

and 'partners.' In the case of coffee, this means that the big coffee corporations are being forced and encouraged into the realm of 'ethical consumption.' We chart out the complex and problematic relationship that is now developing as the fair trade movement engages with the industry's dominant firms and we discuss the potentially fatal trap that the movement is setting for itself.

Theoretical ground

In doing so, we build on work by other scholars and activists who have fruitfully turned their attention to the dynamics of the movement, analyzing fair trade (and other, similar sorts of initiatives) from a variety of perspectives. Just as there exist fractures and splits within the movement itself, so there exist divergences among those who have written about fair trade. Daniel Jaffee (2007, 26–31) categorizes activist perspectives on fair trade according to whether it is seen as a 'market breaking,' 'market reform,' or 'market access' mechanism. That is, does fair trade aim to transcend the market as the key determinant of production and social relations? Does it aim to make markets less structurally 'stacked' in favor of the North, or does it facilitate fuller and more capable participation in the market on the part of Southern producers? The literature on fair trade could be put in a parallel framework, in that much of it evaluates the extent to which fair trade accomplishes or might accomplish one or each of these objectives. Fridell (2007a, 83–99) has also done excellent service by categorizing the range of perspectives from which authors have analyzed fair trade, grouping contemporary scholars under three umbrellas: those who look at fair trade as striving to build producer capacities to more successfully interact with global markets, those who see fair trade as an attempt to build an 'alternative globalization,' and those who analyze it as a project of decommodification. Following his lead, we have created a typology that relates the fair trade literature to four broad theoretical perspectives in political economy, as summarized in Table 1.1.

Each places fair trade within a different role vis-à-vis capitalism or the market. Both the Marxian and the Polanyian approaches analyze fair trade through the lens of its hypothetical opposition to capitalism and market society. The neoclassical examines fair trade with concern for whether it obstructs or enhances market functioning, and whether it offers new opportunities for producers' profitable engagement in global markets. What we call the Bourdieusian perspective looks at fair trade

Table 1.1 Political-economic approaches to fair trade

	Marxian	Polanyian	Neoclassical	Bourdieuian
Role of fair trade	Transformative: An aspect of class conflict; challenging the fetishism of commodities	Protective: Softening the blows of market society; resisting market domination	Optimizing: Increasing access to and improving the functioning of markets	Expressive: Enables an ethical and regulatory performance by the consumer, or satisfies a consumer preference for the exotic
Examples	Fridell (2007a; 2007b); Mutersbaugh (2005)	Guthman (2007); Jaffee (2007); Reynolds (2000)	Byers et al. (2008); Sidwell (2008)	Wright (2004); Adams and Raisborough (2008)

as a consumer experience—as a form of status-seeking through conspicuous consumption, as part of the construction of the self as an ethical subject, or as self-gratifying consumption of the exotic ‘other.’

The authors approaching fair trade, certification, or political consumerism from these theoretical perspectives by no means agree on the potential of fair trade to fulfill the role ascribed to it. Indeed, debates persist over whether fair trade combats commodity fetishism or reinforces it; whether it defends against the incursion of market logic or facilitates its expansion; whether it obstructs markets or corrects for imperfections, and whether drinking fair trade coffee is an act of beneficence, justice, or exploitation by the consumer.

To take a couple of examples from each perspective, within the Marxian framework, both Fridell (2007a; 2007b) and Mutersbaugh (2005) suggest that fair trade cannot or does not adequately address commodity fetishism, and in fact it results in a form of commodity re-fetishization, in which ethics and the expression of dissent are commodified through labeling. Our own work (Hudson and Hudson 2003), including this book, offers qualified support for the idea that fair trade can help mitigate the tendency toward commodity fetishism.

In the Polanyian camp, Jaffee (2007) characterizes fair trade as a re-embedding of markets within social and political systems of constraint, while Guthman (2007) casts a skeptical eye on the potential of labeling initiatives to protect producers or nature from the depredations of the market, since it establishes a new front of neoliberal governmentality.

Sidwell (2008), writing under the auspices of the United Kingdom's Adam Smith Institute, charges that fair trade creates market distortions through its rules and its price floor, subsidizing inefficient producers and thereby actually harming poor farmers by incentivizing them to stay in a glutted market. From within a similar neoclassical framework, Byers et al., writing under the banner of the Food and Agriculture Organization, suggest that the fair trade price premium is a valuable market signal to producers conveying information about the importance of sustainability (2008, 45–46) and, drawing on earlier work by the World Bank, argue that 'a competitive market position based on processes that are more difficult to duplicate, such as certified coffees, is potentially a more viable long-term strategy for coffee producers' (49).

Finally, from within the Bourdieusian camp, Wright (2004) focuses on the advertising of fair trade products, concluding that what is on offer is the satisfaction of consumers' tastes for the exotic, rather than a means of addressing the injustices of globalizing capitalism. Adams and Raisborough (2008) argue that fair trade enables consumers to build their moral selves by enacting and displaying solidarity with the distant, exotic, but deserving poor in the developing world, while ignoring the more proximate, everyday, and 'undeserving' poor at home.

This book fits most closely within the Marxian camp, and is concerned with whether fair trade offers a way to counteract the fetishism of commodities, and with the issue of whether fair trade acts as part of a 'market-breaking' movement. We do so from within a broader question about social movements generally, concerning their abilities to produce social, political, and economic change in the service of justice and ecological sustainability—concerns we have discussed here in terms of the 'transformative potential' of movements. We wonder whether, and how, fair trade might operate *not only* to keep the exploitation required to fuel global capitalism from immediately devouring Southern producers and their land but also to facilitate a process of moving beyond a system that produces immiseration and environmental destruction as a matter of course.

From within a similar set of questions, the work of Karl Polanyi (1944) is also useful as a theoretical launching point, particularly his notions of

embeddedness and the 'double movement.' For Polanyi, while markets have been around for a very, very long time, the existence of the market as a free-standing, autonomous sphere accountable largely to its own 'laws' and dynamics is a fairly modern phenomenon. '(M)arket economy is an institutional structure which, as we all too easily forget, has been present at no time except our own, and even then it was only partially present,' he argues (37). Markets have, in the longer view, been embedded within the social and political relations that guided peoples' day-to-day lives. As Polanyi put it, markets were 'submerged in general social relations; (they) were merely an accessory feature of an institutional setting controlled and regulated . . . by social authority' (67). They were not, in short, governing institutions in the way politicians, the media, and business elites currently talk about them. The Industrial Revolution was revolutionary precisely for attempting to turn markets loose and to create a self-regulating *market system*. This attempt, while generating tremendous wealth, simultaneously generated tremendous suffering in the process of degrading land and labor. Such suffering gave rise to the second leg of the 'double movement': 'a network of measures and policies . . . designed to check the action of the market relative to labor, land, and money' (76).

Some have looked at fair trade (or similar certification schemes) explicitly as a potential instance of this second leg, an attempt to re-submerge economic exchange under a larger set of governing social relations (Bacon 2005; Barham 1997; Bartley 2007; Jaffee 2007, 260; Mutersbaugh 2005; Reynolds 2000; Renard 2003; for a 'modified' Polanyian perspective, see Watson 2006; for a critique of the Polanyian perspective, see Guthman 2007). The question these authors ask is whether and to what extent fair trade is able to stand against the attempt to impose a self-regulating market system as the primary mediator of human relationships.⁷ We too are concerned with this question, and so find ourselves with one foot in this Polanyian camp. Much of our analysis in the argument that follows is an evaluation of whether the current trajectory of the movement can successfully bring about a submersion of the market under political and social priorities of justice and sustainability.

However, we also view the 'Polanyian Way' (Guthman 2007) as insufficient as a long-term political project. Attempts to re-embed markets within sets of social and political systems are not necessarily designed to smash the system. Many such attempts are designed to save it. To see this, one need only contemplate the New Deal or any other instance in which states are pushed into regulating markets in order to avert

crisis and preserve the long-term conditions for the accumulation of surplus. One of the cornerstones of the New Deal was to ensure that the market was not the sole determinant of a family's income through state-funded social protection for the poor, elderly, and unemployed. Yet protecting labor from the misery of a market-determined income was meant to maintain consumer demand to avoid long-term economic crises like the Great Depression and avoid a large-scale social upheaval. Polanyi himself, while a socialist, implies that the double movement is not necessarily about preventing the emergence of new relations, or overthrowing unjust ones, but about slowing the rate of change, or mitigating the worst instances of abuse (1944). So, while we approach fair trade from a Polanyian perspective, examining the extent to which it can or does re-embed market exchange within social relations based on solidarity, our concern goes beyond that, to evaluate whether this can feed or build into transformative (revolutionary?) politics.

Our analysis of this latter point hinges on the idea of commodity fetishism: the degree of its influence on our daily lives and the significance of attempts to overcome it. Theoretically, we approach fair trade from a Marxian perspective that places alienation (of which commodity fetishism is an important form) in its dialectical relationships to both relations of production and political action at the center of the analysis. Our analysis is also Marxian in that it sees political, economic, and cultural action through a lens of class struggle. The tensions and conflicts to be discussed at length in the following chapters are waged in the context of constant efforts on the parts of capitalists to reconfigure and reproduce cultural, political, and economic systems such that they load costs onto the actual producers and channel value into capitalist hands. As such, we draw on a number of other bodies of theory (framing theory, from within the social movements literature, and theories of information asymmetry and free riding, from within heterodox and neoclassical economic theory), but we walk these through the field of class analysis and class conflict. The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (1997), discussing class domination through the concept of hegemony, steered Marxist thought most productively toward understanding the importance of ideology and consciousness in the maintenance (and overthrow) of exploitative class relations, and we follow his lead in our analysis of information, marketing, and framing. Struggles over meaning, over how people understand and interpret their daily lives and interactions, over 'common-sense,' are class struggles just as much as struggles over wages, hours, and safety on the shop floor.

In our theoretical approach, then, we hold a great deal in common with writers like Fridell, who has most explicitly taken an historical materialist approach to fair trade, even analyzing fair trade's capacity to counteract commodity fetishism (Fridell 2007b). Despite our similar launching pads, however, our conclusions vary. Fridell (along with Guthman 2007 and Johnston 2002) has made a great contribution by emphasizing the limits of a consumer-based movement's capacity to undermine commodity fetishism (limits we agree exist, and have pointed to in the past—see Hudson and Hudson 2003). Here, however, we emphasize the political possibilities opened by movements that question the fetishism of commodities by making labor real, different, and qualitative in the eyes and minds of consumers. Fair trade, we argue, is well positioned to contribute positively to the struggle over how people think about a practice they undertake every day—purchasing. Consumption is constructed within capitalist cultural hegemony as an apolitical act, its significance a private matter to be subjectively determined by the consumer. Fair trade, we suggest, offers one way of countering this construction, putting into broad public practice consideration of three important political elements of consumption, highlighted by Princen et al. (2002, 14–17). First, that consumption is a socially embedded process. Decisions to purchase (what, what kind, how much, how often) are heavily affected by social forces, and as such, they are a potential ground for struggle (see also Dawson 2003). Second, consumption of a single commodity brings the consumer into a linked chain of decisions about what society should produce and how, extending from raw production or extraction all the way through disposal. Acts of consumption thus have political, economic, and social consequences backward and forward along the chain from the consumer. Third, as Princen et al. so succinctly put it, 'production is consumption.' Production frequently involves invisible and unaccounted forms of consumption, reductions in the means available to meet human need now and in future generations. Those invisible links backward and forward frequently involve the undermining or destruction of human potential and natural systems. The extent to which fair trade acknowledges these as part of its activism and its model of exchange is a key concern of this book.

The structure of the book

The book begins with a brief introduction to and history of the movement in Chapter 2. This includes a discussion of the rise of coffee as