INTRODUCTION

Shaping Postcolonial Globalization from Below

As summer made a cautious appearance in the streets of Amsterdam, shoppers were invited into a new clothing store. It boldly advertised inexpensive clothes and alluring special offers. Picking items from the stacks, an eager customer wandered into the back of the store to try them on. Instead of finding a fitting room, she found herself in a cramped, hot, windowless chamber where women were sewing the kind of clothes she had just selected for herself. This was 'The Mad Rush', an initiative of the Clean Clothes Campaign in 2016 to draw attention to the abominable working conditions of women in the clothing industry.[1]

Such attempts to locally confront people with the injustices of global commodity chains have been a staple of a certain brand of activism which emerged during the 1950s. This 'fair trade' activism encompasses a range of civic initiatives which aimed to achieve more equitable economic relations between the South and the North. Since the 1950s, a global network of individuals, groups, and organizations has evolved around the issue of fair trade. They have publicized the need for a transformation of global trade and have put alternatives into practice.

The movement promoting fair trade has arguably been one of the most enduring movements to come out of the postwar years. Fifty years after the first campaigns were launched, more than two million farmers and workers in seventy different countries were growing and manufacturing fair trade-certified products, which had become available in 143 countries.[2] The network of fair trade activists had grown remarkably over these same years, with the World

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Figure 0.1 Women sewing in a garment factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh, March 2010. Clean Clothes Campaign.

Fair Trade Organization connecting 359 trading organizations, 25 support organizations, and 26 fair trade networks across the globe.[3] Similarly, the Clean Clothes Campaign has established a global network of more than 230 organizations which work towards better working conditions for workers in the garment and sportswear industries.[4] The fair trade movement has been pivotal in the broad acceptance of 'corporate social responsibility'. It has also fuelled recent debates about legislation on the responsibility of companies to uphold workers' rights and to account for their own environmental impact in commodity chains.

The historical relevance of the fair trade movement, however, goes beyond its immediate and sustained impact. Charting the history of people working towards a more equitable world brings into view a social history of globalization after the Second World War. The process of global integration we have come to label 'globalization' has not unfolded self-evidently. The unprecedented wave of global integration which occurred after 1945 reinforced existing inequalities and created new imbalances as many countries gained their independence from the late 1940s through the 1970s. The

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emerging interconnected world and its discontents were not just a matter for politicians in meeting halls and managers in boardrooms. The daily lives of people across the globe were also significantly affected. Producing and consuming, trading and boycotting, negotiating and protesting, these individuals, too, helped shape this world. If we focus on humanitarian initiatives which challenged the prevailing shape of postcolonial globalization, we can recover the views held by people across the world concerning fair global relations and their efforts to promote these views, and we can grasp the networks they created and the limitations of their endeavours. Peering through the looking glass of fair trade activism, this book thus delineates an era of postcolonial globalization and charts how humanitarianism evolved during this period.

A Social History of Postcolonial Globalization

Historians currently espouse two versions of the history of globalization.[5] The first presents globalization as a novel phenomenon, which emerged during the twentieth century as the world became smaller due to new means of transportation and communication. This technological development was mirrored by the rise of global political institutions such as the United Nations and the development of a 'global consciousness' among people all over the world.[6] The second conception of globalization places the current global integration within a much longer history of global interaction and thinking about the world as a single unit. In this vein, historians point out how people in the nineteenth century understood their societies within a global framework or even trace the roots of 'global consciousness' all the way back to ancient civilizations.[7]

The history of the fair trade movement shifts the perspective on globalization from intellectual discourses and structures to the ways that ordinary people have attempted to change the global market. From this vantage, thinking globally (and acting accordingly) evolved out of missionary activities, humanitarian campaigns, and acts of international solidarity. But it is also evident that globalization has not proceeded continuously. Three important transformations stand out. The first is the impact of decolonization. The fair trade movement emerged during a period that saw the political decolonization of countries in the Global South

challenging prevailing relations on global politics and the world market.[8] Traditional views on what was a just division of wealth and resources were critiqued by politicians and intellectuals from the South and their supporters in the North. Implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, fair trade activists called into question the persistence of colonial relations and mindsets.

The fair trade movement's history thus highlights how ideas about the world and about transnational relations entered a new era, the era of postcolonial globalization. Recent historical scholarship has drawn attention to the importance of decolonization on the way the world was ordered after the Second World War.[9] The alliance of so-called non-aligned countries and the constant back and forth amongst people in the Global South, the Soviet Union, the United States, and European countries were crucial to the way postwar international politics took shape.[10] Decolonization was also negotiated in societies in the Global South and North, where its consequences became visible through migration and new political projects such as African and European cooperation.[11] Decolonization, it turns out, affected people's everyday lives across the globe, prompting them to attempt to shape an emerging postcolonial world.

A second transformation characterizing postwar globalization was the increasing importance of long-distance economic relations. This development was not just reflected in the establishment of global economic institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and the expansion of multinational corporations. It also changed how people across the world interacted. In the North, the notion that citizens held power *as consumers* became a commonly held belief. Through marketing, companies had asserted that the customer was king. Governments in the United States and Western Europe, for their part, came to regard 'buying power' to be an essential indicator of their performance.[12] Citizens themselves had learned to exert their power as consumers in numerous campaigns, which applied pressure to companies and governments by deliberately buying or neglecting to buy certain products – boycotting and buycotting became staples of civic activism.[13]

Since the 1950s, the promise of prosperity and the corresponding ability of individual consumers to make deliberate choices

about what to buy became inseparable from the way people in the West regarded their 'consumer societies'. The emphasis in the North on consumers' power of choice collided with the process of decolonization. Although people everywhere could identify as consumers and organize accordingly, consumer activists in the South often had to advocate for access to consumption rather than focusing on matters of choice.[14] The history of the fair trade movement demonstrates that this tension was reinforced by the fact that the power to choose held by consumers in the North was often mirrored by the economic dependency of producers in the South.

Whereas decolonization and global economic integration were important preconditions for the emergence of the fair trade movement, a third striking transformation in the history of globalization is observable over the course of its history. The advent of digital communications, creating new opportunities for establishing transnational networks around issues of fair trade, significantly changed the dynamics within the movement. The advent of widespread internet use made it possible to involve actors from across the world in campaigns for fair trade. More people could establish direct lines of communications, and the potential visibility of local circumstances to people all over the world was heightened. The internet also provided novel ways to generate publicity, address relevant actors, and mobilize support. The efforts to create equal relations between North and South within the movement were fostered by these new opportunities. There was a particular emphasis on directly involving actors in the South in the planning and conducting of activist campaigns. At the same time, the structural inequalities created by the prevailing global division of resources and labour were not eliminated by the new structure of global communications.

These three phenomena – decolonization, global economic integration, and the advent of digital communications – have exerted a crucial impact on the shape of globalization since the 1950s. An investigation of this novel epoch in the history of globalization reveals the crucial role that middle-class groups and moderate approaches to achieving change have played in postwar history. Whilst the fair trade movement's primary base in the South was amongst marginalized producers, in the North it has predominantly been a middle-class phenomenon. Historians have traditionally

paid scant attention to middle-class groups and their initiatives. These groups lack the romantic steadfastness and ideological purity of more radical activists. Compared to the grand gestures of revolutionary movements, their activities often come across as pedestrian. Even as historians shifted their view from high politics and intellectuals towards common people, the exceptional remained their primary concern. In assessing postwar transformations, it is student activism and the Beatles, rather than consumer associations and the blockbuster movie *The Sound of Music*, that have taken centre stage, even though the latter arguably impacted people's everyday lives in the 1960s just as much.[15] A broad range of moderate views and small gestures is largely missing from the study of postwar history, even though many of the most consequential changes can be traced back to them.

Approaching globalization from the perspective of social history entails a reappraisal of the locus of its politics. A history of the fair trade movement, as I will present in what follows, reinforces and refines the historiographical trend of looking beyond institutional politics to understand how people within a society debate one another and attempt to shape their world. In this history, civic initiatives emerge as crucial activities for defining and addressing societal issues. In recent years, historians have highlighted how decolonization spurred a new group of humanitarian organizations to come to the fore. Oxfam, War on Want, CARE, and Save the Children, as well as many smaller outlets, became important links between the Global North and South. Besides providing support to people in the South, these organizations and their officials also established themselves as experts on international cooperation and development in national and international politics alike.[16]

This book expands on this historiography by including the connections of everyday life with postcolonial globalization. It incorporates the small-scale actions of groups throughout the world in a history which ranges from international trade negotiations to Mexican coffee farmers reacting to the 1980s debt crisis. Alongside international and national development organizations, a host of local and often more haphazard initiatives addressed issues of justice and development. These latter efforts often wanted to raise awareness in their own communities. Sometimes they attempted to address institutional politics at national and international levels,

too. These minute initiatives were crucial to the functioning of the field of civic initiatives around fair trade. Some of these endeavours turned out to be precursors of larger operations. Many were staged in partnership with transnational campaigns and challenged prevailing practices of humanitarian action. Moreover, the interconnections between themes like development and the environment are much more readily apparent on the level of local activism than on that of professional organizations focused on a specific policy area. The evolution of global relations since the 1950s can thus be seen to have produced new ideas and practices not just in the sphere of national and international civic organizations but also amongst people who felt urged to address the same issues in their own environment.

This broader history of civic initiative in the wake of decolonization is similarly instructive in light of the history of the global market. The history of markets has been a central theme in social history since the field's inception, with its traditional focus on economic relations, social inequality, and the history of the working class. The fair trade movement provides more recent examples of civic initiatives which aim to transform the market. Whilst thus continuing the tradition of taking inequality and social movements as points of departure, this book proposes to take a transnational perspective as its starting point in thinking about inequality and social movements and to acknowledge the agency of a wider range of social groups.

The history of the economy was closely related to social history as the latter emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century. Across the world, extensive reports on the living conditions of the poor urban working class and colonized peoples were influential in generating a more comprehensive perspective of societies and prompting state interventions. Detailed analysis of economic conditions was the foundation of the 'scientific' strand of socialism which had emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century. These approaches gave rise to a new generation of historians who aimed to write social history as a 'history of society' and spurred calls for the incorporation of insights from economics and other disciplines into historical research. The current of social history which was closely tied to workers' movements, also looked to economic history to understand its current position and to substantiate its claims. As

social and economic historians developed an increasing appetite for quantitative methods during the 1960s and 1970s, many scholars turned to approaches which were better able to provide history with a human face.

The last twenty years have witnessed a renewed interest in the history of the market amongst historians. This rediscovery treated markets less as collections of abstract numbers possessing a fixed logic and more as constructions which, through adaptation and contestation, have evolved over time.[17] Just as economists discovered institutions and path dependency, historians now present differentiated views of markets as social spaces. In this vein, this book contends that markets are not amoral spaces governed by a fixed logic. Markets are constituted through social interactions marked by inherent moral assumptions. Rather than regarding the 'moralization of markets' as an intervention by an external moral framework into a morally empty sphere, the history of fair trade highlights how expectations structuring markets are constantly contested amongst producers, regulators, vendors, buyers, and civic organizations.

Conceptualizing the History of Fair Trade

Ever since the fair trade movement emerged during the 1950s, it has attracted scholarly attention. Its history has been part of the historiography of the Third World movement, consumer activism, and humanitarianism. Although each of these areas reflects an important aspect of fair trade, the partition has caused a fragmentation in research. Its fissures were cemented by a preference for individual initiatives which fit the mould of solidarity with the so-called Third World, activities aimed at mobilizing consumers, or campaigns directed at relief. A further cause of compartmentalization has been a focus on fair trade activism in individual national cases, despite the obvious importance of unequal relations between the Global North and South and the emergence of a network of activists throughout the world. Nonetheless, the abundance of work on fair trade initiatives by activists and scholars, as well as the perspectives provided as a result of the different conceptualizations, contributes invaluable insights into the transnational history of fair trade.[18]

This study conceptualizes the fair trade movement as a transnational humanitarian movement which has evolved, since its origin in the establishment of alternative trading organizations in the 1950s, in close relation to the decolonization of the Global South. Social-scientific scholarship had primarily understood fair trade as an attempt to introduce social justice into economic relations.[19] Recently, scholars in this field have presented it as a broader movement engaged in trade and certification as well as campaigning and advocacy.[20] The present approach to fair trade as a transnational humanitarian movement advocating socio-economic justice similarly integrates campaigning, trading, and advocacy, asking how citizens have mobilized to shape the global market. It connects the historiography on social movements, consumer activism, and humanitarianism. It draws on social movement research to consider (1) the goals which activists pursued, (2) the repertoire of action they employed, (3) the networks they developed to achieve their goals, and (4) the conditions which drove the evolution of activism.[21] The recent attention to the ways that social movements have shifted between local, national, and transnational scales is crucial to this history.[22] In turn, it demonstrates that we should discern these scales as nodes of government, arenas for actions connected to perceived audiences, and levels of organization and of spatial imagination. The history of the fair trade movement reinforces the observation that these scales are not mutually exclusive but rather coexist with shifting relative weight to one another.[23]

Three strands of scholarship have addressed the history of fair trade activism, each highlighting a distinct feature of the movement. A first wave of scholarship on fair trade connected it to the history of what became known as the Third World movement.[24] This body of work, intimately tied to social movement research, proposed regarding fair trade campaigns as part of a larger movement concerned with transnational solidarity rather than departing from specific organizations or individual campaigns.[25] Historical development and historiography went hand in hand: the fair trade movement indeed evolved alongside transnational solidarity initiatives aimed at individual countries such as Angola, South Africa, Chile, Cuba, and Nicaragua, all of which became prominent between the 1960s and 1980s. Campaigns focused on these countries provided concrete examples and related products which fair

trade activism could build on. In the 1970s, an activist could engage in a boycott against products from colonized Angola, take part in a demonstration directed at the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development, and then attend a lecture on the role of women in development projects without a sense of having divided loyalties.

Approaching fair trade from the angle of Third World activism foregrounds crucial aspects of its history. First, this vantage acknowledges the postcolonial framework within which the movement has to be understood.[26] The recent insight that the Cold War divide between East and West was interlaced with relations between South and North is particularly fruitful for understanding the contestation of the global market since the 1950s.[27] This interconnection pertains not only to the roots in radical activism, which resulted from leftwing solidarity with the Global South, but also to the direct influence exerted by actors from the Global South in circulating ideas and initiating actions in the North.[28] Whereas fair trade has traditionally been supported by a coalition ranging from radical leftwing activists to politically moderate churchgoers, the former has faded into the background as the historiographical focus has shifted towards understanding fair trade predominantly as a certification initiative. Regarding fair trade as part of a broader Third World movement, on the contrary, emphasizes its radical elements, whilst also calling attention to the broader repertoire it has employed. Selling products from the Global South has been pivotal, but picketing, boycotts, rallies, education, and lobbying have been just as influential.

Echoing the claims to novelty voiced by activists, scholars of social movements such as the Third World movement have insisted on treating them as different from earlier social movements.[29] This notion of 'new social movements', however important to the self-fashioning of activists at the time such claims were made, risks neglecting the continuities in the people, practices, and ideas shaping them. The fair trade movement did not break off from the traditions of leftwing solidarity and missionary concern with people in the Global South. Similar caution is warranted when using the label 'Third World movement', because it readily dismisses differences between those campaigning for the Global South and those acting in solidarity with specific countries. Although these aims could overlap, they have not always simply coincided. Moreover, the

continuity of fair trade activism from the 1980s to 1990s cautions against overestimating the importance of the notion of the Third World for this strand of activism, which persisted after notions of the Third World all but dissolved.[30]

The dissolution of an imagined Third World at the turn of the 1990s coincided with the emergence of campaigns which aimed to increase the sales of fair trade products, eventually resulting in the practice of certification. Certification reinvigorated the activities which fair trade proponents had adopted from consumer activism. This was mirrored in the scholarly approach to fair trade, which increasingly conceptualized it as a manifestation of consumer activism.[31] The lens of consumer activism has yielded valuable insights into prominent ideas and practices like emphasizing consumer choice, buying power, and the repertoire of boycotts and buycotts. It foregrounded moderate groups which had been less visible through the lens of Third World activism. Much of the ensuing debate about fair trade circled around the issue of mainstreaming. Had the attempts to sell more fair trade products and to harness the influence of citizens as consumers produced practices which had been co-opted by businesses with no real interest in promoting fair trade? Had these companies suggested to consumers that they did enough to foster a better world simply by buying fair trade products in a supermarket, thus mitigating the critical impetus of the earlier movement and reducing citizenship to a consumerist repertoire? These questions, to be sure, remain vital to the history and future of the fair trade movement.

In turn, this aspect of fair trade history is relevant to debates about the relations between activism and consumption. Competing views about the relation between citizenship and consumption were on display as advocates and critics argued whether fair trade products should be sold only in 'alternative' stores or also in supermarkets. Did activism need its own space, or should it infiltrate other places, too?[32] Similar issues were at stake in assessing the viability of boycotts and the relevance of market share in political negotiations. Could economic indicators be translated into political power? The relation between citizenship and consumption is constantly being negotiated, with civic organizations playing a pivotal role in these negotiations.[33] Rather than focusing only on the organizations explicitly claiming to represent consumers, analysis

of these negotiations should include consideration of the wider host of initiatives concerned with what historian Lawrence Glickman has labelled 'consumer activism'.[34]

Presenting fair trade as a strand of consumer activism, however, tends to reduce it to the practice of buying and selling fair trade products. Yet doing so neglects the campaigning and lobbying efforts of organizations involved in selling products, as well as organizations which promote trade justice without being engaged in selling products. In recent histories of fair trade, for example, the launch of the certification initiative Max Havelaar in the Netherlands has eclipsed the founding of the Clean Clothes Campaign in the same year. The resulting narrative favours the organizations most prominently claiming the label 'fair trade'. Framing fair trade activism as a consumer-driven phenomenon follows the lead of fair trade marketing, which often employs a rhetoric that attributes decisive power to the consumer.[35] This bias reflects the importance of the consumer to the selling of fair trade products and calls on people to reflect on their moral responsibility when buying. In doing so, it conceals the mediating role of civic organizations in providing consumers with products, setting standards for what is considered 'fair', and strategically deciding how to balance selling, campaigning, and lobbying. A historical analysis of fair trade has much to gain from looking beyond this rhetoric and its underlying assumptions.

By reconceptualizing the fair trade movement as a transnational humanitarian movement, this book attempts to integrate insights from the earlier perspectives I have mentioned into a history of transnational solidarity. This strand of historiography has broadly concerned itself with attempts to help 'distant others'. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) channelling such attempts have been a major focus.[36] Humanitarianism provides a fresh perspective on the history of fair trade. It aligns with the available archival material, which is dominated by documentation from NGOs in Western Europe and the United States. Histories of humanitarianism have a strong tradition of reading this material against the grain to include perspectives from the Global South. Stressing the transnational nature of the endeavours of civic organizations, they do not shy away from pointing out the drawbacks of, and power imbalances implied in, humanitarian initiatives, however well intentioned.

Recently, histories of humanitarianism have also grappled with religion as a crucial element, acknowledging the fluid borders between religious and secular impulses in this field.[37] In the historical studies devoted to fair trade, religious influences have long been acknowledged – in particular, the crucial role of religious networks during the fair trade movement's early history in establishing contacts between producer groups and people who wanted to sell products on their behalf. Recent histories of humanitarianism, however, question how fair trade histories have equated religious influence with conservative views and charitable practices. An activist organization like the Dutch Sjaloom group, which initiated some of the most radical political interventions around issues of trade and development in the 1960s and 1970s, was rooted in the ecumenical movement, which aimed for a simultaneous renewal of church and society. It drew supporters from different denominations as well as people without any clear religious affiliation. Such hotchpotch alliances are much more typical of the evolution of fair trade activism than a division between moderate religious and radical secularist circles.

When these strands of historiography are brought together, pertinent questions arise. How are the histories of movements and distinct organizations connected? To what extent could actors from the Global South impact the trajectories of humanitarian initiatives? And how do we embed economic relations within these histories? In reaction to these questions, this book attempts to address three silences in the prevalent source material on the history of fair trade and on humanitarian initiatives more generally. Most strikingly, voices from the Global South are crucial to this history. As the following chapters will show, producer groups as well as prominent political and scholarly spokespersons from the South have been important drivers for the evolution of the fair trade movement. Fair trade scholarship on more recent developments has been able to draw on fieldwork to incorporate producers more systematically. As far as the present analysis goes, their perspective has to be inferred from source material privileging the perspective of actors from the North.

Another significant dimension often overlooked is the importance of the specific materiality of the products involved in fair trade, perhaps most obvious in the means of communication

amongst fair trade activists. The archival material for the 1950s up through the 1990s is dominated by handwritten and typed letters, flyers, and brochures. For national interactions, activists often mention phone calls as another medium. In international correspondence, faxes gradually turn up as a means to communicate quickly over long distances. Over the course of the 1990s, the materials from which historians construct their accounts changed notably. Printed emails start to dominate the files in the archives, and more and more material has been stored on CD-ROMs and external hard drives. But exchanges also took place outside these means of communication. As the following chapters highlight, the exchange of products itself was crucial to establishing a sense of connection between people in different parts of the world. Fair trade activism is hardly imaginable without this material grounding, even though ensuing activist efforts have often gone beyond or even criticized a focus on buying and selling. Moreover, the kinds of products being exchanged mattered greatly. Rather than mere passive conductors of human activity, the products which fair trade activists handled had their own part in shaping the history of the movement.[38]

An approach centred on commodities and their symbolic meanings for those involved is particularly suited to the history of this movement, as activists often focused on specific commodities and ascribed eye-catching meanings to them.[39] Early fair trade initiatives revolved around products like handicrafts and coffee for good reasons: these products were relatively easy to transport over long distances on a small scale without affecting their quality. Their chains of production and distribution were relatively clear-cut, too, which made it easier to present them to the public as symbols of global trade relations. That products such as coffee, tea, bananas, and cocoa could not be grown in the North produced a different dynamic of contention than handicrafts or clothing, because the latter were not limited to the South and could therefore also readily play a part in contesting the working conditions of people in the North.

Finally, this book attempts to decentre the leaders who draw most attention in histories of activism. Instead, it stresses the importance of networks of organizations as distinct structures of cooperation and emphasizes the participation of 'ordinary' people in their activities. Many histories exploring the prominence of

NGOs since 1945 have focused on large organizations and their most prominent spokespersons. This emphasis has highlighted the role of civic organizations in shaping postcolonial globalization, the visions they have articulated, and the practices such organizations pioneered. Organizations and individuals with a longstanding commitment to fair trade have taken centre stage in the movement's history. Those who remained involved continued to recount their experiences as part of fair trade history. People who have disengaged tend to disappear from accounts of the movement's history, whilst defunct organizations have, more often than not, left hardly any documentation. It is thus particularly important to consider the less visible actors and the discontinuities in the fair trade movement's history.[40] Increasingly, historiography is turning towards the specific practices of humanitarian initiatives, particularly in situations when humanitarians wanted to intervene to make a difference. Building on this trend, this book shifts the focus towards smaller organizations and groups and people who did not claim a place in the spotlight for themselves. It thus highlights how the shape of postcolonial globalization was negotiated between many local situations in the Global North and South – in boardrooms, local gatherings, and everyday encounters.

Outline

This book's composition reflects the importance of the materiality of specific products to civic action and foregrounds networks of actors rather than individual leaders. The rise of the fair trade movement from the 1950s onwards was closely linked to the renegotiation of commodity chains in the course of decolonization around products such as handicrafts, cane sugar, coffee, tea, cocoa, bananas, and textiles. Activists reacted to the imbalances and the possibilities of long-distance trade, which became politicized in the wake of decolonization. They provided information about the lives of marginalized producers and a sense of connection to them. In this way, these items countered the lack of knowledge about the circumstances of production and consumption due to the distance between production and consumption in global trade. Exchanging commodities produced new knowledge about and alternative channels for global trade.

The handicrafts imported by alternative trading organizations discussed in the first chapter were produced by women and men in precarious situations which were initially often a consequence of the Second World War. Soon refugees from other violent conflicts, including Chinese and Palestinians, also found their way into these networks. In other instances, products were procured by people with ties to missionary networks embedded in colonial relations. As civic groups in several countries started to sell these products as an act of solidarity with their makers, a 'global' outlook was fostered amongst producers and potential buyers. The networks thus established would shape many future interactions amongst fair trade activists.

In 1968, calls to transform the structure of trade between the South and the North became particularly attached to cane sugar, the focus of Chapter 2. Activists in the Netherlands took their cue from the analysis of economists from the South and the international discussions which took place within the framework of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. As people across Western Europe became involved in the 'Cane Sugar Campaign', the growing body of knowledge about the production and trade of cane sugar complicated attempts to publicize global trade imbalances through a concrete example. Since the launch of the Cane Sugar Campaign in 1968, activists have continuously publicized and practised fair trade at the same time. Cane sugar was an apt example of how the structure of international trade was stacked against producers in the South because European regulation rendered European beet sugar more affordable than cane sugar though the latter was actually cheaper on the world market.

As the Cane Sugar Campaign was followed by new attempts to raise awareness about global trade inequalities – the topic of Chapter 3 – paper arguably became the most important commodity circulating amongst those involved in fair trade activism. Paper is distinct from the products centred in the other chapters, as it was usually not produced in the Global South and did not carry the symbolic weight of the other products in connecting producers and consumers. Its exceptional status here points up the fact that fair trade activism in the 1970s and 1980s did not revolve primarily around the selling of products from the South. Paper is uniquely suited to the transfer of knowledge and to calls to action in

the shape of booklets, flyers, stencils, and posters, all staples of the many local gatherings of fair trade activists which emerged during the 1970s. Paper also accommodated the exchange of knowledge between producers in the South and their supporters in the North, which fair trade activists championed.

Coffee, the focal point of the fourth chapter, marks a change in the balance between raising awareness and selling products, a shift which took shape during the 1980s. Whereas paper was associated with an approach which emphasized raising awareness and discussion, activism surrounding coffee focused on selling products as a means to fuse immediate impact with more effective long-term advocacy. Coffee producers were struggling to survive in the wake of the debt crisis of the early 1980s, compelling those involved in procuring fair trade coffee to make turnover a priority. In 1988, the Max Havelaar campaign introduced fair trade certification as a new instrument for activism. This venture was part of a broader range of attempts to conduct fair trade activism more professionally, whether in traditional settings such as world shops or in cooperation with new associates such as supermarkets.

The selling of coffee was closely related to a postcolonial perspective – the limits of which came into view during the 1990s. Initiatives like the Clean Clothes Campaign challenged the complex and stretched commodity chains of textiles, which are at the heart of Chapter 5. Textiles resisted being framed as an issue only of skewed relations between the South and North, as their chain of production and distribution, and the accompanying forms of malpractice extended across different parts of the globe. The possibilities of communication offered by the internet and the widening range of fair trade products prompted an evolution in the direction of a less hierarchical global network of actors. The growth and professionalization of the fair trade network gave rise to new debates about representation, which played out very differently now that global networks of digital communication and a more robust set of organizations were in play. The gradual dissolution of the era of postcolonial globalization was mirrored by the ascendance of the notion of sustainability. Emerging in the 1980s, the idea of 'sustainable development' had reframed the relation between equity and the economy by relating social, economic, and environmental concerns

to one another and by applying this same logic of interconnectedness to any situation.

The focus here on these five products – handicrafts, cane sugar, paper, coffee, and textiles – is by no means comprehensive. Other analyses of fair trade activism have rightly discussed other crucial products, including bananas, cocoa, tea, and honey, all of which were important to the evolution of fair trade activism in different regions. Products such as wine, canned tuna, toilet paper, footballs, and, more recently, water bottles and computer software have also figured in this history. The products considered in this study have thus been selected to highlight important features of the movement at different moments in its history and are meant to be means to help us rethink activism.

The fair trade movement is remarkable for its longevity, its broad repertoire of action, and the diverse coalition it has mustered. Nonetheless, its economic impact remains slight when compared to the overall volume of global trade, and there are many reasons to be wary of the solutions to global inequality the movement has put forth over the years. These reservations aside, the fair trade movement has brought knowledge about the fraught nature of many global commodity chains into circulation. It has presented people with options for civic activism which can address and publicize these issues. It has contributed to the almost universal acceptance of 'corporate social responsibility'. Surveying the current state of the fair trade movement, the concluding chapter revisits these questions of impact and historical relevance. At a time when sustainability and the legacy of colonialism are firmly on the agenda in many parts of the world, this history of people attempting to shape the era of postcolonial globalization is more topical than ever.