

In Search of the Citizen-Consumer

Fair Trade Activism in the Netherlands since the 1960s¹

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Postwar prosperity enabled citizens to express their views in new ways. The success of the movement for fair trade since the 1960s underlines the significance of the figure of the citizen-consumer in postwar history. The pioneering initiatives for fair trade in the Netherlands invoked the power of citizens as consumers. They should consume responsibly, but their wishes likewise had to be respected. The citizen-consumer was positioned in relation to producers, consumers, civic organizations, companies, local and national governments, and international institutions. An analysis of the shifts in this entangled construction points out the possibilities and the limitations of an approach directed at the citizen-consumer. Examining three crucial episodes in the history of fair trade, this article embeds the citizen-consumer within competing spatial frameworks, relates consumption to other social practices, and demonstrates the significance of intermediaries interpreting individual acts of consumption.

De naoorlogse welvaart stelde burgers in staat om hun opvattingen op nieuwe manieren te uiten. Het succes van de *fair trade*-beweging sinds de jaren zestig onderstreept het belang van de figuur van de burger-consument in de naoorlogse geschiedenis. De vernieuwende initiatieven voor eerlijke handel in Nederland beriepen zich op de macht van burgers als consumenten. Zij moesten zelf verantwoordelijk consumeren, maar hun wensen dienden evenzeer gerespecteerd te worden. De burger-consument moest zich positioneren in relatie tot producenten, consumenten, maatschappelijke organisaties, bedrijven, lokale en nationale overheden, en internationale instituties. Een analyse van de veranderingen in deze vervlochten constructie brengt de mogelijkheden en beperkingen van onderzoek naar de burger-consument naar voren. Dit artikel onderzoekt drie cruciale episodes uit de geschiedenis van *fair trade*. Deze episodes plaatsen de burger-consument in concurrerende ruimtelijke referentiekaders, relateren consumptie aan andere praktijken en wijzen op het belang van bemiddelaars bij het interpreteren van individuele consumptiekeuzes.

Introduction

Because our entire consumer society has placed us on a pedestal so much, we could now trample it. If only we realize our power as consumers, if we transform the game of King Customer and servant-producer into reality. We, customers, consumers, are supposed to be the main reason for the whole process of production. They want to serve us, don't they? So we can say no if we don't want something.²

According to the notorious activist Piet Reckman, this was the simple logic behind the 'cane sugar campaign' (*rietsuikeractie*) which had been launched in 1968 in the Netherlands. Reacting to the failure of the second United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) that same year, the campaign had been set up by a diffuse group of students, youth groups, journalists, and development activists to promote the cause of the global South. The campaign encouraged Dutch customers to demand cane sugar produced in developing countries instead of the subsidized European beet sugar from their grocers. The activists hoped this would create public awareness of the international, European and national trading policies which disadvantaged the Southern producers. If national and international governing bodies were not willing to grant the South a fair chance in the global marketplace on their own accord, pressure by citizens acting out their roles as 'King Customers' would have to force a change.

Reckman observed that citizens could make a difference as consumers precisely because 'consumer society' had been built on the notion that these consumers were its sovereigns. The market could be used as a means to achieve justice and democracy. This view ties into the finding of scholars such as Lizabeth Cohen and Sheryl Kroen, who have signaled the emergence of consumer democracies in the postwar era. According to the prevailing view, the free market and private consumption were crucial foundations for postwar democracies. In opposition to the planned economies of totalitarian states, free markets empowered citizens as consumers, whilst private well-being boosted the support for postwar democracies.³ But whereas Cohen in particular has connected this development to an increasing civic

1 The author would like to thank the participants of the workshop on 'postwar consumer society' (The Hague, 1 June 2015), the editors of *BMGN – Low Countries Historical Review*, and the two anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.

2 Piet Reckman, *Kosmokomplot 70* (Voorburg 1970) 31-32. Translations from Dutch in this article are provided by the author.

3 Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York 2003); Sheryl Kroen, 'A Political History of the Consumer', *The Historical Journal* 47:3 (2004) 709-736, see 729-732.

disengagement, Michael Prinz and Frank Trentmann have called attention to the wide array of relations between citizenship and consumption.⁴

Consequently, people not only express their views on citizenship through consumption, they also formulate specific connections between their roles as citizens and consumers. This perspective is all the more important, because consumption gained in significance in postwar societies which explicitly defined themselves as consumer societies. The history of the movement for fair trade is particularly suited to analyze these connections, because fair trade activists explicitly challenged existing definitions and forced fellow citizens to react to their alternative conceptions.⁵ Fair trade activism brought competing visions of how citizens should relate to the marketplace to the fore. Activists called on their fellow citizens to relate local acts of consumption to the lives of producers, but also to national, European and global politics. These initiatives shed light on the ways in which everyday life was redefined as a result of the growing awareness of global postcolonial interdependence.⁶

The citizen-consumer emerged within a web of conceptions about producers, consumers, civic organizations, companies, local and national governments, and international regulating bodies. In the following, I will focus in particular on how the citizen consumer was defined in relation to notions about producers from the South and fair trade activists in the North. Fair trade activism took its cue from producers in the South in several ways. First, the drive for a reform of the global market which was taken up by activists in the North had been initiated by the states of the South, as epitomized by their cooperation in the so-called Group of 77 and the UNCTAD-conferences they championed.⁷ Second, fair trade activism was continually legitimized by the claim to act on the behalf of Southern producers.⁸ Third, Northern activists sold goods produced in the South as symbols of global inequality or as a practical means to support these producers. The close

4 Michael Prinz, 'Bürgerrecht Konsum', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 44 (2004) 678-690; Frank Trentmann, 'Citizenship and Consumption' *Journal of Consumer Culture* 7:2 (2007) 147-158, see 148.

5 Kathryn Wheeler, *Fair Trade and the Citizen-Consumer: Shopping for Justice?* (Basingstoke 2012).

6 David Kuchenbuch, "'Eine Welt": Globales Interdependenzbewusstsein und die Moralisierung des Alltags in den 1970er und 1980er Jahren', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38:1 (2012) 158-184 DOI:10.13109/gege.2012.38.1.158.

7 Sönke Kunkel, 'Zwischen Globalisierung, internationalen Organisationen und "global governance". Eine kurze Geschichte des Nord-Süd-Konflikts in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 60:4 (2012) 555-577; Karl P. Sauvant, *The Group of 77. Evolution, Structure, Organization* (New York 1981) DOI:10.1524/vfzg.2012.0027.

8 Ruben Quaa, *Fair Trade: eine global-lokale Geschichte am Beispiel des Kaffees* (Cologne 2015); Mark Hudson, Ian Hudson, and Mara Fridell, *Fair Trade, Sustainability and Social Change* (Houndmills 2013), 9-14.

relation between the demands for global equity by representatives of the South and the attempts of citizen-consumers in the North to define their position within a global marketplace demonstrates the relevance of regarding postwar history as an era of postcolonial globalization. Strikingly, references to a colonial past were generally directed towards a generalized notion of colonialism as a past era of global history. Attempts to address national colonial ties were scarce, controversial, and usually unsuccessful.⁹

Several initiatives from the Netherlands have played a pivotal role in the history of fair trade, first in establishing networks to obtain alternative products, then in developing models for fair trade activism, and lastly in presenting a model to sell fair trade products through regular retail channels. As the rapid dissemination of these ideas and practices throughout Western Europe indicates, however, the Low Countries were rather the pinnacle of a broader pattern than an exception to it. Although the specific embedding of fair trade activism naturally differed from place to place, the history of these initiatives allows for a reconstruction of the conditions that enabled the rise of fair trade activism. The politicization of the global economy by representatives of the global South was combined with a tradition of transnational solidarity which existed especially in leftist movements and among religious groups. Their existence provided fair trade activists access to a broad network of civic organizations which were willing and able to support their campaigns. These campaigns connected the politicization of the global economy with the repertoire of consumer activism. Fair trade activists usually maintained an inclusive definition of citizens as consumers, regarding men and women of every class, ethnicity, age, and conviction as possible allies. The pragmatic nature of their campaigns, focusing on everyday consumption, thus enabled the formation of a broad coalition around an attempt to arrive at a more just global marketplace.

The following three sections focus on crucial episodes in the history of fair trade as seen from the Netherlands. The evolution of the cane sugar campaign in the late 1960s and early 1970s demonstrated how citizen-consumers weighed local, national, European and global perspectives. The debates around the decennial of the Dutch National Association of World Shops (*Landelijke Vereniging van Wereldwinkels*) in 1979 serve to trace perceptions about the limits of what citizens could achieve through consumption, as the members of the association discussed the viability of selling products. Finally, the more professional approach to fair trade which emerged during the 1980s demonstrates the limited significance of individual ideals of consumption and the importance of attempts by civic organizations to interpret individual

9 Cf. Peter van Dam, 'The Limits of a Success Story: Fair Trade and the History of Postcolonial Globalization', *Comparativ* 25:1 (2015) 62–77; idem, 'Moralizing Postcolonial Consumer Society: Fair

Trade in the Netherlands, 1964-1997', *International Review of Social History* 61:2 (2016) 223-250
DOI:10.1017/S0020859016000213.

acts of consumption. The viability and limitations of a perspective on citizen-consumers thus come into view. The citizen-consumer needs to be examined as an entangled subject in relation to social actors, other practices of citizenship, and competing spatial frameworks.

Locating the citizen-consumer: the cane sugar campaign

On the 3rd of December 1968, a man wearing an obviously fake beard along with a robe and miter approached the Dutch Minister of Economic Affairs, Leo de Block, in broad daylight. Their ensuing exchange took place close to the offices of the Dutch parliament in The Hague at the *Binnenhof*. De Block was offered a large heart made out of cane sugar, and promptly presented two chocolate letters in return.¹⁰ The whole exchange was witnessed by a group of protesters carrying signs reading ‘Buy cane sugar’ and ‘Beet sugar NO’ (see p. 144).

This surreal exchange – which alluded to the customary celebrations of the feast of Saint Nicholas – was in fact part of one of the first large-scale campaigns for ‘fair trade’ in Europe. The activists addressed the disadvantages experienced by cane sugar producers in developing countries. Despite being cheaper than European beet sugar on the world market, cane sugar was much more expensive within the European Economic Community (EEC) because of international trading agreements on sugar, EEC-subsidies for European beet sugar, and EEC-tariffs on the import of cane sugar. Developing countries and their advocates across the world had attempted to address such imbalances of the global market by pushing for international reforms. They had presented their demands at the UNCTAD-conferences in 1964 and 1968, only to conclude that the more prosperous countries were not willing to make significant concessions. Considering the disappointing results of the 1968 UNCTAD-conference in New Delhi, the Dutch journalist Dick Scherpenzeel concluded that ‘the case of restructuring will initially have to be fought out within the Western camp’.¹¹ The failed attempts to accomplish fair trade through international politics thus provided the spur for groups within more prosperous countries to address the issue of global trade at home.

To mobilize the public, fair trade activists would have to create awareness about the inequality of the global market, and about the ways in which citizens implicated in this system could contribute to change. One way to accomplish this was to single out everyday consumer goods which demonstrated global inequality and provided opportunities to choose an

10 Koninklijke Bibliotheek, ANP Radiobulletins Digitaal 1937-1984: ANP Radiobulletin 03 December 1968, berichtnummer 71.

11 Dick Scherpenzeel, ‘Praten zonder een besluit te nemen’ in: idem, *Trieste balans: Beschouwingen*

over ontwikkelingssamenwerking, Afrika en de Derde Wereld, 1965-1973 (Den Haag 1976) 67-72, citation 72 [originally published in *Groene Amsterdammer*, 6 April 1968].



'Put a heart into the global economy': A member of the cane sugar campaign dressed as Saint Nicholas presented minister De Block with a heart of cane sugar on December 3, 1968, in The Hague. The banners in English underlined the campaign's transnational aspirations.

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alternative. Activists connected to the ecumenical Sjaloom-group were especially active in searching out such opportunities and publicizing them. 'It is about sugar and cocoa. Therefore it is also about every consumer of these commodities of world trade', Piet Reckman of Sjaloom wrote.¹²

A group of Amsterdam students followed suit and decided to focus on sugar. After successful small-scale experiments, they set up an ambitious nationwide campaign. The group contacted an importer who could supply them with large amounts of cane sugar, devised sugar bags, posters, documentation, and even its own stationery. They invited people of considerable renown such as the economists Gunnar Myrdal and Jan Tinbergen to commend their campaign. The group also set up an exhibition, contacted journalists and media outlets, and announced a press conference to announce the kick-off of their campaign on the 30th of September 1968.¹³ Its goal would be, they wrote, 'to realize a change of mentality, which will force the government, faced with a different attitude among its citizens, to choose the side of the poor countries in international negotiations'.¹⁴

National and local actions were integrated within the cane sugar campaign. Activities such as the initial press conference and the demonstration in The Hague attempted to draw nationwide attention. Publications on the inequalities of the sugar trade served the same purpose.¹⁵ Publicity was unintendedly increased by a counter-publication by the Dutch sugar producers associations, of which 50,000 were sold and another 120,000 distributed for free.¹⁶ At the same time, local groups were encouraged to participate. The loose coalition of activists which resulted united Christian and leftist groups, although the dividing line between these was often unclear. Youthful members were vocal within the campaign, but they were usually joined by older sympathizers. Female and male members seem to have been about equally represented in the local groups, although male members have claimed most of the representative positions within the movement even up until the present.

Buying and selling products was by no means the only road to fair trade identified by the activists. A leaflet distributed to a host of contacts throughout the country called on local groups to sell cane sugar, stimulate sales of cane sugar at grocery stores, distribute documentation, write to local media, and host exhibitions and lectures.¹⁷ Many groups responded, creating a

12 Piet Reckman, *Je geld of je leven: Naar een nieuwe wereldhandel en-wandel* (Baarn 1968) 50.

13 Werkgroep Rietsuikeraktie 1968 – notulen van 8 augustus en agenda voor 15 augustus'. Regionaal Historisch Centrum Zuidoost Utrecht (hereafter RHCZU): Sjaloom Archive: T 00248, bestand 117.

14 *Ibid.*

15 Eduard van Hengel, *Suikerraffinement: Rietsuikeraktie 1968* (Amsterdam 1968); Piet Reckman, *Riet: Het verhaal van de suiker* (Baarn 1969).

16 Cf. Reckman, *Riet*.

17 Werkgroep Rietsuikeraktie 1968 – notulen van 8 augustus en agenda voor 15 augustus'. RHCZU: Sjaloom Archive: T 00248, bestand 117.

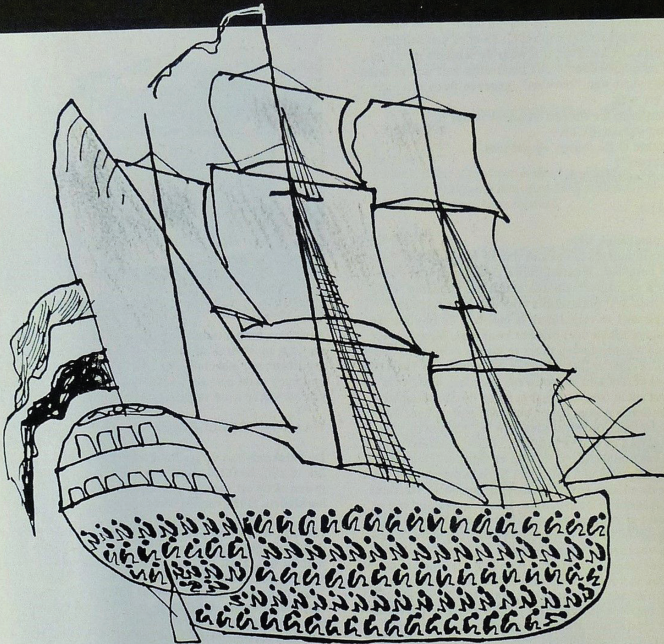


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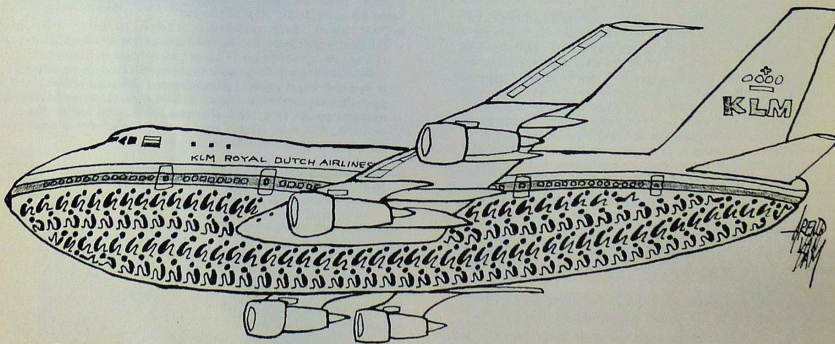
LANDELIJK

wereldwinkel bulletin

4e jaargang no 5, augustus '73.



1673: van Ghana naar Suriname



1973: van Suriname naar Nederland



The world shops' campaign for the independence of the Dutch colony of Surinam in 1973 failed to muster support from the broad coalition of local fair trade activists.

Wereldwinkelbulletin 4 (1973) 2.

campaign which was simultaneously visible in the local environment of many Dutch citizens and in the national media. The campaign was all the more impactful because of its pragmatic focus on a single, common product and its successful attempt to include a broad political and social spectrum ranging from political youth organizations to church groups and from organizations for international cooperation to a wide range of student associations.¹⁸

The cane sugar campaign thus displayed a more intricate entanglement of spatial perspectives than has been suggested by the notion of ‘glocalization’.¹⁹ Not only did it tie a notion of responsibility for producers in the global South to activism on a local and national scale, it was also directed at transnational scales.²⁰ The demonstration in The Hague and its consequences provide an interesting point in case. Strikingly, the protesters who were addressing national politicians carried a host of signs and banners which communicated their demands in English such as ‘Beet sugar? No – Cane sugar: Yes’, ‘EEC stop growing more beet sugar, buy more cane sugar’, ‘Help them – Buy their products’ (see p. 144). The protests were evidently directed at a transnational audience, particularly at the EEC and its member states. The political reactions to the demonstration pointed in a similar direction. In a reaction, Prime Minister Piet de Jong told the Dutch parliament that his government had recommended more favorable trading conditions for developing countries, but had found that the EEC left few opportunities.²¹ The fact that the Minister of Development Cooperation Berend Udink also addressed the parliament regarding this campaign underlines the entanglement of national, European and global politics.²²

The cane sugar campaign thus attempted to reconfigure the balance between local and translocal frameworks in which citizen-consumers located themselves. Inequalities in global trade discussed at the level of UNCTAD and the EEC were related to the half-hearted approach of the Dutch government and the lives of individual citizens. This interpretation did not go uncontested. Dutch sugar producers suggested that this was a

18 ‘Persschouw: Rietsuiker en ontwikkelingshulp’, *Nederlands dagblad*, 9 October 1968, 2; ‘Uit andere bladen: Rietsuikeractie’, *Leeuwarder courant*, 9 October 1968, 2; ‘Actie voor suiker uit de arme landen’, *Limburgs dagblad*, 27 September 1968, 7; Eduard van Hengel, *Suikerraffinement*.

19 Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson, ‘Glocalization, Globalization and Migration’, *International Sociology* (2006) 2, 171-198 DOI:10.1177/0268580906061374.

20 Erik Swyngedouw, ‘Neither Global nor Local: “Glocalization” and the Politics of Scale’, in: Kevin

R. Cox (ed.) *Spaces of Globalization: Reasserting the Power of the Local* (New York 1997) 137-164; Angelika Epple, ‘Lokalität und die Dimensionen des Globalen. Eine Frage der Relationen’, *Historische Anthropologie* 21 (2013) 1, 4-25.

21 Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer (hereafter HTK) 1968-1969. 9^e vergadering, 10 October 1968.

22 HTK 1968-1969. Vaste Commissie voor Buitenlandse Zaken. 2^e vergadering, 21 November 1968.

problem beyond the reach of Dutch consumers. More effective international regulations were needed, including a fund to buy up surplus production and to stimulate modernization of sugar production and diversification in developing countries.²³ In a nationally aired radio debate a spokesman for the producers, Henk Manders, also criticized the marginality of the campaign. Because only a small part of the sugar trade was conducted through the world market, it would have little practical effect. Simplifying its subject beyond the pale, Manders presumed it would leave participants disillusioned and unwilling to contribute to future attempts to improve the situation of developing countries.²⁴

Fair trade activists also attempted to translate their concern into transnational activism. In 1969, the campaign secretariat sent out a letter setting out the goals, the concept and the practical opportunities of their initiative to around a thousand addresses of people and organizations with relations to Dutch groups involved in the campaign.²⁵ At the same time, Dutch activists promoted their initiative in international organizations. For example, in 1969 the World Council of Churches in conjunction with the Ecumenical Commission for Society, Development and Peace (SODEPAX) recommended the cane sugar campaign as an example of how churches could contribute to economic justice.²⁶

The 'Working-Congress of Action-Groups on International Development' held in Egmond aan Zee at the beginning of April 1970 saw a direct attempt to internationalize the campaign. The conference brought together some eighty activists from all over the world, though mainly from Western Europe. Amidst debates about aspects of development action such as education and political pressure, liberation movements and strategies for development, a section on consumer action discussed the viability of internationalizing the cane sugar campaign. The participants agreed to exchange information relevant to the campaign and to pursue actions to pressure the EEC-members on the issue. The applications of four new members to the EEC were deemed a suitable focal point. Joint activities, the participants stated, should prevent these countries from gaining admission 'at the expense of underdeveloped countries'.²⁷

23 J. J. Eshuis, F. C. de Jong, and G. J. de Gilde, *Suiker en de ontwikkelingslanden: Bietsuiker-productie een gezonde zaak* (Rotterdam 1968) 27-31.

24 'Tekst van het programma "zin en tegenzin" op zondagavond 13 oktober 1968. Onderwerp: rietsuikeractie'. RHCZU: Sjaloom archive: T 00248, bestand 117.

25 Paul van Tongeren, 'Schrijven over buitenlandse contacten', January 1969. RHCZU: Sjaloom archive: T 00248, bestand 117.

26 'Rietsuiker en de wereldraad', *Sjaloom: Maandblad* 6:6 (1969) 7.

27 Henk Biersteker and Huub Coppens, *Towards Internationalised Development Action. Report of the International Working-Congress of Action-Groups on International Development* (The Hague [1970]) 105-106.

Transnational exchanges about the campaign changed the dynamics of national and local activism by bringing to the fore several problematic aspects of its approach. During the 1970 conference, the appalling conditions of workers procuring sugar cane were pointed out, just as the fact that most of the production was controlled by European firms. A third concern brought forward at the conference was that substituting the European consumption of beet sugar for cane sugar would lead to a dumping of the European sugar surplus on the international market, eventually resulting in lower prices for cane sugar. Fourth, it was objected that the campaign would strengthen the economic ties between unequal partners. According to this line of thinking, development action should aim to increase the independence of developing countries, not their dependence on rich countries.²⁸

Criticism notwithstanding, attempts at spreading the campaign across Europe met with some success. In November, British activists from the World Development Movement followed in the footsteps of their Dutch fellow activists by presenting Prime Minister Edward Heath with a heart of cane sugar. Local groups distributed leaflets and over 200,000 packets of cane sugar among the public, held sugar tasting competitions, and addressed their Members of Parliament on the subject.²⁹ Their appeal, however, was slightly different. British activists called attention to the fate of the sugar producers within the Commonwealth. The planned accession of the United Kingdom to the EEC threatened the cane sugar imports to England from Commonwealth countries such as Barbados, Jamaica, Fiji and Mauritius, which could be substituted by the sugar surplus produced within the EEC.³⁰

The need to start activities quickly in Great Britain due to the ongoing EEC-negotiations had spoiled the plan for an internationally coordinated campaign. Nevertheless, West-German members of *Aktion Selbstbesteuerung* set up a cane sugar campaign for the fall of 1971.³¹ The main Dutch publication on the campaign was quickly translated into German, whilst the developments in Germany were enthusiastically commented on by Dutch activists: soon, the *Ruhrgebiet* would be turned into a *Rohrgebiet*, they announced to their compatriots.³² However, the West-German cane sugar campaign was crowded out by other initiatives and lacked the support of

28 *Ibid.*, 87-89.

29 Clifford Longley, 'How the cane sugar lobby is preparing for battle', *The Times*, 15 February 1971, 12.

30 Paul van Tongeren, 'Rietsuikeractie slaat ook in andere landen aan', *Groene Amsterdammer*, 2 January 1971, 4.

31 *Aktion Selbstbesteuerung* constituted a West-German self-tax initiative. Its aim was to make an individual donation for development projects calculated by subtracting the percentage the

country of residence was in fact paying for development aid by the percentage it should pay for development and applying the difference to personal income. The 1970 international congress in Egmond aan Zee had been hosted by its Dutch counterpart XminY.

32 Piet Reckman, *Rohr. Die Geschichte Zuckers* (Nuremberg 1970); 'Sjaloom-Duitsland', *Sjaloom: Maandblad* 5:11 (1968) 8. Initiatives in the Ruhr area were promoted at the University of Bochum.

resourceful organizations.³³ Still, the campaign mustered around 10,000 signatures for a petition addressed to the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation.³⁴

These attempts at internationalization highlight the entanglement of local, national, European and global perspectives and activities in addressing the citizen-consumer through fair trade activism. In the course of the cane sugar campaign, a new relationship between producers, activists and citizens was proposed. People in developing countries were not presented as helpless individuals in need of aid, but as actors who demanded a fair chance to provide for themselves. Activists presented themselves as well-informed and responsible actors who were mediating between the demands of the South and citizens in the North. Citizens in the North were approached as people who were not yet sufficiently aware of the inequalities of global trade, their own responsibilities regarding producers in the South and their opportunities to induce change. As a result, they did not act, or they acted charitably instead of addressing the structural problems. By confronting them with information about the injustices of the current structures of global trade, they could be turned into better citizen-consumers, who would be aware of the global implications of their behavior and thus of their ability to make a difference.

The campaign combined a predominantly inclusive definition of the consumer as any person involved in daily consumption with the notion of individual economic and political empowerment. The appeals to the global implications of local citizens' decisions thus bolstered the importance of the citizen-consumer. At the same time, the awareness of global entanglement complicated the formulation of clear conceptions. Were Dutch citizens primarily responsible for the fate of beet farmers in their own vicinity, who decried the cane sugar campaign as a threat to their livelihood? Or did their responsibility regarding producers in the South and a more just global division of labor outweigh these objections? The global entanglement also complicated the question at whom appeals for fair trade should be directed. Should the actions be geared towards pressuring national governments to take international actions? Or should they directly target international organizations such as the EEC? Conversely, some participants seem to have avoided these questions by suggesting that by buying cane sugar, citizens as consumers could make a difference for producers in the South directly, by supplying them with more income.

Cf. Hans-Eckehard Bahr (ed.), *Politisierung des Alltags. Gesellschaftliche Bedingungen des Friedens* (Darmstadt 1972); Hans Jürgen Schultz (ed.), *Von Gandhi bis Càmara. Beispiele gewaltfreier Politik* (Stuttgart 1971).

33 Cf. Konstanze Kemnitzer, *Der ferne Nächste: Zum Selbstverständnis der Aktion "Brot für die Welt"* (Stuttgart 2008).

34 *40 Jahre Aktion Selbstbesteuerung. Friede durch gerechte Entwicklungspolitik* (Stuttgart 2009) 4-5.

As part of the cane sugar campaign, fair trade activists had turned to buying and selling sugar as a concrete means to confront citizens with the disadvantages experienced by Southern producers in the global market. However, this had only been one of several instruments activists had deployed. Gaining media attention, distributing documentation about cane sugar and global trade, setting up exhibitions, holding lectures as well as lobbying politicians were also part of their repertoire. The limits of what citizens could achieve through consumption were thus weighed against other opportunities to promote fair trade. Doubts about the usefulness of cane sugar as a suitable example and a more general uneasiness about participating in market structures fueled these considerations about the limits of consumption.

The debates about the limits of consumption in mobilizing citizens for fair trade carried over from the cane sugar campaign to its successor, the world shop movement. World shops had a dual origin. On the one hand, they tied into attempts by the progressive Catholic development foundation *Stichting sos* from Kerkrade to sell products on behalf of specific projects in the South. In April 1968, Johan Derks, a socially involved Catholic teacher, started selling products supplied by *sos* from his living room in the small town of Breukelen and at a local book store. After several others joined his initiative, they decided to open up a 'world shop' (*wereldwinkel*), for which the local government provided temporary accommodation.³⁵ Their example was actively supported by *sos*, which recognized an excellent opportunity to expand its activities. On the other hand, the initiative was supported by cane sugar campaign participants, who regarded world shops as a potential outlet for their campaign as well as a platform which allowed them to broaden their scope.³⁶ Thus, Paul van Tongeren, who had been one of the primary organizers of the cane sugar campaign, also pushed for a coordination of the activities of several local world shops, leading up to the formation of a national foundation which would evolve into the National Associations of World Shops (*Landelijke Vereniging van Wereldwinkels*) in 1972.³⁷ By then, the enthusiasm of local groups and the support by *sos* had resulted in the establishment of over 120 world shops in the Netherlands.³⁸

The model of the world shop and the support of *sos* were also influential in surrounding countries such as West-Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Belgium. In the latter, the first world shop was established

35 Gien van Warmerdam, 'En het begon in Breukelen: De geschiedenis van Wereldwinkel Breukelen 1969-2009', *Tijdschrift Historische Kring Breukelen* 24:2 (2009) 48-57, see 48-49.

36 'Verslag vergadering 12 November 1969'. Private archive Paul van Tongeren.

37 'Verslag landelijke vergadering 21 February 1970'. Private archive Paul van Tongeren.

38 Hans Beerends et al., *Anders nog iets?* (Amersfoort 1979) 9-10.

in the city of Antwerp in April, 1971. By the end of that year, there were eight similar shops.³⁹ This Belgian initiative was rooted in the British Oxfam-movement, which had inspired Belgian activists to set up their own branch during the 1960s. The first Belgian world shops benefited from the networks which had been established by this movement, but soon fared an independent course due to tensions concerning the politicized approach propagated by the world shops-activists.⁴⁰ Although the Belgian world shops soon set up their own importing channels to obtain fair trade products, they also continually co-operated with the Dutch and the Belgian branch of sos and its successors.⁴¹ This co-operation is but one of many examples of how the fair trade movement was rooted in a transnational network through which goods and ideas were circulated especially among Western European activists. Even though the evolution of the movement resulted in a growing institutionalization of fair trade on a national level, this process was flanked by the continued relevance of transnational relations for both its daily practices and its ideological orientation.⁴²

The world shops would prove a remarkably long-lasting initiative, maintaining a visible local presence in many European countries until the present day. This is all the more noticeable in the light of the tensions which have marked their history. These tensions were especially pronounced during the first ten years of their existence, during which the presence of a radical and outspoken anti-imperialist group within the movement led to pronounced conflicts about the methods employed. As the national association prepared to celebrate the first decennial of the movement in the Netherlands, the reservations about selling products as well as the hesitance to give up on it became abundantly clear.

In a retrospective publication on ten years of world shop activism, the Dutch federation's working group concerned with selling products presented the development of the movement as a learning process. Following the popular model of becoming more conscious of one's situation through learning, critique, and discussion⁴³, the group reflected that the world shops

39 Jan Van de Poel, '35 Jaar Oxfam-Wereldwinkels: Over Groei En Organisatorische Vernieuwing', *Brood & Rozen* 11:4 (2006) 7.

40 Gilbert aan de provincial Oxfam-centra, 26 November 1974. Amsab-ISC: Oxfam-Wereldwinkels, 251/0185. Since the late 1980s, the ties between different branches of the 'Oxfam-family' have been reinforced both within Belgium and on an international level, cf. Amsab-ISC: Oxfam-Wereldwinkels, 251/0753, 251/0758, 251/0759.

41 Cf. Amsab-ISC: Oxfam wereldwinkels, 251/161-251/169.

42 Quaas, *Fair Trade*, 151.

43 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogie van de onderdrukten* (Baarn 1972); Paulo Freire, *Culturele actie voor vrijheid* (Baarn 1974); Piet Reckman, *Naar een strategie en methodiek voor sociale actie* (Baarn 1971); Piet Reckman, *Sociale actie, opnieuw bekeken* (Baarn 1974); Cf. Andrew J. Kirkendall, *Paulo Freire & the Cold War Politics of Literacy* (Chapel Hill 2010).

had started out trading as equal partners in an attempt to overcome a strictly charitable relation between North and South. As early as the cane sugar campaign in 1968, however, activists had realized that the structures of global trade themselves were unjust and would have to be altered in order to make fair trade possible on a large scale. They had continued to sell products, but they had done so mainly to lure customers into the shops to engage them in conversations about the structural problems of global trade. Finally, a third perspective on selling products had emerged from the realization that the structures of global trade could only be altered if the 'system of production, trade and consumption' itself would be changed. In this view, the products sold in world shops were not symbols of unequal trade. They pointed towards an unjust capitalist system, in which multinational corporations dominated the entire commodity chains. This realization had turned many world shop activists away from the idea of selling as an objective in itself.⁴⁴

By presenting the last perspective as the result of critical reflection of earlier approaches to selling products, the group implicitly promoted it as the most 'conscious' view. Although the historical accuracy of the depicted evolution left much to be desired, the different stages do illustrate different opinions of trade which were simultaneously held within the movement. The role of consumption in fair trade activism was fiercely contested: was it primarily a form of direct assistance? Or should products merely serve as symbolic indicators of unjust social structures? Could products pragmatically be used to lure consumers, or was any active participation in trade objectionable in a capitalist society? These questions outlined the debate about the limits of what could be achieved through consumption, whilst the answers were interwoven with broader socio-political positions.

The limits of consumption were also evident in the way in which world shop activists defined the role of their shops more generally. A brochure accompanying the movement's decennial stated that 'a world shop is a political action and information center'. Volunteers who gathered in this shop protested 'social grievances which occur locally, nationally, and internationally' through information and action. The shop according to this brochure was not meant to sell as many goods as possible, but to draw attention to issues such as the problems of the Third World and the causes of underdevelopment. A world shop was therefore not just a place of trade. Ideally, it also functioned as a meeting place, a campaign center, a room to copy leaflets, and a space for exhibitions.⁴⁵ The broad span of the activists'

44 Tien jaar akties van wereldwinkels in Nederland. Tien jaar produkten verkoop. [1979, uitgave PWC] Private archive *Landelijke Vereniging van Wereldwinkels* (Lvvw): Ordner Produktenwerkgroep Korrespondentie 10.12.

45 Brochure 'Wat is een wereldwinkel', 1979. Lvvw: Doos NCO, 10 jaar, 1978-1979.



14 APRIL



EXPO-HAL HILVERSUM

DEMONSTRATIEVE

MANIFESTATIE

10 JAAR WERELDWINKELS

MAAK EEN BEGIN MET ECHTE ONTWIKKELINGSHULP

AANVANG: 11.00 UUR -(TOT 17.00)

TOEGANG: f 2,50

PROGRAMMA:

- * SAM NUJOMA (PRES. SWAPO) ANIBAL PALMA (EX. MIN. CHILI) PROF. FIOLET, PIET RECKMAN, HANS BEERENDS
- * BOTS - INT. NIEUWE SCENE - AMANKAY - RAPALJE, STRIJDORKESTEN, CABARET-PROLOOG (AVOND PROGRAMMA MET RITMICO ESPECIAL)
- * FILMS, SCHILDEREN, ZELF-ZEEFDrukKEN, POPPENKAST, CRESJ ENZ.
- * GROTE AKTIE BEURS - DERDE WERELD GROEPEN E.V.A.

ORGANISATIE:

LANDELIJKE VERENIGING VAN WERELDWINKELS.
MEER INFORMATIE, TOEGANGSKAARTEN, AKTIEMATERIAAL ENZ. BIJ DE
WERELDWINKEL IN UW PLAATS OF OMGEVING OF BIJ DE LANDELIJKE
VERENIGING VAN WERELDWINKELS WESTERKADE 18 UTRECHT
TEL. 030-316312.

STRIJDT MEE TEGEN ONDERDRUKKING



Poster '10 years world shops' (1979).

Nederlandse Affiches, Affichemuseum Hoorn.

repertoire became especially apparent in the crucial support world shop groups offered to boycott campaigns. By picketing local supermarkets, these groups drew attention to the campaigns which called for a cessation of trade in Portuguese colonial goods and products from companies supporting the South African policy of Apartheid.

The local world shop held a crucial position within the fair trade movement. During the 1970s, local groups had gradually replaced centers of national coordination as its main agents, taking their cue above all from the grassroots-approach which had fueled the rise to power of Salvador Allende's left-wing government in Chile.⁴⁶ Especially after an attempt by the national secretariat to launch a campaign on behalf of the decolonization of the Dutch colony of Surinam had failed in 1973 (see p. 146), the local groups had successfully claimed a pivotal position.⁴⁷ In setting up a national campaign to underline the decennial, the national federation therefore had to tread carefully.

The eventual campaign manifestly took up a motto which had been suggested by world shop groups from the provinces of Friesland and Groningen: 'Make a start with true development aid'. As national secretary Hans Beerends explained, this motto was perfectly suited for a national campaign, because it could contain the diverse local activities. It would also serve to signal to a wider public that the world shops were no longer content just to call for more attention for development aid.⁴⁸ Instead, particularly after a sympathetic left-wing government had been replaced by a right-wing government in 1977, they pointed out that providing aid was not enough: 'The world shops have contributed to an expansion of the profitable trade with the Third World under the cover of development aid', the members of the national working group on products elaborated.⁴⁹

Local groups would be the focal point of the decennial campaign. They were provided with several options to underline the political approach to development which many world shops now favored, which included support for liberation movements in South Africa, a boycott of Chilean products, demanding cessation of support for the military regime in Indonesia, and an increase of non-earmarked aid to countries such as Tanzania, Vietnam, Angola, Cuba, and Mozambique. Other possible aims, including the termination of programs for nuclear energy or the increase in subsidies for groups promoting awareness and solidarity in the Netherlands, were less

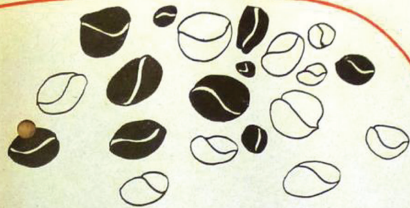
46 Bertus Bolk, 'Participatie in-door-van basisorganisaties', *Nieuwscrift* (1974) 1-2.

47 Evaluatieweekend 16-17 februari. Verslag plenaire vergadering zaterdag [1974]. International Institute for Social History (IISH): Wereldwinkel Amstelveen archive. Doos UBA/CSD vrz 53.2 (Wereldwinkel Amstelveen): Map DOS/46.

48 Maak een begin met echte ontwikkelingshulp. Omschrijving en tips voor een campagne. Private archive LVVW: Doos NCO, 10 jaar, 1978-1979.

49 Tien jaar akties van wereldwinkels in Nederland. Tien jaar produkten verkoop. [1979, uitgave PWG] LVVW: Ordner Produktenwerkgroep Korrespondentie 10.12.

koffie



De dag begint er meestal mee: zonder ons warme kopje koffie voelen we ons 's morgens nooit echt goed. Zo belangrijk is koffie voor ons. Voor 20 miljoen boeren, wonend in 50 ontwikkelingslanden, is koffie méér dan belangrijk: zij leven ervan. Maar meestal niet al te best, want hoewel zij hard werken om goede koffie te produceren, is het in de meeste gevallen enkel de eigenaar van de plantage die er rijk van wordt.

Gelukkig zijn er uitzonderingen. Zo bv. in Tanzania, waar er geen privé-plantages meer bestaan. Bijna alle Tanzaniaanse koffie wordt verbouwd door kleine boeren die rond hun huis naast hun eigen voedsel een gewas voor de verkoop verbouwen. Deze boeren leveren hun koffie aan de plaatselijke koöperatie die doorlevert aan de Nationale koffie Vereniging die op haar beurt zorgt voor de verdere bewerking ervan en voor de verkoop in het buitenland. Deze vereniging, die de koffie dus verkoopt voor rekening van de boeren, betaalt de boeren een prijs die in verband staat met de wereldmarktprijs. Op deze manier halen de boeren ook werkelijk voordeel uit prijsstijgingen. Maar het is ook een goede zaak voor Tanzania. 84% van de 15 miljoen inwoners leeft er van de landbouw. Vandaar de voorrang die gegeven wordt aan het samenwerken in de plattelandsdorpen, en aan de landbouw in het algemeen.

Tanzania kiest daarbij voor een gelijke ontwikkeling van alle inwoners, voor een afbouw van alle privé-plantages, en voor een rem op de greep van het buitenlands kapitaal.

Maar het blijft een arm land, dat de inkomsten uit de koffie broodnodig heeft, én de ongebonden steun uit het buitenland.

Voor de wereldwinkels goede redenen om koffie en oploskoffie uit Tanzania te verkopen. Voor jou een kans om te tonen dat je wat geeft om de kleine boer die al te dikwijls vergeten wordt. Begin je voortaan ook je dag met een kopje Tanzania-koffie?



Landelijke Vereniging van Wereldwinkels
Westerkade 18
3511 H Utrecht
030-316312



een uitgave van de produktenwerkgroep

▲
Poster 'Koffie' [c. 1980].

Private archive Landelijke Vereniging van Wereldwinkels.

directly aimed at the South.⁵⁰ Along with these local activities, a national manifestation was held in Hilversum on the 14th of April 1979, where the overall motto of the campaign and the many local initiatives were promoted and local groups got a chance to get to know each other.

The 1970s thus saw a shift in the ideal of the citizen-consumer as promoted by members of the fair trade movement. Consumption remained a useful tool in the hand of activists, but it was an increasingly suspect one. Other parts of the repertoire of fair trade activism, such as providing information and confronting the public through demonstrations, were much less controversial. Increasingly, more radical members of the movement differentiated between activists and regular citizens. The former were ideally able to relate their local activities to national and international concerns and saw through the limits of consumption as a means to achieve fair trade. The latter were often not aware of the dangers of an approach which focused on achieving fair trade through consumption. Through fair trade campaigns, they had to be made aware of the structure of the global economy, which stood in the way of more equitable relations between South and North.

This general trend masked differences between radical and moderate approaches about the ideal of the citizen-consumer and her relation to producers. Radical members of the movement modelled citizen-consumers as activists, who were aware of the oppressive nature of capitalism and fought against its oppression in solidarity with the people of the Third World. They imagined their Third World allies not as producers demanding a chance to sell their products for a fair price, but as revolutionaries, whose states and organizations could be supported by selling their products. Two posters from around the time of the decennial campaign illustrate their line of thought. One promoted coffee from Tanzania (see p. 156). By buying this coffee, consumers could improve the lives of small farmers, but moreover would support a country which stood for 'equal development of all inhabitants, dismantling of private plantations, and constraint of the hold of foreign capital'.⁵¹ Similarly, by buying wine from Algeria, its buyers would contribute to 'an agricultural revolution, which entails the redistribution of land and a reorganization of farmers in co-operatives and self-governed units' (see p. 158).⁵²

More moderate members of the movement continued to regard the activities of world shops as a way to directly support producers. These members held on to a vision of people from developing countries as producers who were capable of providing for themselves if consumers in the North would buy their products. Often, these two approaches could be combined,

50 Leaflet 'Maak een begin met echte ontwikkelingshulp! informatie over de protestactie van de wereldwinkels'. LVVW: Doos NCO, 10 jaar, 1978-1979.

51 Poster 'koffie' [c. 1980]. Private archive LVVW: Ordner Produktenwerkgroep SII, ABAL, Brochures.

52 Poster 'wijn' [c. 1980]. LVVW: Ordner Produktenwerkgroep SII, ABAL, Brochures.

wijn



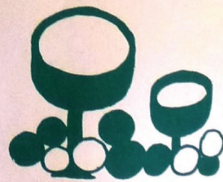
die je in de wereldwinkel koopt komt uit Algerije. Een land waarover bij ons verrassend weinig bekend is. De lange en moordende onafhankelijkheidsstrijd is zo goed als vergeten, en over wat er daarna gebeurd is lees je bijna nooit in kranten of tijdschriften. Waarom verkopen we in de wereldwinkels Algerijnse wijn? Laten we daarvoor even terugkeren naar het koloniale tijdperk. Tijdens het Franse kolonialisme werden niet alleen de vruchtbare gronden afgenomen van de Algerijnse boeren, maar daarenboven werd van Algerije op de goede gronden systematisch een enorme wijngaard gemaakt, bestemd voor uitvoer naar Frankrijk.

Na de onafhankelijkheid bood deze wijnsector ongetwijfeld enige voordelen: de hoge tewerkstelling die ermee gemoeid was, en het buitenlandse geld dat Algerije eruit zou kunnen binnenkrijgen. Maar de nadelen waren ook opvallend: de produktie daalde reeds enige tijd, en de wijn was grotendeel van slechte kwaliteit door de verouderde staat van de ranken. Vele Fransen hadden immers vanwege de gevreesde onafhankelijkheid geen nieuwe investeringen gedaan: alleen onmiddellijk voordeel telde. Bovendien bleek dat Algerije met een mono-kultuur van wijn zeer kwetsbaar was op de wereldmarkt.

Algerije, sinds 1962 onafhankelijk, heeft gekozen voor een dubbele aktie in de wijnsector: vernieuwing van de sektor voor kwaliteitswijn enerzijds, en anderzijds het afbouwen van de wijnbouw die slechte wijnsoorten oplevert en overgaan op voedselverbouw. Op die manier zal men de voordelen (opbrengst, hoge tewerkstellingsgraad) kunnen behouden en de nadelen (afhankelijkheid, voedseltekort) voor een stuk bestrijden.

Deze aktie is een onderdeel van de landbouwrevolutie, waarbij de gronden herverdeeld worden en de boeren georganiseerd in koöperaties en in zelfbeheerde domeinen.

De verkoop van de wijn is volledig in handen van een staatsbedrijf (het O.N.C.V.). De wereldwinkels in Nederland betrekken de wijn via niet-kommerciële inkooporganisaties. Landelijke Vereniging van Wereldwinkels
Westerkade 18
3511 HB Utrecht
030-316312



een uitgave van de produktenwerkgroep

▲
Poster 'wijn' [c. 1980].

Private archive Landelijke Vereniging van Wereldwinkels.

as a third poster from around the same time demonstrates. Explaining the approach of world shops to the public, it stated that world shops ‘only sell products from groups or countries who promote the development of ordinary people. More precisely: from farmers or workers who organize themselves, decide together on what is important to them, and distribute the income among those who have worked for it.’ Selling products was presented as an important way to support producers and a concrete alternative for consumers. ‘The product also has value as a sign of solidarity, and as a concrete story about the causes of underdevelopment.’ World shops aimed to do more than sell products, because its visitors had to come to understand that the system had to be changed.⁵³ In the end, most fair trade activists thus agreed that consumption was a useful, but limited tool to make trade fair on a larger scale.

‘Alternative trade cannot remain symbolic’: Beyond individual ideals of consumption

The competing opinions about what could be achieved through consumption had highlighted the nexus between views of consumption and a broader socio-political outlook. Members of the fair trade movement primarily defined their ideals in global, explicitly postcolonial terms. Their critique of current trading practices was linked to views about how a decolonized world could become more equitable. More moderate members of the movement believed that involving producers in global trade on fair terms would empower them and thus shift the balance of global trade in their favor in the long run. Among the supporters of the cane sugar campaign, many had believed in achieving a better balance in the global economy through an internationally coordinated division of labor, which would see each country contribute to the global economy according to its strengths. More radical groups had embraced the notion of *dependencia* during the late 1960s. They held that a more equitable world would only be realized if the countries of the South would free themselves from the ties to Northern countries. Other radicals, who gained prominence in the fair trade movement in the course of the 1970s, promoted the idea that independence itself would not be enough to overcome the faults of the global economy. Only a break with the capitalist mode of production would bring about a world in which the workers of the world would not be oppressed by a global class of capitalists.

In accordance with classifications often applied to the history of socialism, these different visions of a postcolonial world have been categorized as reformist and revolutionary approaches. Approaches stressing the empowerment of producers through this prism are then regarded as

53 Poster ‘wereldwinkels’ [c. 1980]. LVVV: Ordner
Produktenwerkgroep SII, ABAL, Brochures.

Nicaragua moet overleven

U kunt het
daarin steunen!



koffie &
suiker
bewust kopen

SNV
HIVOS
Wereldwinkels
S.O.S. Wereldhandel
Nicaragua Komitee Nederland
Paulo Freire Stichting

Geen Handelsembargo!



Poster 'Nicaragua has to survive', 1987.
International Institute of Social History (IISH).

conforming to the capitalist system. Attempts to a global division of labor or an independent path to development are by and large categorized as reformist, whereas the anti-capitalist approach fits the revolutionary mold. However, such categorizations downplay the shared impetus to transform the marketplace. Moreover, in practice these positions could readily be combined, for example by empowering revolutionary groups through selling products on their behalf.

It is crucial to outline the limits of the ideals of individual citizen-consumers in regard to the relation between the ideals of the citizen-consumer and their actual behavior. The limited importance of individual motives became particularly apparent during the 1980s, as the fair trade movement gradually adopted a more pragmatic approach. Disenchanted by the results of radical politics at home and in 'distant paradises' across the world, activists readily responded to calls by actors from the South to move beyond symbolic support to address immediate concerns.⁵⁴ In the case of fair trade activism, the left-wing Nicaraguan government and the Mexican co-operative of smallholder coffee farmers UCIRI played a prominent role by encouraging partners in the North to find ways to sell more of their produce.⁵⁵ Selling products constituted a practice which could unite activists. Their coexisting motives outline a first limitation to the relevance of the motives of individual citizen-consumers, as different motives could result in common practices.

Although attempts at 'mainstreaming' fair trade have often been presented as a sudden turning point in the history of the fair trade movement at the end of the 1980s, a closer analysis brings to light a more gradual development of professional retailing practices and calls the relation between moderate views of the marketplace and mainstreaming practices into question.⁵⁶ Among the world shops a more professional approach became widely accepted in the course of the 1980s. Part of the movement had favored a commercial approach all through the 1970s, especially the shops closely related to importing organizations such as SOS, its humanist counterpart ABAL, and *Stichting Ideële Import*, which only imported from leftist countries. Since the early 1980s, these importing organizations had stressed the need for a professional approach to trading.⁵⁷ A focus on selling products as a means to support people in the South was gradually taken up by other groups within

54 Cf. Eleanor Davey, 'Famine, Aid, and Ideology: The Political Activism of Médecins sans Frontières in the 1980s', *French Historical Studies* 34:3 (2011) 529-558; Idem, 'French Adventures in Solidarity: Revolutionary Tourists and Radical Humanitarians', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire* 21:4 (2014) 577-595.

55 Gavin Fridell, *Fair Trade Coffee: The Prospects and Pitfalls of Market-Driven Social Justice* (Toronto 2007) 173-183.

56 Cf. Van Dam, 'The limits of a success story'.

57 Persverklaring AMO-meeting d.d. 11 October 1981. Archive European Fair Trade Association (EFTA): Ordner EFTA 81-02.

the movement. Although most world shops had always sold products from the South, this had often been regarded as no more than a symbolic way to address global inequality. Members of the movement during the 1980s concluded that this had given the world shops a stuffy image, which stood in the way of luring regular customers into the shops.⁵⁸ At a congress hosted by the national federation of world shops' working group on products in 1986, Willemien Nolet argued in favor of a more business-oriented approach. She inferred this could increase the world shops' relevance to their partners in the South and the public in the Netherlands, foster more money to host fair trade campaigns, and provide activists with better insight into the workings of the market.⁵⁹

The ecumenical campaigning organization Solidaridad adapted a more aggressive approach towards the mainstream market in its work on behalf of Latin American grassroots groups. In 1985, it called attention to the relation between Dutch banks' activities and the debt crisis in Latin America. Rather than encouraging alternative banking, Solidaridad called on the customers of the large banks to donate part of their interest and to write the boards of their banks to urge a change. This way, it hoped to achieve a transformation of the regular system, while also raising awareness about the reprehensible entanglement of Dutch banks among a wider audience.⁶⁰

Solidaridad adopted a similar approach to make an impact in the coffee market, opting to impact the regular market through consumers instead of creating alternative channels of consumption. In 1986, it started a two-year campaign on world hunger, calling attention to how Northern countries contributed to the imbalances in agrarian production in the South by controlling cash crop markets and dumping food crops on Southern markets. Part of the campaign had focused on coffee as a tangible example, referring to the possibilities to obtain fair trade coffee through alternative trading organizations and world shops. At the same time, action groups successfully lobbied the Dutch parliament to introduce fair coffee in their facilities, and tried to achieve the same lobbying local councils. Looking forward, Solidaridad staff member Nico Roozen hoped to build on the success of the campaign by introducing fair trade coffee in regular stores.⁶¹

'Alternative trade cannot remain symbolic', Solidaridad urged potential collaborators the following year. Partners in Latin America should be provided with a meaningful economic channel to sell their product, not just

58 'Helpt produktenverkoop?', 24 September 1986. Lvvw: Ordner Algemeen bestuur jaren 1985-1986.

59 Inleiding voor het kongres over produktenverkoop op 8 november [1986]. Lvvw: Ordner Algemeen bestuur jaren 1985-1986.

60 Actiewijzer Solidaridad-kampagne 1985 'Onze rente, hun armoede'. Katholiek Documentatie

Centrum (KDC): Solidaridad archive: 140. Stukken betreffende acties, 1975-1988.

61 Nico Roozen, 'Notitie voor de evaluatie van de campagne "Zuivere koffie, een kwestie van smaak", najaar 1986 en een voorzichtige vooruitblik', januari 1987. KDC: Solidaridad archive: 74: Notulen van het Actiecomitee Solidaridad, 1970-1986.

a marginal outlet which symbolically expressed solidarity. By increasing the sales of fair trade coffee to a market share of possibly three percent, more consumers would become aware of the current unfair conditions on the global market, whilst being provided with a tangible alternative. In the long run, the structure of the market itself could be changed by selling more fair trade coffee.⁶² Such an initiative was especially significant in the second half of the 1980s, because of the breakdown of the international coffee agreements and the ensuing crisis on the global coffee market.⁶³

The focus on a pragmatic strategy to further the cause of 'fair trade' once again allowed the inclusion of a remarkably broad coalition, including representatives of the major Dutch churches, moderate and radical Third World activists, and members of several political parties. The ability to gain support from traditional channels such as established churches and government agencies was crucial to the success of the initiative, as it allowed the ambitious Solidaridad staff to gain the necessary financial backing. In 1988, Solidaridad's overtures resulted in the establishment of the Max Havelaar-foundation, which facilitated certification for coffee sold by any company as long as it conformed to its guidelines for fair trade. By 1991, coffee certified by Max Havelaar had obtained a market share of 2.1 percent, providing coffee farmers with an additional income of around 14 million guilders from 1988 until 1991. Fair trade activists in other countries soon followed suit: similar fair trade marks were soon established in Belgium, Switzerland, and France. Taking note of this model, activists in Germany and Great Britain developed similar approaches. This was accompanied by a deepening and widening of the transnational cooperation within the fair trade movement, as the International Federation for Alternative Trade (IFAT) attempted to institutionalize the relations between producers, alternative trading agencies, and local outlets. In a parallel development, the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) – a collaboration of alternative trading organizations from across Europe – intended to regain the initiative within the fair trade movement. To accomplish this, EFTA promoted the exchange of information, advocacy for fair trade on the European level, and the establishment of another fair trade mark.⁶⁴

A second limitation to the relevance of individual acts of consumption came to the fore as fair trade activists in the course of the 1980s paid more

62 Staf Solidaridad aan Algemeen Bestuur Solidaridad: Onderzoeksrapport haalbaarheid publieksmerk 'zuivere koffie', 27 augustus 1987. KDC: Solidaridad archive: 297: Agenda's voor en verslagen van vergaderingen van het algemeen bestuur (AB), 1986-1999.

63 Elisabeth Bennett, 'A Short History of Fairtrade Certification Governance', in: Janet Dine and

Brigitte Granville (eds.), *The Processes and Practices of Fair Trade. Trust, Ethics, and Governance* (London 2013) 44-46.

64 Stichting Max Havelaar – Jaarverslag 1991. KDC: Solidaridad archive: 278: Jaarverslagen, 1986-1998.

attention to the half-pounds of coffee and amounts of other fair trade products they were selling. This objective led to a subtle shift in the perspective on the citizen-consumer. Whereas raising individual awareness had been the main goal of many fair trade activists, the focus on the interest of the producers caused organizations such as Solidaridad to grant equal importance to the economic behavior of consumers. Consumers' awareness was necessary to turn them into willing buyers of fair trade coffee, thus increasing the significance of fair trade to producers in the South. The strength of the citizen-consumers was primarily located in their number, not in the validity of their individual convictions.

Whereas the ideals of the citizen-consumer and the activists had largely overlapped in earlier fair trade activism, the focus on professional selling in large quantities led to a sharper distinction between consumers and activists. In the words of the 1991 Max Havelaar annual report, consumers constituted 'the driving force' behind fair trade by buying coffee, supporting producers in the South through 'the power of the shopping bag'.⁶⁵ Their relevance was predominantly an economic one, defined through indicators such as the market share of fair trade coffee. The blurred lines between individual and collective action became more noticeable as the foundation indicated the potential of 'corporate citizens' such as companies and public institutions as customers and collaborators.⁶⁶

Activists on the other hand functioned as intermediaries between consumers and producers and made fair trade products available to the public. They played an important role as spokesperson, promoting fair trade to the public through contacts with local activist groups, and by informational and marketing campaigns. In communicating with consumers, activists often rendered themselves invisible. Speaking to consumers through information on the products and through advertising, they minimized their presence by suggesting a direct link between producers and consumers and stressing the importance of the choices consumers themselves made. As spokespersons for fair trade in relations to companies and public institutions, they chose the opposite route. Fair trade activists informed companies about the moral desirability of practicing fair trade and the criteria to which they would have to adhere. In contacts with government officials on a local, national and international level, they lobbied for the introduction of fair trade products, and for judicial and financial support for their initiatives.

The active role of fair trade organizations in representing fair trade calls attention to a third limitation of the perspective of the citizen-consumer. Whereas the individual motivation for buying fair trade goods or other forms of participation in fair trade activism often remain undetermined, civic organizations play a pivotal role in translating their support into

65 Stichting Max Havelaar – Jaarverslag 1991. KDC: Solidaridad archive: 278: Jaarverslagen, 1986-1998.

66 Stichting Max Havelaar – Jaarverslag 1991. KDC: Solidaridad archive: 278: Jaarverslagen, 1986-1998.

definitions of fair trade and a socio-political agenda.⁶⁷ Thus, paradoxically, the remarkable increase in the sales figures of fair trade products during the 1990s and 2000s fostered the inclination to neglect individual motives of citizen-consumers to buy them, however important these remain as drivers for consumer behavior. That is not to say that citizen-consumers have disappeared from fair trade activism. Not just as shoppers, but also as volunteers in world shops and at the many occasional fair trade stands, and recently as drivers of local initiatives to obtain the label of 'fair trade town', they remain an integral part of the continuing history of fair trade.

Conclusion

The history of fair trade activism provides valuable insights into constructions of citizen-consumers and into the sociocultural context in which these were situated. An understanding of postwar consumer societies should look beyond the unprecedented levels of collective and individual welfare. These societies were not just indirectly determined by the international economic circumstances such as the rise and breakdown of the Bretton Woods architecture, the shifting international balance of power which was the result of decolonization, and the economic integration of (Western) Europe. In the case of fair trade activism, the need to come to terms with a postcolonial world provided a particular impetus to challenge the morality of the global market. The translations of this postcolonial impetus into ideals of a citizen-consumer within the framework of fair trade activism have also underlined the importance of relating these to the evolving images of – among others – producers, activists, and companies.

The citizen-consumer stands out as a key figure for coming to grips with the history of postwar societies, in which citizens were collectively and individually challenged to position themselves in relation to increasing material well-being, a growing consciousness of transnational economic interdependence, and the need to come to terms with a postcolonial world. The history of fair trade demonstrates how movements challenging the morals of the marketplace could invoke the power of citizens as consumers both symbolically and practically as a driver for change. Throughout its history, fair trade activism fed off the notion that the wishes of consumers would ultimately have to be met, and that this power could be used to foster a different kind of global market. This frame of reference highlights how the promises of consumer well-being and freedom of choice could sustain the legitimacy of the postwar sociopolitical order in democratic welfare states since the 1960s at latest.

67 Wheeler, *Fair Trade and the Citizen-Consumer*.

In regard to the existing scholarship on the subject, fair trade history opens up several new perspectives on citizen-consumers. First, spatial entanglement should be systematically addressed. Citizen-consumers were not strictly national figures. Rather, they positioned themselves in relation to the local, the national, but also the European and the global level. As a discussion of the cane sugar campaign has made clear, these levels are not mutually exclusive, but were given different relative weight by those involved. Second, the relations of the citizen-consumer to consumption itself should be questioned. The debates around the viability of selling products within the fair trade movement point towards the different views of buying and selling and towards means other than consumption which could be employed in order to mobilize support for fair trade. There is more citizenship than consumption to the citizen-consumer and to many forms of consumer activism.⁶⁸ Lastly, the history of fair trade points out the pitfalls of analyzing the meaning of individual consumption. Individual motives for buying certain goods are often opaque. The ways in which different societal actors interpret their individual acts of consumption are therefore a crucial separate element within debates about the morality of consumer societies.

Whilst the citizen-consumer was a prominent figure in postwar society, we should be aware of the limitations of this perspective. Consumption has provided citizens in the Low Countries with powerful means to express their views and address their contemporaries. However, they have been more than just consumers in formulating their views about the market as well as in their attempts to address its morality. The considerable success the fair trade movement met both during the 1960s and since the 1980s aptly illustrates the emergence of a society in which citizens increasingly responded to calls to consume responsibly. Prosperity might have caused some citizens to behave as passive spectators, but empowered many others to express their views in new ways.

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68 Cf. Lawrence B. Glickman, *Buying Power: A History of Consumer Activism in America* (Chicago 2009).