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# The two faces of Janus: a postcolonial problematization of the fair trade ambivalence

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## **Abstract**

This article studies the ambivalence of the relation between fair trade and colonization, through a postcolonial reading inspired by the Homi Bhabha's work. I show FT is both a rupture and a perpetuation of the international order it criticises. In this respect, fair trade is redefined as a third-space which generates innumerable cultural encounters between the colonizer and the colonized. These encounters are understood as a colonial process. Analytically, it can be broken down into three stages. (i) Northern fair trade actors produce an Other: "the small producer". (ii) Then, they incite him to mimic Northern canons. (iii) Finally, mimicry implies hybridity. Each stage is ambivalent: this colonial process generates both domination and resistance. I use the Roman god Janus as a metaphor to capture this ambivalence. He is the god of gates and bridges. He is represented with two faces: one is turned to look at past and east, the other is turned to look at future and west. Thus, Janus symbolizes the interface between two contradictory worlds. This article aims to make three contributions. First, it breaks with the essentialist and binary view of fair trade which divides actors into geographical categories (North vs. South). Second, it makes the criticism addressed to globalization more reflexive. In this respect, this paper also highlights the postcoloniality of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development. Third, it points out the complicity of management in the colonial process.

**Keywords:** Postcolonial, Fair Trade, ambivalence, mimicry, otherness, hybridity, corporate social responsibility

“More than thirty million of your subjects are MISTREATED AND ABUSED IN YOUR NAME” (Multatuli, 1860: 397, capital letters in the original). Max Havelaar addresses this protest cry to the king of Holland. He is the main character of an autobiographic novel telling the experience of Eduard Douwes Dekker (alias Multatuli) as a Dutch colonial administrator, in the Java Island. Max Havelaar rebelled against the exploitation of Javanese people by feudal chiefs and colonial administrators. But ironically, Dutch colonial rulers have drawn their inspiration from his humanist critique to reform their colonial policy by developing an “ethical doctrine” (Noble, 1991). In other words, the Multatuli’s critique leads to contest some aspects of colonization, but it also conducts to justify it. About 130 years later, Max Havelaar inspired the eponymous name of the most important Fair Trade (FT) label. The hero symbolizes the FT fight against globalization and the international order. To what extent is FT a break with the social order inherited from colonization?

Adopting a postcolonial approach, I argue FT is as ambivalent as the novel of Multatuli. On the one hand, FT actors appropriate the slogan “Trade not aid” which has united the non-aligned countries at the Bandung conference in 1955. By doing so, FT actors claim more autonomy and acknowledgement for the Southern producers and condemn charity and foreign aids. In this respect, FT is a criticism of colonization. On the other hand, FT actors emphasise the marginalization of Southern producers. They encourage them to develop according to the Western canons, especially through knowledge transfers. Subsequently, it perpetuates the international order inherited from colonization. These two dimensions are not alternative. They are both inherent of the phenomenon and thereby must be simultaneously studied.

The encounter between what it is perceived as different culture is in the heart of postcolonial studies which are developed in Organization and Management Studies (OMS), especially in the field of international business (e.g. Banerjee, 2003; Banerjee and Linstead, 2004; Prasad, 2003b; Frenkel and Shenhav, 2006; Frenkel, 2008; Özkazanç-Pan, 2008). Two main reasons justify such a postcolonial analysis. First, FT is defined as “a trading partnership based on dialogue, transparency and respect, which seeks greater equity in international trade”. It mainly deals with the relation between European metropolis and their ancient colonies. But postcolonial studies reject this boundary between a “before” and an “after” colonial moment and prefer understanding the postcolonial situation as a complex construction where the present and the past, the intern and the extern interpenetrate. Thus postcolonial studies enable to historicize FT and to show its social and political construction. Second, new actors emerge in FT last years. Products certification enables conventional firms to involve only a part of

their activity in the FT movement. Thus FT is promoted as a part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies. It leads to an important development of the FT market. Worldwide sales of FT products grew by 22% in 2008. In France, the FT turnover has been multiplied by five in five years. This growth deeply transformed the FT field, especially through an institutionalisation and a professionalization of the FT movement (Gendron, et al., 2009a; Özcaglar-Toulouse, et al., 2010). In this context, scholars underlie an evolution of the FT justice principles (Raynolds, 2004; Renard, 2005; Reinecke, 2010). Therefore, FT is suspected to help the capitalism to incorporate the critique and thereby to embody the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). Homi Bhabha's work enables to problematize in a different way the relation between capitalism and criticism. Domination and resistance would be inherent to FT, rather than only a sequential relation involving cycles of criticism and incorporation of criticism.

I use the Roman god Janus as a metaphor to understand this ambivalence. By doing so, my aim is to turn imagination in a different way to produce an original and surprising understanding of FT (Morgan, 1983). Janus is the god of gates and bridges. He is represented with two faces: one is turned to look at past and east, the other is turned to look at future and west. Thus, Janus symbolizes the interface between two contradictory worlds. This metaphor enables me to focus on the encounter between what the FT actors call the "South" (i.e. producers) and the "North" (i.e. consumers and FT Northern organizations). The metaphor of Janus allows capturing these dichotomous categories and the relation of evolution they imply. In the spirit of what Spivak calls "strategic essentialism": I appropriate the categories "South" and "North" to destabilize the official history of FT. Thus I examine the body of knowledge produced by Northern FT actors about their Southern partners and the power relations it creates. I identify two interpretations of the stereotype of the "small producers" and the power/knowledge relations they imply. The geographical and cultural dichotomy is denaturalized by the identification of four paradoxical situations in FT: (i) the paradox of production rationalization: it empowers producers... but according to the Western canon; (ii) the ambiguity of certification: it implies global standards... which does not acknowledge the specificities of producers; (iii) the contradiction of the FT demand: FT products must be authentic... but adapted to the Northern markets; (iv) the paradox of Nature: it is sacralised... but FT actors aim to manage it. The encounter of Southern and Northern actors in these paradoxical situations generates hybridity. I use these paradoxes to produce a more comprehensive theory of FT (Poole and Van de Ven, 1989).

This paper aims to make three contributions by exploring the FT ambivalence. In a first instance, it breaks with the essentialist and binary view of FT which divides actors into geographical categories (North vs. South). This article rejects this static approach and proposes a more dynamic perspective. Following Bhabha (1994), FT is redefined as a third-space which generates innumerable cultural encounters between the colonizer and the colonized. These encounters blur distinctions and create continuity between the actors: they create hybridity. This approach enables to highlight the production of new forms of knowledge and thereby new forms of power (Frenkel, 2008). In a second instance, this article makes the critique addressed to globalization more reflexive. Despite its colonial “inheritance”, only rare scholars shyly and briefly evoke the relation between FT and colonialism. Goodman (2004) analyses how the stereotypes of the “small producer” lead to the commodification of FT. Diaz Pedregal (2007) highlights the relation between FT and the Western theories of development. Shreck (2005) critiques the top-down approach of FT and the influence of Northern market over the FT production in the South. Unfortunately, they never develop a systematic postcolonial critique of FT. I attempt to preserve FT from ethnocentrism which would consist in evaluating the achievements of the “South” in the light of our own Northern principles and thereby to confer us a dominant position. In other words, I destabilize the myth of universality by questioning the application of FT principles in non-Western cultures (Prasad, 2009). Therefore, I point out to what extent FT actors perpetuate some colonial practices they denounce. In this respect, this paper highlights other critical practices which are also concerned by this paradox, especially corporate social responsibility (Banerjee, 2002; El Akremi, et al., 2008) and sustainable development (Banerjee, 2003). In a third instance, Calàs and Smircich (1999) and Frenkel and Shenhav (2006) argue management is associated with the exclusion and the concealment of its colonial origins. In this perspective, this paper reveals “the intersection between Western theories and Western institutions as a politics of knowledge” (Calàs and Smircich, 1999: 661) by pointing out the specific role of management and organizational practices in the postcolonial process.

This article is structured as follow. I present FT as a Western political project (section 1). Then, I propose a dynamic approach of the colonial encounter in FT, by discussing key postcolonial concepts: third-space, otherness, mimicry and hybridity (section 2). This colonial process is founded on three stages. Each one is ambivalent. Northern FT actors produce an Other: “the small producer” (section 3). Then, they incite him to mimic Northern canons through the ideology of development (section 4). The ambivalence of mimicry generates

organizational paradoxes (section 5). Finally, they imply hybridity. It generates both domination and resistance. In other words, FT is both a perpetuation and a rupture with the international order inherited from colonization (section 6). This problematization raises practical and research issues (section 7).

## **1. Fair Trade as a Western political project**

Fair Trade is an international social movement within the “movement of many movements” (Klein, 2001: 82) which seeks to challenge globalization. It can be analyzed as a counter-hegemonic political project agitating for structural changes both in international trade and in organizational practices (Shreck, 2005). Its strategic intent is (i) to work with marginalized producers and workers – especially in the South – to accompany them from a position of vulnerability to one of security and economic self-sufficiency, (ii) to empower them as the actor of their development and (iii) to play an active role in the global arena to promote greater equity in international trade.

This political project is put in practice in organizational situations. FT seeks to reconfigure commodity chains by reducing the middlemen and by establishing long-term partnerships between actors. Moreover FT aims to guarantee decent working conditions and promote organizational democracy. These political and social values are inextricably linked with the economic value of FT products. In this respect, “FT seeks to determine a “fair” price that protects the human dignity of the producer” (Reinecke, 2010: 68). This fair price covers basic needs of producers and production costs. A part of the price must be paid in advance. It protects producers against price fluctuation and speculation.

This political contest originates from three main sources. First, FT is influenced by the cooperative movement which has its roots in the philosophy of the utopian socialists. In this respect most of Southern producers are organized in cooperatives (e.g. Gendron, et al., 2009a). FT ethos defends a common dignity of persons which leads to break with charity (VanderHoff Boersma, 2009). It also promotes the imperative to act “here and now” which conducts to give priority to pragmatic solutions (Frère, 2009). Second, FT is deeply influenced by religion. For example, the Max Havelaar label was founded by a worker-priest (Roozen and VanderHoff Boersma, 2002). Missionary organizations played an important role in the structuring of the first FT commodity chains. They allowed to link producers in the South and consumers’ network in the North. These religious origins are incarnated in the

principles of duty, self-help and human dignity (Low and Davenport, 2006). They underline the embeddedness of FT in a Western culture. Third, FT is shaped by a political involvement, especially third-worldism (Diaz Pedregal, 2007). In the 1970's, FT actors was influenced by development theories and appropriate the language of anti-imperialism: FT is promoted as a mean to challenge the relation between the "core" and the "periphery" (Shreck, 2005). For example, FT commodity chains are created to short-circuit the U.S. economic boycott (1981) and the embargo (1985) established against Nicaragua. It reveals the international solidarity promoted by FT actors. In the 1990's, FT espouses the anti-globalization protest. FT ironically uses the market to fight against the neo-liberal economy (Low and Davenport, 2006). New actors emerge in FT last years. Products certification enables conventional firms to involve only a part of their activity in the FT movement. FT is promoted as a part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies. It leads to an important development of the FT market. Worldwide sales of FT products grew by 22% in 2008. In France, the FT turnover has been multiplied by five in five years. This growth deeply transformed the FT field, especially through an institutionalisation and a professionalization of the FT movement (Gendron, et al., 2009a; Özcaglar-Toulouse, et al., 2010). In this context, scholars underlie an evolution of the FT justice principles (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006). Industrial and merchant justifications are more and more important in the evaluation of the fair trade minimum price (Reinecke, 2010), in the appreciation of the quality of goods (Renard, 2005), in the selection of Southern partners (Diaz Pedregal, 2006) and broadly in the relations between FT actors (Raynolds, 2004). Therefore, FT is suspected to help the capitalism to incorporate the critique and thereby to embody the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). This brief genealogy enables to highlight the cultural embeddedness of FT and how its Western origins shape its critical practices. A postcolonial analysis enables to problematize FT by challenging these Western assumptions.

## **2. The ambivalence of the fair trade colonial process: a Bhabhaian perspective**

Postcolonial theories emerged from different disciplines in social sciences (literature, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, political sciences and organization studies). Influenced by Marxism and post-Marxism, deconstructionism, post-structuralism and feminism, they cover disparate epistemological and ontological assumptions. Nevertheless, these approaches share a same critical intent: they interest in the conditions of cultural production of knowledge

of itself and of the Other as well as in the agency in a hegemonic context (Smouts, 2007). So, postcolonial theory is driven by a radical criticism of colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism. In this perspective, the prefix “post-” is equivocal and problematic. The ambiguity comes from the temporal distance it suggests, as if colonialism was historically outdated. In this respect, “it obscures the continuing unevenness of power relations between colonizer and colonized in the present by prespecifying the path the former colonies must take – the path to development” (Banerjee and Prasad, 2008: 91), “progress” and “modernity continues the same uneven transfer of resources from the south to the north”. Consequently, postcolonial scholars reject any boundary between a “before” and an “after” colonial moment. They prefer understanding the postcolonial situation as a complex construction where the present and the past, the intern and the extern interpenetrate. In this perspective, the prefix expresses a beyond which is both a resistance, an aim and an expectation (Smouts, 2007).

This section presents some of the main postcolonial concepts and their contribution for the critical analysis of FT. The aim is not to provide an in-depth overview of the different postcolonial theories. Rather I focus on the Homi Bhabha’s work. It enables to break with a binary opposition between the North and the South. In this perspective FT is redefined as a third space, that is to say a space of ambiguity where actors mutually influence each other. Thus, the enumerable encounters between actors generate ambivalence which is problematized in a dynamic colonial process.

### **2.1. Redefining Fair Trade as a third space**

The metaphor of “third-space” enables to break with essentialist and binary oppositions between the Orient and the Occident. For Bhabha (1994), we are embedded in an intercultural “in-between” context which implies innumerable cultural encounters. They generate negotiation and translation between the colonized and the colonizer. In this respect, identity is constructed in relation to varied and often contradictory systems of meaning, which “blurs categorical distinctions and creates continuity and a permanent ambivalence” (Frenkel and Shenhav, 2006: 858). Therefore, third space is characterized by ambiguity and contradictions, ambivalence and the disavowal of the colonial encounter.

In this article, I redefine Fair Trade as a third space. In so doing I follow the postcolonial tradition in OMS which considers international business as a space of negotiation and translation between what is perceived as different cultures (Calàs and Smircich, 1999; Westwood, 2006; Frenkel, 2008; Özkazanç-Pan, 2008). FT is a paradigmatic case of such



exchanges. Southern and Northern actors exchange more than commodities. They also exchange symbols, knowledge, culture (Cary, 2004; Le Velly, 2006; Diaz Pedregal, 2007). FT is economic: it uses market; it redefines value; and it promotes another way to redistribute profits (Reinecke, 2010). FT is social: it encourages sharing cultural traditions; it incites to communicate information; and it implies coordinating social representations. FT is legal: it concerns individual and collective rights (Moore, 2004). FT is politic: it aims to challenge the international social order; and it promotes democracy both in the international trade and in the organizations (Renard, 2005; Diaz Pedregal, 2007). FT is religious: it is strongly influenced by protestant and catholic ethos (Roozen and VanderHoff Boersma, 2002). FT is aesthetic: the design of FT products plays its origins and a symbolic link between producers and consumers (Goodman, 2004). These exchanges are strengthened by the long-range relations promoted by FT. In sum, FT can be defined as a “total social fact” (Mauss, 1923), that is to say a complex phenomenon embedded in enumerable cultural relations which sets in motion many institutions.

## **2.2. The ambivalence of the colonial encounter: a colonial process**

Third-space is a space of ambiguity and contradictions. Colonial encounters produce a system of inclusion and exclusion. On the one hand, differences tend to be reduced, masked or denied: colonial discourse “draws the non-West *inside* the West and thereby breaches the very boundaries [it] has erected” (Prasad, 2003a: 21). On the other hand, differences tend to be accentuated, exhibited and claimed: the non-West occupies a space *outside* the West; “the West and the non-West become radical “others” of each other” (Prasad, 2003a: 20). The metaphor of Janus enables to capture this ambivalence. His two faces don’t reflect two different realities. On the contrary, they partake of the very ambivalence of FT. FT can be problematized as a colonial process. Analytically, it can be broken down into three stages. Northern FT actors produce an Other: “the small producer”. Then, they incite him to mimic Northern canons (i.e. through knowledge transfers). Finally, mimicry repeats rather than reproduces the canon. Consequently, it generates hybridity: the colonized is “almost the same... but not quite”. This colonial process is heuristic and it is empirically difficult to separate each stage from the others.

### **2.2.1. Otherness**

Since Said (1978), the construction of otherness is at the heart of postcolonial theories. He argues the Occident creates the Orient; and, by contrast, it simultaneously elaborates the ostensibly homogeneous identity of the Occident. It generates a binary opposition positing a fundamental “ontological and epistemological distinction” between the Occident and the Orient (Said 1978: 2). This dichotomous structure of thought reflects in couples of concepts such as “civilized/savage”, “developed/undeveloped”, “scientific/superstitious”, “modern/archaic”, and so on. In this system, the Occident is associated with the first terms, whereas the Orient is linked to the second ones. Thus it produces a complex constellation of descriptive, representational, material and institutional practices that enables the Occident “to manage [...] the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively” (Said, 1978: 3). Consequently it essentializes the Orient in a position of inferiority, which justifies its supervision, assistance and guidance.

Although Bhabha (1994) acknowledges the Said’s contributions to postcolonial studies, he rejects some assumptions of *Orientalism*. According to Bhabha, the construction of racial and cultural identity does not conform to the dichotomy between “the Occident” and “the Orient”. He argues otherness is an ambivalent narrative construction. It is expressed in stereotypes or fetishes and their multiple interpretations lead to anxiety or envy. On the one hand, the Other is a threat and his/her difference is frightening. On the other hand, the Other is “a highly desirable and prized object of Western possession” (Prasad, 2003a: 20). His/her difference is a phantasm.

In this paper, my first proposition is that FT actors construct a dichotomy between what they call “the South” and “the North”. Each category can be understood only in its relation with the other one. But they don’t have to be studied from an essentialist point of view. Rather they must be analysed as a narrative construction implying an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation (Bhabha, 1994).

### **2.2.2. Mimicry**

Otherness is not static. It is a dynamic construction. To highlight it, Bhabha (1994) introduces the concept of colonial mimicry, defined as “the miming and imitation of the colonizer by the colonized” (Prasad, 2003a: 21), which aims “not only at changing the colonized’s conduct but also at reconstituting its very identity” (Frenkel, 2008: 926). For Bhabha (1994), mimicry is ambivalent. It both masks and exhibits differences. In one respect, mimicry tends to reform the Other according to the ethnocentric and narcissistic Western canons: it is “an attempt to

make the unfamiliar familiar, thereby controlling it” (Frenkel, 2008: 926). Thus, mimicry implies a certain similarity between the colonizer and the colonized: even if their positions differ, they are both engaged in the same way – for example, the way of economic development (Banerjee, 2003). In this sense, mimicry tends to the homogenization between the colonizer and the colonized. But in the other respect, “mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate” (Bhabha, 1994: 86) and, consequently, naturalizes the difference between the colonizer and the colonized. The former is “the natural repository of preferred knowledge”, whereas the latter “lacks such knowledge and is therefore forced to import it” (Frenkel, 2008: 926). To sum up, the Other become “almost the same but not quite... almost the same but not white” (Bhabha, 1994: 86).

In this paper, my second proposition maintains FT is characterized by mimicry which is justified by the ideology of development. On the one hand, it contributes to mask the difference between Southern and Northern actors: all are involved in the economic development. On the other hand, it exhibits differences between South and North: Southern countries are developing whereas Northern countries are developed.

### **2.2.3. Hybridity**

The ambivalence of mimicry implies power relations between the colonizer and the colonized. On the one hand, mimicry reinforces the hegemony of the colonizer: he imposes its norms and values, its representations and its beliefs to the colonized. On the other hand, “mimicry *repeats* rather than *re-presents*” (Bhabha, 1994: 88, italics in the original): the colonized reproduces some aspects of the colonizer, but it does not give up its own identity. In this sense, mimicry implies hybridity, which produces new forms of knowledge and thereby new forms of power. For Bhabha (1994: 112), the “creative hybridity” can produce “a strategic reversal of the process of domination”. In other words, hybridity can generate resistance.

In this article, my third proposition maintains FT is characterized by such hybridity. Southern producers must meet two contradictory demands. In one respect, they must adapt their products to the Northern markets. But in another respect, they must preserve their authenticity. Consequently, FT products cannot be reduced to one of these two alternatives or a fusion of them. The opposition generates a third possibility.

Table 1 represents the colonial process. Next sections analyses the ambivalence of its three steps.

Colonial process	Otherness	Mimicry	Hybridity	Colonial relation
FT ambivalence	Inferior Other	Western Development	“Almost the same... but not quite”. The Other follows the Western canons	Domination
	:: Romantic Other	:: Empowerment	:: “Almost different... but not quite”. Another trade is possible	:: R�sistance

**Table 1: The ambivalence of the colonial process in fair trade**

### 3. Otherness and the two faces of the “small producer”

In this section, I study the production of otherness and especially the construction of the stereotype of the “small producer”. A stereotype can be defined as a fixed representation of the Other which both denies its complexity and distorts it (Priyadharshini, 2003). These simplification and misrepresentation generate contradictory interpretations (Bhabha, 1994) and, thereby the very ambivalence of FT. I illustrate the ambivalence by data collected in the website of 42 French organizations. They are the members of the Plateforme pour le Commerce Equitable (PFCE) which is a national collective of discussion and representation of the main French FT organizations. They come from different industries and generate about 80% of the national FT turnover. I focus on their proposal of involvement (Boltanski, 1993), that is to say the story that FT actors tell about the suffering of producers to enrol the “spectator”. Following the advices of Said (1978), I examine the style and the figures of discourses, the plan and the narratives processes of discourses.

#### 3.1. The production of a radical Other

Discourses create a radical contrast between producers and the rest of the world. The contrast is based on the disjunction we/they. It creates two categories of actants which are naturalized in a geographical opposition: producers are in the “South” while both conventional and FT actors are in the “North”. Each actants is associated with a set of opposite qualifiers. Producers are “scattered” and “remote”. On the contrary, FT actors are “network-organized”. Producers are “small” and “poor”, they are puny and their organizations are “human-sized”. On the opposite, the actors of conventional trade are “big” and associated with predators such as “coyote”, “shark” and “the predatory agro-industry”. The contrast is accentuated by the recurrent use of the superlative, which throws qualifiers to the most extreme positions. For instance, “the most marginalized producers” are opposed to “the most important industrial

plantations”. In sum, the South is the negative of the North. This opposition leads to two interpretations. One is romantic: differences are celebrated. The other is inferiorizing: differences connote a defect.

### **3.2. A romantic Other**

A romantic Other is produced by four couples of contradictory concepts. First, FT actors condemn the lack of solidarity in the modern society and deplore “the decomposition of the social fabric” and “the dismemberment of families”. On the contrary, “small producers” connote the traditional community characterized by “mechanical solidarities” (Durkheim, 1893): “small producers” are embedded in a community characterized by proximity, a collective conscious and highly intensive ties. In FT, this solidarity takes into account future generations. For example, the French organization AlterEco symbolizes it by showing a picture representing seated children, women and men who are discussing in the centre of a village. Second, Western conventional organizations are accused of destructing nature. As proof, the French FT organization Yamana enumerates a long list of environmental issues and calculates that two planets would be needed to meet the global demand. On the opposite “the small producer” symbolizes the harmony with nature. For instance, Max Havelaar shows a producer who is affectionately feeling the leaves of a coffee tree. Furthermore, the Max Havelaar founders have a mystic approach of the relation between the “small producer” and Nature. They write about Mexican coffee producers:

“In the Indian culture, we call nature the “Mother Earth”. We don’t exploit a mother, we take care of her.” (Roozen and VanderHoff Boersma, 2002: 47; I translate).

Third, modernity is associated with ahistorical and standardized products. Conversely, the “small producer” evokes ancestral know-how. In this respect, the French organization Artisans du Monde depicts a woman, wearing traditional clothes, the face marked by hard work years, who is making a handcraft product. Fourth, FT discourses relates modernity to disenchantment of work. On the contrary, the iconography of the “small producer” proves it is possible to find its work very fulfilling: all producers smile!

The production of the romantic Other needs to mark a radical rupture between the Northern and Southern actants. Frenkel and Shenhav (2006: 856) call “purification” this process of exclusion. It is a chemical metaphor: purification is the mechanism which filters and isolates elements in order to construct “two distinct, and incommensurable, ontological zones”. But purification has also a religious meaning. It is the ceremonial removal of what a religion

deems unclean. As Said (1978) points out Orientalism is partly associated with the idea of the regeneration of the Occident by the Orient. In the same vein, the “small producer” is perceived as a model for a better world. Modernity is criticized. Past is glorified. In other words, the South is a spring where the North can draw the resources of its ablution. In the terms of Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), producers are a “deposit of authenticity” where capitalism can take its justifications to integrate the critique. Janus turns to look at East and past.

### **3.3. An inferior Other**

The stereotype of the “small producer” implies a second interpretation. The language game consisting in using alternatively the terms “small producer” and “marginalized producer” perfectly illustrates the ambivalence of the stereotype. The first epithet connotes the romantic image of a traditional human-sized economy. The second one naturalizes the inferiority of producers who are isolated of what is important: the international market. Their small size is no more touching; rather it is an obstacle for their insertion in international trade. This interpretation is incarnated in the syntax of FT discourses. In sentences, producers are the objects or the complements rather than the subjects. On the rare occasions where producers are subjects, FT organizations uses either state verbs (“840 million people suffer starvation”), or sentences expressing privation (“Millions of men and women have access neither to employment, nor to land, nor to resources, nor to credit”) or sentences in the passive voice. Therefore, the syntax deprives producers of their agency. They are reduced to a passive role: they suffer the action. This effect is reinforced by the recurrent use of the lexical field of “suffering”. Discourses stress the “survival of Southern population”. “The most disadvantaged producers” are the “victims” and must “survive” in a “subsistence economy”. To escape “poverty” and “misery”, “millions people suffering starvation” “are forced” to “rural exodus”. On the contrary, the syntax notifies the hold of both conventional and Northern organizations on producers’ life. Consequently, the stereotype of the “small producer” is marked by paternalism: the North must protect and help a weaker South.

This interpretation is accentuated by the iconography of producers. It implies a process of selection, that is to say the inclusion of attributes considered as relevant and, thereby the exclusion of secondary attributes. In this respect, FT discourses suggest that producers represented on packaging – “the most marginalized producers” — are the primary beneficiaries of FT. Yet, it does not. For instance, certification enables important plantations,

workshops and factories to be in the FT registers. Concerning products such as bananas, pineapples or mangos, there is a concurrence between a small-scale farming and an industrial farming. In this context, peasant structures suffer from a lack of competitiveness. A part of the “small producers” is excluded of FT, which foremost benefits producers the better organized (Shreck, 2002; Diaz Pedregal, 2007; Carimentrand, 2009). In sum, FT discourses represent only a part of producers. Only the smallest producers appear on packaging (even if they are not the primary beneficiaries). The biggest producers are ignored (even if they are the primary beneficiaries).

This second interpretation leads to a movement of inclusion. It draws a continuum between the actors by problematizing the marginalization of producers. The “small producer” is judged from Northern canons: FT producers and Northern organizations belong to the same world, but one is most developed than the other. The North must help the South. Janus turns to look at West and future.

#### **4. Mimicry and the ideology of development**

Northern actors produce a binary system which radically contrasts the South and the North. The dichotomy implies a power/knowledge relation. It is uneven and simultaneously creates the unilateral relation of evolution who links the two terms: the Other must integrate the international market either to regenerate it (romantic interpretation) or to develop (inferiorizing interpretation). The concept of colonial mimicry enables to analyse this move from one term to the other term. Mimicry is mainly legitimized by the ideology of development which deeply influences FT. The ideology of development can be defined as the belief that there are different levels of development and that the ultimate level is the society of consumption (Banerjee, 2003). As Janus, the Roman god of gates and bridges, development enables the transition from past to future. This transition is ambivalent. On the one hand, it promotes empowerment and acknowledgement for the South: producers are the actors of their future. On the other hand, development perpetuates the international order inherited from colonization: Western countries define the future of producers.

##### **4.1. “Not aid, but trade”: the promise of empowerment**

In 1955, the Bandung Conference is a rupture with the colonial situation. It brought together 29 nonaligned countries. Most of them were ex-colonies claiming their neutrality related to

the Western and Soviet blocs. They show not only their willingness to become international actors themselves, but also they reappropriate their history by taking the right to speak for them. Thus, colonization and imperialism were condemned (Balandier, 2007). Therefore, participants aim to free themselves from charity by privileging a development trade. These claims are reflected in the slogan “Not aid, but trade”.

FT was deeply influenced by this rallying call which actors invokes to differentiate FT from charity or any other non-reciprocal form of aid. By doing so FT actors claim a radical rupture with “paternalist attitudes involved in traditional development programmes” (VanderHoff Boersma, 2009: 54). In this respect, the Max Havelaar founders argue:

“The development aid is based on inequality [...]. Even if this aid is well-meant granted, it deprives the beneficiary of its dignity by compelling it to passivity. We want to get it over with these kinds of relations. Equal relations must be established between the North and the South” (Roozen and VanderHoff Boersma, 2002: 10; I translate).

This argument reflects the Mauss’ analysis of gift. He highlights that the non-reciprocal exchange implies a hierarchy between the contracting parties. He adds: “Charity is still wounding for him who has accepted it, and the whole tendency of our morality is to strive to do away with the unconscious and injurious patronage of the rich almsgiver” (Mauss, 1923: 258). In FT, development should bring the position to the same level and thereby lead to more acknowledgement, mutual respect and open-mindedness. This aim appears in the consensual definition of FT:

“FT is a trading partnership based on dialogue, transparency and respect, which seeks greater equity in international trade”.

This objective is put into practice. The Max Havelaar founders tell how the creation of the label was the initiative of the Mexican growers themselves (Roozen and VanderHoff Boersma, 2002). At the international level, producers are represented in FT supranational organizations. At the local level, the democratic organization of producers and the freedom of management are two FT fundamentals. For example, in the specialized field, producers of hand-crafted goods are price-makers: they propose themselves the fair price to export their products (Diaz Pedregal, 2007).

#### **4.2. Ideology of development as a perpetuation of the international order**

Nevertheless some scholars liken the ideology of development to new forms of colonialism (Latouche, 2001; Banerjee and Linstead, 2001; Banerjee, 2003). The ideology of development



could be considered as a “false evolutionism” which consists in removing the cultures’ diversity, while at the same time it pretends to acknowledge them (Lévi-Strauss, 1952: 24). Indeed, the invention of developing countries enables to represent all the people of the world according to the Western point of view. It conducts to a linear construction of development. For instance, following Rostow’s model, all countries can be placed on a continuum divided in successive periods. Each society must go through five stages of development, always the same: a traditional society, a transitional stage, a take-off, a drive to maturity and, the ultimate stage, the age of high mass-consumption. In short, the Western society is the model: developing countries must tend toward it. All societies compete in development, only their levels differ. Therefore, the hierarchy between countries is naturalized in indicators such as the gross national brut or the human development index.

### 5. Mimicry in organizational practices

The previous subpart studies mimicry at the level of political economy and global discourses. This section analyses in what extent the ideology of development shapes organizational practices. The ideology of development promotes the rationalization of production. It both leads to integrate producers in the market and to enrol them in the Northern view of development. Certification is one of the technologies supporting rationalization. It generates a conflict between a homogenized Other and the acknowledgment of his/her singularity. To solve this tension, certification tries to incorporate authenticity. As a result, it conducts to swing between cultural authenticity and adaptation to the market, between Nature and environment (figure 2).

Mimicry	Rationalization	Certification	Authenticity	Nature	Colonial relation
FT ambivalence	Devaluating non-Western knowledge	Controlling - monitoring	Adapting authenticity	Managing environment	Domination
	::	::	::	::	::
	Improving efficiency	Increasing export outlets	Preserving authenticity	Respecting Nature	Résistance

Figure 2: The ambivalence of mimicry in fair trade

#### 5.1. Rationalizing production

FT encourages producers to engage in the “virtuous circle of development” thanks to the improvement of productivity. On the one hand, it contributes to integrate producers in the

market by improving their competitiveness. On the other hand, rationalization is legitimized by the Western economic rationality. It leads producers to occupy a space *inside* the West.

In FT, efficiency becomes a principle of justice as attested by the growing use of the economic language (Diaz Pedregal, 2007):

“In brief: Fair trade is a commercial practice based on the principle of efficiency on the economic, social and ecological levels. The integral price is the instrument enabling to achieve these norms. So-defined FT belongs to economy.” (Roozen and VanderHoff Boersma, 2002: 247, I translate).

For FT actors, efficiency is a mean to integrate producers in the international trade. Therefore, the rhetoric of necessity is used to promote the adoption of management by Southern producers.

“Fair trade producers must create quality products that consumers want and they must do so with production methods that effectively utilize available resources. It also implies that they have to be innovative in marketing and production” (VanderHoff Boersma, 2009: 58).

“These words hide a grim reality because the laws of the market are pitiless” (Roozen and VanderHoff Boersma, 2002: 244, I translate).

To meet this pressing necessity, Northern organizations produce knowledge *of* and *for* Southern producers. Northern actors produce knowledge of production in the South as well as of consumption in the North. As Said (1978: 7) points out the Occident has a “flexible positional superiority”, that is to say the secret power to comment, to acquire and to possess the entire world. Northern FT organizations have the gift of ubiquity, whereas Southern producers are nowhere. This statement can be enlightened by postcolonial studies which underlie the disciplinary effects of knowledge transfers (Frenkel and Shenhav, 2003; Frenkel, 2008; Mir, et al., 2008). They demonstrate how knowledge transfers impose a Western and managerial ideology which devalues local and traditional knowledge. It implies an epistemological opposition between modern and scientific knowledge, archaic and superstitious knowledge (Said, 1978). In FT, the cotton agriculture illustrates the domination of Northern knowledge. For instance, Haynes (2006: 363, I translate) writes:

“In India, producers are used to spray as soon as insects appear. They have forgotten knowledge related to the observation of what it happens in their field. Therefore, an education and learning program of techniques must be implemented. This program requires the intervention of technical consultants in relation with research stations”.

This knowledge production implies asymmetrical power/knowledge relations based on a one-way transfer from the North to the South (Frenkel, 2008). Sometimes these knowledge

transfers blur the frontiers between Northern and Southern actors. The autonomy of the latter would not be always assured. Shreck (2002) and Getz and Shreck (2006) reveal that some producers have the feeling to be a subsidiary of their Northern partners. Others don't perceive the difference between FT and a system of aid (Blowfield and Dolan, 2010). These knowledge transfers have practical implications in the structuring of the chain. The rationalization of production can imply the reorganization of the economic fabric. For instance, the boom of the quinoa consumption leads to deeply modify the production system in the Andes (Carimentrand and Ballet, 2008; Carimentrand, 2009). Traditionally, the production is founded on a manual agriculture, llama-farming and rotation between quinoa and potatoes farming. The growing demand of quinoa implied a focalisation on the quinoa farming and a mechanisation of the production. These transformations conducted to perverse effects. In the first instance, the fertility of the soil dropped: vehicles accelerate the erosion of soil, the periods of fallow are shorter and the diversity of quinoa reduces. Then, the boom of quinoa encouraged the monoculture which leads to the proliferation of ravaging animals. To fight against this plea, producers used insecticides. Thus, the risk is to contaminate organic fields. Finally, the mechanisation of farming enables some categories of producers – mainly the owners of field in the plains – to increase their production and thereby to invest in the loan of vehicles or urban activities. The other producers – especially the producers located in the high plateaus – have a more difficult access to the mechanization of their production. Consequently, FT generates a system of differentiation between FT producers. Cynically, FT increases some inequalities by aiming to reduce them. In other words, the problem of justice is the problem of unfair inequities as well as the problem of fair inequities.

## **5.2. Certification: a global/local tension**

Certification generates a global-local tension. On the one hand, certification implies global standards applied to all FT producers. On the other hand, FT production is heterogeneous and depends on the specificity of social contexts and traditions, local know-how and soils.

Certification is justified by the “necessity” to go from an alternative niche market to a fairer mainstream market (VanderHoff Boersma, 2009). Indeed, the growth potential of the niche – i.e. FT products supplied in alternative networks – is limited and reduced the export outlets for producers. This transformation of the market needs the involvement of conventional firms. It raises two main problems. Firstly, the firms' involvement in FT generates costs. Certification enables to reduce them by enabling to have only a part of their activity (e.g. a

product) involved in FT. Secondly, it creates asymmetries of information. How can the fairness of a product be evaluated, if the firm both participates in conventional trade and FT? Certification solves this problem by producing a signal about the social quality of the product (Spence, 1973). In sum, certification is an incentive (i) for firms by reducing the entry barriers, (ii) for consumers by facilitating their purchase processes and (iii) for producers by increasing their export outlets.

Certification implies to select a limited number of criteria qualifying who is a true FT producer. They are objectivised in standards which producers must respect. These standards act as a disciplinary system. First, they construct a homogenized producer: a standard is applicable to innumerable situations. Second, certification reinforces the colonial control of the South by the North (Renard, 2005; Carimentrand and Ballet, 2008). Most of the efforts fall to Southern producers. To be register by the label, producers must conform to a set of economic, social and environmental criteria. For example, according to the FLO standards, their organization must be democratic; their production must be environmental friendly; their products must be exportable; they must respect the social rights of their employees; they must involve in the improvement of the community's living conditions, and so on. On the contrary, the Northern organizations have any pressure on their production process. In the FLO system, the importers must only buy from registered producers, pay the fair price, develop long-term relations and prefinance producers. The licence holder must only assure the product's traceability and pay the licence for the label. Consequently, it enables conventional firms to have only a part of their activity – a certified product – involved in FT by reducing the costs of their social responsibility (Raynolds, 2009). Others labels are less demanding. For example, the label Rainforest Alliance does not impose a minimum price.

In sum, certification implies a formal control and monitoring which modifies traditional relations in the FT chain. It leads to impersonal relations founded on the compliance with standards. Therefore, it generates tensions with the historical utopia of the movement which aims to promote interpersonal relations, trust and acknowledgment of local specificities. This tension can be reinterpreted as the opposition between a universalist point of view which denies the diversity of producers and a localist point of view which emphasise the singularity of each producer.

### **5.3. Adapting authenticity**

FT production must meet two contradictory demands. On the one hand, FT products must be authentic and traditional: Western consumers want to consume an exotic otherness. It is a demand of differentiation. The mise-en-scene of producers on packaging meets this demand of authenticity (see above). On the other hand, FT products must be adapted to the Western culture. Therefore, it implies that producers manipulate their own image to conform to what Western consumers want to see (Banerjee and Linstead, 2001). They must “produce an adapted authenticity”. That is an oxymoron! For instance, producers must both claim their *Peruvianity* and break with the image of the Peruvian multicoloured poncho. Stylists play the role of the translator between the different cultures and encourage “Southern producers to adapt their production in terms of pictures and colours (surface styling), sizes and forms (length styling)” (Haynes, 2006: 367-368).

This paradoxical tension – to be different in the sameness or to be the same in the difference – is heightened by the geographical division between production and consumption of FT products. It is founded on two taken for granted assumptions. The first postulate states Southern producers can develop only thanks to the Northern markets. It conducts to consider mainly a South-North FT. In this spirit, the French legislator decrees “FT organizes the exchanges of goods and services between developed countries and disadvantaged producers located in developing countries” (Law of the 2<sup>nd</sup> august 2005). This definition does not recognize intra-regional initiatives of FT. Thus, the geographical separation between production and consumption of FT products accentuates the international division of labour and then perpetuates the instrumental role of the colony. The second postulate states FT is not charity: products are not compassionately bought without taking into account their intrinsic quality. As a result, FT implies that producers have to create quality products (Roozen and VanderHoff Boersma, 2002). In other words, FT products must meet the Northern demand in terms of aesthetic quality, taste, use, fashion, and so on. For instance, a list of 25 criteria defines what an “exportable quality banana” is. Producers must comply with these standards to be certified. Shreck (2005) notices that a large part of bananas (over 50% in her study) can’t be certified especially for cosmetic reasons. This kind of devise forces producers to adapt their production and thereby institutionalises unequal relation between FT actors. FT production is pulled and driven by the Northern consumption which assures export outlets (Renard, 2005). On the one hand, it reinforces the exportation ability of some FT producers. But, on the other hand, the inability to produce adapted goods can imply the importer’s defection and acts like an entry barrier (Shreck, 2002; Raynolds, 2009; Carimentrand, 2009).

## 5.4. Managing Nature

A variation of the previous paradox deals with the transformation of Nature into environment. On the one hand, Nature is celebrated as a sacred being. On the other hand, Nature becomes a secular being which can be managed.

Official and legal definitions state FT is a part of sustainable development. This type of development is often perceived as a rupture with traditional development theories: environmental and social considerations would be in the heart of its philosophy. FT actors claim such a rupture. In this spirit, the Max Havelaar founders appropriate the expression of Mexican peasants and call Nature “mother earth”. They argue (Roozen and VanderHoff Boersma, 2002: 47; I translate):

“Economy and culture, economy and faith are closely linked in the Mexican peasant life. [...] The ecology doesn’t have only an economic dimension, rather it is a part of a larger concept which also includes the religious aspect”.

This mysticism also appears in packaging of FT products. Producers are represented in harmony with nature. But, the complexity of Nature disappears when VanderHoff Boersma (2009: 57) writes:

“Fair trade must be sustainable from an ecological point of view. What this means in a nutshell is that the environmental costs of production must be fully incorporated into the price of fair trade products”.

This quotation illustrates the transformation of Nature into environment (Banerjee, 2003; Banerjee and Linstead, 2004). It reveals the ongoing predominance of the economic paradigm, masked by the environmentalist rhetoric (Jermier and Forbes, 2001). The complex and ambiguous concept of nature is reduced to a simple economic notion. According to this economic logic, environmental issues can be solved by integrating the environmental costs of the production. This transformation synthesizes the concept of Nature in an economic indicator which does not take into account its social embeddedness. In other words, it “dehistoricizes and marginalizes the environmental tradition of non-Western cultures” (Banerjee, 2003: 157) by including it in sustainable development. Consequently, “sustainable development is to be managed in the same way development was managed: through ethnocentric, capitalist notions of managerial efficiency that simply reproduce earlier articulations of decentralized capitalism in the guise of ‘sustainable capitalism’” (Banerjee, 2003: 173).

## 6. The fair trade hybridity

The colonial process constructs an Other and incites him/her to mimic the canon. Figure 3 identifies four faces of hybridity by crossing the complementary interpretations of otherness and mimicry. Otherness depends on a narrative contrast between FT actors. It leads to create two categories of actants: the South and the North. Their opposition is either a radical rupture or a continuum. Mimicry is driven by imitation, but generates differentiation. On the one hand, the South mimics the canon imposed by the North. The North draws from the South to regenerate. On the other hand, mimicry simultaneously produces “its slippage, its excess, its difference” to maintain the colonial relation (Bhabha, 1994: 86). The South can never fully adopt the canon. The North has always a step ahead which justifies its domination through distinction. Conversely the South does not passively consume the canon. The colonized can tactically use the “inconsistencies associated with the experience of being ‘almost the same but not quite’” to construct his/her agency. In sum, mimicry shapes the colonizer’s ability to impose its will on the colonized, but it also enables the latter to resist.

	« Southern » actors	« Northern » actors
Imitation	<p><b>A</b> Grotesque doubling</p>	<p><b>C</b> Regeneration</p>
Differentiation	<p><b>B</b> Strategic manipulation of stereotypes</p>	<p><b>D</b> Distinction</p>

**Figure 3: The fair trade hybridity**

Square A refers to the Southern actors’ attempt to adopt the Northern canon. Since Northern actors have the power to modify the canon, Southern actors participate in a Sisyphean process. They are always “the same... but not quite”. Consequently the exhibition of their differences represents them as a “grotesque doubling” (Bhabha, 1994). Square B deals with the strategic use of difference to resist the colonizer. “In reality, a rationalized, expansionist, centralized, spectacular and clamorous production is confronted by an entirely different kind of production called “consumption” and characterized by its ruses, its fragmentation (the result of circumstances), its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity, in short by its quasi-invisibility, since it shows itself not in its own products... but in an art of using those imposed on it” (de Certeau, 1980: XXXVII). Conformity and deference to the canon can be a resource for resistance. Southern producers can appropriate the representations for their own ends: their performance – (fake) smiles and self-representation – can also be a

manipulation to reach their goals (Scott, 1990). Square C refers to the romantic interpretation of “small producers”. Northern actors would like to regenerate the international market or to co-opt their authenticity. For instance, FT products are sold by multinational companies such as Procter & Gamble, Nestlé, Kraft, Ben & Jerry’s, Starbucks, McDonalds or Carrefour. FT re-enchants consumption by integrating the artistic critique: consumption makes sense. In this respect, FT can be interpreted as a legitimization of the new spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). Square D deals with the perpetuation of the colonizer’s domination through distinction (Bourdieu, 1979). Distinction expresses both the imposition of Northern tastes and the difficulty to meet them. Northern tastes shape what is a good FT production and what is not. By doing so, they depreciate some aspects of the Southern production. For instance, fruits must be graded and have the appropriate colour. Moreover consumers’ tastes change over time and fashion. Consequently, the qualitative and quantitative instability of the demand can jeopardize the long-term commercial relation defended by FT.

Hybridity is neither a compromise nor a mixture between these different faces. Such interpretations would imply either choosing one face of the FT ambivalence or admitting the existence of natural differences. On the contrary, epistemology of hybridity rejects any essentialist assumptions. Hence hybridity is defined as an ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of the colonial encounter. Producers, FT organizations and consumers perpetually translate and negotiate the four faces of hybridity.

## **7. Discussion: reinterpreting fair trade through its paradoxes**

I identify three paradoxes of the FT hybridity and I use them both to stimulate new approaches of FT (Poole and Van de Ven, 1989) and to discuss practical implications (figure 4). By doing so, my intent is not to solve or to reduce paradoxes. Rather I take “seriously the potential relationship between [the two poles of paradoxes]” (Clegg, et al., 2002: 486). Paradoxes are inherent in FT and they contribute to its dynamic by showing alternatively only one face of the phenomenon. Then the masked face is a resource to contest the visible face and to promote change.

The first paradox opposes the two categories of actants (vertical axis of the matrix). FT actors claim a common humanity, but they construct an Other who is the negation of the North. Moreover FT promotes a partnership, but the actors are rivals when they try to impose their ethnocentric point of view. Finally, FT defends the empowerment of the South, but the South



can speak only through the intermediary of the North (Spivak, 1988). Researchers and Northern FT actors tend to privilege one pole of the paradox. This imbalance can be explained by the geographical distance between actors and their unequal access to the public-space (e.g. the media). It opens three directions for further researches and practical implications. First, some studies point out many FT producers don't know what FT is (e.g. Blowfield and Dolan, 2010; Vagneron and Roquigny, 2010). Others reveal that producers can be reluctant to the adoption of FT standards which can be perceived as a disciplinary or an inappropriate device. For instance, certification can be oppressive for illiterate producers (e.g. Shreck, 2002; Gendron, et al., 2009b: chap. 3). Eventually, they depict the deep transformations that FT can generate in their daily life. For example, the boom of quinoa exportations increased the price of the cereal. Hence, local people had to change their usual food (e.g. Gendron, et al., 2009b: chap. 2). Consequently, further researches could study the FT influence on the producers' subjectivity. What are the disciplinary effects of FT? How does FT influence the identity work of producers? At the practical level, FT actors could be encouraged to adopt an ethic of care to break with the colonial narcissism. "It involves willingness and openness" by Northern FT actors "to be challenged and have their views radically called into question" by their Southern partners (Spicer, et al., 2009: 548). An ethic of care should question FT through four phases: caring about (Why are FT actors affected by the condition of producers?), caring of (How can FT actors act?), care giving (At what level is the action situated? How is an action converted into care?) and care receiving (Was care adapted? Did care succeed? Did care generate new needs?). Second, the uneven relations between the North and the South produce a centripetal force which tends to neglect some categories of actors (Calàs and Smircich, 1999; Czarniawska, 2005). Consequently, further researches should listen to the silencing voices. It would lead to restore the polyphony of FT. It could also enable researchers to access to the producers' "hidden transcript" and thereby allow studying the producers' practices of resistance (Scott, 1990). For FT actors, it encourages continuing to open spaces of discussion for FT stakeholders. For instance, it implies preserving personal interactions between FT actors. Third, the paradox suggests analysing power relations. It urges to increase the influence of Southern actors in FT. In this respect, it is paramount to improve the representation of producers in international FT organizations (Reed, et al., 2010).

The second paradox deals with the two faces of mimicry: imitation and differentiation (horizontal axis). On the one hand, the two actants imitate mutually. It leads to convergence. On the other hand, the actants differentiate themselves from the other. It leads to divergence.

Most of FT researches and FT activists focus on homogenization by pointing out the effects of certification and mainstreaming. Their approach is partial and raises three limits. First, they underestimate the agency of producers (square B). Moreover they don't perceive that homogenization is not really desirable for the North which needs to maintain differences to assure its domination (square D). In the first case, their analysis is too pessimistic. In the second case, it is too optimistic. Second (and consequently), they depict a linear dynamic of FT which converges on a same point. On the contrary, a postcolonial reading of FT describes a non-linear dynamic. In some way, FT can be compared with fashion. "Fashion is a form of imitation and so of social equalization. But, paradoxically, in changing incessantly, [fashion] differentiates one time from another and one social stratum from another. It unites those of a social class and segregates them from others. The elite initiates a fashion and, when the mass imitates it in an effort to obliterate the external distinctions of class, abandons it for a newer mode" (Simmel, 1957: 541). The contradictory movements of imitation and differentiation lead to a dynamic which never stops. One force counterbalances the other one. Consequently, the FT dynamic is as well uncertain as fashion. Third, comparing fashion and FT enables to imagine two critical resources to influence the FT evolution. On one hand, FT actors can influence its rhythm and its direction by acting on one term of the paradox. On the other hand, FT actors can try to break the postcolonial FT dynamic. In this respect, a local FT between and inside Southern countries can reduce the incentives to mimicry, and thereby the dependence of producers to Northern actors. The Mexican label Comercio Justo Mexico supports such a project. It aims to be closer to the producers' experience and affordable to them (Gendron, et al., 2009b).

The third paradoxes can be summed up by the image of a dog which tries to bit its tail: the South runs after the North, while the North runs after the South (diagonal axis). This cycle can be compared with the dynamic of capitalism described by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005). Critiques emerge; capitalism integrates them; new critiques appear. Another cycle begins. This cycle depends on the ambivalence of critique and capitalism. Critique resists capitalism... but critique needs to be isomorphic in order to be efficient. Capitalism seeks to avoid critique to make profits... but capitalism needs to integrate it in order to be legitimized. In this respect, critique and capitalism are as well ambivalent as FT. Consequently, the FT evolution can be also interpreted as a three-step waltz. Most scholars break down FT history into three periods (e.g. Low and Davenport, 2006; Diaz Pedregal, 2007; Özcaglar-Toulouse, et al., 2010). The first period corresponds to the emergence of FT from the 1960's to the

1980's. Actors mainly promote an alternative trade and operate outside conventional trade. The commodity chain is largely based on trust and informal relations between the actors. Most of FT products are supplied in alternative channels, especially in "world shops". Actors mainly invoke civic justifications (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006): they defend collective interest and have strong political involvements. During this period, producers push their products in the Northern market which are mainly bought by militant. Consequently, the disciplinary effect of the Northern demand is weak. But the volume of exportations is low. The second period refers to the take off of FT. In 1988, the creation of the Max Havelaar label symbolizes the rupture with the associative and alternative ideal. Certification enables firms to have only a part of their activity involved in FT. It opens the doors to large-scale distribution. Market and industrial worlds have been progressively integrated in the justification of FT (Renard, 2005; Reinecke, 2010): new FT actors promote competitiveness and transparency (merchant city), efficiency and control (industrial city). Consequently, the tensions between the poles of FT paradoxes are strengthening while the FT sells are increasing. The third period corresponds to the institutionalization of FT and its partial assimilation in conventional trade. It conducts to encapsulate FT ideals of partnership, trust and fairness "in formally documented standards for both buyers and suppliers" (Raynolds, 2009: 1086). "The objectives of sustainable production are no longer limited to a small sector or a niche in the dominant market. *This different type of market is the practice of making the conventional market different*" (VanderHoff Boersma, 2009: 59, italic in the original). More and more multinational corporations are involved in FT. The integration of FT in the corporate social responsibility would be another proof of the pliability of the spirit of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). The paradoxical tensions are in the highest point. FT is swinging between empowerment and control, adaptation and authenticity, differentiation and imitation. This analysis leads to two implications. For researchers, the convergence between the postcolonial theory and the sociology of critique allows to generalize this study to other fields. It encourages studying postcoloniality of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development (Banerjee, 2003) and analyzing their interactions with FT. For FT actors, this analysis encourages to revive the critique (Boltanski, 2009).

<b>Paradoxes</b>	<b>Research implications</b>	<b>Practical implications</b>
North/South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interesting in the subjectivity of FT producers.</li> <li>• Listening to silencing voices.</li> <li>• Studying power relations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopting an ethic of care.</li> <li>• Opening spaces of discussion.</li> <li>• Improving the representation of producers in FT.</li> </ul>

Imitation/differentiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paying more attention both to the producers' resistance and the Northern distinction.</li> <li>• Reconsidering the thesis of convergence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing the influence of producers in FT.</li> <li>• Promoting intra-regional FT.</li> </ul>
Critique/capitalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading FT as a dynamic process of critiques and reactions to critiques</li> <li>• Making connections with corporate social responsibility and sustainable development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviving the critique.</li> </ul>

**Figure 4: The implications of the fair trade paradoxes**

## Conclusion

This article has redefined FT as a third-space which generates enumerable encounters between FT actors. Their relations are interpreted as a colonial process: (i) FT organizations construct an Other: the “small producer”; (ii) the Other is encouraged to mimic the Northern canon; (iii) it creates hybridity. By doing so, this paper breaks with two approaches of FT. One considers FT as a critique of the social order. The other analyzes it as a legitimization of the dominant order. The metaphor of Janus shows that “two half-truths don't make a truth” (Multatuli, 1860: 282): resistance and domination are two faces of the FT ambivalence.

This article suffers two main limits. First, I am not a subaltern (Spivak, 1988) and perhaps I speak for producers. In some way, I reproduce what I criticize. It is another proof of the ambivalence of the postcolonial critique. Therefore, I reassert it is important to open space discussion for the silencing voices and to adopt an ethic of care. Second, this paper is mainly a theoretical work. It aims to make FT more reflexive and to promote new conceptualizations and problematization of the phenomenon. Consequently, it encourages empirical researches paying more attention to the co-construction of FT by producers, Northern organizations and consumers by focusing on power relations and translations between actors embedded in different social, economic and historical contexts.

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