrictions, the Welsh Government uses the well-being and sustainable development powers of the Government of Wales Act (NAW 1998, 2006b) to take action in the international sphere. Wales is one of only three countries worldwide to have a duty to implement sustainable development, and from an early stage this was identified as a pivotal governance mechanism for fair trade (interview, February 18, 2009). Fair trade's focus on consumer action also fits with well-being powers where benefit to Wales and its people must be demonstrated in each international project financed by government.

As a consequence, international activities are part of Welsh Government Sustainable Development Frameworks and Action Plans (e.g., WAG 2005b), are central to the Wales for Africa and International Sustainable Development Program launched in 2006 (WAG 2005a, 2005b, 2006c), were part of the Welsh Coalition Government's (2007-2011) One Wales Agreement (Labour and Plaid Cymru Groups 2007; NAW 2010a), are part of the Welsh Labour Manifesto 2011 (Labour 2011), follow the Government of Wales Act (1998, 2006b) and are within a proposed Sustainable Development Bill for 2013. These frameworks, policies, and legislation form the basis of governance mechanisms for fair trade within Welsh Government.

Wales' adoption of fair trade as a vehicle for international development also reflected a "tricky" relationship to DFID in the early 2000s, when central government support for de-volved policy on international development was ambiguous. At the time, the United Kingdom government strategy on fair trade was weak, so regional adoption of fair trade did not challenge established policy. In 2006, the central government permitted Wales to have an international development policy with fair trade as a component (i.e., the International Sustainable Development and Wales for Africa Program), with the United Kingdom Secretary of State for International Development publicly supporting this "mutually beneficial" arrangement,[8] but then, as now, it is made clear that "international development is a reserved matter" (Anyimadu 2011:19). In the late 2000s, following criticism from a United Kingdom Parliamentary select committee (IDC 2007), fair trade was situated within a United Kingdom Minister's portfolio and £12 million ($19 million) given to the Fair Trade movement (compared to £3 million [$4.8 million] between 1999-2009) (Alexander 2009; Fairtrade Foundation 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010a). By then, fair trade was integrated into Welsh government strategy.

The relationship of the Welsh Government and Scottish Executive has also been integral to the FTN campaigns. In the early 2000s, Scotland paved the way for development of devolved international policies sanctioned by the central government (Anyimadu 2011; Smith 2011), a precedent used by Wales (NAW 2005b). Scottish and Welsh civil servants liaise over international development, but there is also political rivalry. While Scotland led the way on international development policy, Wales was ahead on fair trade, instigating the FTN initiative and informing the Scottish campaign (BBC 2008b; SG 2005, n.d.; WAG 2006a, 2006c). Nevertheless, crucially, Wales relied on Scotland for external legitimacy for its FTN campaign.

To summarize, regional devolution opened up a policy space for fair trade, as governments in the Welsh and Scottish regions sought to implement international policies distinctive from central government and more receptive to notions of self-autonomy and nationhood. This provided the Welsh Government with claims to political interaction with civic networks, and to lesser extent business actors, harnessing an emergent mode of legitimacy to formulate a pragmatic approach to international sustainable development.

Incorporating a Political Community Into Fair Trade Networks

Thinking on the significance of fair trade for Welsh action on international sustainable development was influenced by Oxfam International's Make Trade Fair (2002-2005) and Make Poverty History (2005) campaigns (Royles 2007). Due to devolution, Welsh offices of international NGOs were gaining a Welsh identity (Royles 2007), linking international development to locally situated meanings. From an early stage, fair trade was located as a vehicle for international sustainable development: as a past representative of Oxfam described "we asked ourselves what are the levers of power in Wales...[for international development]...and fair trade was

one of them" (interview, October 17, 2006). Anderson (2009) argues that NGOs were central to the development of fair trade from the 1970s; in Wales this occurred later, in the 2000s.

Post devolution, the capacity of civil society actors to influence government was facilitated by an openness and transparency associated with the National Assembly for Wales, giving access to politicians and civil servants through committees, consultations, and personal relationships (Loughlin and Sykes 2004). This included the formation of the Wales Overseas Agencies Group and Assembly All Party Group for International Development, informing Assembly Members about fair trade. Oxfam prompted agenda items on trade policy for the European and External Affairs Committee of the National Assembly for Wales (NAW 2003, 2005a) and NGO lobbying led two people to be assigned to Welsh Government proposals to develop strategy on fair trade and international development.[9] Influence by the fair trade movement continues, as the Coordinator of Fair Trade Wales maintains that "people have access to their Assembly Members like never before... Twenty-two Assembly Members signed up to the 'Big Swap.'[10] They were asking what more they can do. They have letters on the doorstep from the public. Then an organization like Fairtrade Wales comes along to help them" (interview, April 9, 2010).

The Wales Fair Trade Forum (WFTF, renamed Fair Trade Wales in 2008) emerged from the Wales Overseas Agencies Group and was launched at the National Assembly in March 2000 with the objectives of building the fair trade movement in Wales and of working with the Welsh Government to influence change (Richardson and Wilson 2008). Initially, WFTF was based in the south; in the north, Together Creating Communities (2010) and Christian Aid established the North Wales Fair Trade Coalition in 2002. In 2004, they joined to launch the Wales-wide fair trade campaign (interview, October 18, 2006 and November 2, 2006).

In 2002, a civil society interagency coalition made "A Call for an Outward Looking Wales" (Oxfam 2002). It proposed that Wales could become a "Fairtrade Country" based on the Fairtrade Foundation's "accredited Fairtrade areas," with connections to local farmers markets/Made in Wales initiatives to "recognize the link between fairtrade and human rights in Wales and globally...[to]...ensure that Wales could become the first Fairtrade Country in the world" (Oxfam 2002:1). The potential for systematic linkages to local farming or other forms of Welsh production weren't pursued; instead, the influence of the United Kingdom Fairtrade Foundation's Fairtrade Towns Scheme is clear. As a leading member of WFTF described, the Towns campaign prompted discussion "on what a Fair Trade country would look like. It seemed a logical step; Fairtrade Towns were taking off [with] villages, cities, local authorities" (interview, October 18, 2006).

Developing criteria for a Fair Trade Country/Nation took, in the words of a government official, two to three years to make the campaign "measurable, meaningful, and achievable" (interview, February 18, 2009). Eventually in 2006, the criteria were agreed upon by the WFTF and Scottish Fair

Trade Forums and approved by the first ministers of Wales and Scotland (NAW 2008a, 2008b; WAG 2006a). The Wales FTN Report (Richardson and Wilson 2008) provides details of criteria and targets:

- 100 percent of counties/local authorities (total 22) to have active Fairtrade groups working towards Fairtrade status (8 in 2006; 22 in 2008);
- 55 percent of counties/local authorities with Fairtrade status with 10 percent increase year on year until 100 percent is reached (6 in 2006; 12 in 2008);
- 100 percent of cities (total 5) have Fairtrade status (2 in 2006; 5 in 2008);
- minimum 55 percent of towns (approximately 110) have active Fairtrade groups working towards Fairtrade status (11 in 2006; 56 in 2008);
- 60 percent of higher education institutions (total 12) have active Fairtrade groups working towards Fairtrade status (3 in 2006; 10 in 2008);
- increasing by 5 percent every year the number of people who know about Fairtrade to 75 percent (44 percent in 2006; 62 percent in 2008);[11]
- 75 percent of people to buy a Fairtrade product every year;[12]
- 40 percent of people regularly buy Fairtrade products.[13]

Non-quantified criteria were:

- resolutions or pledges by faith groups, schools, trade unions, business networks, youth organizations, voluntary organizations, and national festivals;
- policies by national festivals;
- a "good number" of British Association of Fair Trade Shops (BAFTS) or world shops and Fairtrade or BAFTS suppliers;
- 75 percent of school children to have access to Fairtrade or locally sourced fruit;
- demonstration of political commitment, support for Fairtrade Fortnight, and public procurement by the National Assembly for Wales and Welsh Government.

These targets were designed to increase fair trade campaigning through local networks, political commitment, public recognition, consumption, and education. Importantly, there was no consideration of government compulsion or regulation, nor was there consideration of developing a different form of certification from Fairtrade International or the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) even though these organizations were not leading the campaign. Indeed, the criteria and targets demonstrate how political action at the local level, which may seek to do things differently, imbibes categories set down by Fairtrade organizations in the wider movement, and correlates action with the need for measurement and audit as the method of verification and gaining public, governmental, and external legitimacy (cf. Strathern 2000).

What's in a Name—Country or Nation?

On February 4, 2006, the National Assembly for Wales voted to "promote Fair Trade and make Wales a beacon of Fair Trade practice" (NAW 2006a). Later, in July 2006, the First Ministers of Wales and Scotland announced that criteria had been agreed for gaining Fair Trade status for their countries (WAG 2006a). Between 2006 and 2009 the National Assembly for Wales gave political support (e.g., NAW 2006a, 2008a/b/c), and Welsh Government provided financial backing, spending £330,000 ($517,500) on fair trade over three years (2006-2009) (Townley 2009).[14] Also significant was financial and in-kind support from business sectors, notably the Cooperative Group Ltd. (the United Kingdom's largest mutual business and fifth largest food retailer), which sought to advance its ethical stance on business, with the Cooperative Membership Community Officer chairing the WFTF Board of Trustees through the campaign (interview, April 27, 2010).

For a period between 2006 and 2008, the campaign in Wales was intense. The report detailing "progress against specific criteria" (Richardson and Wilson 2008) is revealing:

Figure 2. A Parade Through Aberystwyth (Wales, United Kingdom) Led By a 30ft Long Welsh Dragon as Part of the International Fair Trade Association Global Journey (2007)

criteria and categories for impact are set out with narratives and pictures establishing links between Welsh people and place, demonstrating fair trade networks extending through counties and cities across the country and incorporating government, public sector, and business. An example is provided in Figure 2 of the International Fair Trade Association (IFAT)[15] Global Journey, which incorporates a Welsh dragon, linking a global campaign to Welsh identity in the creation of the FTN as a social category.

In addition to the certification of Fairtrade Towns, etc. by the Fairtrade Foundation, information on targets needed to be compiled from surveys, the National Assembly, the Welsh Government, media articles, procurement, etc. (see Richardson and Wilson 2008). Two targets presented difficulty: one on the numbers of people regularly buying Fairtrade products, which reproduced survey categories used by the United Kingdom Fairtrade Foundation but made a mistake in interpretation;[16] another related to public procurement of fairly traded goods, which encountered contractual difficulties over beverage vending machines. However, once outstanding questions had been clarified, it was agreed by a panel of experts that Wales had met the criteria.

The terminology "Fair Trade Country" and a shift to "FTN" is significant. Originally Wales aimed for a "Fair Trade Country" linked to policy on international sustainable development (NAW 2008a; Townley 2009) while Scotland adopted the term "FTN" linked to ideas of citizenship (Scottish Parliament 2006, 2007). Despite Wales' desire to be an "outward facing nation," ideas of nationhood were less prominent in the Welsh fair trade campaign. In 2008, when Wales sought external legitimacy for its fair trade sovereignty prior to the announcement that the Welsh campaign had succeeded, its relation to Scotland was central; in the process, Scotland (civil servants, activists) prevailed on Wales to use the term "nation" (interviews, April 14, 2008 and February 18, 2009).

Figures 3 and 4 represent the conceptual shift from fair trade country to nation: Figure 3 shows a banner from the campaign in 2007 declaring "Help Make Wales a Fair Trade Country." In contrast, Figure 4 was taken on June 6, 2008—the day Wales declared it had become a FTN and the banner states "Wales, A Fair Trade Nation."[17]

To summarize, in the 1990s, prior to devolution, grassroots campaigners promoted fair trade in Wales, activities stimulated by the Fairtrade Towns Scheme in the 2000s. Political leadership from the National Assembly for Wales and Welsh Government (and Scottish Parliament and Executive) fuelled these activities, through support for the fair trade movement and for fair trade business development through the Wales Cooperative Centre. To garner external legitimacy for being a FTN, Wales looked to government and civil society in Scotland, another devolved region of the United Kingdom. Arguably the Welsh—Scottish relationship was given more emphasis than wider support from the international fair trade movement. In the process a Fair Trade Country shifted to being a FTN.

Figure 3. Welsh School Children in the Campaign to Make Wales a Fair Trade Country (2007)

Figure 4. Left to right: Esperanza Dionisio (Pangoa, Peru), Raymond Kimaro (KNCU, Tanzania), Jane Davidson (then Welsh Minister of Environment, Sustainability, and Housing) P. C. Buah (Kuapa Kokoo, Ghana), and Casildo Quispe (Coinacapa, Bolivia) (2008)

The Fair Trade Nation: A Contested Social Category

Wales' success at becoming the first FTN was announced in June 2008 (BBC 2008b; NAW 2008c). However, campaign politics revealed tension and exposed political dynamics within the fair trade movement. Leadership by Welsh (and Scottish) politicians and their civil servants was integral to the campaign but created friction with local groups. In the view of the Head of the Wales for Africa and International Sustainable Development Program, rapid outcomes were essential to demonstrate accountability for public finance (interview, June 4, 2008). However, government's focus on, in the words of a member of the Board of Trustees of WFTF, "quick deliverables" generated tensions with groups wishing to develop at their own pace (interview, April 27, 2010).

Early in the campaign, a Panel of Experts was established to provide independent verification that targets were met. They included experts from WFTO, Traidcraft, Tearfund, Christian Aid, Oxfam, and Together Creating Communities but omitted a representative from the United Kingdom Fairtrade Foundation, a body responsible for upholding Fairtrade International's standards.[18] According to two leading members of WFTF and a government official, the Fairtrade Foundation declined an invitation to be on the Panel of Experts and later, in 2008, made it extremely clear in a private meeting that it was unhappy with the FTN proceeding (interviews, April 14, 2008, February 18, 2009, and April 27, 2010). The Fairtrade Foundation certified Fairtrade Towns,

Universities and Colleges, and Schools for Wales to meet FTN targets but was opposed to the FTN because there were no internationally agreed criteria.

A discussion held by this author with the Deputy Director of the United Kingdom Fairtrade Foundation in April 2008 suggested profound concern over the integrity of the FAIRTRADE Mark and brand damage from the FTN campaign; his emphasis was on the need for international market growth rather than support for a regional campaign. There was also a concern from both the Fairtrade Foundation and WFTO that Wales did not have a strong enough business base for fair trade. Although business support and sales of Fairtrade products was demonstrated by Fairtrade Towns certification and commitment by small- to medium-sized businesses such as Fair Do's, Dwyfor Coffee Company, and Tropical Forest Products, Wales had no internationally leading alternative/ fair trade organizations.

These tensions were manifested in difficulties around the FAIRTRADE Mark: because it is a registered trademark, the Fairtrade Foundation rejected WFTF's argument, backed by the Welsh Language Board, that bilingual policies meant schools needed the FAIRTRADE Mark in Welsh (interview, August 15, 2009). This carried wider significance over the ability to link Welsh identity to fair trade; however, hope that an international symbol could be given local expression ended in dispute over property rights within the market.

These institutional struggles are revealed in the use of "fair trade" (two words) for FTN, rather than "Fairtrade" (one word). This is not simply pedantic but a distinction repeated in interviews: "fair trade" connotes broader ideas and ethics on trade justice, while "Fairtrade" for some, represents the "London-centric" orientation of the United Kingdom

Fairtrade Foundation. The Welsh Government itself avoids reference to "Fairtrade" because this would be privileging a brand name.

Welsh political support for the campaign permitted local autonomy to develop, linking universal symbols of fair trade to local identity and expression, and extending social networks for fair trade. However, there were parameters to this autonomy because close connections are made to wider fair trade campaigns and product consumption. Importantly, the FTN is not an oppositional category to the governance system of Fairtrade International and use of existing international private agri-food standards (cf. Fisher 2012; Tallontire 2009): Wales does not have its own system of certification, FAIRTRADE Mark products are widely consumed, and the FTN incorporates Fairtrade Towns and Schools schemes of the Fairtrade Foundation.

A "Journey, Not a Destination"

The FTN is portrayed as "a journey, not a destination" (NAW 2010a) with achievement of further criteria being ongoing (WAG 2011; see Fair Trade Wales 2012). Nevertheless, there are profound questions over how the national campaign develops. As an ex-trustee for WFTF argued, "Once you become a FTN, what is next? People's imaginations are engaged. What next? How do you take it forward? ... You can't top that!" (interview, April 27, 2010).

Civil society and government acknowledge that fair trade business needs to be stimulated, knowledge of trade justice deepened, and the campaign broadened to a more socially diverse support base. The Welsh Government also expresses a desire to support direct links between Welsh fair trade groups and southern producers and provides small-scale finance to Welsh community/business links, including with coffee producers in Uganda, beekeepers in Cameroon, craft producers in Zimbabwe, and jewelry makers in Mali (Townley 2009; WACL 2010; cf. Smith 2011). This is in keeping with recent developments within fair trade;[19] however, to date, Welsh initiatives are at a micro-level and in early development.

Beyond this, perceptions differ about the significance of the FTN for Welsh businesses, people, and government. For the Coordinator of Fair Trade Wales, "being a FTN is an act of leadership that people can tap into. The FTN gives towns integrity, and Fairtrade Towns give the Nation integrity" (interview, April 9, 2010). While for a campaigner "schools are the future, this is where fair trade should go in Wales" (interview, March 3, 2010). For the Marketing Officer of the Wales Cooperative Center, which promotes fair trade business development, "being a FTN is included within the benefits you can tell business about because you can say that by selling Fairtrade products they are supporting Wales" (interview, April 7, 2010). For the Membership Community Officer of the Cooperative Group, "a business like us wants to be a leader on Fair Trade, and to say you have been supporting the FTN campaign is a good thing" (interview, April 27, 2010). Finally, the words of the Minister for Environment, Sustain-

ability, and Housing to the Welsh Parliament remind us of the FTNs significance for Welsh internationalism in the context of devolution: "Together we are helping to tackle global poverty through trade, by paying a fair price and supporting community development for some of the world's poorest farmers and producers" (NAW 2010a: 1).

Underpinning all these views, however, is a profound difficulty common to advocacy worldwide—maintaining momentum to keep the FTN present in the public imagination; without this, political support would not exist.

Conclusion

Assembling the FTN as a social category for international development demonstrates how a political community can be incorporated into fair trade networks. Shifts towards the localization of international development action are integral to the question of why regional and local government in Europe supports ethical consumption. Initiatives are generated at the margins of bilateral development aid, and alternative ways of working are sought, including through the market, to garner legitimacy for sub-state development initiatives.

In devolved regions of the United Kingdom, the politics of nation-building have enabled a field of social action to unfold that incorporates state, business, and civil society actors in performative networks with a global reach. This has permitted the rehearsal of ideas of local integration, regional solidarity, and national sentiment, as well as difference and dissent. Elsewhere, the network politics of a fair trade campaign will differ, as will the nature of government involvement, so clearly comparative data is needed. Nevertheless, the case reveals how political devolution stimulates change in the distribution of power and configuration of regional actors in fair trade networks in ways that can create a semi-autonomous dynamic around the market as part of decentralized development policy.

In Wales, we see how the relational and emergent properties of networks come to the fore: symbols of international fair trade (the FAIRTRADE Mark and the IFAT [WFTO] Logo) are situated alongside symbols of Welsh identity (a harp, mountain, castle, dragon) as a political community establishes itself, civil society actors gain confidence, and business actors demonstrate ethical credentials. This stimulates the extension of fair trade networks, building local groups and establishing personal and distant connection—within counties, cities, local government, schools, cafés, businesses, and public offices, and between Wales and producer groups in Africa, India and Latin America.

Controversies associated with the FTN campaign reveal recognized tensions between the politics of a social movement and the dynamics of the market within fair trade (Moberg and Lyon 2010), as reflected in disputes over legitimacy between the "Fairtrade" agenda occupied by Fairtrade International plus member organizations and wider knowledge, practices, and discourses on "fair trade." This suggests that drawing government into fair trade networks can create institutional struggles and perceived threats to

existing power and authority within the fair trade movement; nevertheless, it also reinforces support for Fairtrade (one word). As a result of FTN campaigns, new sites to promote fair trade have developed that draw heterogeneous events, objects, people, knowledge, and practices into relational network building, helping to increase Fairtrade consumption and raise development awareness.

What implications does a focus on government involvement have for our understanding of the fair trade movement? A central conclusion is that government needs to be recognized as an actor in contemporary fair trade, and clearly in doing so there is a need to go beyond an abstract, often polarized, debate over the market versus state regulation when considering government engagement (e.g., Dine and Shields 2008; Renard 2005; Wilkinson 2007). Evidence demonstrates that government at different levels can play a non-regulatory leadership role, contribute finance, and integrate fair trade into public policy, as well as stimulate a political dynamic around fair trade. This supports arguments suggesting fair trade is shaped by diverse actors and power sources and can't simply be conceptualized as a consumer-driven movement (cf. Anderson 2009; Barnett et al. 2005; Goodman 2004).

The FTN raises questions over the role fair trade business plays within government—civil society network relations. Until 2008, the Welsh FTN campaign was chaired by a representative of an ethical business leader in the United Kingdom, the Cooperative Group Ltd. In addition, across Wales, small businesses are committed to fair trade, and corporate retailers sell Fairtrade products. Nevertheless, business leadership is the weaker element in the FTN campaign. In this respect, the specifics of the Welsh case are relevant due to an uncompetitive economic environment and absence of fair trade business leaders based in the country. How government—civil society—business networks develop in another FTN campaign remains to be answered, and here comparison with Scotland would be relevant.

One can muse over whether government or the fair trade movement gains more through the network politics of a FTN campaign. While political leadership and public finance provide critical stimulation for fair trade advocacy, development awareness, and education, benefits to government in terms of ethical, educational, sustainability, or international credentials that support a nation-building agenda can be substantial, while incorporation of fair trade products and action on ethical trade into governance practices may be superficial. For example, integration of fair trade into Welsh public expenditure through procurement is marginal despite public procurement being part of FTN targets (Fisher 2012; cf. Smith 2011). Furthermore, in spite of new regional and local dynamics around fair trade in Europe, and evidence of (small) increases in Fairtrade consumption above United Kingdom averages in Wales, existing FTN campaigns in Wales and Scotland focus "inward" within the United Kingdom regions; demonstration of international political leadership on a trade justice agenda is limited. This may be symptomatic of United Kingdom regional politics, but we should be cautious in this conclusion because in other areas, such as action on climate change and sustainable development, Wales reveals an international leadership role (Royles 2010; Smith n.d.; Wyn Jones and Royles 2012).

In the long term, a critical question for the fair trade movement is whether involvement by government in fair trade can facilitate the production of positive development outcomes for fair trade producers in developing countries. In this respect political commitment can enhance fair trade advocacy and business uptake, stimulating civic networks and action. Indeed, one can express less concern that government will derail a fair trade campaign through threatening ethical standards, as Fairtrade standard-setting organizations feared when the FTN was declared; a greater worry is that fair trade slips from political view in the face of other priorities, perhaps as an unintended outcome of the European crisis in public sector finance or through sidelining by government enthusiasm for other development initiatives.

Notes

[1]"Fairtrade" (one word) is a trademark of Fairtrade International; "fair trade" (two words) refers to the wider fair trade movement.

[2]See www.eftafairtrade.org.

[3]Devolution is understood to be "the process of devolving power from the center to sub-national units" (Leeke, Sear, and Gay 2003:7) and can take three forms: administrative, executive, and legislative.

[4]Sweden is considering a FTN campaign.

[5]See Fair Trade Towns USA 2010; Fairtrade Towns nd.

[6]The National Assembly for Wales is an elected body (parliament) that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales, and holds the Welsh Government to account. The Welsh Government is the executive of the Government of Wales (until 2011 referred to as the Welsh Assembly Government).

[7]Northern Ireland developed a strategy for international action more recently (NI-CO CADA 2010).

[8]Hilary Benn held the position of United Kingdom Secretary of State for International Development from 2003 to 2007(WAG 2006b).

[9]One position was held by this author.

[10]"Big Swap" was the theme for "Fairtrade Fortnight" 2010 in the United Kingdom (Fairtrade Foundation 2010b).

[11]A "jump of 17 percent in 12 months compares to an average growth across the United Kingdom since 1999 of 4.5 percent per annum, and at its fastest 9 percent (between 04 and 05)" (Richardson and Wilson 2008:32).

[12]The independent survey criteria were based on criteria used by the Fairtrade Foundation; however a mistake in the categories meant that targets had to be ignored and instead progress demonstrated. The Fairtrade Foundation only surveys the number of people buying a Fairtrade product from the percent recognizing the FAIRTRADE Mark, whereas Wales based recognition of the mark on total population.

[13]See Note 12.

[14]The program's total budget is small: rising from approx $784,000 in 2006 to $1,097,870 in 2009 and $1,333,125 in 2010 to 2011 (NAW 2010b; WAG 2011).

[15]The International Fair Trade Association is now renamed the World Fair Trade Organization. WFTO was established in 1989 and is composed of members that demonstrate 100 percent commitment to fair trade.

[16]See Note 12.

[17]A cabinet statement as late as March 2008 referred to a Fair Trade Country (NAW 2008a).

[18]Fairtrade International consists of 25 member organizations, including the Fairtrade Foundation, that set standards and support producers (FLO 2011).

[19]For example, the European Union funded the GeoFairTrade Geo-traceability initiative to promote transparency and traceability of the whole product supply (GeoFairTrade nd.).

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