Article:

Krauss, J.E. orcid.org/0000-0003-4593-0781 and Barrientos, S. (2021) Fairtrade and beyond : shifting dynamics in cocoa sustainability production networks. Geoforum, 120. pp. 186-197. ISSN 0016-7185

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.02.002

Title: Fairtrade and beyond: shifting dynamics in cocoa sustainability production networks

Running head: Fairtrade and beyond

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.02.002 (first 50 day free access)

Declaration of interests:

The authors declare no competing interests.

Acknowledgements:

JK (S.D.G.) gratefully acknowledges support from ESRC PhD studentship ES/J500094/1 and the Sustainable Consumption Institute, SB from a Leverhulme Major Research Grant. We would like to thank all our interviewees and everyone whose comments and engagement have strengthened this paper, including participants in the 2017 Royal Geographical Society Conference, the Geoforum co-editor-in-chief, Rob Fletcher, and anonymous reviewers. All errors that remain are our own. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors alone, and do not represent those of any funder, company or other organisation.

[1] Original research while at the University of Manchester

ABSTRACT

Fairtrade was the most popular sustainability standard for cocoa in the 2000s, reflecting the movement's success in building credibility. There have long been debates within the Fairtrade movement over the extent of engagement with private companies, with tensions between expanding scale of engagement versus adherence to the movement's founding principles. Amid predictions of insufficient future supply, a widening spectrum of stakeholders and standard-setters is engaging in 'cocoa sustainability' initiatives. Increasingly, private companies are relying on sustainability programmes they have devised themselves, often eschewing independent certification from Fairtrade and other standard-setters. This paper asks to what extent do the changing dynamics in cocoa sustainability between civil-society standards and corporate-led initiatives exemplify larger shifts away from civil-society sources of credibility, and how is this affecting the trajectory of cocoa sustainability standards, particularly Fairtrade? Conceptually, the paper draws on global production network analysis to explore embeddedness and power asymmetries, complemented by an analysis of credibility through convention theory and sources of justification. Empirically, it reviews the changing dynamics in cocoa sustainability in terms of independent sustainability standards and major chocolate company-led programmes. It argues that the increasing reliance on corporate-led cocoa sustainability initiatives constitutes a significant shift in terms of sources of credibility, which risks exacerbating power and embeddedness asymmetries. It remains open whether this will enhance or undermine sustainability in future.

Keywords: cocoa, sustainability, Fairtrade, global production networks, convention theory

Highlights:

- Fairtrade, the most popular cocoa seal in the 2000s, is losing ground.

- Cocoa sustainability is shifting from civil-society towards company-led arrangements

- Whose voices and credibility count reflects changing power/embeddedness relations.

- In three cocoa cases, changing sustainability dynamics exacerbate power asymmetries.

- We combine global production networks, sources of justification, convention theory.

1 INTRODUCTION

The cocoa sector is changing. In the 2000s, Fairtrade, a seal conferred by the Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International with strong socio-political roots, was the most popular sustainability standard, certifying the largest volumes of ethical production. This reflected consumers' respect for the credibility of the social movement underpinning Fairtrade as an independent standard-setter. There have long been tensions within Fairtrade between expansion through corporate engagement, and narrower reach while staying true to the movement's founding principles. Increasingly, a myriad of alternative social and environmental seals are populating retailers' aisles (Fountain and Hütz-Adams, 2015). Predictions of demand for conventional and ethical cocoa exceeding supply by 2020 contributed to a widening spectrum of stakeholders engaging in diverse 'cocoa sustainability' initiatives incorporating varied social and environmental commitments (Barrientos, 2014; Glin, Oosterveer and Mol, 2015; Tampe, 2016). In addition, pressure from some European governments is driving the mainstreaming of standards within the chocolate-confectionery industry. A growing number of companies are now promoting 'sustainability' programmes which they have largely devised themselves. Some involve new forms of partnership with Fairtrade or other stakeholders, but they are no longer based on traditional independent certification. There is an intensifying debate over the changing dynamics around the balance of civic and commercial drivers and their implications for the credibility of sustainability initiatives. It compounds tensions within the broader movement for fairer trade regarding the extent and terms of civic engagement with private companies (Dolan, 2010; Doherty, Davies and Tranchell, 2013; Mason and Doherty, 2015), meriting an investigation.

Against this backdrop, this paper asks to what extent do the changing dynamics in cocoa sustainability between civil-society standards and corporate-led initiatives exemplify larger shifts away from civil-society sources of credibility, and how is this affecting the trajectory of cocoa sustainability standards, particularly Fairtrade? In investigating whose understandings of sustainability and worth dominate diverse initiatives, it argues that the rise of company-led programmes changes whose virtue and credibility are paramount compared with certification involving civil-society standard-setters, which risks exacerbating diverse tensions and asymmetries of power and embeddedness. Who sets what priorities, how these are taken to scale, and who serves as a source of credibility, is shifting the balance in asymmetrical power relations and forms of embeddedness in cocoa production. This has implications for the trajectory of standards in the cocoa sector, and sustainability standards more broadly. We aim to contribute both analytically and empirically to this debate.

Analytically, the paper draws on global production network (GPN) analysis as a framework for exploring stakeholders' relations, focusing on the GPN concepts of network, territorial and societal embeddedness and corporate, collective and institutional power (Henderson et al., 2002; Hess, 2004; Hess and Coe, 2006; Coe, Dicken and Hess, 2008). To illuminate stakeholder credibility, GPN analysis is complemented by insights from sources of justification (Boltanski and Thévenot 1999; 2006; Thévenot 1995), and convention theory (Fold, 2000; Renard, 2003; Cidell and Alberts, 2006), combining these elements in a novel way. The analysis of shifting dynamics between the private sector and civil society also draws on Blowfield and Dolan's (2008) concept of 'stewards of virtue', questioning who is (considered) entitled to define what is justified, virtuous, worthwhile behaviour. Consequent repercussions for asymmetrical power relations between corporate and civil-society actors are reshaping network, societal and territorial embeddedness underpinning sustainability standards. Our synthesised conceptual framework facilitates analysis of power and embeddedness dynamics in production networks as more systematic, industry-led engagement with sustainability occurs. It offers a lens to question how sources of justification and credibility are being deployed in shifting landscapes involving civil society and industry, facilitating assessments of who benefits.

The paper draws on qualitative empirical research undertaken in Europe on sustainability in the cocoa–chocolate value chain between 2012 and 2018.[2] It involved a review of a wide range of publicly available private-sector, public-sector and civil-society sources. Fieldwork comprised key informant interviews with representatives of 11 private-sector and 13 civil-society organisations, and three focus-group discussions with consumers.[3] The paper focuses on Fairtrade due to its erstwhile status as one of the earliest and most common standards in cocoa.

The paper is organised as follows. Section two examines recent dynamics in cocoa sustainability programmes and particularly Fairtrade to set the paper's overall context. In section three, we build our analytical framework, combining GPN analysis of power and embeddedness with sources of justification

[2] The research was conducted independently of any individual standard-setter or company. Both authors were independently funded, cf. Acknowledgements.

[3] Additional fieldwork was undertaken in Nicaraguan and Ghanaian cocoa. However, this serves only as background for this paper, which focuses on tensions between civil-society and company-led initiatives within the main consumer markets. Findings at producer level are reported elsewhere [see Barrientos, 2014, 2019; Krauss, 2017, 2018].

and convention theory, a lens which we then apply to cocoa sustainability initiatives. Section four examines the expansion of corporate-led initiatives through three brief case-studies detailing major chocolate company sustainability programmes. These illustrate our argument that recent developments constitute a shift in terms of credibility, with repercussions for power and embeddedness; and by extension affecting who sets what priorities for implementing and upscaling sustainability initiatives in future. Section five concludes, exploring what shifting justification and credibility mean for sustainability in cocoa and more widely amid asymmetrical embeddedness and power dynamics.

2 SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMMES IN COCOA – QUO VADIS FAIRTRADE?

2.1 Mapping the cocoa sector: shifting sustainability dynamics

To set the context, it is important to explain the reasons for sustainability concerns increasing considerably in the cocoa sector. While precise estimates differ, the projection by one leading cocoa trader of a million-ton shortage of total cocoa volume by 2020 galvanised consensus among chocolate-confectionery actors that there was increasing risk of future cocoa demand, estimated at up to 5m tonnes, exceeding supply (Thornton, 2010; ICCO, 2012; Fountain and Hütz-Adams, 2015). Cocoa demand has not increased as rapidly as forecast (ICCO, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a, 2016c, 2018). Nevertheless, these projections of shortages, over and above consumer concerns, have triggered behavioural changes in companies in favour of large-scale engagement with 'sustainability' to safeguard supply.

On the supply side, socioeconomic, environmental and commercial factors are contributing to shortage projections and sustainability challenges. As cocoa prices have declined for decades, average farmer ages have been climbing and the livelihood is unattractive for younger generations (Hainmueller et al., 2011; Barrientos, 2019; Fountain and Hütz-Adams, 2015). Equally, there are questions on how to expand certification and capacity-building across millions of smallholders who are often unorganised and live in remote settings.[4] Cocoa only grows within 20 degrees latitude either side of the equator, requiring specific environmental conditions (WCF, 2012). Consequently, the areas conducive to cocoa are limited, and yield-maximising production that does not ensure sustainability cannot continue indefinitely. Also, the

[4] Author interview with the sourcing manager of a chocolate company in August 2014.

repercussions of climate change present challenges that are difficult to gauge (Läderach et al., 2011; Ofori-Boateng and Insah, 2014; Afriyie-Kraft, Zabel and Damnyag, 2020).

In addition to nervousness over projected shortages, the cocoa-chocolate sector has experienced significant concentration. First, two West African countries, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, usually contribute about 60% of the worldwide crop (ICCO, 2016b), with millions of smallholders harvesting individually small quantities. Second, cocoa processing and cocoa manufacturing are increasingly concentrated, with a handful of companies operating successive oligopolies (UNCTAD, 2008). It is estimated that in 2006 40% of world cocoa grindings were handled by four companies (UNCTAD, 2008: 23), with Cargill's 2015 acquisition of Archer Daniels Midland's chocolate business increasing concentration (Cargill, 2015). Among confectionery makers, Mondelēz, Nestlé, Mars, and Hershey's controlled 43% of the marketplace in 2010 (Candy Industry, 2010), and the top eight companies in 2016 occupied about half the market (Candy Industry, 2017).

In this challenging marketplace, companies' engagement with 'sustainability' has increased markedly. Traders-processors have increased their targets for sustainable sourcing, including 21% for Cargill and 13% for Barry Callebaut (Fountain and Hütz-Adams, 2015: 24; Hütz-Adams and Fountain, 2012: 10). Large-scale chocolate manufacturers Ferrero, Mars and Hershey's have pledged to use 100% sustainable cocoa by 2020 (Nieburg, 2012), with Mondelēz and Nestlé also setting ambitious targets.[5] To safeguard future supply, large-scale companies have sought to get closer to cocoa communities, some behaving more akin to nongovernmental organisations.[6] As commercial entities, they nevertheless need to cope with financial pressures in a concentrated, competitive chocolate-confectionery sector. Growing corporate engagement in diverse multi-stakeholder initiatives (Bitzer et al., 2012) includes the industry-wide CocoaAction plan (WCF, 2015). Some private-sector stakeholders feel that smallholders' geographical fragmentation across remote settings, as well as difficulties in delivering capacity development, pose profound challenges which sustainability certification alone cannot resolve.[7]

The scale of the challenge is also demonstrated by government commitments to promote sustainable cocoa, signalling to companies changed expectations and regulatory environments in important

[5] A more recent driver for companies to engage with sustainability initiatives have been the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (cf. e.g. UN Global Compact, 2016).
[6] Author interview with the representative of a research institute in November 2013 and with a civil-society representative in November 2018.
[7] Author interviews with a sourcing manager of a retail chain in August 2014 and with the sustainability manager of a chocolate company in January 2014.

cocoa markets. These include the Dutch government's commitment that 80% of cocoa imported into the Netherlands should be certified 'sustainable' by 2020, and the German government Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (IDH, 2015, 2017; GISCO, 2017). In this context, there has been a shift from cocoa sourced through independent civil-society certifiers towards cocoa sourced through dedicated in-house company 'sustainability' programmes as examined below. This has implications for established standards such as Fairtrade.

2.2 Implications for Fairtrade and sustainability standards

Fairtrade is one of the longest-established voluntary certification schemes and was the most common cocoa standard in the 2000s.[8] Its aim is to enable small-scale farmers to access markets with fairer returns than conventional trade (Renard, 2003; Raynolds, Murray and Taylor, 2004). Its social-movement roots have contributed to perceptions of independence and credibility among consumers. A 2015 survey across 15 countries showed that over 50% of consumers have seen the Fairtrade mark while shopping, and for over 80% of them it improved their perception of brands (GlobeScan, 2015). This trend is supported by focus-group discussions with consumers in Europe.[9] Fairtrade pays an agreed minimum price irrespective of world-market fluctuations, premiums in addition to market prices, while also providing access to credit, capacity development and farmer organisations (Nelson and Pound, 2009; Fairtrade Foundation, 2011; Fairtrade International, 2016).

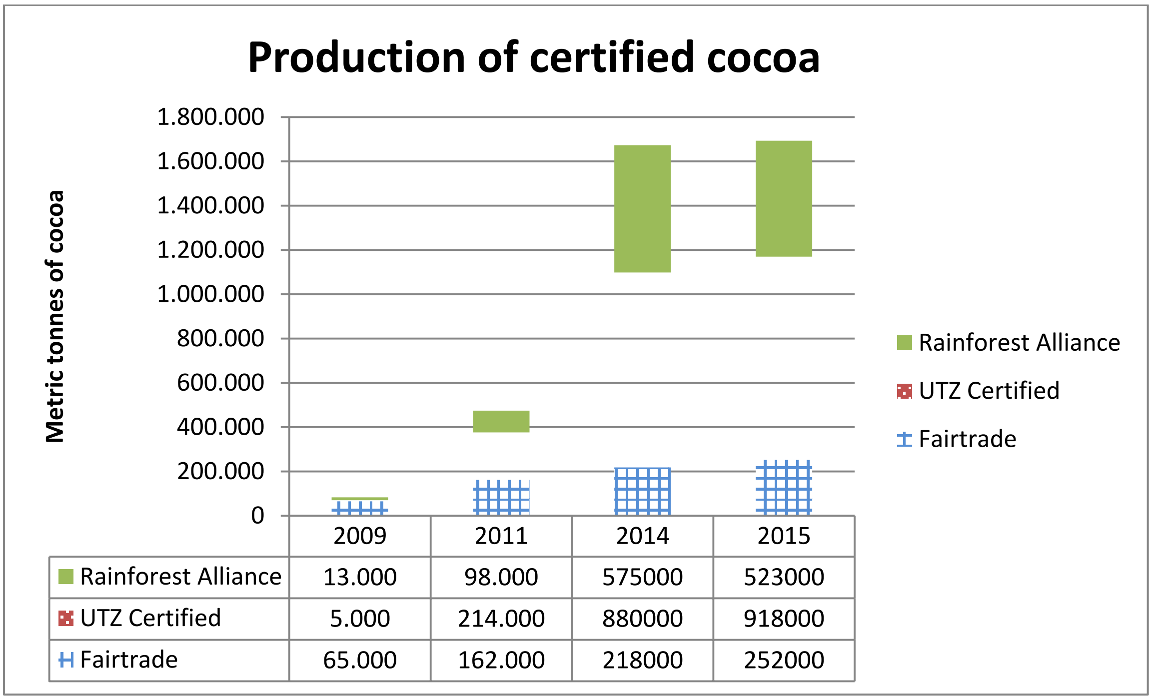
Fairtrade has had to navigate tensions between socio-environmental and commercial dimensions since its inception (Raynolds, 2017: 1486). Its social movement roots aimed to establish socio-political connections between the Global North and Global South (Renard, 2003), yet engaging with mainstream companies has meant striking a balance between ethical drivers and commercial pressures (Dolan, 2010; Davies and Tranchell, 2013; Mason and Doherty, 2015; Doherty, Smith and Parker, 2015). Raynolds, Murray and Wilkinson (2007) highlight the difficult balance between mainstreaming ethical standards so as to maximise fair(er) market opportunities for farmers in the Global South, and staving off co-optation of moral principles by the market drivers which they were conceived to oppose (Murray and Raynolds, 2007: 9–10). Yet the agri-food system's emphasis on cost and efficiency has exerted mounting pressure on such

[8] 'Fairtrade', one word capitalised, is the certification scheme of Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International, whilst 'fair trade' (two words, lower case) is an umbrella term covering a wider range of ethical trading schemes.
[9] Focus group discussion 1 with an environmental group, 05/12/2013 in Germany; focus group discussion 2 with a church group, conducted 23/04/2014 in UK; and focus group discussion 3 with the communications department of a non-food multinational 29/05/2014 in Germany.

'alternative' approaches (Raynolds and Wilkinson, 2007: 37). These competing narratives have materialised in differences of opinion between faith-based and alternative trade organisations (Barrientos, Conroy and Jones, 2007), and in splits e.g. of Fair Trade USA (formerly TransFair) from Fairtrade International (Tallontire and Nelson, 2013). Pressures on Fairtrade have increased due to mixed findings from impact studies, ranging between identifying material benefits for farmers (Chiputwa, Qaim and Spielman, 2015), and raising significant doubts about economic benefits (Oya et al., 2017). The ongoing 'scale vs. niche' debate counterbalances two positions: the desire to improve producers' market access (Wilkinson and Mascarenhas, 2007), and positions that equate expansion with dilution (Smith, 2008). This translates into striking a balance between commercial compromises to extend lesser improvements to more farmers, versus upholding stringent socio-environmental principles that benefit far fewer farmers.

Diverging motivations among sustainability actors led to UTZ and Rainforest Alliance (RA) being established as more market-driven alternatives to Fairtrade (Barrientos and Dolan, 2006; Raynolds, Murray and Heller, 2007; Renard and Pérez-Grovas, 2007). There are considerable differences between standards' requirements, with UTZ and RA providing a less demanding, less costly alternative to Fairtrade (KPMG, 2013). Fairtrade has now been overtaken by these other standards, as illustrated by the sharp rise since 2011 in UTZ and RA cocoa certification relative to Fairtrade (see Figure 1). The decision by RA and UTZ to merge under RA, announced in June 2017, will help rationalise diversity between standards organisations (Rainforest Alliance, 2017), but poses further challenges to Fairtrade certification.[10]

[10] For further details on differences between standards, e.g. costs, please see KPMG, 2012, and KPMG, 2013.



	2009	2011	2014	2015
Rainforest Alliance	13.000	98.000	575000	523000
UTZ Certified	5.000	214.000	880000	918000
Fairtrade	65.000	162.000	218000	252000

Figure 1: Production of certified cocoa for different certifiers. Source: Authors, based on Hütz-Adams and Fountain (2012); Fountain and Hütz-Adams (2015) for 2009 and 2011; Lernoud et al. (2017) for 2014-2015.

This has had implications for Fairtrade's corporate engagement. The cost of using Fairtrade is a concern for companies wanting to upscale sustainability.[11] One response by Fairtrade was to shift to a 'mass balance' system of accountability for cocoa, already in use by other certifiers. This allows buyers to use conventional cocoa for a certified chocolate bar as long as they purchase the equivalent quantity of Fairtrade cocoa for use elsewhere in their operations (Fairtrade International, 2017). The shift was deemed necessary to avoid market exclusion for certain cooperatives unable to safeguard physical traceability (Fairtrade Deutschland, 2012). The Fairtrade Cocoa Program was also introduced in 2014 to accommodate chocolate-confectionery companies not willing or able to source sugar through Fairtrade, with the seal confirming only that a product's cocoa was sourced from Fairtrade (Fairtrade International, n.d.; Fairtrade Foundation, 2014a, 2014b). These and other changes, such as varying stances on collaboration with large plantations and household brands, have been debated heavily, especially in the face of the expansion of other standards (Chocablog, 2013; UNGC, 2014; Lee, 2015; Subramanian, 2019).

Earlier civil-society-led principles have thus yielded to private-sector pressure to upscale Fairtrade cocoa volumes, resulting in company-led arrangements, examined in section 4. In terms of Gereffi,

[11] Author interviews with two cocoa industry key informants in September and November 2015.

Garcia-Johnson and Sasser's classification (2001: 57-58), who distinguish between first-party certification originating from the company itself, and third-party certification from an independent organisation, there has thus been a considerable shift. The rise of company-led 'sustainability' arrangements has implications for underlying power asymmetries between corporate and civil-society actors in this varied spectrum of initiatives, and their relative embeddedness in cocoa production. It also raises questions around who has the credibility to oversee sustainability initiatives. Before examining this further, the following section advances our analytical framework.

3 POWER, EMBEDDEDNESS AND CREDIBILITY IN GLOBAL PRODUCTION NETWORKS

Analysing the implications of the changing dynamics between civic-led and company-led initiatives for the credibility of sustainability standards requires deeper exploration of the corporate-societal dynamics of global production. The Global Production Network (GPN) lens provides a network-based framework that usefully captures the multi-scalar and multi-layered processes involving corporate and civil-society actors (Henderson et al., 2002; Coe et. al., 2008). The GPN lens includes a nuanced reflection of embeddedness and power relations that underpin tensions between corporate and civil-society engagement (Hess, 2004; Coe, Dicken and Hess, 2008; Coe, 2011). To capture the complex framing of credibility involving different guardians of sustainability, we further nuance the GPN analysis of power and embeddedness by drawing on worlds of justification and convention theory. This synthesised conceptual lens is designed to illuminate the complexities of sustainability and production networks. It enables a deeper analysis of tensions between the Fairtrade movement's original principles versus scaling up through private-sector-led sustainability initiatives in cocoa and between civil-society and corporate-led sources of credibility. It also facilitates critical exploration of the implications of these dynamics for power and embeddedness asymmetries. This conceptual lens is built and applied here in relation to the cocoa sustainability landscape, but also has relevance for wider agri-food sustainability initiatives.

3.1 Synthesising Global Production Networks, sources of justification and convention theory: credibility, power and embeddedness

GPN analysis takes embeddedness to comprise relationships, be they personal, social or economic, which situate stakeholders within networks, territories and societies. Following Hess (2004), societal embeddedness refers to how a stakeholder's roots and background, as well as the home location's regulatory environment, shape an actor's behaviour in a value chain. In cocoa, this would also extend to the degree to which they are engaged in the social dimensions of production, and can project or communicate societally ethical conduct to end consumers. Network embeddedness is understood to mean how essential a stakeholder is to the network. Given corporate concentrations in the cocoa sector (UNCTAD, 2008), network embeddedness provides a relevant criterion for investigating the relative dominance of private-sector versus civil-society actors and their interconnections with the 5m smallholders within production networks. Finally, territorial embeddedness refers to how well a stakeholder is anchored in a location (Henderson et al., 2002), i.e. how engaged they are with the multi-scalar terrains of production and consumption.

In the cocoa sector, embeddedness has traditionally been achieved through local civil-society organisations creating strong links with cocoa communities, with embeddedness relations often used in public-facing communication as sources of credibility. How stakeholders project or leverage their embeddedness in a network, territory or society underpins their ability to establish their own 'worth' and virtue. Some geographical research has predominantly interpreted perceptions of embeddedness advanced by Polanyi and Granovetter from a spatial point of view (Hess, 2004). This study goes beyond location by considering whether economic activity is embedded in society or vice versa in terms of which interests take precedence (Polanyi, 1957), whilst cognisant of the important interdependence of economic and social relations (Granovetter, 1985). In sum, embeddedness plays a considerable role in analysing tensions between private-sector and civil-society stakeholders, their implementation of commercial and socio-environmental priorities in production networks, as well as their reliance on different sources of credibility.

GPN analysis explores three dimensions of power: corporate as exerted by the private sector, the collective power of civil society, and institutional power of public-sector stakeholders (Henderson et. al., 2002). In analysing inherent inequalities within GPNs, Phillips (2017) extends this to intersections and tensions between: market power asymmetries (where corporate oligopolies dominate); social power asymmetries (in which inequality prevails and can be contested by collective action involving civil-society actors); and public power asymmetries (which shape interactions between wider institutions, political interests, and corporate governance of value chains). Power also involves the means to instigate in someone else a perception or behaviour (Weber, 2005), based not only on the actual exercise of power, but also the capacity to project perceptions onto others (Lukes, 2005). The ability to exercise power, overtly or covertly, is often predicated upon asymmetries in bargaining position, wealth or standing. Intersections between market, social and political power asymmetries can also shape bargaining positions and contestation between corporate and civil-society actors in complex and multi-scalar ways at global, national and local levels (Herman, 2019).

In this study, we analyse links between a stakeholder's ability to exercise power and their embeddedness in network, society or territory. This contributes to analysis of GPNs' relational aspects as complex processes that can involve both alliances and contestation across global, national and local scales (Barrientos, 2014; Hughes et al., 2014; Herman, 2019). How these play out is underpinned not only by tensions between asymmetries of market, social and political power (Phillips, 2017), but also by which stakeholders (corporate, civil-society and/or public) are able to influence perceptions of what counts as 'sustainable'.

In addition to the GPN lens, both sources of justification and convention theory can shed additional light on credibility and concomitantly on the complex interdependencies of power and embeddedness. The work of Boltanski and Thévenot (1999; 2006) emphasises that 'worlds', understood as sources of justification, will coexist in society, determining stakeholders' priorities, perceptions of worth and ultimately behaviours. They identify six different worlds and sources of justification, outlined in Table 1 as worlds characterised by inspiration, domestic, renown, civic, market and industrial dimensions.

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World	Sources of justification and parameters determining worth
World of inspiration	Relationship to external sources from which all possible worth flows
Domestic world	Place in the network of dependencies and hierarchies

World of renown	Reputation; conventional signs of public esteem
Civic world	Common, public interest; giving up particular interest for common good
Market world	Wealth, seizing opportunities of the market
Industrial world	Efficiency, measured on scale of professional capabilities

Table 1: Worlds, sources of justification and parameters determining worth

Source: Authors based on Boltanski and Thévenot (1999; 2006); Thévenot 1995.

Expanding on this approach, convention theory posits that, given diverse sources of justification and hence stakeholder priorities, there will be considerations within economic decision-making particularly in agri-food which are not neatly encapsulated by price, necessitating instead an emphasis on quality (Renard, 2003). What makes it particularly useful to complement GPN analysis is its insistence that conceptions of 'quality' may differ between network stakeholders, requiring negotiation (Fold, 2000; Cidell and Alberts, 2006). These understandings are usually not mutually exclusive, but can coexist or overlap (Ponte and Gibbon, 2005). Convention theory defines four regimes governing the determinants of food quality (Fold, 2000; Renard, 2003; Cidell and Alberts, 2006):

1. Market-based definitions predominantly guided by price, linked to Boltanski and Thévenot's market world;
2. Industry-based regimes that prioritise the existence of standardised physical features, i.e. the industrial world;
3. Domestic-based regimes, which largely follow brand name or geographical provenance, i.e. connecting to domestic world and renown;
4. Civic-based regimes that rely on environmental and societal aspects of production and links between consumers and producers, which link to the civic and the world of inspiration.

A GPN approach combined with convention theory provides insights into sustainability initiatives by exploring the multi-scalar intersection of embeddedness, power and credibility, and how tensions have evolved within and across these dimensions. Companies' profound network embeddedness, premised on asymmetries of corporate power, led to the rise of Fairtrade as a channel for civil-society contestation of conventional trading relations that have long disadvantaged smallholder farmers. In the process, Fairtrade has drawn on civic-based understandings of quality rooted in the world of inspiration through its societal embeddedness in the Global North, and territorial embeddedness in cocoa production communities, with the civil-society stakeholder's renown and collective power somewhat acting as a balance between farmers and companies. At the same time, these collaborations iteratively benefited the private sector in enhancing its societal and territorial embeddedness and domestic-based standing. However, the mainstreaming of Fairtrade and shifting alliances with corporates also involved compromises on founding values, and arguably reflect a perpetuation of market and social power asymmetries between stakeholders and their market-based, industry-based or civic-based logics, resulting in tensions within the Fairtrade movement (Herman, 2019). Tensions and alliances within and between civil-society and corporate stakeholders have shaped the evolution of conventions, and the regimes governing 'quality' as sustainability standards have become more established. However, the persistence of power asymmetries underpins a corporate-led sustainability agenda that could enhance corporate power and network embeddedness through schemes largely devised in-house which notionally rely on civic-based logics, but prioritise market and industry interests. At the same time, it could also continue to generate new forms of civil-society contestation, and tensions within and between GPN stakeholders.

3.2 Cocoa sustainability's changing landscape: whose credibility and voices count?

Combined, this analytical lens helps provide insights into recent shifts in cocoa sustainability initiatives. Sustainability standards such as Fairtrade that rely heavily on ethical justification have drawn predominantly on civic and domestic norms around trust, place attachment and socio-environmental benefits, as well as connectedness between consumers and producers. Recent shifts in cocoa sustainability favour market, industry and domestic-based understandings of quality, which are under greater company control. These prioritise market logics on price, industrial features that can be standardised and the domestic-based aspect of key brand names, over ethical commitments to socio-environmental aspects of production. The shift towards greater private-sector involvement may also be an acknowledgement of the insufficiency of past efforts to improve socio-environmental production conditions for the majority of cocoa smallholders. These dynamics are not unique to cocoa, but also relevant to other agri-food products such as coffee, where corporate engagement in sustainability initiatives is also growing (Daviron and Ponte, 2005; Raynolds, Murray and Heller, 2007).

The pressure to act on sustainability has led to companies increasingly opting for models more akin to first-party certification than to third-party oversight, traditionally the domain of certifiers such as Fairtrade, with this prioritisation of market-based over civic-based rationales risking to exacerbate existing power asymmetries. In discussing 'stewards of virtue', Blowfield and Dolan (2008) question how and why organisations, particularly private-sector, can imprint a certain definition of virtue on public consciousness as arbiters of justice, thereby granting legitimacy. This dynamic similarly can turn ethical seals into stand-ins for consumers in their connections with producers, allowing shoppers to 'care for' producers at a distance amid or despite a multitude of differential, complex power relations (Naylor, 2018; Krauss, 2018). Questions thus need to be asked about whose power, embeddedness and credibility are the crucial factors in creating virtue and legitimacy on what is 'sustainability' amid considerable power and embeddedness asymmetries in a sector dominated by successive oligopolies.

Tensions between mission-driven and market-driven rationales (Raynolds, 2009) and questions around the future trajectory of fair trading are not new (e.g. Barrientos, Conroy and Jones, 2007; Doherty, Davies and Tranchell, 2013). We advance this analysis by examining how far recent developments in the cocoa sector around sustainability standards and particularly Fairtrade reproduce or differ from past commercial–civic tensions. In particular, how do tensions evolve at the intersection of sources of credibility, power and embeddedness in a context of needing to scale up sustainability to address socio-environmental challenges, predicted supply shortages, and greater government requirements on certification?

4 COCOA SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES: SOURCES OF JUSTIFICATION, POWER AND EMBEDDEDNESS RELATIONS

The new cocoa landscape involves diverse 'sustainability' arrangements creating complex implications in terms of whose credibility and worth matter, and what those tensions mean for the relational interplay of power and embeddedness. Building on insights from the overview of the broader cocoa sector and the analytical framework, this section examines three company-led cocoa sustainability initiatives which exemplify some emerging tensions. Two – Mondelēz and Nestlé – represent large-scale chocolate manufacturers who began with a commitment to Fairtrade, but have gradually refocused towards stronger in-house oversight. The other – Lindt – is a chocolate manufacturer that has historically relied on an in-house programme. Details of each company's initiative are presented in turn, followed by an analysis of power, embeddedness and sources of credibility. This lays the groundwork for the following section's wider analytical observations on power and embeddedness relations in the sustainability landscape.

4.1 Mondelēz and Cocoa Life

Mondelēz established its company-spanning cocoa sustainability initiative 'Cocoa Life' in late 2012, pledging to invest US$400 million over ten years with a view to supporting 200,000 farmers and one million people in cocoa-farming communities through commitments covering 'farming', 'community', 'livelihoods', 'youth' and 'environment' (Mondeléz, 2013a-e; Cocoa Life, 2013). The initiative is active in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, India, Brazil and the Dominican Republic, building on ties with the United Nations Development Programme, the Worldwide Fund for Nature, and several NGOs (Mondelēz, 2016). For the UK, the 'Cocoa Life' programme continued the pre-existing 'Cadbury Cocoa Partnership' launched before Mondelēz's acquisition of Cadbury in 2010 (Barrientos, 2015; Cadbury, 2017). The Cadbury Cocoa Partnership prioritised the family company's links with Ghana and improving farmer incomes via a community-based approach (Cadbury Cocoa Partnership, 2008). From 2009, under the Cadbury Cocoa Partnership, all Cadbury Dairy Milk bars sold in the UK had Fairtrade certification (Barrientos, 2015; Cadbury, 2017).

In November 2016, Mondelēz-Cadbury announced that previously Fairtrade-certified chocolate would no longer bear the Fairtrade logo on the front of bars in the UK. Instead, the back of the pack would testify to a new partnership between Mondelēz and Fairtrade Foundation, which would roll out Cocoa Life to all Cadbury products in the British Isles by 2019 (Mondelēz, 2016). Mondelēz's President for Northern Europe characterised the move as an opportunity to become an accountable partner for farmers rather than just a buyer (Mondelēz, 2016), extending Cocoa Life to far more beneficiaries compared with previous Fairtrade certification. In August 2017, it was announced that Mondelēz's formerly all-organic, all-Fairtrade Green & Black's brand, acquired by Cadbury in 2005, would launch a non-certified chocolate bar that would, however, be 'Cocoa Life' (Ecovia Intelligence, 2017). UK Cadbury Dairy Milk bars lost their front-of-pack Fairtrade certification in 2017, replaced by the 'Cocoa Life' logo

(Fairtrade Foundation, 2018b); Cocoa Life's partnership with Fairtrade Foundation was subsequently referenced back-of-the-pack, but without the Fairtrade logo (Fairtrade Foundation, 2018b).

The new chocolate packaging is emblematic of a move from Fairtrade as the primary source of civic-based credibility to a scheme in which Mondelēz and Cocoa Life are dominant, but also of a significant shift on the niche-scale spectrum. In the UK, both Mondelēz-Cadbury and Fairtrade Foundation emphasise that the certifier remains involved in overseeing the scheme, albeit differently (Fairtrade Foundation, 2016; Mondelēz, 2016; Fairtrade Foundation 2018a, b)[12]: rather than monitoring a small share of Mondelēz's overall cocoa volume, according to Fairtrade Foundation, FLOCERT verifies Cocoa Life's supply chains and will ensure that five times as much UK chocolate will be from 'sustainable' sources (Fairtrade Foundation, 2018a, b)[13].

This moves away from a civic-based scheme which was also a niche commitment, to significant, corporate-led upscaling in terms of reach, which relies predominantly on domestic-based and industry-based logics. While there are various civil-society organisations, including Fairtrade Foundation, involved in overseeing and implementing Cocoa Life, Mondelēz's considerable corporate power causes some to doubt whether the civil-society partners could leverage their own collective power in opposition to the lead corporation (Doherty, 2016). This constellation recalls the broader market and social power asymmetries within the cocoa sector, while confirming multiple and partly contradictory dynamics in the interplay between power and embeddedness. The viability of the arrangement is predicated on diverse civil-society support, as confirmed by the plethora of NGO partners for Cocoa Life. While there is a move towards a stronger reliance on the domestic world of renown, i.e. Mondelēz's own scheme 'Cocoa Life', the civic stewards of virtue and their credibility nevertheless still feature. Fairtrade Foundation's continued involvement is likely to heighten Mondelēz's societal embeddedness with consumers in the UK, while boosting the company's own territorial and network embeddedness vis-à-vis cocoa communities. Growers no longer obtain independent Fairtrade certification, but work within Mondelēz's Cocoa Life. With the latter's logo front-of-pack, to what extent does Cocoa Life become the steward of virtue when it comes to defining what constitutes ethical production? A key source of justification in this new phase is Mondelēz's own renown and reputation in standing in for growers in relations with consumers (Naylor,

[12] Interview with civil-society representative, November 2018.
[13] Interview with civil-society representative, November 2018.

2018), partly replacing the civic virtues which Fairtrade had brought to the table. While convention theory's civic-based regime continues to play a role through the involvement of Fairtrade Foundation, domestic-based considerations are highly significant through a corporate brand lending credibility, as are market and industry-based considerations around scale and price.

4.2 Nestlé's Cocoa Plan

Nestlé is also among the handful of brand-name chocolate companies controlling about half the global retail market (Candy Industry, 2017). In 2009, the cocoa used for four-finger KitKat was switched to Fairtrade for the UK market (Fairtrade Foundation, 2009) and Nestlé's 'Cocoa Plan' was launched to promote sustainability in the sector (Nestlé, 2009). The company has committed to investing over EUR100,000,000 (CHF110m) by 2020 in its cocoa-related initiatives (Nestlé, 2017a), aiming to improve social conditions, boost incomes, reduce child labour and gender inequality while safeguarding high-quality cocoa (Nestlé, 2017b). The Nestlé Cocoa Plan website, detailing its ongoing operations, highlights Nestlé's contribution to the endeavour. Far less prominent is the role of NGO and certifying partners, including Fairtrade and UTZ, or the Fair Labor Association's work of auditing child labour issues (Nestlé Cocoa Plan, 2017). Some documents detailing the scheme (e.g. Nestlé Cocoa Plan, 2012) do not mention *any* certifiers. Whereas the Nestlé Cocoa Plan website used to provide details of percentages obtained from growers under the Cocoa Plan or farmers certified by Fairtrade or UTZ (Nestlé Cocoa Plan 2013a, b, c), the focus is now more strongly on its in-house plan. In terms of quantities sourced under the Plan, the 2015 figure exceeded the target of 100,000 tonnes, equating to 25% of Nestlé's supply, with Cocoa Plan-sourced quantities to increase to 175,000 by 2018 (Nestlé, 2017b). Thus upscaling has been given priority in terms of Cocoa Plan commitments, moving away from the niche Fairtrade certification of four-finger KitKat. In the UK as of 2018, only the previously Fairtrade-certified four-finger KitKat still references Fairtrade back-of-pack through the Fairtrade Cocoa Program; front-of-pack only references the Nestlé Cocoa Plan, which is prominent front-of-pack on diverse Nestlé chocolate products.

Analytically, there are some parallels, but also differences compared with Mondelēz's strategy. Nestlé's moving KitKat to Fairtrade in the UK was a well-publicised measure in 2009, with Fairtrade or UTZ still featuring as sources of justification and credibility over the following few years as detailed above. In both cases, there is a question to what degree the associations linger as positives in consumers' mind, boosting the company's societal embeddedness. By 2019, however, the source of credibility had grown less external and civic in terms of certifying partners playing a trust-building role. It is now the Cocoa Plan, advertised prominently on the front of chocolate products, which is to inspire confidence. Increasingly, despite continuing its collaboration with Fairtrade for some KitKat products on the British Isles, Nestlé also seems to be relying on its own brand's renown and the company's corporate power rather than independent third-party certification. Akin to Mondelēz, the programme prioritising the Nestlé brand limits alternative selling options for cocoa communities. Cocoa grown under the requirements of the Nestlé Cocoa Plan (in contrast to, say, full-blown Fairtrade certification) is unlikely to attract many other buyers beyond Nestlé, or obtain extra income elsewhere given limited transferability. This move boosts the company's network embeddedness further, making it even more essential to cocoa communities.

There is thus an interesting interdependence with societal and territorial embeddedness, which had previously been attained through third-party certification. Instead, corporate power and boosted network embeddedness are to substitute for NGO and certifying bodies' credibility in furthering the company's own territorial, network and societal embeddedness. As market-based considerations such as controlling supply becoming more important, increasing direct collaboration with communities rather than using an independent certifier as an intermediary also brings cocoa communities closer to the company, while boosting corporate power and heightening network embeddedness in response to the wider sector challenges, like many major companies. Again, there is a shift away from convention theory's civic-based regime of ethical requirements being their chief source of justification. The domestic-based regime of prioritising a brand name's attractiveness is just as important as the industrial aspects of safeguarding standardisation and the world of renown in a scheme which the company largely defines. Given the company's history of being boycotted by certain consumers for various perceived moral and environmental infractions (Nestlé, 2018), this is an interesting choice[14]. As with Mondelēz, there is an aspiration to shift away from a niche commitment towards greater scale, and a stronger emphasis on private-sector, domestic-based credibility compared with the prior, smaller-scale collective power of civic-based independent certification.

[14] Public engagement event with chocolate-consuming public, June 2018.

4.3 Lindt & Sprüngli's Cocoa Farming Program

Lindt & Sprüngli, unlike Nestlé and Mondelēz, opted for a programme mainly devised in-house from the outset, launching a partnership with cocoa trader Armajaro and the public-sector Ghana Cocoa Board in 2008 (Lindt, 2017a). The 'Lindt & Sprüngli Cocoa Farming Program' encompasses traceability, training and internal monitoring, improvement activities including farmer and community development. Since 2015, verification is undertaken by the Forest Trust, an environmental charity supporting companies to transform supply chains (Lindt, 2017c: 16), rather than by common certification bodies in cocoa. Lindt combines this in its public communication with the aspiration that '[e]veryone who is involved in the success of LINDT should be treated fairly' (Lindt, 2017b: para 1). With traceability and a voluntary price premium Lindt says it pays per tonne of cocoa purchased, the programme parallels certifiers' efforts in various ways, albeit without a well-known certification label lending its credibility. In addition to the on-going independent verification, the aim is for Lindt's global cocoa supply chain to be traceable and verified by 2020 (Lindt, 2017b). The programme has been expanded to include Ecuador as well as Madagascar, aiming to safeguard comprehensive traceability of the entire supply chain by 2020 (Lindt, 2017c). The rationale for favouring an in-house scheme throughout is that the company prefers to go its own way (Nieburg, 2017), although its lack of formal, third-party certification may have contributed to its coming under fire from consumer groups urging it to stop buying cocoa from illegal plantations in protected areas (Myers, 2018).

When viewed through a GPN lens, there are both parallels and differences with Nestlé and Mondelēz. An effort has been made to involve a public-sector stakeholder, the Ghana Cocoa Board and its institutional power, and Lindt is a member of the United Nations' Global Compact (Lindt, 2017c). This somewhat makes up for the absence of named certifying bodies overseeing the effort, with territorial embeddedness in Ghana as well as consumers' positive associations aided by public-sector presences.[15] The complex relations between corporate, collective and institutional power, and territorial, network and societal embeddedness thus surface again. The private-sector stakeholder's corporate power and network embeddedness provide leverage because of its importance to the network, with farmers again monitored

[15] Focus group discussion 1 with an environmental group, conducted on 5 December 2013, Germany, and focus group discussion 2 with a church group, conducted on 23 April 2014, UK.

for compliance with a company scheme. In 2017, the company reported that 79% of all cocoa beans sourced were now traceable and externally verified under its Cocoa Farming Program (Lindt, 2017c: 16). As noted, Lindt, unlike Nestlé and Mondelēz, has never had a third-party certifier, but instead prioritised compliance with in-house standards from early in its sustainability engagement, marking less of a shift; nevertheless, its model appears to exemplify the template for the recent phase of cocoa sustainability. Some civic-based elements are present in the public-sector involvement and external verification. However, trust in Lindt as well as traceability and monitoring play a major role. Given Lindt's high-quality reputation among consumers, the world of renown is relevant, alongside the domestic aspect of brand-name credibility and the industrial element of standardisation. The redefinition of what matters by relying on brand name over independent certification, which is implicit in this shift, is thus linked to the wider dynamics in the sector.

In sum, in response to cocoa-sector challenges, these shifts exemplify the broader trend of companies towards a spectrum of sustainability arrangements that go beyond traditional civil-society certification as major sources of credibility. Mondelēz now relies on greater scale in cooperation with Fairtrade, but without full Fairtrade certification, while Nestlé promotes its Cocoa Plan in association with a wider array of stakeholders; Lindt has long taken a more independent approach. The role of stewards of virtue pivots towards the companies and away from civic initiatives, giving companies greater sway over setting sustainability standards within global production networks. To upscale at reasonable cost to themselves, these companies no longer rely on full-fledged civil-society certification. Although civic considerations and Fairtrade's societal embeddedness and credibility continue to play roles, the focus on company-led rather than on independent civic third-party certification means heightened network embeddedness and power for the corporate partner vis-à-vis smallholders, exacerbating power and embeddedness asymmetries. It remains to be seen whether company reputations will suffice to inspire trust in a consumer environment increasingly dominated by fervent and confrontational exchanges on social media. The final section situates these empirical and analytical considerations in the wider debates.

5. COMPANY-LED SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES: SHIFTING DYNAMICS, REAFFIRMING POWER ASSYMETRIES?

Building on the above cocoa examples, we argue that these empirical and analytical considerations are relevant to evolving tensions at the intersections of: firstly power and embeddedness relations in sustainability initiatives; secondly sources of credibility, and finally the broader trajectory between niche, civil-society-led certification versus scaled-up, private-sector-led efforts.

The process of change from traditional certification towards company-led sustainability initiatives has been occurring on a spectrum and over a prolonged period. Section 2 discussed the trajectory in cocoa sustainability, followed by empirical case-studies in section 4. In combination, the findings suggest that, while a spectrum of 'sustainability' arrangements persists in terms of whose credibility, power and embeddedness drive initiatives, there has been a shift from civil-society-led initiatives towards more corporate-led initiatives, exacerbating existing asymmetries of power and embeddedness while shifting predominant sources of credibility. This suggests that company 'galvanisation' resulting from predicted future cocoa shortages, plus socio-environmental challenges and government import requirements, have caused a re-evaluation. For companies, seeking greater control over sustainable supply now outweighs previously ascribed benefits of independent civic certification in terms of credibility, territorial and societal embeddedness. This also means that companies are leveraging their own network embeddedness through their corporate power to implement company-driven initiatives, thereby replacing NGO and civil-society's societal and territorial embeddedness.

This dynamic is illustrated in Figure 2, where the x-axis shows the predominant reliance on different convention theory regimes; the y-axis shows whose power and embeddedness are driving initiatives (on the left) and the scale targeted (on the right). The axes should be understood as continua rather than distinct categories, with this fluidity also expressed by the phases being represented as clouds. Building on the conceptual and empirical discussions, it would appear that, while earlier, civil-society-led initiatives relied quite heavily on civic considerations, the most recent company-driven initiatives increasingly draw on domestic-based and market-based regimes, while targeting greater scales (cf. Figure 2):

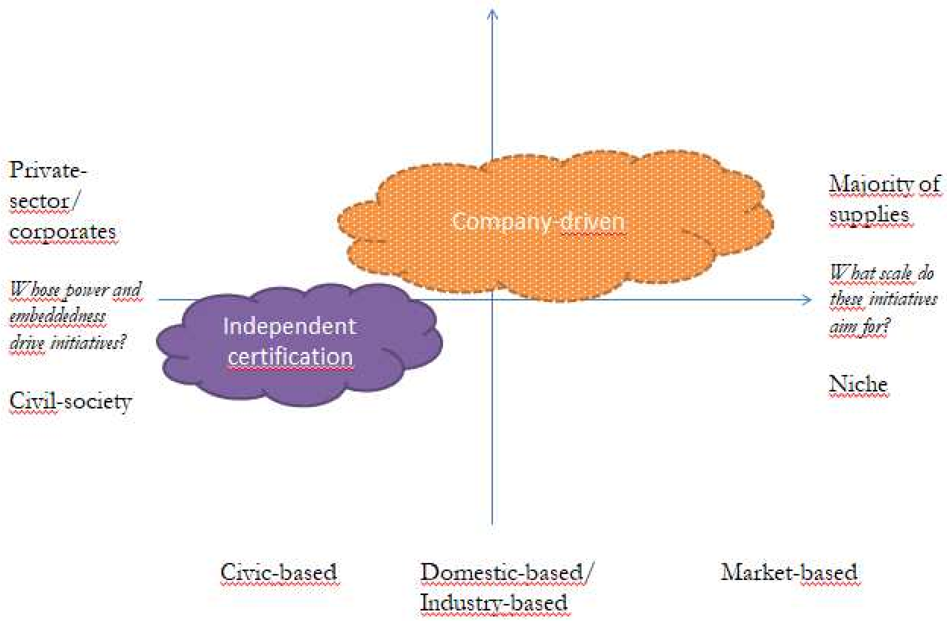

Figure 2: Power and embeddedness driving cocoa sustainability initiatives over time (left) and what scale initiatives aim for (right), distinguishing between company-driven initiatives and independent certification. Source: Authors.

Given this backdrop, there is a need to reflect on tensions and relational interdependencies between different facets of embeddedness and power. For instance, companies' embeddedness in a network, and thus that network's dependency on their capacity as a sales outlet, contrasts sharply with the relative insignificance of fragmented cocoa producers. As long as there is cocoa to buy, individual producers are largely interchangeable because of their small production volumes. In contrast to companies' high corporate power and network embeddedness, producers' low network embeddedness and fragmentation prevents them from projecting their collective power even at a time when their stakes, given shortage projections, should be rising (Krauss, 2017). Equally, given Fairtrade's beginnings as a social movement, there is widespread societally embedded awareness of and respect for the standard as discussed above (Fairtrade Foundation, 2014c; GlobeScan, 2015). By contrast, companies such as Nestlé have long faced public scepticism and even boycotts. A domestic-based understanding of worth, through reference to the specific Nestlé brand name, had been considered less powerful for enhancing embeddedness than an affiliation with the civic world. The question is thus whether the move away from independent oversight by certifiers as stewards of virtue and towards private-sector-dominated initiatives suggests that companies are confident in using their own brand as a credibility booster?

It appears power and embeddedness are linked through an interplay of mutually constitutive and interdependent, but also somewhat adversarial relationships. To a degree, all three types of embeddedness (network, societal and territorial) are predicated on stakeholders collaborating, rendering these relationships liable to change should one actor, on the strength of their own power, choose to challenge another actor by relying on their own brand, reputation or civic engagement. Persisting inequalities in the cocoa sector linked to asymmetries in market and social power, low incomes and environmental degradation, even after the advent of 'cocoa sustainability', have motivated some stakeholders to follow their own strategies. Some pursue business models which allow farmers to be shareholders, maintaining close ties to civil society or a 100% independently certified range.[16] These stakeholders choose to implement initiatives built jointly between private-sector and civic actors with predominantly civic-based motivations, with implications for territorial, societal and network embeddedness and a more equitable distribution of corporate and collective power across GPNs. Some criticise the major cocoa players for pursuing a different strategy, aiming to enhance their own power and embeddedness through self-devised cocoa programmes and plans, a strategy which prioritises their own reputation, renown and embeddedness rather than certifiers' or civil society's (Doherty, 2016; Divine, 2017).

In terms of convention theory and credibility in sustainability, these observations raise questions whether recent dynamics suggest a shift from a civic-based to a domestic-based world by powerful commercial stakeholders. Our synthesised analytical framework, drawing on GPN, sources of justification and convention theory, helped emphasise a shifting sustainability landscape in terms of whose credibility and voices count, reaffirming or exacerbating power and embeddedness asymmetries. While companies generally attempt to use civil-society partners to retain societal and territorial embeddedness, the former are increasingly serving as a source of credibility and steward of virtue. Company-driven initiatives are thus shifting attention towards the domestic-based regime, with the company's own brand name increasing in importance. Time for these schemes to be operational, and further research need to establish whether, in terms of convention theory (Renard, 2003), a domestic understanding of quality now supersedes the civil-

[16] An example is Divine Chocolate, part-owned by the Ghanaian farmer cooperative Kuapa Kokoo.

society-based, civic sources of credibility on which they formerly relied. The rise of corporate-led arrangements equally is redefining what 'industrial' regimes mean, as the points of reference for compliance are specifically the company's own ideas of what constitutes quality and virtue, thereby limiting alternative sales outlets for growers.

This raises questions especially about the implications for growers given inherent market power asymmetries. Civil-society certification, in schemes such as Fairtrade with a specific socio-political mission, set out to broaden growers' market access and empower them against the inequities of international trade. It appears that the fear of cocoa shortages has companies increasingly opting for large-scale schemes primarily devised in-house, with market-based and industry-based considerations moving up in prioritisation. While this creates more choice for consumers, it also presents complex challenges around capacity-building and logistics for farmers and cooperatives[17]. Moreover, this calls into question two key benefits which conventional wisdom ascribed to certification: broader market access combined with a greater voice for growers (Doherty, 2016; Divine, 2017). It also raises questions as to whether scaling up sustainability initiatives *de facto* exposes producers to more adverse purchasing practices given the market power of buyers, as found in other sectors (Herman, 2019).

In terms of how this speaks to broader debates about trajectories in cocoa sustainability, our findings are relevant to debates over niche, civil-society-led versus scaled-up, private-sector-led initiatives as a continuation of tensions between commercial and ethical rationales within Fairtrade. Although outcomes are too early to assess, this trend is likely to further drive tensions between stakeholders advocating more stringent socio-environmental standards, and those advocating compromise to scale up initiatives and attract more commercial partners (Mason and Doherty, 2015). Mondelēz's and Nestlé's shift from full-scale certification could be perceived as part of a wider pattern of Fairtrade losing ground in the cocoa sector, with companies appearing to move away from using its unique socio-political premise for certification (Doherty, 2016). Conversely, public-sector and civil-society entities, including Fairtrade, have a key role to play in upholding the importance of civic-based, socio-ecological considerations vis-à-vis commercial considerations including market-based supply security.

[17] Author interviews with seven cocoa producers and four representatives of cooperatives in February and March 2014.

This dynamic raises broader questions about reconciling different sustainability priorities in light of persistent power and embeddedness asymmetries. Fairtrade's validation of Mondelēz's shift (Fairtrade Foundation, 2016) cites the greater number of farmer beneficiaries from Cocoa Life than from the previous smaller-scale certification. However, the potential risks from increasing corporate power through company-dominated initiatives have been questioned (Doherty, 2016). Equally, whether corporate-driven schemes will satisfy regulatory requirements remains to be seen following the Dutch government's commitment to 'sustainable' cocoa certification from 2020, given the significance of the Netherlands as a trading and processing base for cocoa. This reflects shifting forms of institutional embeddedness, as public policy (which was significantly reduced in the 1980s under structural adjustment programmes) comes more to the fore in GPNs. Moreover, the governments of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire introduced a minimum price for forward sales of cocoa beans in June 2019 for the 2020/21 season (Myers, 2019). Both interventions from Global North and Global South governments raise questions as to whether and how asymmetries in public power will play out in the future governance of sustainability standards. It remains to be seen to what extent such institutional-public power interventions can redress power and embeddedness asymmetries in favour of cocoa farmers, which requires future research.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the extent to which the changing dynamics in cocoa sustainability between civil-society standards and corporate-led initiatives exemplify larger shifts away from civil-society sources of credibility, and how this is affecting the trajectory of cocoa sustainability and specific standards such as Fairtrade. It has argued that the increasing reliance on corporate-led cocoa sustainability initiatives constitutes a significant shift in terms of sources of credibility which risks exacerbating persisting power and embeddedness asymmetries. Building on GPNs' analytical dimensions of power and embeddedness complemented by convention theory, sources of justification and 'stewards of virtue', the paper analysed who can project sustainability priorities onto initiatives. . This novel combination of conceptual approaches, designed to illuminate the nuances of interdependent, asymmetric power and embeddedness relations, informed our investigation of the trajectories of three company-led sustainability programmes in the cocoa sector, featuring major chocolate brand names as examples of different positions along the spectrum of who drives sustainability initiatives. Although not the focus of this paper, the analysis has relevance to other agri-food products where private sector engagement in sustainability initiatives is growing.

This paper has raised some far-reaching questions on the tensions and interdependencies connecting civic and corporate stakeholders active in the sustainability sphere. Inherent tensions arise within all types of sustainability initiatives due to the dichotomy between commercial, market-driven considerations prioritising supply security, and ethical motivations that originally gave rise to sustainability concerns. Given abiding power asymmetries between private-sector and civil-society stakeholders in cocoa, as in other commodities, these tensions have only intensified as corporate-led initiatives have come to the fore, and these initiatives' priorities focus more on market-based regimes than on the civic-based end of the spectrum. These tensions also reflect longstanding debates in fair trading between its civic, socio-political roots, and market-based priorities. As the trajectory of cocoa sustainability appears to point towards ever more corporate-led initiatives, with varying degrees of Fairtrade involvement, these tensions are likely to intensify. Recent involvement by governments in the Global North and South suggest that tensions will continue to play out on a wider stage, involving private-sector, public-sector and civil-society and complex, interconnected dynamics of power and embeddedness.

The paper's observations can be summarised under three interconnected themes. First, the study emphasised that power and embeddedness are intertwined in various ways, with companies leveraging their market power and significant network embeddedness to increase control over production and secure sustainability of supply, thereby potentially displacing the social power of civil-society societal and its territorial embeddedness. Second, our synthesised conceptual lens helped us link these GPN dimensions of power and embeddedness to nuanced observations on credibility and sources of justification. Where, previously, civic 'stewards of virtue' dominated in cocoa sustainability, there appears to be a shift towards promoting company names as domestic-based sources of credibility. Third, this is closely related to the observation of a trajectory leading away from civil-society as independent guardians of 'sustainability' towards company-led initiatives in a context where public actors (in both importing and exporting countries) are playing an increasing role. It is too soon, however, to assess the extent to which public power could play a role in redressing asymmetries between market and social power. All three points suggest that there is a risk of in-house 'sustainability' initiatives reaffirming the power asymmetries which ethical trading seals such as Fairtrade were established to challenge. This raises pertinent questions about the future not only of Fairtrade, but of 'sustainability initiatives' more broadly.

Further research is required on the outcomes for farmers of niche, civil-society certification versus scale, company-led sustainability schemes across a range of agri-food products, in order to review their implications in terms of social, environmental and economic benefits. At its core this future analysis needs to examine shifting intersections in power asymmetries between market, social and public actors as governments become more engaged. There is also a need to examine how the above-discussed shift may affect the future of Fairtrade given its uniquely socio-political roots, and whether this constitutes part of an inevitable trajectory of decline as 'sustainability' is mainstreamed and scaled up by business and governments (Subramanian, 2019). The cocoa sector, as an important, albeit not unique, case, provides insights into a rapidly changing terrain, in which the terms of engagement between companies and certification schemes, and sustainability initiatives more broadly, are being reshaped. In the long run, it remains unclear how underlying corporate and civil-society power and embeddedness asymmetries will affect whose credibility as 'stewards of virtue' prevails.

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