DONT LET YOUR ETHICS SLIP

The Postpolitical Condition of Fairtrade

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Abstract

In this thesis I apply SWYNGEDOUW's argument of the postpolitical condition to the case of Fairtrade. I take a two-fold methodological approach. The visual and textual analysis of Fairtrade adverts complements a literature review. I argue that the postpolitical condition of Fairtrade is discernible in three regards. First, its ideological orientation does not challenge neoliberal market logic, but rather mainstreams it into its politics and thus reproduces neoliberalism as consensus. Second, depoliticized representations of producers employed in Fairtrade adverts draw on wider discourses of power, development and the 'African Other'. Third, they deprive producers as much from taking ownership of Fairtrade as does its postdemocratic governance structure. Despite its postpolitical condition, potentials for politicizing Fairtrade are identified. Its wide-spread advocacy network lays the foundation for a collective political movement that must go beyond the purchase of Fairtrade goods. Fairtrade itself, its approach and its vision must be opened up for debate in order to become political. Its governance structures must undergo radical democratization. Depoliticized representations and discourses must be deconstructed in order to empower producers to make their voices heard.

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1   Introduction

Ethical consumerism has slowly but steadily tiptoed its way into our everyday shopping practices. Though fair and ethical products have long been available only in specialized fair trade shops, all large supermarket chains offer these goods nowadays. Fairtrade has been the early pioneer of this development. Its products have become available to a mass of consumers due to its expansive marketing strategy. In addition to promoting sales of fair products, Fairtrade has long considered itself as a political movement. Its critique is aimed at the neoliberal world trading system that leaves farmers in the Global South no chance to benefit. However, Fairtrade's approach is confined within capitalist market logic, namely the creation of a fair niche market.

In this thesis, I discuss Fairtrade in the context of Swyngedouw's argument of the postpolitical condition. I argue that Fairtrade is postpolitical with regard to its ideological orientation, the depoliticized and stereotyped representations in its marketing strategies and its postdemocratic governance structures.

This thesis brings together two fields of research: postpolitics and Fairtrade. Swyngedouw has introduced notions of the (post-)political advanced by political theorists Mouffe, Ranciere and Žizek to geography and political ecology. He develops his argument of the postpolitical condition in regard to climate change politics and the politics of nature and sustainability (Swyngedouw 2007; 2010; 2011; 2013). Several scholars have applied his argument to water governance and to different aspects of climate change (Goeminne 2012; Bettini 2013; Beveridge et al. 2014; Kenis and Mathijs 2014). An application to the case of Fairtrade is lacking. The scholarly debate on the fair trade movement in general and on Fairtrade in particular has so far focused on the governance of standards in agricultural markets (Hughes 2000; 2001; Renard 2003; 2005; Hale and Opondo 2005; Riisgaard 2009; Ouma 2010; Tallontire et al. 2011; Raynolds 2012a; 2012b; 2014), the notion of development in fair trade (Freidberg 2003; Goodman 2004; Dolan 2010; Nelson and Tallontire 2014) and the role of ethics in consumption (Goodman 2004; Dolan 2007; Marston 2013). In this thesis, I identify and discuss postpolitical aspects of Fairtrade and embed them in Swyngedouw's argument of the postpolitical condition. Thus, I contribute to the debate on Fairtrade as well as to the research field of postpolitics. My contribution to the latter is the application of its argument to a new case and a critical reflection on methods for its empirical assessment.

I argue that Fairtrade is postpolitical in three regards. For this purpose, I take a two-fold methodical approach. Visual and textual analysis of Fairtrade adverts complements a literature review. I find that Fairtrade's ideological orientation does not challenge neoliberal market logic, but rather mainstreams it into its politics and thus reproduces neoliberalism as consensus. Depoliticized representations of producers employed in Fairtrade adverts draw on wider discourses of power, development and the 'African Other'. They deprive producers as much from taking

ownership of Fairtrade as does its postdemocratic governance structure. Despite its postpolitical condition, potentials for politicizing Fairtrade are identified. Its wide-spread advocacy network lays the foundation for a collective political movement that must go beyond the purchase of Fairtrade goods. Fairtrade itself, its approach and its vision need to be opened up for debate in order to become political. Its governance structures must undergo radical democratization. Depoliticized representations and discourses must be deconstructed in order to empower producers to make their voices heard.

A multitude of terms – political, postpolitical, politics, policy, police – is used by different scholars to elaborate on postpolitics. SWYNGEDOUW draws on the notions of MOUFFE, RANCIÈRE and ŽIŽEK. His use of the terms is closest to how MOUFFE (2005) understands them. I employ the terms political and politics according to MOUFFE (2005) as well. Politics hereafter designates a consensual policy making. It describes the practices and institutions that bring order to a society full of conflict and which foreclose the political. The political, in contrast, is a space for questioning this order of society. In order to realize this, the voice of everyone in this society is recognized as equal and legitimate. See chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of these concepts.

As I frequently employ the terms fair trade, Fairtrade and ethical and moral trade, their meanings shall be briefly discussed here. Fair trade designates the broader movement that comprises multiple initiatives and that Fairtrade forms a part of. I also use the term whenever speaking about standard initiatives whose objective is to establish an alternative way of trading that challenges neoliberal market logic. Fairtrade refers to the system of the Fairtrade Labelling Organization International. Fairtrade is a certification scheme for a range of agricultural and handicraft products from the Global South that are marketed in the North. It seeks to improve environmental and social conditions of production on smallholder farms as well as on plantations with hired laborers (RAYNOLDS 2012a). Following DOLAN (2007), the terms ethical and moral are used synonymously when describing production, trade or consumption. This is due to the fact that different scholars employ one term or the other, but speak about the same concept. Ethical or moral trade occurs in compliance with core labor standards and human rights, but does not aim at trading alternatively.

The thesis is structured as follows. First, I introduce SWYNGEDOUW's argument of the postpolitical condition and the underlying notion of the political. In the methodology chapter I substantiate my methodical approach and discuss limitations to the methods. Next, I elaborate on my argument that Fairtrade is in a postpolitical condition. Subsequently, I identify potentials for politicizing Fairtrade. I conclude with a critical review of my findings and the methods employed.

2 The Postpolitical Condition

Drawing on key political theorists Žižek, Mouffe and Rancière, Swyngedouw diagnoses contemporary climate change politics with a postpolitical condition. A set of characteristics defines this condition: the disavowal of ideological dissent, the production of consensus through postdemocratic governance structures, populist gestures as well as apocalyptic imaginaries. The wider context of political theory provides notions of the political that underpin the argument of postpoliticization. The political is conceived as a space for antagonism and for the contestation of political positions. Moreover, it is the political that questions the hegemony of the prevailing sociopolitical order.

The terms of depoliticization and postpoliticization are not set apart clearly in Swyngedouw's writings. While depoliticization rather specifies the process of depoliticizing a political issue, postpoliticization is often used to describe the condition that is the effect of such depoliticization (Swyngedouw 2007; 2013). Elsewhere, both terms are used practically synonymously (Swyngedouw 2010). Postpoliticization often refers to the works of political theorists Mouffe and Žižek, while Swyngedouw frequently employs the term depoliticization. In further developing these thoughts he derives the concept of the postpolitical condition to describe the state of politics resulting from de- or postpoliticization (Swyngedouw 2013).

Based on the writings of Mouffe, Rancière and Žižek, Swyngedouw conceives postpoliticization as a process that excludes and prevents the political (Swyngedouw 2007; 2013). Swyngedouw develops his thoughts in regard to contemporary politics of climate change, nature and sustainability. These issues rank high on policy agendas and seem highly politicized. Swyngedouw argues that it is exactly their entering into the domain of politics that depoliticizes them, because the political is kept from this domain. He develops a comprehensive set of characteristics, that outline the postpolitical condition of such politics (Swyngedouw 2007; 2010; 2011; 2013).

For the purpose of this thesis, which is to examine whether Fairtrade is postpolitical, these characteristics are grouped into four interrelated categories. According to Swyngedouw, a postpolitical condition is mainly characterized by (1) the disavowal of ideological dissent, (2) the production of consensus, (3) populist gestures and (4) apocalyptic imaginaries. First, ideological divisions and the possibility to universalize particular claims are rejected (Swyngedouw 2013). Key political questions on the rearrangement of socioenvironmental relations are unthinkable and unspeakable (Swyngedouw 2007). Solutions to problems must remain within the realm of the existing socioenvironmental relations – namely capitalism – regardless of whether capitalism itself may have caused these very problems (Swyngedouw 2013). Second, the political is reduced to consensus. Dissent, disagreement and contestation as true political acts are eliminated from politics. Consensus is produced through policy making which administers and manages political issues (Swyngedouw

2011). Contestation is only possible on behalf of technicalities of this administration (SWYNGEDOUW 2013). Postdemocratic governance structures such as expert panels dominate politics and leave no space for the articulation of the political (SWYNGEDOUW 2007). The consensus is in the interest of those in power whose voices are recognized and legitimate. Discerning voices are prohibited or their legitimization is compromised through public discourse in which they are posed as radicals or fundamentalists (SWYNGEDOUW 2013). Third, this virtually unchallenged consensus is sustained by certain means that SWYNGEDOUW terms populist gestures (SWYNGEDOUW 2007). Problems are often displayed as a universal threat to mankind on which immediate action is required (SWYNGEDOUW 2013). 'The people' have both the power and the obligation to take this action. Diverse society is socially homogenized as 'the people' in the face of crisis (SWYNGEDOUW 2007). If action is taken, mankind will supposedly benefit as a whole (SWYNGEDOUW 2010). Fourth, apocalyptic imaginaries and discourses of fear and danger form an important part of staging these problems (SWYNGEDOUW 2011). Nothing less than apocalypse threatens mankind in its existence and compels it to urgently take action. These imaginaries leave no space for disagreement or alternatives and are therefore depoliticized (SWYNGEDOUW 2010).

Diagnosing our current epoch with a postpolitical condition raises questions about the underlying concept of the political. SWYNGEDOUW draws on works of key political theorists ŽIŽEK, MOUFFE and RANCIÈRE. Despite their differing notions of the key terms - politics, the political and the police - all three authors advocate for the properly political as the thinking of the unthinkable, the questioning of the unquestionable and the speaking of the unspeakable.

The Marxist critique of contemporary politics is a key topic in ŽIŽEK's work. Like SWYNGEDOUW, he argues that postpolitics forecloses the political (ŽIŽEK 2000). Postpolitical systems, like many of the Western capitalist democracies, claim to have overcome the ideological left/right struggle. These democracies perceive themselves as the best societal and political system that is possible. Instead of being concerned with ideological divisions, they engage in other areas such as the regulation and management of human life (ŽIŽEK 2008). Postpolitics is enforced by teams of technocrats who negotiate compromises in the guise of a universal consensus (ŽIŽEK 2000). This consensus as well as the democratic capitalist system of politics as a whole prevents antagonistic opinions. These are for example the opinions of the people who do not benefit from this system. Since the system itself is not to be questioned, their opposing voices are not to be heard (ŽIŽEK 2008). Politicization, and thus the realization of the political, is the uncovering of the ideological dissent that capitalist democracies do not acknowledge (ŽIŽEK 2000; 2008). ŽIŽEK, like MOUFFE and RANCIÈRE, advocates for democracy in its radical sense in order to realize the political. According to their definition, democracy opens up a space in which the voice of everyone is recognized as the voice of an equal, legitimate partner (ŽIŽEK 2000).

MOUFFE, like ŽIŽEK, elaborates on the triumph of liberal capitalist democracy over communism through the fall of the Soviet Union. Liberal democracy has come to be accepted as universal and as the best possible system. But the belief in its universality establishes a consensus that is only seemingly free of conflict (MOUFFE 1993; 2005). MOUFFE (2005) terms this consensus postpolitical, because it denies the political. According to her, the political is a space for antagonism and contestation. It is the clash of political positions and the conflict of opinions (MOUFFE 1993; 2005). Liberal capitalist democracies do not regard antagonistic opinions as legitimate, because they might question this system altogether (MOUFFE 1993). Here, the political is reduced to politics, namely the practices and institutions that bring order to a society full of conflict (MOUFFE 2005). Liberal democracies regard themselves as inclusive of pluralist opinions. Nevertheless, precisely the assumption that this system can include all opinions and that it is the best means to favor everybody in society, homogenizes society. Pluralism and thus antagonism and the political are rendered impossible (MOUFFE 2005). Bringing back the political means challenging the hegemony of contemporary democracies and the hegemony of capitalism inscribed in them. A radical democracy opens up space for the contestation of antagonistic opinions. It opens up space for the political (MOUFFE 1993; 2005).

RANCIÈRE introduces the concept of the police as opposed to politics (RANCIÈRE 2001). His notion of politics differs from MOUFFE's understanding. Her concept of politics correlates with RANCIÈRE's police, while his notion of politics corresponds with the political in MOUFFE's works. To RANCIÈRE politics means questioning the logic of the entitlement to domination and uncovering the contingency of domination. It means the appropriation of power by those who have so far not been entitled to it. Politics challenges established views on what is the common and who is entitled to speak for it (RANCIÈRE 1999; 2004). In contrast, the police is the established order that remains unquestioned until politics challenges it. The police is neither the mere state apparatus nor repression and control. It is the "*partition of the sensible*" (RANCIÈRE 2001, p. 1), the order of the visible/invisible and audible/inaudible. It defines what is and what is not part of society; more explicitly what *is* and what *is not* (RANCIÈRE 1999; 2001). Politics questions the logic of the police and disputes the partition of the sensible. The essence of politics is dissent. It makes the voices of those excluded heard and makes them speak for the common (RANCIÈRE 2001).

The notion of the political that ŽIŽEK, MOUFFE and RANCIÈRE advance in their writings underpin SWYNGEDOUW's argument of the postpolitical condition of contemporary politics. The political recognizes the voices of those not heard in postpolitical systems and conceives them as legitimate adversaries in the political arena. The prevailing order of society, or the police in the sense of RANCIÈRE, must be opened up for contestation in order to be political. Contrary to this, a postpolitical condition marks a status of politics in which the political is foreclosed.

3   Methodology

SWYNGEDOUW develops his argument of the postpolitical condition in regard to climate change politics and the politics of nature and sustainability. His writings lack instruction on how to empirically assess postpolitics in other contexts. Several scholars have studied different cases, using different methical approaches. GOEMINNE (2012), like SWYNGEDOUW, examines the postpolitics of climate change. He develops his argument through literature review. BEVERIDGE ET AL. (2014) discuss whether the argument of postpolitics is applicable to water governance in Berlin. They review documents of the Berlin Water Company to reconstruct the case. BETTINI (2013) draws on discourse theory to analyze how narratives on 'climate refugees' depoliticize climate governance.

To examine whether the postpolitical condition is discernible for Fairtrade, I propose a two-fold methical approach comprised of literature review and visual and textual analysis. The characteristics of this condition (see chapter 3) help structure my analysis. I draw on literature review to study the disavowal of ideological dissent in Fairtrade. This is a rather theoretical aspect that crystallizes in Fairtrade's market-based approach to make global trade fair. As the production of consensus is achieved through postdemocratic governance structures, the governing of the Fairtrade system is as well to be reviewed. While SWYNGEDOUW discerns populist gestures and apocalyptic imaginaries as the means to stage postpolitical climate change politics, I argue that Fairtrade draws on other specific representations and discourses. Visual and textual analysis of Fairtrade adverts deconstructs depoliticized representations of producers and the places of production as well as wider discourses of power, development and the 'African Other'.

The review of journal articles focuses on the ideological orientation of Fairtrade and its governance structures. I argue that their administrative and management structures are postdemocratic and that Fairtrade has given in to capitalist market logic. The selected articles cover different conceptual approaches. Their authors come from various academic disciplines, though most of them engage in political economy or political ecology. It is striking that most of the researchers were born and have been educated in Europe or North America. The few who come from African or South American countries have been educated at European or North American universities as well. I emphasize this point because it demonstrates two difficulties I had in selecting the literature for this thesis. With a lack of researchers educated in the Global South and, more importantly, with high barriers for these researchers to publish their findings in European or North American journals, their perspective is not represented in the literature I reviewed. Furthermore, the representation of participants in the Fairtrade system – producers, traders, consumers, decision-makers – depends on the approach and method employed by the respective researcher. Perspectives or aspects not covered by their research cannot be analyzed in this thesis. In conclusion, the selection of articles brings some aspects to

the surface while it forecloses others. To say it in the words of RANCIÈRE (2001), it determines what *is* and what *is not*.

Complementing the literature review I make use of visual and textual analysis. For one thing, this method allows examining main characteristics of the postpolitical condition. What is more, my own empirical analysis gives me the opportunity to critically revise, sustain and further develop the arguments I devised through literature review. SWYNGEDOUW (2010) argues that populist gestures and apocalyptic imaginaries create and sustain a postpolitical consensus. By the means of visual and textual analysis I demonstrate that the quasi-normal, quasi-natural truths that underpin Fairtrade's representations are postpolitical and that they are framed by wider, depoliticized discourses of power, development and the 'African Other'.

According to FOUCAULT, a discourse is *"the order of things"* (FOUCAULT 1970 [1966], p. xxv). It is the universal, all-comprising order that is unconscious to a human being, but which defines her/his horizon to think. It is the order "*within which he will be at home*" (FOUCAULT 1970 [1966], p. xxii). For FOUCAULT powerful discourses establish and govern the way in which humans structure reality. Although this order of things is universal, it can be discovered that this order actually exists. It is achievable for human beings to understand that the prevailing order is not natural and that other orders are possible (FOUCAULT 1970 [1966]). This is where discourse analysis sets in. It deconstructs discourses that manifest in text and images, among other things. These textual and visual records do not just show reality, but they make it (CRANG AND COOK 2007). Every image or text is a specific representation of reality that mirrors a broader order of things, a broader discourse. Discourse analysis aims at deconstructing these quasi-natural realities. It makes power relations visible that lie behind the construction of certain meanings (GLASZE AND MATTISSEK 2009b). According to LACLAU AND MOUFFE (1985) discourse analysis reveals the hegemony of a discourse by pointing out its contradictions and voids. Once a discourse's lack of explaining reality becomes too obvious, it loses its viability and is replaced by another discourse (LACLAU AND MOUFFE 1985; DALLMAYR 1987; GLASZE AND MATTISSEK 2009a).

Drawing on discourse theory and analysis, I propose visual and textual analysis of Fairtrade adverts as a viable approach to identify depoliticized representations and discourses. I structure my analysis according to WRIGHT (2004) who conducted a similar study on adverts of Cafédirect, a fair trade company whose products are Fairtrade certified. The analysis comprises three steps. Firstly, I describe the adverts and what they suggest to me. Secondly, I link the text and image to the advertised product and to the broader cause of Fairtrade in order to reveal how Fairtrade represents producers and the places of production and why that might be. Finally, I discuss the wider depoliticized discourses which frame these adverts.

This visual and textual analysis has its limitations to determine a postpolitical condition. Even if certain representations and discourses can be identified as

postpolitical, it is doubtful whether every reader will conceive them as postpolitical. FOUCAULT's (1970 [1966]) assumption that discourses are universal and that they affect every reader in the same way is problematic. Even if they were universal, different people might act upon them differently. It would, for example, be imaginable that a Fairtrade advert politicizes some readers to take action specifically against the universality of its discourse and that would be political. The fact that three Fairtrade adverts have been selected over plenty of other documents for this analysis is another limitation to the method. I did so, because they became available recently (2015). After having reviewed numerous documents and adverts published by various certification schemes, I opted for these adverts because I consider them representative for the manner in which Fairtrade publicly presents itself.

The limitations of the two methods have been discussed in detail. The question remains whether they can grasp the characteristics of a postpolitical condition and how it can be empirically assessed at all. Furthermore, due to its limited extent, this thesis lacks an empirical on-the-ground analysis of Fairtrade's ideological orientation, its governance structures and producers' ability and power to take influence through these structures. While of interest, a discussion on an extension or modification of SWYNGEDOUW's characteristics of the postpolitical condition is beyond the scope of this thesis.

4   The Postpolitical Condition of Fairtrade

I argue that Fairtrade is postpolitical in three regards. My line of argument draws on the characteristics of a postpolitical condition advanced by SWYNGEDOUW. The production of ideological consensus and thus the disavowal of any ideological divisions manifest in Fairtrade's market-based neoliberal solution to global problems. Instead of questioning capitalism, Fairtrade mainstreams it into its politics (see chapter 5.1). Postpolitical representations are conveyed through Fairtrade's marketing and teaching materials and draw on wider depoliticized discourses (see chapter 5.2). Postdemocratic governance structures in the Fairtrade system become obvious in the inadequate representation of smallholders and plantation workers, their limited influence on standard setting and the mode of governmentality employed to keep them in their powerless position (see chapter 5.3). As laid out in the methodology, ideological consensus and postdemocratic governance structures are discussed based on a literature review. Visual and textual analysis provides the empirical basis for the study of Fairtrade's postpolitical imaginaries.

4.1   Ideological Consensus

"In or Against the Market"?

(SCHMELZER 2007, p. 1)

Fairtrade, instead of questioning the economic and societal system underlying the global problems it tries to solve, promotes a market-conform, consensual and thus postpolitical solution. The ideology of the free but regulated market as the means for equal development for all is incorporated into the Fairtrade system. Its neoliberal underpinnings crystallize in several recent developments: its creation of a moral economy, the mainstreaming of Fairtrade into large corporations, the privatization of development efforts and the notion of fair consumption as personal politics. In conclusion, Fairtrade is operating in the very market it sets out to challenge.

Rooted in the broader fair trade movement of the 1970's and 1980's, Fairtrade started off as a critique of globalized unfettered capitalism (DOLAN 2007). In contrast to the promise of free trade theory that trade brings prosperity and development for all, deregulated international trading practices have contributed to wide-spread poverty (DOLAN 2007; SCHMELZER 2007). Among their structural problems on markets for agricultural commodities are declining world market prices, the concentration of power in the hands of a few retail chains and the increasing standardization of products. The latter occurs through certification schemes such as Fairtrade that impose codes of production producers must adhere to in order to access the market (SCHMELZER 2007). Small producers struggle to compete in these markets as they suffer disadvantages in terms of access to information, inputs, financing and sales markets. Moreover, they cannot reach certain economies of scale that would lower production costs (SCHMELZER 2007). The broader fair trade movement and with it the predecessors of Fairtrade (namely Max Havelaar in the Netherlands) emerged as a critique of this unregulated, globalized capitalism. They understood themselves as taking political action against this system as well as showing solidarity with politically marginalized producers. Several fair trade initiatives supported Nicaraguan Sandinista coffee farmers during the US embargo in the 1980's. The initiatives bought Sandinista coffee and marketed it in the US despite the embargo in order to support the farmers and the political action of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua (RENARD 2003).

Keeping in mind capitalism critique and solidarity purchases as a starting point and considering Fairtrade's current development, RENARD (2003) discusses whether Fairtrade is "*being reabsorbed by the market*" (RENARD 2003, p. 93). Rephrasing this more radically: How did Fairtrade abandon – or rather sell out – its anti-capitalist political principles and gave in to postpolitical market logic? Four developments of Fairtrade over recent years are of interest: its creation of a moral economy, its mainstreaming, the privatization of development efforts and its politics of consumption.

GOODMAN (2004) argues that Fairtrade creates a *"moral economy"* (GOODMAN 2004, p. 891) that connects struggling producers with reflexive consumers. Both actors are to be understood as parts of a transnational trading network that is adhering to moral principles such as the payment of decent prices for agricultural goods. The development and well-being of producers in the Global South becomes the political concern of consumers in the North. GOODMAN (2004) criticizes that Fairtrade does not establish an alternative way of trading. It rather just raises the *"niceness"* (GOODMAN 2004, p. 892) of capitalism without questioning it. In line with this, Fairtrade is incorporated in the Northern consumption scape, raising the 'niceness' of supermarkets and coffee chains alike. Consumers do not need to question or change their consumption patterns. They may shop at the same groceries, buying a Fairtrade product every other week. They may grab a coffee at a café of their likes, feeling ethically relieved at the sight of the Fairtrade label. As GOODMAN (2004) puts it: "*Robin Hood comes to town, latte in hand*" (GOODMAN 2004, p. 896).

According to DOLAN (2010), the mainstreaming of Fairtrade designates two processes in the broader sense. Firstly, it comprises the introduction of certification and the sale of certified and labeled products in supermarkets. Secondly, it describes the inclusion of large plantations with hired laborers in a system that had so far focused on smallholders (DOLAN 2010). Arising from mainstreaming are what RENARD (2003) terms Fairtrade's three dilemmas. The first dilemma is that two visions of fair trade compete and each of them determines a different trajectory for Fairtrade. A more pragmatic vision sees Fairtrade as the means to make the neoliberal economic system work properly and to help smallholders benefit from it. The other, more radical or idealistic vision sees Fairtrade merely as a tool of transition that will finally help transform the economic system (RENARD 2003; SCHMELZER 2007). These two visions are not openly discussed in Fairtrade. The prevailing consensus is that, despite this ideological division, Fairtrade does something good for Southern producers. But the disavowal of this ideological dissent is what renders Fairtrade postpolitical (SCHMELZER 2007). The second dilemma, according to RENARD (2003), is the inclusion of large corporations into the Fairtrade system. In order to let more producers benefit, sales volumes need to be increased. Producers can sell only as much Fairtrade produce as traders are willing to buy. COLE AND BROWN (2014) find that supply is currently outstripping demand by far. This poses problems on smallholders who comply with Fairtrade standards for their whole production but are only able to sell a small portion under the Fairtrade label. When the label was first launched, markets needed to be created for the products. Starting from the late 1980's Fairtrade products have become available in supermarkets in order to increase sales volumes. Moreover, large corporations were approached with the request to source from Fairtrade farms. The fast growing supply needed an also growing demand that was created through collaboration with large enterprises (RENARD 2003; DOLAN 2010). DOLAN (2010) criticizes these developments. Fairtrade has made itself dependent on the voluntary engagement of corporations who do not alter their business practices in favor of fairness. On the contrary, the accusation of

'green-washing' one's company through the sourcing of Fairtrade goods has widely been discussed, e.g. in the prominent case of Starbucks (RENARD 2003; GOODMAN 2004). RAYNOLDS (2012b) elaborates on why corporations engage with Fairtrade. Their objectives are often far from a fair trade philosophy. Business-driven considerations such as access to the fair niche market and access to high quality produce drive their engagement (RAYNOLDS 2012b). In addition to this, Fairtrade seems desperate to increase demand for its products even if it means the dilution of its standards. In early 2014 the Cocoa Program, Sugar Program and Cotton Program were launched. Companies that sell composite products (e.g. cookies or chocolate bars) had so far been obligated to source all ingredients with the Fairtrade label as long as they were available under Fairtrade certification. The new, slightly altered label for the three programs allows for companies to only source one ingredient fair, e.g. only the cocoa in a chocolate bar. According to Fairtrade International, this step is necessary to increase demand for all the farmers unable to sell 100% of their produce under the Fairtrade label (FLO 2015b). While a viable argument, the question remains whether the dilution of their standards loses Fairtrade the consumers' trust they depend upon for any of their sales. The third dilemma in the mainstreaming of Fairtrade is, according to RENARD (2003), the lack of focus on the needs of producers and their limited influence on strategic decisions and standards setting. This argument is further discussed in chapter 5.3.

Surrendering to market logic, Fairtrade advances a privatized, postpolitical notion of development. It renders the development of poor producers a consumable commodity for reflexive Fairtrade buyers (GOODMAN 2004). Depoliticized representations of producers and places of production reduce complex social, historical and cultural factors to a mere economic solution: development through Fairtrade. Here, development is understood as a cause market economy and any ethical consumer may realize. Thus, Fairtrade reproduces rather that revolutionizes neoliberal politics of development (DOLAN 2010). This point is further elaborated in chapter 5.2.

GOODMAN (2004) argues that, although Fairtrade understands consumption as a political action, the scope of this action is limited to the realm of personal politics. Consumers may show through their consumption which kind of conditions of production they prefer. But even if these conditions are a political issue, the mode of expression of political opinion is postpolitical. If consumers criticize the conditions of production that capitalism determines, then capitalism itself needs to be challenged. This is not possible through the purchase of products that are delivered through a capitalist market (GOODMAN 2004).

Coming back to the introductory quote, it is not an easy task to position Fairtrade either *"in or against the market"* (SCHMELZER 2007, p. 1). As SCHMELZER (2007) puts it, the reality is probably to be found somewhere in between these two extremes. Fairtrade intends for the marginalized farmers to benefit from international trade, *but* has the power to exclude them from the market via their standards (GOODMAN 2004).

Consumers are asked to buy into its ethically correct and politically progressive agenda, *but* only if wealthy enough to purchase Fairtrade products (GOODMAN 2004). Fairtrade practices 'trade not aid', *but* employs moral beliefs and the obligation to help in its adverts (DOLAN 2007). It has become clear that Fairtrade does not challenge capitalist logic, but rather is *"reabsorbed"* (RENARD 2003, p. 93) by it. Its creation of a moral but market-conform economy, its mainstreaming, its depoliticized notion of development and its focus on consumption as political action do not question the consensus on capitalism and render Fairtrade postpolitical.

4.2 Postpolitical Representations

"[T]he […] public with both the obligation and the power to save the 'African poor'"

(DOLAN 2007, p. 246)

Fairtrade lifts the veil of commodity fetishism and reveals material and social conditions of production. But it does so only partially. It lets the consumer take a glimpse at producers' livelihood struggles to market the producers' otherness, their exoticism and their poverty. Fairtrade's adverts reproduce depoliticized and stereotyped representations about consumers, producers and the places of production. Wider depoliticized discourses of power, development and the 'African Other' underpin these representations.

As discussed in the methodology chapter, visual and textual analysis of three Fairtrade adverts is used to derive the argument put forward in this chapter. The analysis is structured according to WRIGHT (2004) and comprises three steps. Firstly, I describe the adverts and what they suggest to me. Secondly, I link the text and image to the advertised product and to the broader cause of Fairtrade in order to reveal how Fairtrade represents consumers, producers and the places of production and why that might be. Finally, I discuss the wider depoliticized discourses that frame these adverts. The first advert (FAIRTRADE FOUNDATION 2015c) with the slogan *"Fairtrade. The power is in your hands."* is to be found as a header on the website of the Fairtrade Foundation (the National Fairtrade Organization in the UK) and is from 2015. The second advert (THE CO-OPERATIVE FOOD undated) stating that *"Some people can't live without coffee"* is taken from a print marketing campaign of one of the UK's largest supermarket chains The Co-operative Food (in short Co-op) and is undated. The third advert (FAIRTRADE FOUNDATION 2015d) claiming to *"Make your breakfast count for Teresa"* is from 2015 and forms part of the Fairtrade Foundation's print and online campaign for Fairtrade Fortnight 2016. This campaign intends to raise consumers' awareness of where their breakfast ingredients come from and who is involved in their production (FAIRTRADE FOUNDATION 2015b).

Fig. 1. Advert 1 (Fairtrade Foundation 2015c).

Fairtrade Foundation's advert (see figure 2) is set in landscape format. The background is blurred. One might discern people on the left-hand side in front of a house or café. On the right-hand side there is a hint of grey and green, maybe a park or street lined with trees. To me, the scene suggests an urban setting with some greenery. In the foreground there is only one thing that is sharply focused: the torso of a white, male, presumably young person. He is dressed in current fashion, wearing blue jeans, a grey t-shirt with a black print and a wristwatch. His hands are prominent and central to the image. In his right hand, he carries a coffee to go in a plain blue cup and he is walking briskly. The front left of the advert is occupied by the slogan in white on a blue ground: *"Fairtrade. The power is in your hands."*

The scene is supposedly set somewhere in the Global North, in an urban area. It is clear that the consumer is the focus and that she/he is spoken to. The person on this advert depicts the kind of person Fairtrade consumers might find appealing. His qualities mirror what the reader, and potential buyer, wants to be. He is young and confident and his straight and dynamic walk suggests that he is stepping ahead toward the future. In a figurative sense this might point to Fairtrade's aspiration to bring progress to its farmers. The hot-air balloon on the t-shirt suggests an open-mindedness and cosmopolitan attitude that are attributed to Fairtrade consumers. It also indicates Fairtrade's caring for global problems and distant farming communities. Coming back to the whole scene, it is noticeable that an everyday situation is displayed here. According to Goodman (2004), Fairtrade has come to incorporate itself into the consumption scape of the North, namely in everyday purchasing practices like buying a coffee to go. Consumption patterns do not change and are not questioned, e.g. the environmental implications of a take away coffee cup. Potential Fairtrade consumers are supposed to think about Fairtrade coffee as a win-win-purchase. It is just as hip as any other coffee *and* it makes the world a better place. It is striking that, though Fairtrade invokes the power of the consumer in its slogan, it is not specified what this power can achieve. Neither, Fairtrade's standards are mentioned. According to Wright (2004), it is taken for granted that Fairtrade does something - everything - good.

Though there are of course other discourses at play as well, I focus on the discourse of power that is a recurrent theme in the other adverts as well and that has been identified by WRIGHT (2004) and DOLAN (2007). It is the power of the consumer that is addressed in the slogan. It is not specified how the consumer could exert his power, why he would exert it, for which purpose or over whom. The notion of power here is universal, all-encompassing. The consumer, the white male, is depicted as universally powerful. It is implied that it is the producer over whom the consumer has power. Simultaneously it is suggested that the producers are powerless, incapacitated and helpless. They adopt the position of the 'Other' that is in every regard different from the powerful consumer. And he, quite literally, holds the power over their destiny in his hand. The coffee cup that symbolizes the producers is enclosed in his hand and it is his choice whether to care for them or to crush them. Another intriguing aspect of this advert is the formation of a consumer's identity that occurs through purchasing. GOODMAN (2004), WRIGHT (2004) and DOLAN (2007) discuss how consumers of ethical products try to become an ethical person through their consumption. They purchase more than a product. They purchase the kind of person they want to be (DOLAN 2007). Desirable personal attributes are projected onto the man in the image: white, male, young, educated, open-minded and concerned for the poor. This characterization also speaks to the discourse of power that positions exactly this kind of person as powerful. Both the notion of identity formation and the discourse of power are depoliticized. Here, capitalism is conceived as "*both the source and palliative of consumers' ethical concerns*" (DOLAN 2007, p. 243). It is not questioned that Fairtrade presents a market-based solution to problems that the market accounts for.

This discourse of power also underpins the second advert (see figure 3), although it is played out in reverse this time. In the first advert the consumer cups the coffee, symbolizing the producers, in his hand and is much larger than it. In the second advert the instant coffee jar, symbolizing the consumers, is so big that it contains the producer completely. The second advert is displayed in an upright format with the jar taking up most of the space. It is half filled with instant coffee. In it there is a man of color who is supposedly engaged in one of the processes of coffee production. In the background there are two more people of color, a truck and a one-story house. The earth is of reddish color. Supposedly, this scene is to be set somewhere in rural Africa. The upper half of the advert is taken up by the heading *"Some people can't live without coffee"* and a smaller text reading *"hot beverage switch – 15 million households are relying on you to make your next cup of coffee"*. At the bottom the Fairtrade mark and the logo of the supermarket Co-op are displayed rather small. Again, there is no mention of Fairtrade's objectives or standards.
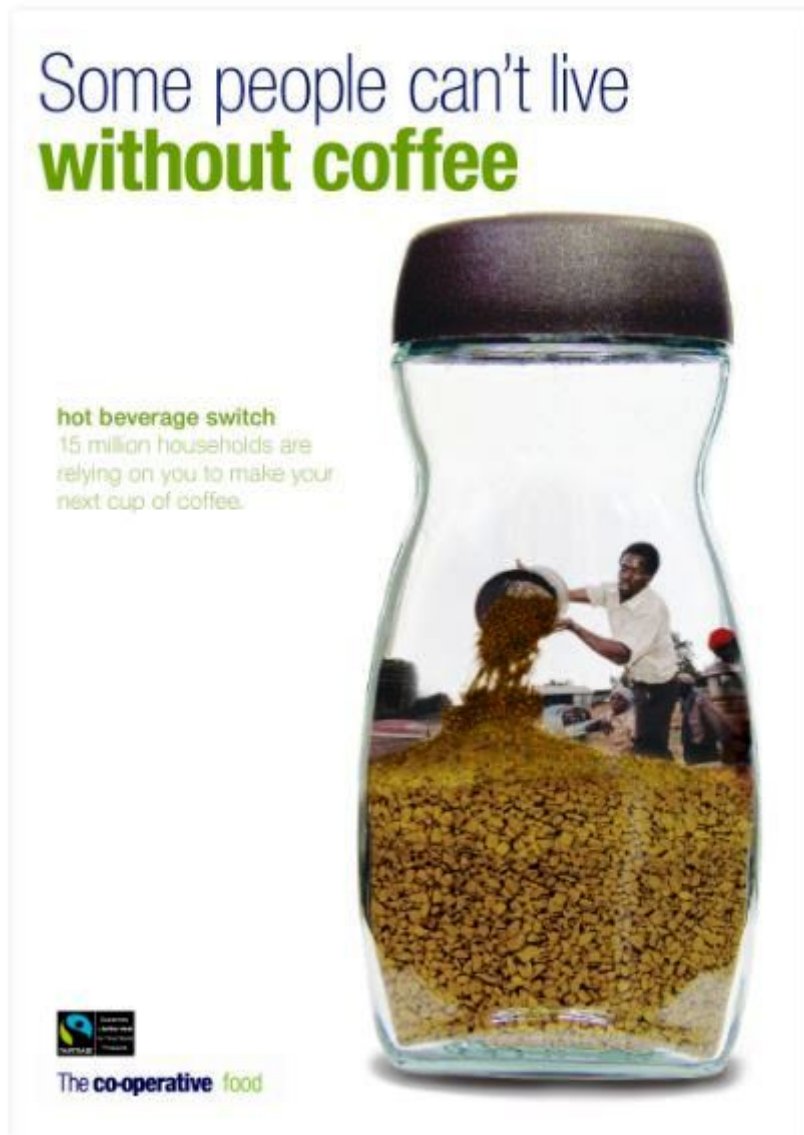
Fig. 2. Advert 2 (THE CO-OPERATIVE FOOD undated).

The representation of the man of color, supposedly one of the African Fairtrade coffee farmers, is intriguing. He faces the reader of the advert, the potential consumer, and piles up coffee beans in front of her/him. He works hard to provide the Fairtrade consumers with good quality coffee and he does so without machines or technology. Eventually he will vanish behind the heap of coffee beans that he is piling up. These coffee beans seem to miraculously become the instant coffee in the jar. Then again, the instant coffee seems to form the soil beneath the man's feet. It is the source on which he grows his product. It is even the source on which he builds his life. He *"can't live without coffee"*. Although the advert reveals certain aspects of the life of this farmer, it stereotypes him. The man in the picture is a coffee farmer and nothing else. Nothing more is revealed about him; neither his interests nor life aspirations. The only thing that the reader comes to know is that he depends wholly on coffee and that he is nothing without it. The coffee defines him, contains him. He

becomes a trait of his product through his work. The consumer is less visible in this advert, but she/he is nevertheless central to it. The heading speaks to her/him, because she/he *"can't live without coffee"*. It is a common saying that consumers of coffee cannot get up without it in the morning. The producers' need for coffee in his daily livelihood struggle is perversely twisted into the consumers' morning choice of beverage. This choice puts the consumer in a very powerful position. She/he is so powerful, that her/his next cup of coffee will do good for an unbelievable *"15 million households".*

As in the first advert, the discourse of power is prominent. The consumer is depicted as free in her/his choice to help 15 million households or to not help them. Her/His power is contrasted by the desperate, impotent producers who completely depend on this choice. They cannot *"switch"*, they do not have a choice. They are determinate to produce coffee. The discourse of power even goes beyond the relation between consumers and producers and inscribes power on a greater scale. Not only has the consumer power over the producer. The white person has power over the person of color. The European has power over the African. The North has power over the South. Colonial power relations are reproduced in this advert. Adding to the discourse of power, another discourse of the 'African Other' frames this advert. The man of color is depicted in his otherness, his difference, his being exotic – in all that what makes him different from a Fairtrade consumer. I further elaborate on this discourse of the 'African Other' in the discussion of the third advert. Its implications for the concept of commodity fetishism shall be examined here. The discourse of the otherness of the 'African' helps Co-op and the Fairtrade Foundation to endow the product with a cultural surplus value that sets it apart. This is what COOK AND CRANG (1996) have come to call the double commodity fetishism. While limited knowledge about the circumstances of production is conveyed to consumers to lift the veil of the (first) commodity fetishism, a second fetish is constituted through this knowledge. Because specific and deliberate imageries are used to create a cultural surplus value for the product, it is once more fetishized (COOK AND CRANG 1996). FREIDBERG (2003) and MARSTON (2013) observe this double fetish in the marketing of ethical products. According to WRIGHT (2004), the difference and otherness of fair trade products and their producers is emphasized to create a surplus value. This can as well be witnessed in this advert. The circumstances of production are only partially revealed. The advert makes it seem like the coffee bean miraculously turns into instant coffee. But between the coffee bean and the instant coffee lie various highly mechanized steps of production. They are foreclosed, because they compromise the image of coffee as a purely natural product and the image of the directness of trade between producers and consumers. Moreover, it would diminish the otherness of the producer that is used here to market the coffee. This partial revelation constitutes the second commodity fetish. The otherness of the farmer, his poverty and his manual work add a surplus value to the coffee.

The discourse of the 'African Other' is also apparent in the third advert (see figure 4) which features Teresa, supposedly a worker on a tea plantation. The biggest part of the advert is taken up by a picture of a woman of color standing in a lush green field plucking leaves. High trees frame the scenery. The short-haired woman wears a yellow apron over a blue blouse and carries an empty basket on her back. She stands almost upright and reaches out with her hand in the direction of the advert's reader. To me, it suggests a gesture of offering the leaves she has just plucked. A big slogan takes up the upper left side of the image reading *"Make your breakfast count for Teresa"*. It is personalized, suggesting that the woman's name is Teresa. There is mention of Kenya, supposedly her country of origin. The bottom part of the advert displays an announcement for Fairtrade Fortnight, the Fairtrade mark, the slogan "*The power of you*" and the motto of the campaign "*Sit down for breakfast, stand up for farmers*". What Fairtrade exactly does, its standards and its objective are missing like in the other two adverts. There is a text in small font, the smallest of all texts, revealing information about Teresa: *"Thanks to a water tank funded by Fairtrade tea sales, Teresa can water her kitchen garden during the dry season to grow vegetables for her family. Choose Fairtrade to enable more farmers like Teresa to feed the people they care about, all year round."*

Fig. 3. Advert 3 (Fairtrade Foundation 2015d).

Again, this advert seems to let the reader take a glimpse into Teresa's life. But this glimpse is deliberately chosen. First of all, there might be confusion about where Teresa actually works. The text provides information on her kitchen garden, suggesting she is a smallholder. For the inattentive reader she might be on her own small farm. Contrary to this, tea is mostly grown on large plantations with hired workers. The odds are high that Teresa works on one of these plantations. What is more, workers have to bend down to pluck the leaves, not stand upright like Teresa does. Her basket might also be full and heavy during work. The deliberate display of

Teresa as a content laborer in a lush green setting suggests easy, enjoyable work in the freedom of nature – comparable to going on a hike rather than to laboring on a tea plantation. Her name, Teresa, is also carefully chosen. It is a Christian name, well-known in Europe, rendering this woman near and dear to the reader. Furthermore, it may be suggestive of her role in her family or community as 'Mother Teresa'. Her name is printed in letters half as large as the letters for "*breakfast*". *"Breakfast"* speaks to the potential Fairtrade consumer who is again central in this advert. The slogan invites her/him to take action for Teresa. But this action, of course, is convenient for her/him. All she/he has to do is to *"sit down for breakfast"*.

Again, the discourse of power that has already been discussed in detail is obvious. The consumer is so powerful in her/his actions that a simple breakfast is enough to change Teresa's life or that of any other African. The discourse of the 'African Other' frames the advert as well. The information given about Teresa does not seem to aim at informing the reader about herself or her work – otherwise one would be told about the challenges of working on a tea plantation. Rather, the text serves the purpose to bring to mind the unconscious discourse of the otherness of the 'African' and her/his colonially-inspired features. I draw on the writings of Wright (2004), Dolan (2007) and Marston (2013) to show how the 'African' is represented in fair trade. The 'African farmer', rather the 'African', in the guise of Teresa is displayed in this advert. The 'African' lives a simple life in a rural area and she is content with whatever nature provides her with. Rural life and work in agriculture are romanticized as is the smallness of it, e.g. in the mentioning of Teresa's kitchen garden (Dolan 2007). Of course the text refers to her family, because family and community are important to the 'African'. She is hard-working and authentic and this is what makes her graspable for the reader (Wright 2004). The 'African' has no capacity to improve her livelihood on her own (Dolan 2007). She is in desperate need of Fairtrade or any white person to help her to work her way out of poverty (Marston 2013). Even a simple task like setting up a water tank is not in her capacity. She needs to be developed, to be civilized by Fairtrade (Dolan 2007). Thus, depoliticized notions of development are as well woven into the discourse of the 'African Other'. Development is understood as a problem any Fairtrade consumer can solve by simply purchasing Teresa's tea. It is abstracted from complex social, historical and cultural contexts to a cause market economy can realize.

In this chapter I have argued that the representations of consumers, producers and places of production that Fairtrade employs are depoliticized. In contrast to Swyngedouw who identifies populist gestures and apocalyptic imaginaries as characteristics of a postpolitical condition, I find that depoliticized representations and discourses render Fairtrade postpolitical. They leave no space for the imagining of other possible attributes and roles of consumers and producers. They also foreclose any thinking about other solutions to global problems that are not Fairtrade. The adverts do not open up space for a discussion on the conditions of production, on the needs of producers or on the role of consumers. They deliberately reproduce

discourses of power and the 'African Other'. WRIGHT (2004) criticizes that the producers have no influence on how they are displayed. Furthermore, the transmitting of information only takes place in one direction. The producers learn nothing about the consumers in return (WRIGHT 2004). This is far from being political. To say it in the words of RANCIÈRE, these representations and discourses keep the voices of African and other farmers from being heard. The displayed knowledge about the producers is partial and carefully chosen. It serves the purpose to create certain imaginations and endow the product with the surplus value of the 'African Otherness'. The representation of the 'African' is depoliticized and reproduces colonial ideas on what the 'African' is like. It represents producers in a helpless, powerless manner that renders the consumers powerful in contrast. As DOLAN (2007) puts it: The consumers are given "*both the obligation and the power to save the 'African poor'*" (DOLAN 2007, p. 246). The discourse of power reproduces colonial power relations between white people and people of color. Depoliticized notions of development are woven into this discourse. Development is no longer a complex challenge, but a consumable good.

4.3 Postdemocratic Governance Structures

"Cleaning up down South comes cheap"

(FREIDBERG 2003, p. 40)

Fairtrade sets out to empower the marginalized. However, the marginalized are allowed only limited influence on its governing structures. Looking at the Fairtrade system and especially at its standard setting procedure, it becomes clear that the producers (smallholders and plantation workers) are represented. But they lack representation adequate to their numbers and central role in Fairtrade. The promise to empower producers, especially hired workers, to speak and make better deals for themselves is a vain one. Multiple studies show that Fairtrade fails to realize workers' empowerment. What it does realize is a change in governance in the markets in which it is active – but not necessarily for the good of producers. Finally, the widespread critique that Fairtrade employs a neocolonial mode of governmentality over its producers is severe. Taking this criticism into account, one might claim that Fairtrade's mission of "*Cleaning up down South comes cheap*" (FREIDBERG 2003, p. 40): namely without the proper acknowledgement of producers' powers and without allowing them to govern the Fairtrade system by themselves in their best interest.

What I generally refer to as Fairtrade in this thesis is composed of several organizations: the Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (Fairtrade International or FLO in short), National Fairtrade Organizations (NFOs), Producer Networks (PNs) and the FLO-Cert GmbH (FLO 2011f; FAIRTRADE DEUTSCHLAND

2013). Central to the Fairtrade system is Fairtrade International, an association formed in 1997 of several NFOs, among them the well-known Max Havelaar initiative in the Netherlands. Fairtrade International currently has 19 member NFOs in 24 countries across Europe, North America, Australia, Japan, Brazil, India, South Africa and Kenya. 3 PNs covering Latin America, Africa and Asia respectively are also members of Fairtrade International and represent the producers. Fairtrade International is entrusted with the development of the Fairtrade standards (in its Standards Committee) and with the provision of guidance for producers who struggle to comply with these standards (FLO 2011f; FAIRTRADE DEUTSCHLAND 2013). Generalizing across products these standards include: direct trading and the reduction of intermediaries, long-term trading relations, a minimum price above the world market price, setting up democratic structures in certified smallholder cooperatives and a social premium that is directly paid to these cooperatives (FAIRTRADE DEUTSCHLAND 2013). If in compliance with Fairtrade standards, smallholder cooperatives may be certified. Certification is also possible for plantations with hired laborers. Exporters, importers and manufacturers must be certified in order to trade, produce and sell Fairtrade products. FLO-Cert GmbH is an independent certification organization which conducts the audits for all actors to be certified. Certification costs are to be paid by these actors. In the case that a cooperative is unable to finance this, a fund from Fairtrade International provides financial support (FAIRTRADE DEUTSCHLAND 2013). The NFO in Germany is TransFair e.V. (also called Fairtrade Deutschland). Its task is to advice corporations interested in selling Fairtrade products. TransFair e.V. licenses the use of the Fairtrade label in Germany and thereby brings in the resources to finance its works in public relations and marketing (FAIRTRADE DEUTSCHLAND 2013).

Having a clear understanding of the actors in the Fairtrade system, their influence and governing is yet to be discussed. PNs and NFOs hold their own separate assemblies and delegate representatives to the General Assembly. The General Assembly elects the board of Fairtrade International, the FLO Board. In this election PNs and NFOs both have 50% of the votes regardless of the number of voters. The elected FLO Board currently has 11 members of which 4 are from the PNs, 4 are from the NFOs and 3 are external experts (FLO 2011d; FAIRTRADE DEUTSCHLAND 2013). Also of interest is the Standards Committee that reports to the FLO Board and that is entrusted with the standards setting. Producers, traders, labelling Initiatives and external experts are represented in this committee (FLO 2011b). Standards are reviewed every five years. Stakeholders can submit a request for a new standard. This request needs to be approved by the FLO Board (FLO 2011b). During the planning phase the Standards Committee conducts research on the need of the new standard which "*may involve stakeholders*" (FLO 2011b, p. 1). During a consultation phase stakeholders that are to be identified by the FLO Board may comment on the new standards. It is also possible to leave comments on the website of Fairtrade International (FAIRTRADE DEUTSCHLAND 2013).

Before coming back to a critical assessment of the described governance structures, a look at the empirically grounded critique of Bacon (2010) and Tallontire et al. (2011) is worthwhile. Tallontire et al. (2011) focus on the influence of external actors on the governance of standards in general. Nevertheless, their insights are also viable for the analysis of Fairtrade. They find that actors that are not explicitly involved in the production or exchange of goods have only limited influence on it. Donors, workers' representatives or civil society organizations mainly shape the public debate on these value chains or specific standards. But the power to alter the standards rests with actors that are powerful within the value chain, namely large enterprises (Tallontire et al. 2011). Bacon (2010) analyzes Fairtrade's governance structures based on empirical studies in the coffee sector. He sees the process of standard setting as a socially embedded practice that reflects power relations in the definition of what is fair. Even though various stakeholders may participate in a standard revision, the vote on a new standards is taken by the Standards Committee (Bacon 2010). Apart from producers, this comprises other actors such as traders and the labeling initiatives who could use their power to define what they view as fair. Joining in with Bacon's (2010) critique, I point out a few more critical aspects that arise from the review of documents from TransFair e.V. and Fairtrade International (FLO 2011a; FLO 2011b; FLO 2011d; FLO 2011f; Fairtrade Deutschland 2013; FLO 2015a). Although stakeholders can submit a request for a new standard, the FLO Board must approve of its need. Let us assume a hypothetical standard request from a producer cooperative. This request will most certainly be in their own interest and maybe not in the interest of traders or producers. In the FLO Board producers are represented by the PN delegates who hold about one third of the votes. They alone cannot overrule the other members of the FLO Board. Considering the often invoked centrality of producers to the Fairtrade system, the question arises why they are deprived of setting the standards they must adhere to. If it was a system that took producers' empowerment serious, these producers should be able to alter the standards in their best interest. This would not question the democratic legitimation of the FLO Board. On the contrary, it would strengthen it. It would be radically democratic and political in the sense of Rancière, if every woman and man in the Fairtrade system had a voice that was heard and recognized as legitimate. The voices of the producers are not adequately represented and thus not recognized in the FLO Board, the General Assembly and the Standards Committee. They lack representation adequate to their numbers. These bodies are therefore postdemocratic and postpolitical. Bacon (2010) discusses another structural problem in the representation of producers. While NFOs have enough financial resources to employ staff, the PNs often lack sufficient professional staff for the multitude of their tasks. Research on Fairtrade's websites confirms this allegation at least in one case. The chair of the board of the Africa PN is at the same time board member of two NFOs (Canada and UK) and member of the FLO Board (FLO 2011d).

So far, the structural problems of the governance system have been discussed. The central aim of the empowerment of producers is yet to be scrutinized. While

RIISGAARD (2009) acknowledges Fairtrade's role in empowering plantation workers in the cut flower sector, several other studies show a limited impact of these empowerment attempts (HALE AND OPONDO 2005; BARRIENTOS AND SMITH 2007; RAYNOLDS 2012a; RAYNOLDS 2014). RIISGAARD (2009) finds that Fairtrade pursues labor standards and empowers labor organizations to a greater extent than other standard initiatives do. The formation of a Workers' Committee that is similar to a farm level union is encouraged. The establishment of a Joint Body of workers' representatives and management delegates is mandatory as a space for negotiation between workers and management. The Joint Body decides how to invest the Fairtrade premium. According to interviewed farm union representatives, the Joint Body strengthens the union through increased awareness among workers. RIISGAARD (2009) reports that unions have been consulted for the purpose of standard setting. Despite these tangible achievements the possibility for labor organizations such as the Workers' Committee or the Joint Body to alter the prevailing governance structures that have put them in their powerless position is extremely limited. BARRIENTOS AND SMITH (2007) find that ethical standards in agricultural production improve labor standards, but do not contest commercial practices or social relations that these labor standards are based on. Improvements concerning health and safety issues, limitation of working hours and the payment of the national minimum wage were achieved through the standards. But these improvements did not occur across all groups of employees. Non-permanent, seasonal or casual workers were not likely to benefit from the standard. HALE AND OPONDO (2005) voice similar criticism concerning women workers on flower plantations with ethical standards. Women workers face job insecurity due to pregnancies and maternity leaves. These gender-sensitive issues could not be addressed properly during auditing on the examined flower plantations. The critique of BARRIENTOS AND SMITH (2007) and HALE AND OPONDO (2005) refers to different ethical standards in agricultural production, namely the Ethical Trading Initiative ETI and the Horticultural Ethical Business Initiative HEBI. However, Fairtrade Standards for Hired Labour (FLO 2011c) do not sufficiently address these issues either. Non-permanent work is still permitted on plantations, confronting workers with high job insecurity. Firing women during pregnancy and maternity leave is prohibited (FLO 2011c). Empirical studies on whether this standard improved job security for non-permanent and women workers are yet to be conducted. RAYNOLDS (2012a; 2014) researches the impact of Fairtrade certification on flower farms in Ecuador and finds problems similar to those of ETI and HEBI. Fairtrade strengthens the empowerment of workers through the formation of the Workers' Committee and the Joint Body. This is especially effective if there are no unions active on the farm. These workers' representations can articulate and negotiate worker's requests with the farm management. Nonetheless, RAYNOLDS (2012a; 2014) estimates their impact beyond that limited. The committees lack the status of a union and are not organized beyond farm level which limits their influence on national labor policing.

Even if Fairtrade succeeds in empowering workers to a certain extent, its influence on prevailing market governance is extremely limited. Several scholars (RENARD 2005; DOLAN 2010; OUMA 2010; MARSTON 2013) have pointed out Fairtrade's inability to change powerful governance structures in agricultural and handicraft markets. DOLAN (2010) criticizes the virtuality of Fairtrade. According to her, the morality of Fairtrade is virtual, since its markets and the conventional markets largely operate in the same way. Large corporations dominate the global value chains of Fairtrade. They exert their power through certification schemes that producers must adhere to in order to access the market. Workers, smallholders and any social regulation initiatives have limited impact on market governance (DOLAN 2010). OUMA (2010) and MARSTON (2013) elaborate on how standards function as barriers to market access. According to OUMA (2010), private standards in agricultural production govern the access to a certain market and function as barriers for those farmers not able to comply (OUMA 2010). MARSTON (2013) examines a craftswomen cooperative in rural Ecuador which failed to obtain certification by the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO). The WFTO focuses even more on small producers than Fairtrade does. The author identifies the WFTO standard as a hindrance for most marginalized producers to gain access to this market. Paradoxically, it is the aim of fair trade to support the marginalized. In this case its standards exclude exactly these marginalized producers. In summary, Fairtrade fails to reformat the market structures in the interest of smallholders and plantation workers. The growing complexity of the Fairtrade market, the centralization of regulation and the introduction of certification renders them even more powerless (RENARD 2005).

Several scholars advance the critique that Fairtrade employs a neocolonial mode of governmentality in its networks (BLOWFIELD 1999; HUGHES 2000; HUGHES 2001; DOLAN 2007; BACON 2010; COLE AND BROWN 2014). HUGHES (2001) elaborates on FOUCAULT's concept of governmentality and applies it to global commodity networks. Governmentality is constituted through certain mentalities or rationalities (ways of thinking) and technologies that put these mentalities into practice (HUGHES 2001). Fairtrade is governed by neoliberal rationalities such as the belief in the self-regulating market or in the price mechanism (HUGHES 2001). There is no set minimum price for Fairtrade tea and flowers and their prices are determined by world market pricing (BACON 2010). The technologies employed are the auditing procedures that certify compliance with standards. HUGHES (2001) perceives these mentalities and technologies as developed in the Global North and imposed on the Global South. Moreover, she criticizes that the knowledge circulated through the commodity networks is from the North and that it is positioned as superior (HUGHES 2000). DOLAN (2007) considers the universal right ethos put forward by Fairtrade as a mode of governmentality. Fairtrade's ethics is assumed to be universal, while differing notions of ethics are denied. Within the standards there is no regulation on how to deal with competing notions of ethics, rights or well-being (DOLAN 2007). In Fairtrade's ethics farmers in the South are not defined by their capacity to improve their livelihoods, but by their desperate need of Fairtrade to do it for them. Thus,

Fairtrade leaves these farmers powerless and not as partners (DOLAN 2007). BLOWFIELD (1999) and COLE AND BROWN (2014) discuss the fact that Fairtrade is a standard that has been developed in the North, but claims to speak for Southern producers. COLE AND BROWN (2014) accuse Fairtrade of neocolonialism, because farmers have to comply with standards they did not set and can hardly change. BLOWFIELD (1999) criticizes Fairtrade's paternalistic attitude. The standards reflect values and concerns of Northern corporations and consumers and assume that they know best what Southern smallholders need. BLOWFIELD (1999) advocates that, in order to make Fairtrade a standard entitled to speak for the farmers, the decision-making should be shifted to the South.

In this chapter I have argued that the postpolitical condition of Fairtrade manifests in its postdemocratic governance structures. Although producer's empowerment is realized to a certain extent on farm level, they lack adequate representation in the General Assembly, the FLO Board and the Standards Committee. Fairtrade does not change the governance of markets to the advantage of producers. It employs a neocolonial mode of governmentality in its networks that puts the producers in a powerless position. Following SWYNGEDOUW's argument, Fairtrade's governance structure leaves no space for the articulation of the political. Its bodies rather administer a system that can itself not be questioned. The politics of Fairtrade are managed by expert groups that prohibit the mass of producers to make their voices heard.

5   Potentials for Politicizing Fairtrade

Fairtrade may be, at least in some of its aspects, diagnosed with SWYNGEDOUW's postpolitical condition. Advocating market-based solutions for market-introduced global problems mirrors the neoliberal agenda Fairtrade has set out to overcome. It permits smallholders and laborers to participate in its governance system, but deprives them of adequate representation and full ownership of the Fairtrade strategy. Finally, stereotyped representations of consumers, producers and places of production further depoliticize Fairtrade. Now - where to from here? Critique on Fairtrade has not reached a dead end. From the thinking on its postpoliticization arise potentials for politicization. These potentials or entry points address the three characteristics of Fairtrade's postpolitical condition: its lack of ideas challenging the ideology of neoliberalism, its postdemocratic governance structures and its postpolitical representations.

Let us recall the theoretical underpinnings of the political and the possibilities for politicization. MOUFFE (2005) conceptualizes the political as a space for dissent, conflict, contestation. It is a space in which antagonistic opinions are expressed. Taking ŽIŽEK's (2008) Marxist notion of the political into account, the political challenges the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism as prevailing societal and

economic system. According to RANCIÈRE (1999), the political unearths the fact that any established order is contingent and that it can be changed. It challenges the police order, the "*partition of the sensible*" (RANCIÈRE 2001, p. 1), that is to say the distinction of the visible/invisible, of that what *is* and what *is not.* The voice of everyone of the public masses must be heard and recognized as legitimate (RANCIÈRE 2001).

Unearthing the political in Fairtrade means to question postpolitical consensus regimes and to uncover its disagreement with neoliberal ideology. It means pointing out potentials for a democratization of its governance structures and for the deconstruction of its representations. Based on literature review I identify several entry points for a politicization of Fairtrade. Fairtrade needs to strengthen its advocacy network comprising producers, consumers, civil society organizations and fair trade groups. These people need to think of themselves as political subjects who take the cause of fair trade beyond market activities such as shopping. Fairtrade itself has to become an issue of contestation in order to be political. Its legitimacy and its vision need to be opened up to political debate. Furthermore, Fairtrade needs to bear in mind its roots as a political movement that set out to empower the marginalized in the pursuit of their interests. Fairtrade's governance structures have to undergo radical democratization. The producers need to take full ownership of Fairtrade's strategy. Moreover, the voices of those producers excluded from the Fairtrade system, need to be made audible. Depoliticized representations and discourses must be deconstructed in order to show that they are hegemonic constructions and that they foreclose other possible realities.

Before examining the entry points for politicization, the concept of political consumerism and the question whether consumption may or may not be political at all shall be briefly discussed. It leads to reasoning whether or not Fairtrade may be considered as a consumption-based political action. TRENTMANN (2007) observes that consumption is often situated as a matter of political identification and mobilization. Consumption itself has become a political arena in which antagonistic attitudes towards production and trade as well as differing consumption patterns are disputed (MICHELETTI AND STOLLE 2012). HARTWICK (2000) sees consumption as a political act, because it is informed by consumers' knowledge and political attitude toward a products' globalized commodity chain. The authors point out the introduction of political activity into everyday life activities such as shopping (HARTWICK 2000; TRENTMANN 2007; MICHELETTI AND STOLLE 2012). Hereby consumers demonstrate their collective power, be it through boycotting (avoiding a product) or buy-cotting (buying a product because it reflects a consumer's ethical or political attitude) (HARTWICK 2000; BROWN 2015). Political consumerism, too, has its challenges. HARTWICK (2000) criticizes that the promise of consumers' power is postpolitical. Their power is enacted through the market. This gives in to the logic of capitalism, presenting it as the solution to its own problems (DOLAN 2007). TRENTMANN (2007) speaks of the *"market-based citizen-consumer"* (TRENTMANN 2007, p. 151).

Citizenship and the political are enacted through the market. This market suggests that the consumer is free in her/his choice. But not only that, she/he is obliged to choose. The market as the means to realize the political negates any alternative outside the market (TRENTMANN 2007). Such a consumption-centered movement reduces the political to personal morality (BROWN 2015). Consumption of ethical products serves as the means for self-formation (DOLAN 2007) and not as collective action. Considering the implications of political consumerism discussed by HARTWICK (2000), TRENTMANN (2007) and BROWN (2015), consumption might function as a political arena in which consumers express their different attitudes toward production and trade practices. Nevertheless, in the sense of MOUFFE (2005) and ŽIŽEK (2008), consumption cannot be political, because it gives in to the logic of capitalism. If the political cause is the fighting of problems arising from capitalism, then capitalism itself needs to be fought. This is not possible by purchasing goods that are delivered through a capitalist market.

Potentials for politicization of Fairtrade must be found elsewhere in its ideological orientation, its governance structures and its representations. SCHMELZER (2007) and RAYNOLDS (2012b) interpret Fairtrade as a social countermovement against the excesses of capitalism. They draw on POLANYI's (2001 [1944]) theory of the double movement. The first movement is the economic liberalization, the dis-embedding of the market from its social relations. This triggers a second movement, a countermovement whose aim it is to re-embed the market in regulations that protect human life, workers and the environment from these liberalized, destructive market forces (POLANYI 2001 [1944]; SCHMELZER 2007). SCHMELZER (2007) sees Fairtrade's strength in its attempt to socially re-embed globalized production and trade. The Fairtrade standards force corporations to internalize social costs, because it requires them to pay a minimum wage. Another strategy of re-embedding is the negotiation of minimum prices above world market prices. In the case of Fairtrade this rings true for smallholder commodities such as cocoa or coffee. Plantation products such as tea or flowers are exempted from the minimum price rule. Price formation is thus, at least partly, not any more an autonomous, uncontrollable market function, but a socially mediated process (SCHMELZER 2007). RAYNOLDS (2012b) goes beyond this rather market-focused notion of the countermovement. In order to be a political countermovement in the sense of POLANYI (2001 [1944]), political engagement is indispensable. The author considers Fairtrade a double approach. On the one hand, it is a market-based solution that proves alternative trade viable. On the other hand, it is a critical political movement that has spun a wide-spread advocacy network of producers, consumers, corporations and civil society organizations who engage in the critique of globalized trade (RAYNOLDS 2012b). For GOODMAN (2004) it is exactly this transnational network that is an entry point for politicization. Fairtrade connects people struggling for the same cause. If these people realize their connectedness, their concurrent interest and their solidarity with each other, they could advance as a political movement. Fairtrade thus creates the member base for political action and may be politicized through these members (GOODMAN 2004). JAFFEE (2007)

elaborates on another challenge Fairtrade faces in order to become political. The two visions of Fairtrade discussed earlier, namely the pragmatic vision of a market-based solution versus the radical vision of transforming the world economic system, need to be addressed. This would in the sense of MOUFFE (2005) mean to open up space for the political. Both visions need to be acknowledged in their legitimacy. Thus, they become contestable and an issue of political debate. According to JAFFEE (2007), Fairtrade's whole approach needs to be contested as well. So far, Fairtrade presents itself as the primary solution to the unfair global trade regime (JAFFEE 2007). Politicizing Fairtrade means to render Fairtrade itself contestable. The need for and the legitimacy of Fairtrade must be opened up for political debate. In addition to this, GOODMAN (2004) advocates that Fairtrade shoppers not only think of themselves as consumers, but as political subjects. Through Fairtrade, they may become sensitized for global problems and for their own agency to solve these problems. But their action needs to go beyond purchasing in order to be political (DOLAN 2010). Another entry point for politicization, according to RENARD (2003), are Fairtrade's roots in the broader fair trade movement which started off as political action. The support of Sandinista coffee farmers in Nicaragua during the US embargo during the 1980's clearly shows how fair trade is able to commit to a political cause. In this case it is the suffering of farmers supporting the Sandinista government who only years before had overthrown Nicaragua's dictator (COLE AND BROWN 2014).

Turning to Fairtrade's postdemocratic governance structures, the entry points for politicization arise from MOUFFE's (2005) and RANCIÈRE's (2001) claim for a radical democracy in which the 'demos', the common people and those who claim to speak for them are radically regarded as equal. Applying this notion to Fairtrade, all members, regardless whether producer, trader, manufacturer or member of a NFO, must be considered equal. Their voices and votes must be considered equal. In practice this would require a radical democratization of Fairtrade's governance structures. The producers, traders, manufacturers and members of NFOs need to be represented according to their numbers in all bodies including the General Assembly, the FLO Board and the Standards Committee. If Fairtrade claims to work with over 1.5 million producers worldwide (FAIRTRADE FOUNDATION 2015a), then they need to be represented adequately, probably with over 95% of all votes. In consequence this means that they take full ownership of Fairtrade's strategy and operations. Another potential for politicization is the challenging of Fairtrade's own "*partition of the sensible*" (RANCIÈRE 2001, p. 1). Although it makes smallholders' and laborers' livelihood struggles visible, the struggles of those excluded from the Fairtrade system remain invisible. The marginalized producers who are excluded need to be made visible in the Fairtrade debate. Furthermore, the concerns of the non-permanent and women workers who still face problems at work despite Fairtrade standards must enter the debate.

The postpolitical representations and discourses that Fairtrade employs to market its cause leave no space to imagine other possible realities. It "*claims to have* the

solution by making global trade more equitable" (MICHELETTI AND STOLLE 2012, p. 103) and does not open up the debate about complex issues of power and development. Nevertheless, several potentials for politicization can be identified. Firstly, the postpolitical representations and discourses must be deconstructed. It must be revealed that they represent consumers and producers in a certain, deliberate manner; one that puts the latter in a powerless position. The discourses that frame Fairtrade make sure that their voices are not recognized as equal. As long as FOUCAULT's order of things or RANCIÈRE's police remain unquestioned, their voices are not heard. Even if they were adequately represented in Fairtrade's bodies, they would not be able to make themselves heard. In order to politicize Fairtrade and to make these voices heard, representations and discourses must be deconstructed. Secondly, WRIGHT's (2004) argument is a potential for politicization. She criticizes that producers have almost no control over how they are represented and no opportunity to learn about consumers. Politicization would allow them to determine how they are displayed to consumers. They should be recognized not only as stereotyped Africans or farmers, but as personalities. Moreover, learning about consumers would strengthen the aforementioned Fairtrade network. According to GOODMAN (2004), this network is not only created materially, but also discursively.

In this chapter I have argued that, although Fairtrade can be diagnosed with SWYNGEDOUW's postpolitical condition, it has potentials for politicization. Fairtrade's wide-spread advocacy network lays the foundation for a collective political movement. Its action needs to go beyond the purchase of Fairtrade goods. Fairtrade must open up its approach and its visions to public debate in order to become political. Its governance structure should undergo radical democratization. Furthermore, postpolitical representations and discourses need to be deconstructed.

6 Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued that SWYNGEDOUW's argument of the postpolitical condition is applicable to the case of Fairtrade in three regards: its ideological consensus, its postdemocratic governance structures and the depoliticized representations in its adverts. My two-fold methodical approach comprises literature review and visual and textual analysis of Fairtrade adverts. My findings are as follows. Fairtrade's ideological orientation does not challenge neoliberal market logic, but rather mainstreams it into its politics and thus reproduces neoliberalism as consensus. The representation of consumers, producers and places of production in Fairtrade's adverts is stereotyped and is framed by wider depoliticized discourses of power, development and the 'African Other'. Fairtrade's postdemocratic governance structures limit the producers' influence and prevent their voices from being heard. Although I argue that Fairtrade is in a postpolitical condition, I identify potentials for politicizing it. Its wide-spread advocacy network can develop into a political movement, if political action goes beyond the purchase of Fairtrade goods.

Fairtrade's approach and its vision must be opened up for debate in order to become political. Its governance structures need to be transformed into a radical democracy. Depoliticized representations and discourses must be deconstructed in order to empower producers to make their voices heard.

The arguments put forward in this thesis and the methods employed need to be critically reflected on. My thesis presents a theoretical work on the postpolitical condition. The question remains how the postpolitical in Fairtrade manifests in practice. I am well aware that I cannot, only through reading, 'prove' Fairtrade to be postpolitical. My analysis lacks empirical findings. The literature-based discussion of Fairtrade's ideological orientation is limited to the research results of other scholars. Fairtrade's market-based approach and its mainstreaming are obvious and its neoliberal logic cannot be denied. It would nevertheless be intriguing to learn how actors in the Fairtrade system understand and explain this approach, Fairtrade's vision and its impacts on globalized markets. The postdemocratic governance structures are analyzed using literature review. Certain aspects like the percentage of votes of producers in the Fairtrade bodies or their influence on standards setting can be discovered. It can however not be determined how these regulations play out in practice. An empirical analysis is needed to study the impact of these governance structures on the actual governance of the Fairtrade system and its markets. Representations that Fairtrade uses in its marketing and the discourses that frame them have been identified to be postpolitical. The difficulty of this argument is closely linked to the method employed. Visual and textual analysis draws on discourse theory and FOUCAULT's universal notion of discourse. It is assumed that, if Fairtrade employs depoliticized representations and discourses, then readers will be depoliticized by it. Visual and textual analysis can, however, not determine which impact Fairtrade's adverts have on every reader. Readers could become politicized and motivated to act upon unfair trading relations *despite* the depoliticized representations. Or they could be politicized exactly *by* these representations, deconstructing them like I did in my analysis. In summary, visual and textual analysis demonstrates that Fairtrade's representations and discourses are depoliticized, but it is beyond their scope to determine their impact on readers.

Not only does the question remain how the rather theoretical argument of the postpolitical condition manifests in practice. What is more, its empirical assessment is to be discussed further. Although literature review has proved viable to gain information on postpolitical aspects of Fairtrade, the findings depend on the theoretical and methodical approach of the respective scholars. Perspectives or aspects that their research does not cover are necessarily foreclosed from my analysis. This also applies to the choice of adverts for the visual and textual analysis. Other adverts might have brought to light other aspects in Fairtrade, although of course I have aimed at putting together a representative sample. Finally, my findings from visual and textual analysis are to a certain extent subjective. Nevertheless, I sustain my analysis with findings from scholars in order to verify my results.

This thesis brings together two fields of research: postpolitics and Fairtrade. My contribution to the first is the application of its argument to the case of Fairtrade and a critical reflection on methods for its empirical assessment. To the latter I contribute the embedding of thoughts on the depoliticization of Fairtrade in SWYNGEDOUW's argument of the postpolitical condition.

Now, what could be the way forward? The theoretical argument presented in this thesis needs on-the-ground empirical assessment. It would be interesting to bring to light how actors within the Fairtrade system – consumers, governing bodies, National Fairtrade Organizations, producers and their representatives - describe the character, scope and vision of Fairtrade, whether these actors consider Fairtrade a political movement, and where they see it is going. Will it help farmers to get their fare share of profits generated by global trade? Will it eventually lead to a transformation of the whole world trading system?

7 Acknowledgments

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