

Moralising Markets, Marketizing Morality. The Fair Trade Movement, Product Labeling and the Emergence of Ethical Consumerism in Europe

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I argue that the historical change in the organizational logic of the Fair Trade movement, embodied by Fair Trade labeling, has had an important effect on the emergence of ethical consumption in Europe. By establishing Fair Trade labels, the initial movement logic of political influence through education was supplemented and partly abandoned in favor of a market logic. Fair Trade movements in Western Europe differ in the way they organize and market fair traded goods. Drawing on organizational institutionalism and social movement theories of economic opportunity structures, it is elaborated how the emergence of a new organizational form and its underlying logic shape consumption patterns. Hypotheses are empirically tested using a quantitative multilevel design. Organizational data on national Fair Trade movements compiled from an organizational survey of the European Fair Trade Association are combined with individual-level survey data of the 1997 Eurobarometer for 12 European countries. Logistic hierarchical regression models reveal the crucial importance of the Fair Trade labels once diffused into consumer markets, controlling for organizational communication efforts as well as the number of distribution channels for individual Fair Trade consumption. Thus, adopting a market logic has been a powerful force in rendering Fair Trade successful.

KEYWORDS

Political consumption;
institutional logic; fair Trade;
social movement;
organization

Introduction

Fair Trade is a transnational social movement that seeks to alleviate poverty in the Global South by altering the price mechanism of consumer goods, paying a premium to producer groups above the market price. Besides this developmental goal, Fair Trade aims to educate consumers in the global north on the detrimental effects of the terms of trade in global market exchange. Originated in the 1960s in the Netherlands and United Kingdom, Fair Trade has become an immensely successful social movement since the early nineties, with high growth rates in turnover, rising consumer awareness across Europe, but also enhanced life chances of Fair Trade farmers in the south (FLO, 2010; Krier,

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2007; Nicholls & Opal, 2005). While older economic social movements, like the labor movement, are facing severe problems in mobilizing participants (Ebbinghaus & Visser, 1999), the “success story” (Krier, 2007) of Fair Trade is puzzling. While some observers argue that “the postmodern world is defined by consumption (rather than production)” (Ritzer, 2005) and means of politicizing consumption are driven by an increased reflexivity of citizens (Micheletti, 2003), this paper takes another perspective focusing on the organizational dimension of Fair Trade and the creation of a new organizational form, product certification. In labeling products according to Fair Trade standards, normative values become marketable. This process introduces a new institutional or field logic of marketization into the Fair Trade movement, embodied by certification organizations and their respective labels. The marketization also leads to a further moralization of markets, a process that goes hand in hand in the case of Fair Trade (Bode & Zenker, 2001). The main argument of this paper is that the new institutional logic of “marketization” has enabled Fair Trade to thrive, prioritizing the market idea to the civic educational logic. Moreover, different from existing accounts, which argue that value change and growing consumer affluence led to the growth of moral markets, I argue that the organizational strategies of Fair Trade labeling organizations have been detrimental for the rise of ethical consumption.

Most studies on Fair Trade consumption focus on actor-centered explanations, neglecting the organizational and institutional processes, as well as the structural context in which Fair Trade consumption is embedded (De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007; Schenk, 2019; Shaw et al., 2006; Sunderer & Rössel, 2012). As Fair Trade is an organized attempt on “civilizing” markets (Hirschman, 1982), the movements mobilizing repertoire might be of great importance in understanding Fair Trade’s success. First, referring to the idea of institutional logics and framing, the idea of marketization and its impact on Fair Trade consumption is outlined (Davis et al., 2005; Scott, 2008; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Next, drawing on social movement and organizational research, organizational mobilizing structures for Fair Trade are discussed. After discussing contextual and individual determinants of Fair Trade consumption and knowledge, theories are empirically tested, using a multilevel design on a cross-section of 12 European countries. Using data of the 1997 Eurobarometer, supplemented by national data on Fair Trade organization as well as information on economic and cultural context, logistic regression models are estimated. First, I find that marketization has a robust effect on individual Fair Trade consumption and knowledge controlling for individual determinants as well as movement age and alternative explanations. As “marketization” has been a deliberate route taken by the Fair Trade activists, it shows how a social movement directed against the capitalist market logic might successfully colonize the market in absorbing its logic to advance its

goals. A discussion of limitations, research gaps as well as recommendations for companies, NGOs, and the state conclude the article.

Theoretical background

In the social movement literature at least three types of explanations for movement mobilization can be discerned (McAdam et al., 1996a). The first approach centers on the political opportunities or environmental conditions for mobilization and the success of social movements (Meyer, 2004; Tarrow, 1994). The second theory focuses on the mobilization structures, provided by movement entrepreneurs (McCarthy, 1996; McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Finally, the third group of theories relates collective action to the framing efforts of movement activists (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow & Benford, 1988). The three approaches are hardly separable along clear lines, but overlap and are used in different combinations to explain the success of social movements (McAdam et al., 1996a). Since some years there has been a growing interest in combining insights from social movement research with organizational studies (Balsiger & Schiller-Merkens, 2019; Davis et al., 2005; King, 2007; Lounsbury, 1997; McCarthy, 1996; Rao, 1998; Rao et al., 2000). Both fields share a common interest in the organization of collective behavior, being it occupational conduct or protest participation of citizens. Bureaucratic forms of organizing are not only common in the former, but as movement theorists came to understand become, an ever larger part of interest or social movement organization's (SMOs) attempt to govern protest politics (McAdam & Scott, 2005). In such a perspective, political opportunities, framing and mobilizing structures can be understood as part of a deliberate organizational project by movement organizations to mobilize participants and successfully voice their interest. This is also done by altering the institutional logic through introducing labeling for consumer goods. In the following, I first will discuss the changing institutional logic of the Fair Trade movement and how this is altered by the Fair Trade movement, before turning to how social movement organizations come to create structures and frames conducive to diffusing Fair Trade. Next, I present some theoretical claims on the importance of economic and cultural opportunity structures and finally present some hypotheses about individual-level determinants of Fair Trade consumption and knowledge.

Organizational drivers of Fair Trade consumption

Marketization as an institutional logic driving fair trade

On way of synthesizing theories of social movements and organizational Sociology focuses on the role of institutional logics or field logics. Institutional logics can be defined as the "belief systems and associated practices that predominate in an organizational field" (Scott et al., 2000, p. 170).

McAdam and Scott (2005) note that the concept of institutional logics is somewhat akin to the notion of framing as “the collective processes of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediate between opportunity and action” (McAdam et al., 1996b, p. 2) in the social movement literature. Yet, framing is a more deliberate process of constructing certain meanings, while institutional logics are seen as externally given scripts and rationalities of organizational fields. According to Clemens (1996), frames and logics may be embodied by organizational forms, “which portrays problems as amenable to a particular type of actions” (p. 206). As forms are subject to change, frames and logics are changing consecutively. In the case of Fair Trade in the late 1980ies, Fair Trade movements started creating new organizational forms: certification organizations issuing product labels (Renard, 2003). New organizational forms can be characterized by “goals, authority relations, technologies and marketing strategy” rendering them distinct to other forms (Rao et al., 2000). Until the late 1980s the field of Fair Trade organizations was dominated by importing organizations, Worldshops and church groups. All of them were loosely coupled. In 1988 the Netherlands Fair Trade network, led by “Fair Trade Organisatie” found the first labeling organization with the label “Max Havelaar” (Fridell, 2004). This organizational form diffused fast throughout the neighboring countries, so that within the next ten years labeling organizations were founded in 10 other European countries. Yet, labels introduced a new logic into Fair Trade as they provide a clear and distinguishable signal, that product meets certain normative standards (Renard, 2003). Once critical of capitalist market exchange the Fair Trade movement by labeling goods commodified the standards itself (Fridell, 2007). In introducing labeling the “civic coordination” logic (Renard, 2003, p. 89) was supplemented or partially replaced by a market logic. This process will be called “marketization” here. “Marketization” refers to the process where a price gets attached to certain goods, previously not for sale. These goods become available for exchange between sellers and buyers and the price for them is determined by supply and demand (Ertman & Williams, 2005). Thus, “marketization” here does not mean that for instance, coffee from small-scale cooperatives in Latin America is for sale in western Worldshops, but that the Fair Trade standards of production and distribution, signaled by a Fair Trade label, receive a price and become identifiable and available on mass consumer markets. One could argue that this price is fixed and therefore not subject to supply and demand. However as a market for fair-traded goods emerged, a differentiation of goods and their respective price by competing providers (retailers) reflects this process (Davies, 2007).

Combining the dimensions of an organizational form with the idea of institutional or organizational logic, the change that occurred in the Fair Trade movement’s logics is depicted in an ideal type way in [Figure 1](#).

	Fair Trade Movement 60s to 80s	Fair Trade Movement 90s to today
Dominant logic	<i>“Civic coordination” logic</i>	<i>Market logic</i>
Dimensions of organizational form		
Goals	Network penetration, low output	Market penetration, high output
Authority relations	Embedded exchange	Disembedded, atomistic exchange
Technologies	Civic networks	Labelling
Marketing Strategy	Partisans, church members Handicrafts Low quality	Mass consumers Consumer commodities Medium to high quality

Figure 1. Changing institutional logics in the Fair Trade movement. Source: own depiction

From a civic logic that mainly targeted citizens, Fair Trade became a market movement that targeted consumers. The marketization process had a direct impact on the adoption of fair-traded goods by consumers, but also on the knowledge of Fair Trade. Institutional logics provide actors with some sense of agency and thus orient action (Meyer, 2010). Labels enable such agency, by sending clear signals and provide information in an efficient, comprehensible, and consistent way. As Fair Trade is about “credence goods,” where a difference in quality or value is not easily assessable, labels are devices that convey information and help overcome the problem of valuation, i.e. assessing the specific quality of a product (Beckert, 2009). Independent certification helps the consumer to trust that the claimed product characteristics are really part of the product. Furthermore, the label indicates some moral superiority when compared to normal market products and therefore helps differentiating consumer identities build on normative ideals. Thus, the label becomes a framing device that by absorbing commodity characteristics increases consumer adoption. Finally, as also noted above, labels also enable products to be sold in mainstream market outlets, thus decreasing transaction costs for Fair Trade consumption.

Mobilizing structures and framing

Once Fair Trade labels emerge, the question is on how these relate to the diffusion of ethical consumption. The sheer existence of a label and the changed field logic of the Fair Trade movement might not suffice to explain the strong growth of Fair Trade. Moreover, why did fair-traded goods rose to great prominence in some countries while fair consumption is growing slower in some other countries? The Fair Trade movement and especially the Fair Trade labeling organizations have used two strategies to promote the rise of ethical consumption, referring to two core strategic action fields of the movement (Fligstein & McAdam, 2011): first, the field of consumers, and the direct

targeting of these by campaigns and marketing; second, the organizational field of corporations, mainly retailers and producers that use fair-traded resources in their products and the retailers that sell these goods. Thus, from a social movement theory perspective, they do so mainly in two ways: by engaging in framing activities and by creating mobilizing structures (Benford & Snow, 2000; McCarthy & Zald, 1977).

The concept of framing denotes that a phenomenon first needs to be realized and understood as a problem, and solutions to this problem must be provided to mobilize citizens. Furthermore, SMOs need to provide venues for action, providing a “solution” of how problems could be solved through individual participation. Thus, SMOs create “schemata of interpretation” (Goffman, 1975) of the social world. Greenpeace’s campaign against Shell, planning to sink the oil storage “Brent Spar” in 1995, might serve as nice example. Greenpeace activists first tried to gain media coverage in occupying the oil storage announcing the environmental risk of sinking the platform, a frame that resonated well with the pro-environmental understandings prevalent in the 90ies. Yet, the campaign did not stop there, but Greenpeace also created an opportunity for citizens to voice their interest, by calling for a boycott of Shell’s gas stations. This was a great success and Shell did not sink the oil storage.

In the case of Fair Trade, this means that Fair Trade Organizations (FTOs) define the global terms of exchange as problem for less developed countries. FTOs communicate on this, through leaflets, commercials, campaigns, educational materials for schools, etc. Yet, they also provide venues for resolution of the problem by offering Fair traded products. In modern communication societies, with immense communication efforts by corporations, it is especially difficult to successfully convey and construct meaning on markets. Therefore, framing efforts are especially important to balance the information asymmetry between consumer and producer and to gain attention for alternative consumption options. The way Fair Trade is presented or framed as a solution to market problems is crucial. However, also the volume of communication, rivaling commercial market communication is of great importance. Thus, if Fair Trade organizations devote more resources to communicate on Fair Trade, consumer should become more aware and thus increasingly buy Fair Trade goods.

A second dimension is providing citizens with opportunities to participate, in creating mobilizing structures (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). SMOs do so by addressing actors in specific strategic action fields, and by providing easy access to “protest” activities. Mobilizing structures are created by movement entrepreneurs (McCarthy, 1996), for instances in providing sign-up sheets in public spaces, like malls or pedestrian areas, or by organizing transportation to get to a demonstration. Market actors like firms seek to provide easy accessible and widespread distributed store locations, so consumers can easily buy their

products. The Fair Trade movement elevates the opportunities to buy Fair Trade goods, by increasing the number of stores and commercial chains where these products are available. Labeling does improve on that, for Fair Trade goods now can easily be sold in mainstream market stores. Before labels were introduced, the information that goods were produced according to certain standards was conveyed by the setting in which those products were sold (e.g., Worldshops or church groups). Thus, FTOs might improve the infrastructure for fair consumption to enhance Fair Trade participation (Southerton et al., 2004). This can be understood as an active lobbying strategy by the Fair Trade labeling organizations directed toward corporations to make them sell labeled goods. Once, powerful (and sometimes quite unlikely) actors started selling such moralizing goods, like the German discount retailer Lidl, other retailers, like Aldi, had to follow the track. The emerging competition on moralized markets, lead to a further differentiation and increased availability, so ethical consumption could be aligned with “normal” consumption routines. In sum, I expect that the more successful Fair Trade organizations are in lobbying corporations to provide Fair Trade labeled goods, the higher will be the increase of ethical consumerism.

Opportunity structures for Fair Trade consumption

Other external opportunities given by the environment have been addressed in the theory of political opportunity structures (Meyer, 2004). In a broad definition Tarrow (1994, p. 18) defines political opportunity structures as “consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national – dimensions of the political environment which either encourage or discourage people from using collective action.” Depending on the subject case, authors vary greatly in their definition of political opportunity structures rendering this framework somewhat arbitrary (Gamson & Meyer, 1996). Efforts to clarify the concept resulted in a differentiation of at least two additional domains, namely cultural (McAdam, 1996) and more recently economic opportunity structures (Koos, 2012; Wahlström & Peterson, 2006).

The political opportunity structure itself might be neglected in regard to Fair Trade consumption as states do not strongly impact the Fair Trade system or restrict Fair Trade access. Yet, economic opportunities are especially important for mobilization and movement success in social movements that target economic actors, industries, or aspects of the economic systems (Luders, 2006). These opportunities are given by the externally determined economic resources and costs associated with a certain action. As Fair Trade is more costly, than normal products, people in countries with a high average household income should have a better economic opportunity structure to engage in such activities (Koos, 2012).

Finally, the cultural opportunity structure is outlined by dominant norms, beliefs, and values characteristic of a society (Verba, 1965). These beliefs pre-structure which behavior is deemed appropriate or whether collective actions are more traditionally oriented and channeled through established political institutions. Inglehart (1997), for instance, claims that the emergence of post-materialist values have been a strong cultural force of introducing new ways of political, but also civic participation. Thus, it can be expected that citizens in countries with a more progressive civic culture are more likely to adopt new ways of consuming, than people in societies dominated by more traditional values and norms. Value change has been observed as a major driving force of political consumption (Copeland, 2013; Stolle et al., 2005).

Individual determinants of Fair Trade consumption

Individual approaches to Fair Trade consumption or political consumption in general, focus on two dimensions constituting action, that are central to most individualist theories (Rössel, 2008): On the one hand, action is assumed to be restricted by certain resources (Elster, 1989). On the other hand, it is presumed to be driven by certain motivations and identities (Opp, 1999; Verba et al., 1995).

The resource dimension has been associated with factors like household income, but also social class and education (Verba et al., 1995). Greater resources enable citizens to participate deliberately, whereas a lack of such resources, constraints the monetary, but also cognitive ability to engage in civic action. For Fair Trade consumption the impact of household income is straight forward. Education plays a crucial role in enabling citizens to understand the complexities underlying modern modes of market exchange and their consequences. Finally, class has been a social category, which has been both associated with specific patterns of political participation, but also modes of consumption. The basic idea is that status differences are reproduced and signaled by certain consumption decisions (Bourdieu, 1984).

The motivational dimension, is decisive in orienting action (Hechter, 1994). Thus, even if action is habitualized it would not be conducted without any purpose being reflected or learned at a prior point in time. Here scholars have pointed to the importance of post-materialist values (Stolle et al., 2005) and generalized trust for participating in political consumption (Neilson & Paxton, 2010). Work in social psychology drawing on the theory of planned behavior show the importance of ethical identities in Fair Trade consumption (Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006; Schenk, 2019; Sunderer & Rössel, 2012).

The knowledge of Fair Trade is more difficult to explain from an individualistic perspective. Yet, it can be assumed that education is a cognitive resource that enables acquiring information on all kind of economic and political issues. People that have a leftist political ideology also can be expected be more knowledgeable of alternative modes of market exchange.

Data, variables and method

Data

This paper uses a comparative quantitative multilevel approach to test hypotheses. The individual-level dataset used for the analyses is the 1997 Eurobarometer 47.0 (Melich, 1997), containing a section of questions on Fair Trade. To date, this is the only large-scale comparative data set on Fair Trade, containing individual-level information for 15 European countries. Due to missing country-level data, Portugal and Greece had to be dropped from the analysis. Furthermore, the Netherlands were excluded, being a strong outlier, which introduced a bias into the analyses. After recoding and cleaning the data 12,140 cases, residing in 12 countries remain for the analysis. The countries are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Sweden, and Spain.¹

The organizational data used in the analysis are mainly derived from a report on the Fair Trade sector in Europe (Martinelli, 1998). The report is based on a survey among Fair Trade organizations in 16 European countries in 1997 and provides rich information on the national structure of the Fair Trade movement, like central organizations, number of Worldshops, budget for communication, but also brief historical information on Fair Trade in each country. Missing information on some items was complemented from an earlier Fair Trade report (Martinelli, 1995). Additional information, especially on the founding year of the Fair Trade movement and the labels are taken from later Fair Trade reports, that provide more information on the history of the movement (Krier, 2001, 2005, 2007). The information was validated by comparing the different reports over time, but also by looking at national sources, were available (like websites of labels and import organizations).

Individual-level variables

As the target of the Fair Trade movement is to both educate people on Fair Trade issues in general and sell fair-traded goods, two dependent variables are used in the analysis, measuring both the knowledge about and the consumption of Fair Trade goods. Both variables are derived from the following question in the Eurobarometer survey (Melich, 1997, p. 419): “Some products

from developing countries carry a 'Fair Trade' mark or label. This mark guarantees that the products have been produced ensuring fair working conditions for farmers and employees, and respecting the environment. It also means that a fair part of the profit is transferred back to the producers and/or workers. Have you ever heard about this type of products, or not? And have you ever bought any this type of products?" The first variable "*bought Fair Trade*" is dichotomous assuming the value 1, if respondents answered, that they have "heard and bought" a Fair Trade product, and 0, if they had not bought any. The second variable "*know Fair Trade*" is again dichotomous being coded 1 for all participants that responded that they at least have heard about fair traded good independent of whether they have bought them. A downside of the consumption measure is that only the diffusion but not the frequency of Fair Trade consumption can be assessed.

The resource dimension outlined above was operationalized for household income, social class, and education level. *Income* is measured using the relative equivalence household income (new OECD scale) (Hagenaars et al., 1994). Since the income categories used in the Eurobarometer differed slightly between countries, the midpoint of each category was used to estimate the household equivalence income relative to the mean national income for each respondent. To arrive at a comparable measure, the resulting values were collapsed into four income groups, consisting of people that earn less than 80%, 80% to 120% and above 120% of the average national household income, plus one missing data category. *Social class* is based on the common European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC) schema (Rose & Harrison, 2007). The ESeC classification in principal follows the Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) class schema. I distinguish service class (collapsing the higher and lower salaried occupations), higher grade white-collar workers, petit bourgeoisie (including farmers), trained blue and white-collar occupations (as one category) and non-skilled workers (Rose & Harrison, 2007, p. 464). *Education* is operationalized by three variables that denote primary, secondary, and tertiary education. The education variable is based on an Eurobarometer question that asks for the age, when the respondents have finished full-time education (unfortunately the only measure of education available in the Eurobarometer surveys). When respondents gave an age of 15 to 19 years they have been coded as having secondary education. Age below 15 years, when finished schooling, indicates primary education or less; age higher than 19 years is coded as tertiary education. For a lack of value measures, like post-materialism, in the Eurobarometer survey, only two motivational variables can be used, relating to transnational trust and political ideology. Since no simple question on generalized trust was asked a measure of *transnational trust*, which is trust in people from the own and other countries, is used. The transnational trust measure is based on the following question: "Now I would like to ask you how much trust you have in people from various countries. For

each, please tell me whether you tend to trust them or tend not to trust them.” The presented list consisted of people from 18 European countries supplemented by “Russians” and “Americans” and including the country of residence of the respondent. To eliminate a nonresponse bias, for some of the mentioned country citizens, I divided the number of country residents that respondents “tend to trust” by the sum of the number of country residents respondents “tend to trust” and “tend not to trust,” not counting “don’t know” responses, for each respondent. Considering the “don’t know” answers would introduce a bias as they would be counted as not trusting the way the variable is constructed.

As a second measure the self-placement on a left-right scale was used to operationalize *political ideology*. It is based on the following question: “In political matters people often talk of ‘the left’ and ‘the right.’ How would you place your view on this scale?” The respondents were asked to locate themselves on a ten point scale, presented on a show card, where 1 equaled “left” and 10 equaled “right.” The answers were recoded into three dummy variables, for left (scale values 1 to 4), center (scale values: 5 to 6), and right (scale values 7 to 10), as well as a dummy variable for the numerous missing values on this item.

Besides the motivational and resource variables models control for gender and age. There is strong theoretical and empirical support that women shop politically more frequently than men (Micheletti, 2004; Stolle et al., 2005). Some research has shown, that very young and old people shop less politically than people aged 26 to 55 (Strømsnes, 2005); therefore, I included age in years as well as an age squared term to account for the expected curvilinear relationship. However, today younger generations might have become key drivers of the moralization of markets, as indicated by the “Fridays-for-Future” movement.

Contextual level variables

On contextual level, I used several variables to operationalize the organizational determinants of Fair Trade consumption, supplemented by two variables on the opportunity structure. The first organizational variable *marketization* (dummy variable) measures, whether a Fair Trade labeling organization is present in a country and whether this organization is active, meaning that there are actually labeled products available (yes = 1; no = 0). Most of the 12 countries by that time have a labeling organization present, except Finland and Spain, yet the French labeling organization only by 1998 started labeling goods, albeit being founded in 1992. Secondly, the organized *availability* of Fair Trade goods is operationalized by the total points of sale (as the sum of Worldshops, supermarket, and alternative commercial outlets) given in Martinelli (1998) standardized by population size, to make it comparable across countries. Thirdly, the *framing* efforts of the Fair Trade movements

are operationalized by the national budget for education, public relations, and marketing as given by Martinelli (1995, 1998) and again standardized by population size. Finally, to control for timing effects, caused by different “life cycles” of the Fair Trade movement thus potentially different diffusion patterns the *age of the social movement* (in years) is controlled for. The founding of the Fair Trade movement in each country was determined by the establishment of the first Fair Trade organization (either import organization or world shop).

The opportunity structure for Fair Trade consumption is measured by the affluence and the post-materialist culture of a country. The *affluence* of a country has been operationalized by the share of household expenditures spent on food relative to all other expenditures, e.g., for housing, health, etc. as given by the 1994 Household Budget Survey provided by Eurostat (2009). Shares have been subtracted by 100, so that a high value indicates high affluence. This variable is a more specific measure of the degrees of freedom in consumption decisions, than the average income as measured by gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (Martín-Lagos López, 2010). However, all analyses were also estimated with GDP per capita (not reported) of the year 1997 and results were consistent. The civic or *post-materialist culture* of a country is measured by the share of people within a country that identify as post-materialists. This variable is based on another Eurobarometer survey in 1997 (47.1), which used Inglehart’s standard post-materialism items. The contextual variables are merged to Eurobarometer data to have a comprehensive data set.

Method

To analyze the multilevel data I used logistic regression analysis for binary dependent variables (Long & Freese, 2003). As individuals are nested within countries the assumption of independence of observations is violated, which results in biased standard errors and thus biased significance test. This problem is addressed by using a Huber/White sandwich estimator with robust standard errors clustered by countries (Wooldridge, 2002). As some of the contextual variables are likely to be somewhat related, for instance, when a label is present in a country this is likely to affect the number of outlets that sell this label, a correlation analysis was performed. All variables were correlated below Pearson’s r 0.6, except age of the label and availability as well as age of the label and affluence, suggesting that multicollinearity is not a problem in most variables (see Table A1 in the Appendix). These three variables, however, were not used simultaneously in a model.

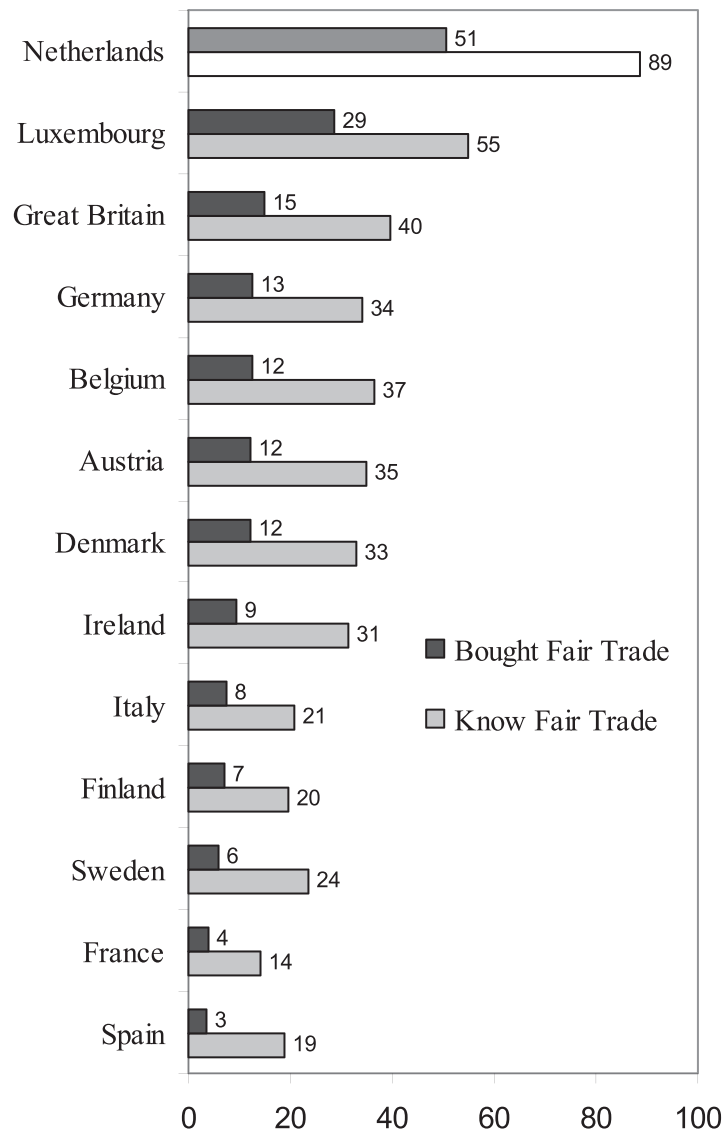


Figure 2. Share of respondents reporting to know Fair Trade and to buy Fair Trade goods across Western Europe (in %). *Source: Eurobarometer 47.0, 1997, own estimations.*

Results

In Figure 2 country differences in reported purchases and knowledge of Fair Trade are presented. It can be seen that in the Netherlands both, Fair Trade consumption and knowledge of Fair Trade is the most widespread. Yet, being such an extreme outlier the Netherlands have been excluded from the further analysis.² For the remaining countries, I see a large variation in Fair Trade knowledge and consumption. Luxembourg dominates the field, with more than half of the population knowing of Fair Trade and almost one-third of the population that have actually bought Fair Trade products. With 15%, Great Britain has only half the share of Fair Trade consumers than Luxembourg. Yet, 40% of the respondents know of Fair Trade. Followed by the central European countries, like Germany and Belgium, but also Ireland, both knowledge and consumption are constantly declining and are lowest in northern and southern

European countries (with the exception of Denmark). In France, only 14% of the respondents know of Fair Trade and only 35% of the “knowers” buy Fair Trade (4% of respondents). Spain is at the bottom of the list with only 3% of the respondents having purchased Fair-traded goods, but almost one-fifth of the population knowing of Fair Trade. These patterns seem somewhat surprising, as the Scandinavian countries are usually spearheading political consumption (Koos, 2011, 2012). These patterns might be a first indicator for the impact of underlying organizational differences in the Fair Trade movement. To test the hypothesis and carve out these differences I now turn to the multivariate results.

Table 1 shows the results of the logistic regressions for knowledge of Fair Trade (Know FT, model 2) and Fair Trade consumption (Bought FT, model 1). While there is a statistically significant difference between men and women in Fair Trade consumption, this does not hold up for knowledge of Fair Trade. Thus, women are more likely than men to buy Fair-traded goods. The age variables indicate that for both dependent variables there is first an increase in the chance to know of and buy Fair Trade, but later on at the age of around 45 this chance is declining again with further increasing age. Respondents with higher education (secondary or tertiary) have a higher

Table 1. Logistic regression models for bought Fair Trade (FT) (yes = 1; no = 0) and know of Fair Trade (FT) (yes = 1; no = 0) (individual effects).

Variable	Model 1		Model 2	
	Bought FT		Know FT	
<i>Constant</i>	-4.33***	(0.43)	-2.18***	(0.18)
Female	0.18*	(0.08)	0.00	(0.05)
Age	0.05**	(0.02)	0.03***	(0.01)
Age2	-0.00**	(0.00)	-0.00***	(0.00)
Education level, (Ref.: primary education)				
Secondary education	0.30+	(0.16)	0.22**	(0.08)
Tertiary education	0.66***	(0.16)	0.46***	(0.08)
Social class (Ref.: non-skilled workers)				
Service class	0.82***	(0.11)	0.55***	(0.08)
Higher grade white collar occ.	0.45***	(0.10)	0.34***	(0.07)
Petit bourgeoisie & farmers	0.12	(0.16)	0.08	(0.10)
Lower grade white collar occ.	0.36***	(0.08)	0.22*	(0.10)
Student	0.55***	(0.11)	0.29*	(0.13)
Unemployed	-0.03	(0.25)	-0.03	(0.06)
Homemaker	0.26	(0.18)	0.12	(0.14)
Relative equivalence income (Ref.: 0–80%)				
80% to 120%	0.15	(0.16)		
More than 120%	0.20+	(0.11)		
Missing value	0.05	(0.10)		
Political Orientation (Ref.: right)				
Left	0.37*	(0.15)	0.15+	(0.09)
Center	0.12	(0.11)	0.09	(0.08)
Missing value	0.03	(0.11)	-0.10	(0.12)
Generalized trust	0.23+	(0.12)	0.15	(0.14)
Pseudo R2	4.2		2.6	
N	12,140		12,140	

*Eurobarometer 47.0, 1997; own estimations; robust standard errors; levels of significance: + < 0.10, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.*

likelihood of knowing of and purchasing Fair Trade, as compared to the respondents with only primary education or less (reference category). Social class differences prove to have an effect on both dependent variables. Members of the service class and higher-grade white-collar workers have the highest likelihood compared to non-skilled workers to know of Fair Trade, but also as a means of distinguishing oneself in consumption. While no effect can be found for the petit bourgeoisie, homemakers and unemployed, especially students, but also higher-grade white-collar workers have a higher likelihood of engaging and knowing of Fair Trade. People with higher income should be more likely to possess the means to afford far traded goods. This hypothesis can be confirmed, as people that earn more than 120% than the national average have a higher likelihood to consume fair-traded goods than people earning less than 80% of the average national income. Turning to the motivational characteristics, I find that partisans of a left ideology are more likely to be knowledgeable about and buy Fair Trade goods. This is hardly surprising, given Fair Trade implies a critique of free market exchange as a liberal right-wing project. Finally, respondents that are more trusting toward people of other countries are more likely to buy Fair-traded goods. Yet, this relationship does not hold up for knowledge of Fair Trade. Here transnational trust does not foster knowledge of Fair Trade. The pseudo R^2 for both models remain rather low, yet different than the R^2 of OLS regressions pseudo R^2 is not standardized between 0 and 1, and therefore it is difficult to say whether this indicates a good or only moderate model fit.

Next, I turn to the contextual level results, which are the central focus of this paper. Because the individual-level variables do not show significant changes, when introducing contextual level variables, in the following tables only the contextual level coefficients are presented. In model 3 and model 4 (Table 2) marketization is introduced into the analysis, controlling for the age of the Fair Trade movement and the availability of Fair-traded goods, as given by the total points of sale per capita. Marketization increases both, the likelihood to buy Fair Trade and the knowledge of it. Neither, the movement age, nor the availability have a statistically significant effect, when controlling for marketization. Thus, the introduction of labeling by the Fair Trade movement impacts on the adoption of Fair Trade by consumers. Being part of the market and more easily comprehensible through the label, marketization also raises the number of citizens that know Fair Trade. The availability of fair-traded goods is strongly increased through labeling. However, what the results convey is that it is not the easier availability and thus not the decreased transaction costs, that drive Fair Trade consumption, but rather a shift in the logic of the movement. In models 5 and 6 besides marketization and movement age, I control for the impact of framing. Controlling for movement age and marketization, the framing efforts of the Fair Trade movement do not reveal a statistically significant effect on

Table 2. Logistic regression models for bought Fair Trade (FT) (yes = 1; no = 0) and know of Fair Trade (FT) (yes = 1; no = 0) (contextual effects).

Variables	Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
	Bought FT	Know FT	Bought FT	Know FT	Bought FT	Know FT	Bought FT	Know FT	Bought FT	Know FT	Bought FT	Know FT
<i>Constant</i>	-5.31*** (0.49)	-3.07*** (0.25)	-5.56*** (0.57)	-3.26*** (0.27)	-5.39*** (0.60)	-2.96*** (0.28)						
<i>Organizational Drivers</i>												
Marketization (Active label)	0.84*** (0.25)	0.69** (0.22)	0.59* (0.27)	0.47* (0.21)	0.94** (0.36)	0.83** (0.28)						
Points of Sale p.c.	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)	0.01* (0.00)								
<i>Communication activities p.c.</i>												
<i>Control Variables</i>												
Age of Movement	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.14)	0.02 (0.13)						
Age of label					0.10 (0.07)	0.04 (0.05)						
Pseudo R2	6,6	5,1	6,9	5,4	6,7	4,9						
N	12,140	12,140	12,140	12,140	12,140	12,140						

*Eurobarometer 47.0, 1997; own estimations; individual level variables included, but not shown; robust standard errors; levels of significance: + < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.*

purchases of Fair Trade goods. Yet, as expected, stronger communication efforts have a positive impact on the knowledge of Fair Trade within a country. Every 10,000 Euros per one million inhabitants spent more increases knowledge of Fair Trade by approximately 2%, holding all other values at their mean. In models 7 and 8 I control for the time the Fair Trade label has been on the market (in years). Yet, controlling for marketization, neither the age of the label nor the age of the movement has an additional effect on any of the two dependent variables.

In Table 3 I introduce the additional contextual variables, affluence, and post-materialism. While I do find some support that relative affluence increases the likelihood of Fair Trade consumption such a relationship cannot be found for the cultural dimension. Neither affluence nor culture has any statistically significant relationship to knowledge of fair-traded goods. Finally, in models 13 and 14, I explore whether marketization also impacts the micro-rationale of individual consumption focusing on a logic of distinction. I find that marketization is a statistically significant moderator of the social class effect. In respect to the knowledge, dimension marketization increases the likelihood that people in higher social class positions know about Fair Trade. I see a similar effect for the buying dimension, albeit only marginally statistically significant. Interestingly, it is the homemakers, those most likely mainly responsible for shopping that are much more likely to shop ethical, when a label is present.

Discussion and conclusion

Fair Trade seeks to change the terms of global market exchange, introducing a fair price connected to certain ethical standards. For the Fair Trade movement, it is especially important to mobilize consumers to increase Fair Trade sales, but also to educate people on the consequences of the global terms of exchange. While many studies focus on the individual determinants of Fair Trade consumption, the organizational and structural embeddedness of Fair Trade consumption has been mostly neglected in prior research. Yet, I argue that organizational and marketing strategies by NGOs have played an important role in creating a market for ethical consumption. In the field of Fair Trade, the introduction of Fair Trade labeling has brought about a marketization of the Fair Trade movement, changing its field logic. Using a comparative perspective, the study seeks to develop a comparative organizational approach to understanding the emergence of ethical consumerism. On the one hand, I argue that the introduction of labeling itself is a crucial antecedent of the emergence and diffusion of ethical consumption. On the other hand, using two strategic action fields, facing the consumer and the retailer side, I argue that both campaigning consumers and lobbying corporations are organizational forces further promoting the establishment of an

Table 3. Logistic regression models for bought Fair Trade (FT) (yes = 1; no = 0) and know of Fair Trade (FT) (yes = 1; no = 0) (contextual effects).

Variables	Model 9		Model 10		Model 11		Model 12		Model 13		Model 14	
	Bought FT	(1.16) (0.23)	Know FT	(0.82) (0.24)	Bought FT	(0.62) (0.24)	Know FT	(0.38) (0.19)	Bought FT	(0.44) (0.19)	Know FT	(0.23) (0.21)
<i>Constant</i>	-3.00**	(1.16)	-1.74*	(0.82)	-4.99***	(0.62)	-2.81***	(0.38)	-4.92***	(0.44)	-2.79***	(0.23)
<i>Organizational Drivers</i>												
Marketization (Active label)	0.78***	(0.23)	0.67**	(0.24)	0.91***	(0.24)	0.73***	(0.19)	0.39*	(0.19)	0.35+	(0.21)
<i>Control Variables</i>												
Age of Movement	0.00	(0.02)	0.01	(0.01)	0.02*	(0.01)	0.02*	(0.01)	0.02	(0.01)	0.02	(0.01)
Relative affluence	0.15*	(0.07)	0.08	(0.05)								
Post-materialist culture					-0.03	(0.02)	-0.02	(0.01)				
<i>Cross-Level Interaction</i>												
Service class * Market.									0.42	(0.36)	0.41**	(0.14)
High white coll. * Market.									0.84+	(0.47)	0.48**	(0.15)
Petit bourgeoisie * Market.									0.13	(0.26)	0.40**	(0.14)
Low white coll. * Market.									0.15	(0.32)	0.39	(0.26)
Student * Market.									0.03	(0.42)	0.02	(0.13)
Unemployed * Market.									0.75*	(0.30)	0.43	(0.29)
Homemaker * Market.									1.17**	(0.40)	0.53*	(0.24)
Pseudo R ²	7,3		5,4		6,7		5,3		6,8		5,2	
N	12,140		12,140		12,140		12,140		12,140		12,140	

*Eurobarometer 47.0, 1997; own estimations; individual level variables included, but not shown; robust standard errors; levels of significance: + < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001.*

ethical market. These strategies increase information and availability of Fair Trade products and ultimately render it a commodity whose purchase can be incorporated in the everyday shopping routines.

In addition, I find that higher national affluence increases the likelihood that people shop ethically, confirming existing research (Koos, 2012). No effect can be observed for the post-materialist culture of a country, however. On the level of individuals, females are more likely to buy Fair Trade. While I find a curvilinear age effect, where Fair Trade consumption increases with age and decreases again at the age of 45 in these data, younger generations, often called “Centennials” might become important change agents of political consumption in the future, as for instance, demands by the “Fridays-for-Future” youth climate movement show. Higher levels of education and higher social class position are related to better knowledge and higher probability of buying ethical. Moreover, higher personal income is also related to a higher likelihood of buying Fair Trade, as is a left-leaning political orientation. Interestingly, marketization is a moderator for social class differences in Fair Trade consumption. Where labeling is present, social class differences in ethical consumption are more pronounced, suggesting that marketization fosters differentiation of ethical consumer identity along the lines of class status.

Certain limitations apply to this study. First, while allowing an important historical and comparative perspective, the data used has a number of shortcomings, such as a lack of motivational measures, no information on the frequency of fair trade consumption, as well as a limited set of countries confined to Europe. Second, based on the analysis, the future development of Fair Trade markets, and whether the early developments analyzed here had some path-dependent impact on growth in Fair Trade consumption, cannot be assessed. Third, while I argue that Fair Trade labeling organizations played an important role in promoting ethical consumption, also via lobbying corporations, consumer demand might also have affected corporate decisions to label their products (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2013) potentially creating a mutual circular self-reinforcing process. Future research should thus analyze which forces drove the massive growth of Fair Trade over the last two decades, ever since labeling has been implemented and how Fair Trade’s as well as corporate strategies and consumer demand have contributed to this growth. Understanding these developments and supporting the development of social and eco-labels, therefore, need more fine grained in depth analysis of specific activities, campaigns, and marketing efforts pertaining to the introduction and use of labels. Integrating social movement theories and organizational institutionalism has been a promising route, yet theoretically, a better integration of theories of consumption and marketing would be a promising next step.

In terms of practical recommendations for NGOs, corporations and the state, certification, and labeling has been a promising route to improve social and ecological standards, which seem to have been specifically effective in the case of Fair Trade (Bartley et al., 2015). Specifically, wisely using the market as a way to promote social aims remains a promising path for NGOs to advance their mission. Companies can use such initiatives to gain a competitive advantage, as also new groups of young consumers seem very likely to demand substantial social and environmental improvements of products. Marketing wise, using labels not only as part of the packaging, but also in advertising and as part of Corporate Social Responsibility programs creates both advantages for companies and opportunities for NGOs to further promote social or ecological standards. Finally, the state can play an important role in promoting standards and labels, by engaging in forms of co-governance and by promoting labels through public procurement (Koos, 2011). Yet, the emerging “market for standards” – the rise of numerous public and private competing standard setting initiatives and labels – demanding significant consumer attention and knowledge to understand the countless standards, makes it increasingly difficult for credible new labels to emerge. Therefore, understanding the limits of the certification approach from a marketing, consumer, and governance perspective seems a final important task for future research.

In sum, organizational marketization and the changes of field logics are important processes in the emergence of ethical or political consumption. As the Fair Trade movement gets closer to normal market exchange by marketizing its normative standards through labeling, it makes use of the market forces it seeks to critique. Yet, it is these forces that helped to advance the Fair Trade movement and make it one of the most popular and enduring ethical consumer movements that exists. Deliberately using the market logic can thus be a powerful way to voice ethical demands and bring about social responsibility in market exchange.

Notes

1. Analyses were also conducted including the Netherlands and controlling by a dummy for its unique effect. Results then proved to be consistent with the results presented here.
2. I also ran analyses excluding Luxembourg and results remained consistent.

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Appendix

Table A1. Correlation matrix of contextual variables and aggregated dependent variables.

	Know FT	Bought FT	Marketized	Availability	Framing	Age Movement	Age Label	Postmaterialist Culture
Bought Fair Trade	0.9542*							
Marketized	0.6690*	0.545						
Availability	0.5977*	0.5255	0.5177					
Framing	0.6817*	0.5954*	0.5884*	0.4779				
Age Movement	0.455	0.3524	0.3712	0.5038	0.0217			
Age Label	0.462	0.4925	0.3574	0.6407*	0.3037	0.4214		
Postmaterialist Culture	-0.1807	-0.1251	-0.1437	-0.317	-0.08	0.0143	-0.1506	
Affluence	-0.6774*	-0.6607*	-0.4241	-0.5309	-0.4303	-0.5398	-0.6293*	-0.1405

Operationalization and sources see data section, own estimation.