Campaign spaces for sustainable development: a power analysis of the Fairtrade Town Campaign in the UK

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Abstract: *This paper explores the role that Fairtrade towns and cities can play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As the largest consumers of resources, cities have a crucial role to play in the transition towards sustainable development, both within and outside their geographical boundaries. In the UK, towns and cities have driven the expansion of the Fair Trade movement through the 'Fairtrade Town' campaign, but an exploration of the relationship with sustainable development is currently missing. By applying power analysis we investigate campaign material produced by the Fairtrade Foundation and the experience of local campaigners. Our findings suggest that Fairtrade Towns operate as campaign spaces for sustainable development, challenging multiple forms of power and mobilizing resources on interrelated levels. Providing a framework to foster social equity on a glocal level, Fairtrade Towns hold the potential to contribute to multiple SDGs, representing a systemic approach to sustainable communities and cities.*

HOME TO OVER 50 PER CENT of the world's population and generating more than 70 per cent of the global emissions (UN, 2018), cities have a crucial role to play in the transition towards sustainable development. Their position as key actors in driving change has been established since the adoption of Local Agenda 21 plans (LA21), which states that while national strategies are essential to sustainable development, countries should delegate responsibilities to the lowest level of public authority to achieve effective action (UNCED, 1992). The centrality of the local level has been reconfirmed with the launch of Agenda 2030 (UCLG, 2018).

Nonetheless, within the UN framework, sustainable cities are defined mainly in relation to process-driven targets and technical improvements of the services cities are able to offer (UNSTATS, 2017). Cities are considered mainly as places of production and consumption, and their ability to foster social change through community cohesion and political participation is currently overlooked in the conceptualization of a 'sustainable city' (UN Habitat, 2016). Academic literature on urban sustainability has criticized this reductionist perspective, defined as

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an efficiency approach to sustainable development (Bengtsson et al., 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2018). Conversely, from many different angles, scholars have been calling for a systemic approach in order to achieve structural and trans-formative change (Bai et al., 2016; Wolfram and Frantzeskaki, 2016; Bengtsson et al., 2018).

One of the major challenges cities are called to address is managing food and agriculture systems taking into account local and global dimensions. Due to increasing world population and urbanization processes, food systems are contributing to degenerative impacts such as progressive environmental degradation and increased social inequalities across rural and urban communities globally (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2018). As the largest consumers of resources, cities have a significant potential to contribute to systemic change, but they cannot achieve sustainable development alone: this requires tackling interlinked issues both within and outside urban boundaries, involving actors and institutions outside the city, on both a local and a global scale (Bai et al., 2016).

The Fair Trade movement has been campaigning for decades to address global inequalities within food global supply chains, entangling local and global concerns (Van Dam, 2016). During the last two decades, cities in the UK and in Europe have been playing a fundamental role in raising awareness about Fair Trade. Their role as 'glocal' actors (Robertson, 1995) has been amplified by the creation of a 'Fairtrade Town' campaign, an international initiative launched in the UK in 2001, which bundles together local concerns for sustainable food consumption with global political issues around trade justice in food supply chains.

Academic literature and campaign material define this form of local activism 'Fairtrade Town campaign' (FTT). The focus of these campaigns is on achieving and maintaining 'Fairtrade Town status', granted to local communities by the Fairtrade Foundation (the charity that monitors the use of the FAIRTRADE Mark in the UK). The campaign started in Garstang, a market town in the north-west of England, where a group of Oxfam volunteers successfully persuaded the local council to pass a resolution to declare Garstang the first Fairtrade Town in the world (Lamb, 2008). Following this example, groups of local volunteers started to campaign in their towns and cities to raise awareness about Fairtrade and to increase availability of Fairtrade certified products. Despite initial scepticism, the Fairtrade Foundation was persuaded to formalize the campaign and develop a set of criteria for towns and cities to fulfil in order to be acknowledged as a 'Fairtrade Town'. While the first Fairtrade Town was based on a self-declaration of community support for Fairtrade, all the successive campaigns followed a formal process of application and review against five goals, monitored by the Fairtrade Foundation.

To be awarded Fairtrade Town status, local communities have to secure political recognition, convincing the local authority to pass a resolution in support of Fairtrade. The other goals cover: Fairtrade product availability in retail and catering outlets; workplace and community support; media coverage and community events; and a local FTT steering group (Fairtrade Foundation, 2011).

The campaign rapidly expanded nationally and internationally, and there are currently 2,023 FTTs in 30 countries across the world, with more than 600 FTTs in

the UK (FTTI, n.d.). One of the reasons for its success was the early support of local authorities (Malpass et al., 2007), which seized the campaign as an opportunity to localize sustainable development and to pursue Local Agenda 21 plans. Although it remains a voluntary initiative, the campaign has gained European political recognition, with the European Parliament defining FTTs as an important device for strengthening citizen-to-citizen cooperation and raising awareness about North–South relations (European Parliament, 2005).

FTTs play an important role in the expansion of the Fair Trade movement and are identified by the Fairtrade Foundation as among the main strategies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Fairtrade Foundation, 2016a). Despite this, a detailed reflection on the relation with the Agenda 2030 is currently missing. This research aims at extending the knowledge base about what constitutes a 'sustainable city' within the Fair Trade movement and the process of locally implementing SDGs.

Aligning individual and collective consumption

Previous research on Fairtrade consumption as collective social activism has set the theoretical framing for new research on Fairtrade Towns. Most Fair Trade scholarship has focused attention mainly on individual dimensions of purchase and consumption (Andorfer and Liebe, 2012). However, some academics have been challenging the assumption that the key driver of Fair Trade market expansion is the individual, atomized consumer (Clarke et al., 2007; Low and Davenport, 2007; Wheeler, 2012; Anderson, 2015), giving visibility to collective structures and emerging narratives that repoliticize the movement (Anderson, 2018). FTT scholarship builds upon this call to align individual and collective consumption. Although the FTT campaign is constantly expanding, research on this phenomenon is still in its early stages and scattered across different disciplines. The main theoretical contributions so far draw on marketing insights and, to a lesser extent, on human geography and political ecology.

Several recent studies have analysed FTTs within a marketing approach (Alexander and Nicholls, 2006; Peattie and Samuel, 2015; Samuel et al., 2018). FTTs have been defined as the idea of expanding the Fairtrade label from products to places (Alexander and Nicholls, 2006) and as brand communities (Szmigin and Carrigan, 2003; Szmigin et al. 2007; Samuel et al. 2018). A macromarketing approach has proved to be particularly fruitful to explore the collective dimension and relational activism of FTTs (Samuel and Peattie, 2016).

A broader focus on the role of places in the campaign has been introduced by geographical and political literature. From this perspective, the FTT campaign can be defined as a place-based, geographically embedded social movement concerned with globalization issues, which advocates for transnational solidarity (Lyon, 2014) and practises global citizenship (Malpass et al., 2007). Its social action repertoire combines marketplace advocacy with practical actions (Peattie and Samuel, 2018), including raising awareness activities, educational initiatives, local and national campaigning, and, most of all, a distinctive form of consumer activism.

Despite the differences, these approaches are associated with an emphasis on the role of campaigners and networks of local groups while overlooking the coordinating role of the Fairtrade Foundation (Peattie and Samuel, 2018). Moreover, despite the campaign's potential to be part of a global transition towards sustainable cities, this aspect and the links with the UN framework have not been explored by previous literature.

This brief overview highlights two connected issues. First is the positioning of FTT research within a broader reassessment of the role of the social movement and political decision making in the expansion of the Fair Trade movement (Anderson, 2015). Second is the need to address the lack of research on the mechanisms and power dynamics between local campaigners and the Fairtrade Foundation, and the implications of this interplay for the future contribution of the campaign to the SDGs.

Methodology

Our methodology involved three stages. We began the study with a systematic review of campaign material produced by the Fairtrade Foundation between 2015 and 2018 (Table 1). This period was chosen to explore the context within which

Table 1 Overview of Fairtrade Foundation campaign material

Year	Target audience	Total no. of sources	Fairtrade Foundation documents and report 2015–2018
2015	Campaigners	9	Fairtrade Fortnight 2015 campaign material; petitions to MPs and MEPs; Fairtrade Campaigners Guide to General Elections; Fairtrade Town case studies; promotional material; town crier
	Policymakers	3	MP briefings; policy papers and recommendations
	Schools	2	Classroom assembly resources; lessons plans
2016	Campaigners	12	Fairtrade Fortnight 2016 Campaign material; International FTT Conference; Fairtrade Town Campaign Awards; impact story 2015–2016; promotional material ; town crier
	Policymakers	1	Engaging with constituencies guide
	Businesses	1	Workplaces guidelines
	Places of worship	3	Places of worship guidelines
2017	Campaigners	8	Fairtrade Fortnight 2017 campaign material; National Supporters Conference; Sainsbury's campaign material and petition; Brexit updates
	Policymakers	4	Brexit policy papers
2018	Campaigners	10	Fairtrade Fortnight 2018 campaign material; Brexit updates; promotional material; petition to MPs
	Policymakers	5	Brexit policy paper; Climate Coalition campaign
	Places of worship	1	Fairtrade Fortnight 2018; church worship resources
	Schools	12	Lesson plans; assembly plans; campaign activities

campaigners operate; that is, whether and how the UN framework has informed the campaign. Utilizing documentary analysis (Bowen, 2009) we produced an overview of the campaign material and thematic evaluation of the SDGs addressed.

Second, we conducted eight semi-structured interviews with members of the National Campaigner Committee (NCC). The NCC is a group of 12 elected Fairtrade campaigners who each represent a region of the UK. The committee is a member organization of the Fairtrade Foundation, with voting rights and responsibilities, and is represented at the annual general meeting (Figure 1). Our eight interviewees represent: London, Scotland, north England, north-west England, south-west England, Yorkshire, Wales, and the West Midlands.

The third stage of the research process included a presentation of our preliminary findings during an NCC meeting, attended by the Fairtrade Foundation Campaign teams and NCC members. While their feedback allowed us to validate findings, this also constituted an opportunity to exercise organizational self-reflection (Gaventa, 2019) and to further reflect on the implications of applying power analysis to a Fairtrade campaign.

Our discussion of the findings is based on the concept of power analysis, in particular the 'powercube' developed by John Gaventa at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex (Gaventa, 2006). Power analysis builds upon the three dimensions of power conceptualized by Lukes (1974). The powercube is a tool to analyse how power affects citizen action and participation; it understands power as an interplay of interrelated dimensions, namely levels, spaces, and forms of power (Figure 2).

The powercube was originally designed to investigate actions taken by institutions or organizations to address power imbalances in international development contexts and its application outside this scope is still limited (Pantazidou, 2012; Gaventa, 2019). Within Fair Trade scholarship, power analysis has been applied to Fairtrade tea production (Brugger, 2017, quoted in Gaventa, 2019) but the application to a Fairtrade campaign represents a novel approach and a contribution of this paper.

'Spaces of power' refers to the opportunities for citizen participation and action, including closed, invited, and claimed spaces. It builds on work by Cornwall (2002) that applies concepts popularized by French social theorists (i.e. Foucault, Lefebvre, Bourdieu), that spaces for participation are not neutral, but shaped by power relations. We use this dimension to analyse how FTT campaigns have been established and the emerging challenges about boundaries, identity, and inclusivity.

'Levels of power' acknowledges that in a globalized world, power is multi-layered and found across the interrelated locations of local, national, and global arenas. This is particularly relevant to FTT campaigns as much of the literature refers to it as 'glocalized' – in terms of aims and practices (Malpass et al., 2007; Samuel et al., 2018).

'Forms of power' take into account the work of VeneKlasen and Miller (2002), who distinguish between the visible, hidden, and invisible forms of power. We use this dimension to analyse norms and beliefs that shape FTT campaigns and may also present social and cultural barriers.
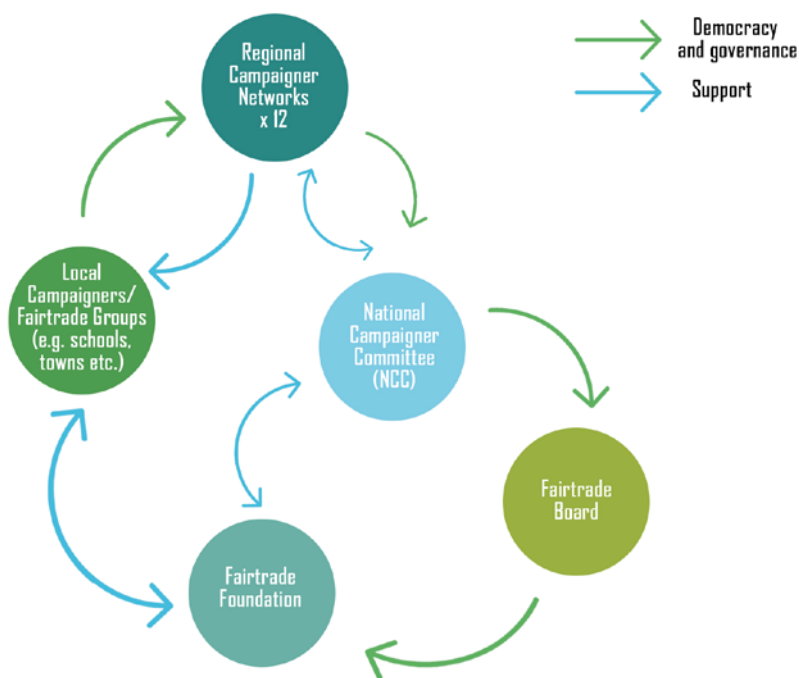
Figure 1 National Campaigner Committee's role in the governance of the Fairtrade Foundation
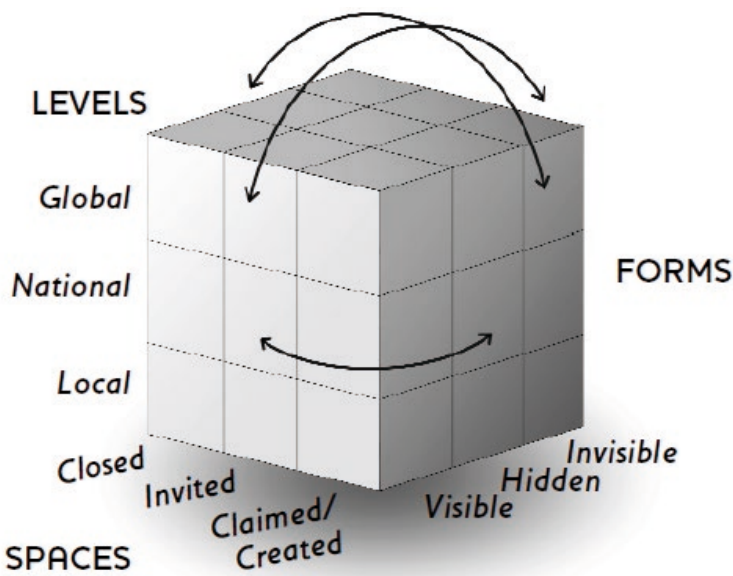*Source*: Fairtrade Foundation, 2019

Figure 2 The 'powercube'
Source: Gaventa, 2006

Findings and discussion

Situating fairness in sustainable development

Since the launch of the SDGs, the Fairtrade Foundation has incorporated the 2030 Agenda into research and policy papers, calling for policy coherence (Fairtrade Foundation, 2015) and identifying the main areas where the Foundation seeks to contribute (Fairtrade Foundation, 2016b). While all SDGs are acknowledged to some extent, as relevant for Fair Trade, SDG 12 – 'ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns' – is identified among the key goals for the movement, both at European level (FTAO, 2016) and in the UK (Fairtrade Foundation, 2016b).

Our findings though, suggest that the FTT campaign does not have an exclusive focus on sustainable consumption, nor has it polarized around any specific goal, but it tackles multiple issues connected to different SDGs (Table 2). For their multiple actions on several connected issues, FTTs contribute to a systemic approach to SDGs (Bai et al., 2016).

While most areas of contribution overlap with the SDGs identified by the broad European movement, the FTT campaign in the UK displays concerns not highlighted by previous policy research on the topic (FTAO, 2016), such as quality education (SDG 4), strong institutions (SDG 16), and sustainable communities (SDG 11). SDG 11 is particularly relevant to the future development of the campaign. Our findings show the potential of FTTs to contribute to this goal through its engagement with a number of contributing factors to urban social sustainability, such as: education; inter- and intra-generational social justice; participation and local democracy; active community organizing; and sense of place (Dempsey et al., 2011). Most of the academic literature on sustainable communities though defines social equity in relation to a geographical bounded community (ibid.). FTTs display instead a sense of equity towards distant actors, referred to in the Fair Trade literature as 'caring at distance' (Barnett et al., 2005a). This approach to social equity broadens the scope of the current definition of sustainable communities and confirms the campaign's glocal scope around sustainable development.

Local FTT groups recognize the need for action on a wide range of issues connected to Agenda 2030, such as: climate change, promotion of quality education, and sustainable consumption and production. However, the SDGs are not necessarily at the forefront of local FTT campaigning. The connection between Fairtrade and the SDGs is often implied rather than explicit: 'I would say that the work that we do to raise awareness of Fairtrade and to increase consumption within our area does contribute to several of the goals. But as I say, we don't make a direct connection' (north-west England representative).

As Gaventa (2006) stresses, power analysis understands all power dimensions as existing along a flexible continuum, not as a fixed set of categories. The powercube approach conceptualizes social change as a systemic challenge to power imbalances, through multiple linked strategies that work across each of the dimensions simultaneously. The strategies employed by the Fairtrade

Table 2 Overview of SDGs thematic areas addressed in Fairtrade Foundation campaign material

Year	Target audience	No poverty SDG 1	Zero hunger SDG 2	Quality education SDG 4	Gender equality SDG 5	Economic growth SDG 8	Reduced inequalities SDG 10	Sustainable cities SDG 11	Sustainable consumption SDG 12	Climate action SGD 13	Strong institutions SDG 16	Partnership for the goals SDG 17
2015	Campaigners	×				×		×	×	×	×	
	Policymakers	×		×							×	×
	Schools			×								
2016	Campaigners		×			×	×	×	×	×		×
	Policymakers							×				×
	Businesses					×						
	Places of worship		×						×		×	
2017	Campaigners	×		×				×		×	×	
	Policymakers	×		×			×			×	×	
2018	Campaigners		×			×		×	×			
	Policymakers	×				×						
	Places of worship								×	×		
	Schools			×					×			

Note: Areas in grey represent SDGs not included in previous policy research (FTAO, 2016)

Foundation and the local groups are strongly interlinked and will be discussed together, while Table 3 will provide an overview that gives more visibility to the differences in approaches and contributions.

Claiming spaces for campaigns

Power analysis conceptualizes 'claimed spaces' as opportunities for citizens to affect policies and shape public discourses (Gaventa, 2006). We argue that FTT campaigns are spaces claimed through a synergy between local grassroots effort and NGO organizational capacity. By encouraging participation in institutionalized and non-institutionalized spaces and enhancing debate around interwoven concerns of Agenda 2030, FTTs mobilize local power to challenge global power imbalances.

Spaces of participation are not neutral but are themselves surrounded and permeated by power relations (Cornwall, 2002). Their permanence is not guaranteed, and once they have been shaped as democratic spaces they can fall back on less participative structures. As the campaign becomes mature and reaches a plateau due to success against perceived objectives, it loses part of its initial dynamism and risks becoming a closed space, with thickened boundaries and a static identity. This can lead to a reduction in overall levels of activism within local groups, shrinking the space left for deeper discussions:

> We meet four times a year for an hour and a half or two hours. That's about as much commitment as we can get from people. And in that short time, there's a lot of practical issues to get sorted out: applying for funding, planning Fairtrade Fortnight, planning renewals for Fairtrade Town status, and that takes up almost all our time (north-west England representative).

The FTT campaign has been defined as a combination of marketplace advocacy and action (Peattie and Samuel, 2018). However, the relative increase in focus on the 'practicalities' of the campaign risks undermining the advocacy component. Our research shows at least two strategies put in place by campaigners to tackle this risk and maintain the openness of claimed spaces. First, some local groups have adopted an extended view of Fair Trade that promotes a broader message about 'making trade fair':

> I think in recent years, there's been a sort of loosening up on being too legalistic about sticking to the FAIRTRADE Mark. I think that Fairtrade groups feel that they have the freedom now to promote and fully support say, for example, local Fair Trade shops who may sell a lot of goods which don't have the FAIRTRADE Mark, and to be supportive of Fair Trade organizations, which, you know, lots of their activity doesn't involve the FAIRTRADE Mark (Yorkshire representative).

This extended view of Fair Trade has already been adopted by some local campaigns, such as the city of Bristol, which changed the name of the campaign from 'Fairtrade Town' to 'Fair Trade Town' (Rochman, 2018).

Table 3 Overview of the strategies employed as identified in the 'powercube' framework

| | Spaces of power | | |
	Claimed spaces	Invited spaces	Closed spaces
Fairtrade Foundation	Synergistically open spaces for public mobilization where discourses around sustainable development are constructed and practised	Access to formal invited spaces, both in the private and public sector	Challenge legitimacy of closed spaces of decision making, i.e. international trade deal negotiations
Local campaign groups		Access to informal spaces of collaboration with NGOs and CSOs	Shape the boundaries of campaign spaces at the local level
	Levels of power		
	Local	National	Global
Fairtrade Foundation	Relationships with local groups of campaigners, through FTT Awards, Fairtrade Fortnight, supporters conferences and ongoing communications	Influence decision and policymakers in private and public sector through certification relationships and political advocacy	Relationships to strengthen producers and influence multinationals through global Fairtrade system
Local campaign groups	Influencing local decision making through local action and development of partnerships	Local participation is mobilized to exert power upwards to national decision makers	Partnerships between international FTTs create a global network of mobilization
	Forms of power		
	Visible	Hidden	Invisible
Fairtrade Foundation	Articulate new discourses around sustainable development and raise critical consciousness	Aim to shape national political agenda and private sector sourcing trends to raise legitimacy and visibility of Fair Trade issues (i.e. post-Brexit trade deals)	Challenge hegemonic discourses and cultural practices
Local campaign groups	Mobilize collective action and collective learning around sustainable development	Aim to shape local political agenda to raise legitimacy and visibility of Fair Trade issues (i.e. local public procurement, individual consumption)	Engagement shapes identity through 'power within' and 'power with'

Second, local FTT groups have increasingly looked to build new partnerships with a wider spectrum of NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) working on environmental aspects of sustainable development. Although previous research has highlighted the capacity of FTTs to interconnect activism (Wheeler, 2012; Peattie and Samuel, 2018), new actors are emerging as part of local Fair Trade networks, such as: the slow fashion movement, plastic free movement,

community farming groups, simple living groups, and the vegan movement. Although from different approaches, these movements all highlight concerns about the sustainability of the current patterns of production and consumption (SDG 12) and the need to take action to address climate change (SDG 13). Bristol is again an emblematic example of this approach. Exploring the environmental aspect of Fair Trade was seen to revitalize the campaign and boost membership: 'we definitely see ourselves as being part of a bigger picture, not just campaigning on Fair Trade … The link with the environmental movement has been huge to our campaign, and definitely a part of our success' (south-west England representative).

What is relevant to these dynamics is the capacity of campaigners to shape the boundaries of campaign spaces starting from the local level. Reflections around boundaries are key in investigating spaces for participation. As efforts to engage participation can be thought of as inherently spatial (Cornwall, 2002), decisions over boundaries – who is allowed to speak and participate in a determined space – are crucial to the democratic permeability of the space.

Bridging local, national, and global levels

While FTTs represent situated campaign spaces which localize sustainable development, their identity and their scope of action go beyond the local dimension, and in fact build on the local to exert power upward, towards national politics and global issues.

Mobilization at the local level can be used to exert influence on a global scale. Early work on FTT highlighted how FTT groups acquired recognition and legitimacy at local level by constructing the 'local' and the 'global' as mutually constitutive (Malpass et al., 2007). Making the link between farmers in the global South and local farmers, who were also struggling to get a fair price for their produce, was seen as an important factor in the success of Garstang's pioneering FTT campaign. Following considerable debate, this local/global dynamic was also replicated in the emergence of FTTs in other regions of the UK (Barnett et al., 2005b).

However, this alignment between 'local' and 'global' producers appears to be facing new challenges and a sustainability agenda based on a broader framing of solidarity has been difficult for FTTs to maintain:

> I'm not aware of actual farmers who are part of the local sort of Fair Trade groups … Although individual groups around the county probably have personal links with farmers in their areas, perhaps on a sort of friendship basis, I don't think we get a great deal of input from the farming community on the whole (north England representative).

Since 2016, Brexit has dominated British politics. The Fairtrade Foundation has raised concerns about the potential impacts of trade rules being rewritten and has made the case for protecting developing country market access to the UK throughout the Brexit process (Fairtrade Foundation, 2018a). Following Charity

Commission guidelines, the Fairtrade Foundation has not endorsed either side of the referendum debate but has produced regular updates and research briefings about the potential implications of Brexit for overseas farmers and workers (Fairtrade Foundation, 2017). The Fairtrade Foundation has applied a 'trade for development' lens, that reflects on 'the contribution of these sectors to developing country economies, and more broadly, the Sustainable Development Goals' (Fairtrade Foundation, 2018a).

Although the Fairtrade Foundation has had some success in engaging individual supporters through petitions and MP lobbying activities, Brexit presents a particularly challenging campaign context for FTTs:

> We try to focus on the farmers, the producers, on the message that Fair Trade is getting across and if anyone starts talking about Brexit or something like that, we would tend to try to close that conversation down very quickly, because we can't influence it, not through Fair Trade (London representative).

However, this apparent reluctance should not be seen as a lack of willingness to engage with global issues or wider debate. Instead, the response by local FTT campaigners needs to be understood within the context of a wider political dislocation and upheaval that has followed the UK referendum on EU membership. There is a feeling that the 'bundling' together of local and global understandings of fairness may struggle to resonate in regions that, according to media reports, have been left behind and alienated by globalization (*The Economist*, 2017).

Making power visible

Campaigning in FTTs pivots on making visible the hidden mechanisms of power within food supply chains. The campaign challenges hidden power relationships which alienate food consumption in wealthy countries from food production in contexts characterized by poverty and food insecurity. Local groups' main concern is unveiling the origins of commodities:

> Asking the question: where does this stuff come from? Because if you start answering the question, where did this stuff come from? How do people that produce it live and where do they live and produce? Somewhere along that line you're not going to like an answer if it's an exploitative relationship (West Midlands representative).

Consumer awareness and trust are key elements that bolster support for independent third-party certification – any confusion over use of key terminology or labelling presents a risk of corporate 'fairwashing' (Jaffee, 2010). What is particularly noteworthy in FTT campaigns is the collectivization of this questioning process. FTTs mobilize collective action strategies in order to construct new statements around sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12). The collective learning that underpins campaigning and awareness raising activities anchors FTTs as community spaces for the production of new discourses and shared knowledge. This differentiates them from an aggregate of individuals making the same

consumption choices, as access to knowledge and participation in its production are among the first resources to be mobilized to influence public debate in created spaces (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008).

Political engagement is an important part of campaigning in FTTs, and local groups have adopted advocacy approaches that address visible forms of power in local, regional, and national politics. In the updated process of renewing Fairtrade status (Fairtrade Foundation, 2018b), campaigners are asked to provide information about their engagement with their local authority and political representatives (MP, MSP, AM, or MLA). Fairtrade has formal support within the UK Parliament through the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Fairtrade, but the main political relationship for FTTs is with local authorities.

Local authorities were an important driver in the early development of FTTs in the UK (Malpass et al., 2007). However, following austerity measures, the Local Government section of the Department for Communities and Local Government experienced the largest cuts, losing over half of its funding between 2010 and 2015 (Gray and Barford, 2018). This has directly affected many FTT groups who no longer benefit from local authority funding or staff time. Despite these challenges, FTTs have remained at the forefront of sustainable public procurement in the UK.

Campaigns focused on public procurement have provided opportunities to address visible forms of power (the regulations and guidelines of the procurement process) and also the hidden forms of power (how value is defined by decision makers). With support of European partners, Fair Trade campaigners in the UK have succeeded in ensuring that procurement guidance is updated to reflect the European Court of Justice ruling that 'Fairtrade or equivalent' can be included in calls for tenders either as award criteria or contract performance conditions (Fairtrade Foundation, 2014). Although this ruling does not allow tenders to only specify the FAIRTRADE Mark as a qualifying criterion, the principle of 'equivalence' is recognized as a pragmatic approach that supports an extended view of Fair Trade and sustainable public procurement.

Local councils face ongoing pressures to pursue the most cost-effective options in calls for tenders. Questioning this approach, FTT campaigns aim to deconstruct hidden forms of power that permeate much of public procurement decisions of local authorities, namely the discourse around what constitutes value. The campaign has been successful in challenging this hegemony, which previously sidelined non-economic measures of value. By promoting measures of social value as opposed to economic value, the campaign pursues what Dillard et al. (2008) define as the 'metaphorical quest' of articulating the economy in the language of social sustainability.

Lastly, campaigners' engagement in FTTs shape their identity and determine a growth of their sense of agency. Previous research on Fair Trade activism has shown that Fair Trade supporters do not only recognize themselves as consumers, but rather use consumption practices to express commitments to political projects (Clarke et al., 2007) and to practise citizenship (Wheeler, 2012). In FTTs, campaigners link 'power within' (i.e. the awareness of agency

within individual consumption choices) and 'power with' (i.e. the collective power of shaping new beliefs and cultural practices that challenge the current power structures).

Campaigners' increased agency is key in tackling the invisible power behind daily consumption choices and in articulating new discourses around alternatives modes of production and consumption:

> (Fair Trade) it's about buying less but buying better. So trying to persuade people to not buy loads and loads of cheap clothing for example, or 'two for one' food when they end up throwing away half of it. So thinking about what they're consuming and what they buy being good quality … we don't want to in any way encourage overconsumption … people need to make sensible decisions based on all the different aspects, not just blindly buying it because it's got Fairtrade label attached to it (south-west England representative).

This interlinkage between social and environmental concerns enhances broader transformations of consumption patterns. A balanced and equitable consumption of natural resources is mirrored, at the individual level, by a reduction of overconsumption supported by a principle of sufficiency. Support for Fair Trade is also compatible with narratives of reduction and simplicity (Ulinski, 2013); however, these issues are often only addressed within campaign material designed for Fairtrade churches and linked to Christian principles of parsimony and frugality (Traidcraft, 2016).

Looking forward

Our research has explored key thematic areas of current campaign activity in relation to UK FTTs and the SDGs. Based on this analysis we have identified three areas of future research interest and potential for campaign development.

While the Fairtrade Foundation was a relatively early adopter of the SDGs as an important campaign framework, this has not yet translated to widespread adoption by local FTT groups. For many FTT campaigners the SDGs are seen as an aspiration for future campaigns:

> I think the way the SDGs are seen regarding campaigning, is something for the future … like with the Millennium Development Goals, it took time for them to get known, time to be interested in them. And I think this is something that will happen with the SDGs (Yorkshire representative).

Climate Action (SDG 13) is an area that future FTT campaigns are well-positioned to address. Although current Fairtrade Foundation literature has mainly prioritized the social dimension of sustainable development, our research shows an emerging ecological perspective among Fair Trade campaigners, which could be harnessed to extend the scope of the campaign. There is an emerging group of FTT campaigners and activists that have already started to promote Fair Trade as complementary to a wider range of environmental concerns:

> I think the informal discussions, informal connections, between Fairtrade groups and environmental groups are because of a shared vision, there are

shared goals, which underpin a lot of the reasons why people choose to be active in support of Fair Trade and also choose to be active in support of environmental issues … I think when Fairtrade supporters get together with environmental supporters, what they have in common dominates, rather than having discussions about what might be different (Yorkshire representative).

Formalizing and regularizing these exchanges in invited spaces (Gaventa, 2006) could be pursued as a strategy to widen participation; invited spaces for collaboration could take the form of policy forums or platforms with more participatory governance.

Education to promote sustainable development (SDG 4) is already an important part of FTT's outreach and there are further opportunities to build links with Fairtrade schools. FTTs have established successful collaborations with educational actors to promote global citizenship through a range of learning activities. Recent examples include programmes developed by the Cumbria Development Education Centre (CDEC, 2019) in collaboration with the Cumbria Fair Trade network, and the Global Goals Centre (Global Goals Centre, n.d.) in collaboration with the Bristol Fair Trade Network.

Engaging with schools and young people remains a priority for many FTTs and an area where they can identify their contribution to making change happen:

We do have a good relationship with many primary schools and they do invite us back year-on-year to talk to the young people. The benefit of that is that those young people will then go home and take that message into the families. So, often, when you go back the next year, some of the young people will go all 'we've actually changed our practices. We now buy Fairtrade'. So I know that that has an impact. So, because we know that this is successful, I think we put our efforts into that (London representative).

Universities are also seen as important partners for FTTs. Universities can powerfully contribute to sustainable development by implementing capacity building processes within communities (Shiel et al., 2016). In the US, universities are identified as one of the main drivers of Fair Trade campaigns (Nealis, 2018). Initial research has explored Fair Trade universities as potential vehicles for sustainability (Feldman and Barnhill, 2013). Building on these insights, future research is required to investigate how to expand Fair Trade educational actors' potential as a pathway to a systemic approach to sustainable development.

Lastly, we see an opportunity for FTTs to contribute towards SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals). The process of twinning FTTs in the global North and global South, such as the partnership between Bristol and Puerto Morazán in Nicaragua (BLINC, n.d.), aims to strengthen the links of commercial exchange and solidarity. The involvement of consumers within peer-to-peer learning and local partnerships constitutes a form of empowerment typical of Fair Trade networks (Dubuisson-Quellier and Lamine, 2008) which holds potential to encourage the global 'localizing' of Agenda 2030.

Conclusions

This research has reflected on the role Fairtrade Towns and Cities can play in the transition towards Agenda 2030, exploring forms of power that can be mobilized for change, entry points for future collaborations, and strategies to expand the networks and encourage participation. The key findings of the paper can be summarized in three points.

First, using the powercube framework, we have defined FTT campaigns as claimed spaces for participation, where current patterns of sustainability (social, environmental, and economic) and the power mechanisms behind them are debated and questioned. We have discussed some of the risks these spaces are currently facing and highlighted strategies that local campaigners are putting in place to address those risks.

Second, we have argued that FTT campaigns have the potential to contribute to a range of important objectives for the Fair Trade movement, particularly to SDGs not taken into account by previous policy research (FTAO, 2016), such as quality education (SDG 4), strong institutions (SDG 16), and sustainable communities (SDG 11). For their ability to operate on interrelated issues and advance social transformation in a participatory coordinated effort, FTTs represent a transformative project, which contributes to a systemic approach to the SDGs. This counters some of the criticisms the movement has faced about mainstreaming Fair Trade; in particular that it has been overly reliant on individualized consumption as a driver of social change.

Third, we have discussed how FTTs represent an extended view of sustainable communities and how this framing is particularly relevant for the future of the campaign and its overall contribution to the SDGs. FTTs complement the UN definition of sustainable communities with a focus on social equity that goes beyond the boundaries of the local level, to encompass global concerns around food supply chains, configuring a glocal project.

As Gaventa (2006) stresses, transformative change happens when social actors are able to work effectively across each of the power dimensions simultaneously. We recommend that FTT campaigns invest in those strategies that span local and global action and challenge visible and hidden power simultaneously. We also envision opportunities for future research and partnerships between academia and practice in applying power analysis to local campaigns and in different national contexts, implementing community-level action research.

Limitations of this paper

Although we have explored areas of potential contribution of the FTT campaign to the SDGs, this study's aim was not to assess the impact of FTTs in achieving the SDGs. Such an assessment would require a robust measurement against UN indicators. The issues of measurement of SDG targets, whether they are adequate to measure the subject matter, and how to implement them, are among the most challenging aspects of the debate around the SDGs and fall outside the scope of

this paper. For this reason, this research does not attempt to provide recommenda-tions in terms of impact but instead focuses on power dynamics and areas of future strategic opportunities.

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