**Assembling Fairtrade: practices of progress and conventionalisation in the Chilean wine industry**

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**Abstract**

The global Fairtrade system is multiple, heterogenous and dynamic. The processes that underlie its contextual formations are key, and this paper analyses these through bringing together assemblage thinking and social practices to discuss Fairtrade in the Chilean wine industry. Local level contestations and appropriation highlight the different forms Fairtrade takes at the micro-scale, which maintain a contextual heterogeneity without challenging the overall coherence of the Fairtrade economy. Power relations are uneven and the important role of local and international 'assemblage converters' in catalysing and curtailing possibilities for Fairtrade practices is highlighted. These operate within and across scales, interacting, and varyingly integrated, with other similarly multiscalar assemblages to support or disrupt particular stabilised compositions. Fairtrade emerges as simultaneously globally coherent and locally fragmented, a system in constant motion between alternative and conventional relations and practices. To challenge creeping conventionalisation, the paper concludes that maintaining space for unpredictability and creativity is critical to Fairtrade's future through making space for enhancing opportunities and alternatives to take flight.

## 1    Introduction

Fair Trade is dynamic, contested and multifaceted.[i]  For some it is a consumer choice movement (Nicholls and Opal, 2005), for others a response to globalisation (Raynolds and Murray, 2007) or a form of interregional reciprocity (Moberg, 2014).  For yet others it is co-opted, subject to an elite capture of control and maintaining a paternalistic colonial-style commodity trade (Besky, 2015, Naylor, 2014).  Such multiplicity is arguably grounded in its bifurcation in the late 1980s into an alternative trade organisation (ATO) focused movement and a certified system (Jaffee, 2012); despite the latter's subsequent global hegemony, tensions remain within Fairtrade over aims, subjects, relations and processes.  Mainstreaming, which has included plantations, supermarkets and multinationals in the system, has presented a particular challenge to how Fairtrade understands and positions itself, leading to questions as to who is the 'proper' subject of Fairtrade (Besky, 2015).

Fairtrade addresses this tension in production spaces, to some extent, through a variegated series of standards for different products and types of producer (small producer organisations [SPOs] or hired labour).  However, the necessity of universal justice claims (Besky, 2015) and bureaucratic governance mechanisms (McDermott, 2013) for maintaining a complex global system results in a uniformity in standard and price-setting, which struggles to engage with the contextuality, heterogeneity and multiplicity of local stakeholder experiences (Naylor, 2014).  How can we understand this innate tension, conceptualising simultaneous and multiscalar (in)stability within Fairtrade networks?  Global Value Chain (GVC) and Global Production Network (GPN) approaches have been widely used in Fairtrade analyses to discuss, for example, power relations and inequality (Author, 2018a), local-global relations (Hughes et al., 2014), company and civil society relations (Barrientos, 2013) and producer experiences (Neilson and Pritchard, 2009).  While GVCs/GPNs continue to provide a useful geographical framework, the aim here is to explore a different line of thinking to this systems perspective.  Through the use of assemblage theory, I move away from the sense of a globally integrated totality (Haarstad and Wanvik, 2016) to a relational perspective that makes space for contingency, reorientation, emergence and interruption (McFarlane, 2011b) and allows for 'changes and ruptures that may not overthrow "the system as a whole" but nevertheless represent significant change' (Haarstad and Wanvik, 2016: 433).  Assemblage theory conceptualises how, and why, multiple and heterogenous parts come and hold together without becoming homogenous (Allen, 2011) in more or less impermanent relations.  Assemblage theory therefore offers insights into how the multi-scalar Fairtrade system is composed, accounting for durability and highlighting possibilities for contestation and alternative compositions (Anderson et al., 2012a).  Understanding Fairtrade through the language of assemblage makes space for its innate heterogeneity and the constant relational and power-laden work involved in (re)assembling its forms and processes.  This allows for a nuanced and holistic understanding of the placed connections, alliances, competition and conflicts that shape contemporary Fairtrade across its multiple scales of operation.

For Sohn (2016: 184) assemblages are 'heterogenous and open-ended groupings of material and semiotic elements that do not form a coherent whole but that allow us to explain how different meanings derived from different actors…may interact and endure in a contingent and provisional way'. They seek to blur divisions between human-nonhuman, near-far (Anderson and McFarlane, 2011) to offer an emergent and provisional account of 'how forms and processes are composed, held in place and work in different ways to open up and close down possibilities' (Anderson et al., 2012b: 172). Assemblages are therefore always becoming, processes of simultaneous balance and tension (Legg, 2011) that are constantly open to reassembly and contestation (Anderson et al., 2012a, Müller and Schurr, 2016), with relations of exteriority connecting but not constituting component elements (DeLanda, 2006). As such, they allow us to explore the relations between stability and transformation in Fairtrade through analysing the socio-material processes of disruption, interruption and conversion at particular sites. Assemblage theory is therefore not in opposition to GPN research but, through overcoming artificial dualisms and bringing attention to material transformations (Hudson, 2008), can help 'describe and explain the complexities and emergent properties of GPNs' (Coe et al., 2008: 289).

Allen (2011) warns against the 'thin description' and taken-for-granted nature of some assemblage accounts and so, following McFarlane (2011a), Strengers et al (2016) and Duff and Sumartojo (2017), I turn to practice theory to offer a critical analysis of the dynamics of Fairtrade at the micro-scale of production spaces. While I develop ideas of social practices further in section 4, as interconnected, emergent and dynamic 'doings and sayings' (Schatzki, 2002, Shove, 2014) they make space for, and help conceptualise, the contingent and creative processes of assembling within emergent contexts (Duff and Sumartojo, 2017, McFarlane, 2011a). Drawing on empirical material collected in the Chilean wine industry, I reflect on how Fairtrade is being assembled by, for and through certified wine grape producers, analysing the practices that are shaping the constant negotiations within what are seemingly stabilised formations of Fairtrade. A focus on social practices highlights the constant activity involved in performing Fairtrade, offering a conceptualisation of *how* power works to enact a particular composition over another (Lancione, 2013); analysing the impact of key, catalysing actors, or assemblage converters, is important in understanding the role and agency of different agents with different resources and capacities to act. In turn, assemblages move practices beyond the predominant concentration on objects and consumption in the literature (see, for example, Warde, 2014, Hand and Shove, 2007, Ingram et al., 2007, Jaeger-Erben and Offenberger, 2014). Through accounts of progress and transformation, alongside continuity with conventional trade practices, Fairtrade emerges at the local scale as dynamic and varied with a multiplicity of practices shaping how it is brought into being, held stable, ruptured and reassembled differently in different sites (McFarlane, 2011b). This is not a big story about the Fairtrade system as a whole, instead it is about the micro-scale ruptures and reorientations, which, while not globally transformative, are significant in shaping the everyday experiences of certified producers. The paper concludes by reflecting on the iterative and

performative nature of Fairtrade that emerges, a system in constant tension between a progressive ethics of care-full justice and a regressive conventionalisation (Author, under review; Author, 2018a).

## 2    Research Context: Fairtrade Wine in Chile

The first Chilean Fairtrade producers were certified in 2005 and the rise in number of producer organisations to 22 (FLOCERT, 2018) and product categories, including fresh fruit, vegetables, honey and walnuts, looks set to increase.  Since 2017, La Coordinadora Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Pequeños Productores y Trabajadores de Comercio Justo (CLAC) – the regional producer network – and La Coordinadora Chilena de Comercio Justo – the Chilean national network – have been working with the Chilean government to support the wider implementation of Fairtrade, developing entrepreneurship and the export potential of SPOs (CLAC, 2018).[ii]  For now, wine grapes remain Chile's largest Fairtrade product category with standards introduced in 2004.  Since certification criteria were introduced for wine in South Africa in 2003, and extended to Argentina in 2006, the sector has experienced rapid market growth (Fairtrade Foundation, 2013).  Fairtrade wine's positioning as a luxury consumable produced in 'upper middle income' countries has moved it out of Fairtrade's traditional tropical commodity spaces, offering insights into the system's changing practices, places and commodities, and turn to quality (Goodman and Herman, 2015, Staricco, 2017a).  Research to date has mainly focused on South Africa, as the world's largest Fairtrade wine producer (Herman, 2010, Herman, 2012, McEwan and Bek, 2009, Moseley, 2008), although recent work by Staricco (2015, 2016, 2017b) is highlighting the practices and experiences of certified Argentinean producers.  However, there has been no research conducted in Chile since Kleine's (2008) action research and this paper therefore makes an original contribution through an empirical focus on the certified wine grape producers of Chile's Central Valley.  It draws on qualitative fieldwork conducted with producers, industry and government stakeholders and regulators in June – September 2016.

In order to understand and analyse the impacts, relations and structures of Fairtrade I worked with both types of certified producer organisation; in particular, I draw on research conducted with the SPO Viña Caupolican SA (certified 2009) and the hired labour Viña La Fortuna SA (certified 2010).  The former involved semi-structured interviews and focus groups with the association manager and 10 of the 22 small producers who make up the association.  The latter involved semi-structured interviews with two management representatives and focus groups with 14 of the 60 workers alongside photovoice methods with seven of the latter.  For the regulator perspective, I interviewed the national *Gestor de Fortalecimiento* (GdF, formerly known as a Liaison Officer) who is employed by CLAC to support and promote Fairtrade production in Chile.  The majority of interviews were conducted and transcribed in Spanish, and then translated by the author; interviews with the GdF, Caupolican's association manager and Producer 10 were conducted and transcribed in English.  The broader research project included interviews with Fairtrade International (FTI), FLO-Cert and Fairtrade labelling organisations in the UK, Germany, Sweden and Finland

in order to gain an understanding of their interactions and relations with producer spaces. However, as the focus was on the impacts of Fairtrade in producer communities no other stakeholders in the supply chain were interviewed.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to fully and exhaustively account for Chile's historical and structural conditions, it is useful to briefly reflect on some key elements that have shaped how Chilean wine grape producers engage with Fairtrade. While Chile is economically stable with a strong currency and active export sector (Borzutzky, 2012), it's adoption of neoliberal policies from the 1980s led to rapid and sustained increases in inequality. While it has been recognised that inequality and poverty are barriers to its sustainable national development, social exclusion, discriminatory employment practices, limited labour rights and widespread economic vulnerability continue to structure many Chileans' everyday experiences (*ibid*). In rural areas, the land reform initiated under the socialist Allende government in the 1970s has largely been erased by the actions of the Pinochet and subsequent regimes (Gallardo Fernandez, 2004, Murray, 2006), with the former also characterised by political repression, corruption, disappearances and torture, leaving social fractures that endured beyond the return of democracy in 1990. Interest in local governance and sustainable rural development was renewed during Chile's democratic transition (Fawaz-Yissi et al., 2012) but the rural economy remains dominated by monocultures, precarious employment and agrochemical abuse with small producers increasingly excluded (Aguayo, 2015). Despite Chile's success in agro-exports more broadly (Aguayo and Latta, 2015), most wine grape producers are small-scale (Felzensztein, 2011) and finding it increasingly hard to compete in an industry monopolised by large multinationals; making a living is made more difficult by low and volatile grape prices. Fairtrade standards were introduced to Chile to support small producers, and hired workers who face low wages and poor working conditions (Fairtrade International, 2017), through guaranteeing a minimum price and supporting economic, environmental and social projects in their local communities through an additional social premium (Kleine, 2008).

Through the empirics, I first explore how Fairtrade can be understood as an assemblage through reflecting on how it has been composed in related but different ways in Viña Caupolican and Viña La Fortuna. I then consider how practice theory can help to nuance this conceptualisation by discussing the extensive and multi-scalar power relations that assemble Fairtrade in the local contexts of these two Chilean wine producers. Three key findings emerge from the empirical material. Firstly, the multiple interpretations of, and motivations for, Fairtrade that govern its specific and varying praxis within and between different places. These must be constantly negotiated and open up the play between processes of stabilisation and volatility. Secondly, the influence of key actors, often operating at a distance, on the power-laden practices assembling Fairtrade at particular production sites. Finally, Fairtrade does not exist in isolation and is constantly interacting with other assemblages across all scales.

### 3     Assembling Fairtrade: negotiating stability and change

Viña Caupolican was established in 2007 following a protest against the market collapse in fine wine grape prices, arguably triggered by the pricing and procurement practices of the four multinationals that monopolise the Chilean wine market.  As their website explains 'we needed stable and sustainable prices but most of all to be treated with human respect notwithstanding our size' (Caupolican Wines, 2015).  All members are small producers with less than 12 hectares and the discourses of Fairtrade mobilised in this context centre on solidarity with small producers, continuity of production and market and development opportunities:

> *'So, at the general level, the problem that the small producer, with the prices paid by industry, the prices being paid by the wineries, the small producer cannot survive.  The trend is that there are many small producers starting to sell their land; the problem in the future is that the land once again is concentrated in few hands… Fairtrade helps to maintain the small and medium farmers.'* *(Caupolican Association Manager, Interview, 2016).*

> *'…if I am alone they are not going to buy from me… I am not going to sell my grapes, right?  I am going to sell for less.  In contrast, being in the group and Fairtrade, they have to pay me a little more, I am also going to have other benefits… we need more money for health and for education, for the children to have a different future so that they are not like us who just accumulated an education …'* *(Caupolican Producer 6, Focus Group, 2016)*

These discourses of Fairtrade are being constantly composed through internal and external relations with other producers, CLAC, FLO-Cert and retailers, amongst others, that ensure sales alongside stable and guaranteed prices, environmental protection and the material benefits of the healthcare, dentures, spectacles and subsidised education discussed by the producers.  Together with others, these position Fairtrade on the ground as offering supportive market, social and development opportunities; how then is this particular composition being made durable?

Key to this is the association manager who, following DeLanda (2006), emerges as an assemblage converter, a 'well-placed component' who has a catalytic impact on transforming or stabilising a particular assemblage (Wanvik, 2014).  Since meeting the initial producers at the 2007 protest march, her actions and ideals have been fundamental to the establishment of Caupolican, its Fairtrade accreditation, growth and social premium activities.  For her the two main problems in the association are solidarity and mindset; she considered that each producer is preoccupied with their own problems, a manifestation of the broader lack of a culture of association in Chile (Gdf, Interview, 2016).  When Caupolican needed to expand from the founding 15 due to market demand, some resisted because the new members would be 'having it easier'.  The association manager felt that this was compounded by the producers' mindset as *only* growers.  She argued that they often struggled to think strategically or in terms of market demands, and that some

were resistant to extending the discourses of solidarity and opportunities beyond the association; she reflected that:

> '…one of the rules of the Fairtrade that I like a lot is that you have not to focus in yourself. Because the problem of a lot of these groups is that they are making the groups, they get better conditions but then they say "No, all the money is for us, we don't give the money for the community"…"We don't put other growers in the group because we have started this project so all the benefits must come to us". And some of the growers have this mentality, but this is not the rule…' (Interview, 2016)

In contrast, the small producers framed Fairtrade as 'a help for the producers…help for the partners and the children of the partners' (Caupolican Producer 5, Focus Group, 2016), which connects into the Fairtrade Foundation's definition of the social premium as 'an additional sum of money which goes into a communal fund for workers and farmers to use – as they see fit – to improve their social, economic and environmental conditions' (Fairtrade Foundation, 2018). Indeed, a member of the directorate and premium committee noted that the social premium 'is distributed in different things: studies, health, inputs for the vineyard and miscellaneous expenses' (Focus Group, 2016) with a clear focus on those within Caupolican. This highlights a tension in how Fairtrade is being assembled in this space between the different interpretations of the producers and the association manager.

No producer was aware of Fairtrade before Caupolican and, for individuals with limited education such as these small producers, their lived experience of Fairtrade is their main connection to it (Author, 2018b). Fairtrade's abstract discourses of solidarity and sustainability are only given meaning through their tangible impacts on the producers themselves in terms of selling grapes, money, education and healthcare. These very personal materialities are foregrounded by the producers, which highlights the presence of alternative compositions of Fairtrade in this space. The small producers were very aware of the role of the association manager, and thankful for her involvement in setting up and sustaining the association. However, the centrality of the association manager to the operations, logistics and governance of Caupolican gave her definitional power, supporting her in stabilising an outward-looking Fairtrade assemblage, challenging the member-focused one favoured by many of the producers. This resulted in 5% of Caupolican's social premium being used to support the library of a local school. This experience indicates both the contested power asymmetries within local Fairtrade spaces and the relational work essential to maintaining a particular assemblage. It also highlights that these are 'relations of exteriority', which grants a certain autonomy to the component parts brought together in each assemblage. Exteriority of relations is fundamental to understanding assemblages as with objects conditioned, but not determined, by their relations (Anderson et al., 2012b) space is made for contingency without a general rule of change or potentiality (Anderson et al., 2012a). In Caupolican this means that the association will have different properties and experiences if the producers entered into relations with a new manager; as Haarstad and

Wanvik (2016: 439) argue 'the interactions between seemingly separate elements produce unstable and contingent entities', revealing the stability of Fairtrade assemblages to be 'temporary, contingent achievements, always vulnerable to reconfigurations'.

At La Fortuna motivations to gain Fairtrade accreditation were similar to Caupolican although it has resulted in a qualitatively different assemblage. As the commercial manager for La Fortuna remembered, 'we could have a commercial advantage with respect to others and we realised that, at the same time, we could encourage our people... but it has not been the boom that we thought it could be' (Interview, 2016). Despite this failure to meet commercial expectations, for the workers of the 140-hectare organic vineyard, Fairtrade has been assembled through discourses of interconnection and care:

> '...since the beginning of Fairtrade relations have improved because the worker is seen as more important within the company and that is good. In other words, the worker is seen as necessary...' (La Fortuna Worker 13, Focus Group, 2016)

Although only the wine side is certified, Fairtrade is being practised throughout the company so that workers in the orchards are also experiencing changes. As in Caupolican, the material impacts were foremost in their minds; when asked what Fairtrade meant to them, workers commented on projects that had been supported by the social premium:

> '...we have had improved dental treatment, medical treatment, ophthalmology...' (La Fortuna Worker 8, Focus Group, 2016)

> 'That also helped us, not to buy the bikes because they are already ours, but it certainly helped with the helmet, the lock, the patches, some wanted saddles, handles, yes, we greased the bikes, they fixed the bikes... which are our means of transport' (La Fortuna Worker 1, Interview, 2016)

While healthcare was as important as in Caupolican, in this context the material benefits of Fairtrade were also taking different forms – the renovation of the sports field and dressing room; the building of spectator stands; the purchase of gas cylinders for home fuel; the provision of baskets of products at holidays; and the bike maintenance and accessories. These come from decisions taken in the workers' assembly as they 'are the necessities that the workers need most. Also, they propose different projects... It is not that we decide alone, we organize the search for projects but together the option is chosen' (La Fortuna Worker 9, Focus Group, 2016). In general, the workers of La Fortuna were very engaged with both the *sayings* and the *doings* of Fairtrade, reflecting on scrutinising the accounts in preparation for audits, meetings with other Fairtrade-certified wineries and critically engaging with the rationale for the audit. These knowledges and skills were largely enacted thanks to the GdF who does training and information sessions 'frequently and when she cannot come, she emails ...so that we are always informed of all the new things' (La Fortuna Worker 12, Focus Group, 2016). She was discussed very favourably by all the producers and workers I spoke with in Chile, who agreed that 'each thing that she knows, she communicates immediately to the

companies and here it is known at once' (La Fortuna Worker 8, Focus Group, 2016).  Like Caupolican's association manager, the GdF emerges as an assemblage converter who, through her role as a Fairtrade educator and communicator, is pivotal in stabilising Fairtrade as a transparent and supportive assemblage that is practised by small producers and workers across Chile.

Despite the homogenising global marketing of Fairtrade (Trauger, 2014), the experiences in Caupolican and La Fortuna demonstrates that each local engagement with Fairtrade is a dynamic and contingent process. Here, Fairtrade is a solidarity movement as well as a system promoting sustainability and care; an opportunity for community development; member-focused; and a bringer of material change.  All these heterogenous relations, ideals and materialities come and hold together in particular and different ways in Caupolican and La Fortuna, and always hold the potential to be otherwise.  The concept of an 'assemblage' helps us to capture and understand this dynamism and complexity, offering a framework to understand how stabilities interact with potential volatility and the impacts of specific rather than systemic changes (Haarstad and Wanvik, 2016).  These production space compositions also interconnect with other local meanings from different nodes in the network, often in strategic ways to ensure the durability of Fairtrade (see Author, 2012; Author, 2018b).  Such spatial differences and tensions are also replicated temporally as Fair Trade has changed from its inception as a post-war solidarity movement to its incarnation in the 1970s as ATO 'social entrepreneurs' to moves in the late 1980s towards, and then consolidation in the 1990s of, mainstream growth (Nicholls and Opal, 2005).  This history highlights flows of discourses, processes and materialities as priorities, needs, relations and forces are made and remade, and different actors come and hold together (McFarlane and Anderson, 2011).  From the experiences of both Caupolican and La Fortuna, we can see that Fairtrade is composed in these places through activity.  After all 'assemblages require work' (Saldanha, 2012: 195) and so it is critical to reflect on the interconnections between assemblages and social practice.

## 4    Assemblages of Practices: heterogenous and multiscalar power relations

While practice theories are diverse and so subject to critique (Warde, 2014), they remain useful for social analysis because 'they take us beyond distinctions between the automatic and the rational, the conscious and the unconscious, and beyond interpretations of social action that are, at heart, centred on the individual' (Blue et al., 2014: 5).  The latter remains important but a focus on praxis embeds the individual within their broader context (Jaeger-Erben and Offenberger, 2014).   Therefore, practices can be understood as interconnected and emergent 'doings and sayings', which are inherently unpredictable and dynamic (Schatzki, 2002, Shove, 2014); as in assemblage theory attention is drawn to those between-spaces and relations that highlight the constant tension between fixity and change.  Practices are both simultaneously structural and enduring, and in need of everyday reproduction (Jaeger-Erben and Offenberger, 2014).  As such they offer insights into how particular assemblages take place and why certain

components align or not to enable, in this case, particular forms of Fairtrade over others (McFarlane, 2011a). Social practices are therefore rather difficult to conceptualise but, very briefly, I understand them as:

> *'…an interacting nexus of discourses, materials, skills and relations that shape its context, how the practice is understood and positioned in society and how it is performed. This is held together as relatively stable and coherent through power operations and relations of certain, vested interests, which normalise a particular practice nexus making it acceptable and enduring. Nevertheless, this is only ever provisional and the possibility for innovation and change can come from both within or outside of the stabilised accumulation that represents a particular practice' (Author, 2018b).*[iii]

Above, some of the practices assembling Fairtrade differently in Caupolican and La Fortuna emerged through the fluctuating interactions between, amongst others, discourses of sustainability and solidarity; skills of communication, marketing and sales; relations of participation, conflict and care; and materialities of sports fields, dentures and education. An assemblage approach emphasizes that the Fairtrade system is neither singular nor a globally integrated totality (Haarstad and Wanvik, 2016) but 'has to be enacted and translated in practice' (McFarlane, 2011b: 379). In Caupolican and La Fortuna it was very clear how materials helped enact certain assemblages for the small producers and workers, with the meaning of Fairtrade centred on their practical and lived engagement with it (McFarlane, 2011a). The relational work involved in maintaining a particular form of Fairtrade in a production space emphasizes that both its subjects and contexts are *made in experience* (Duff and Sumartojo, 2017) in what is a sometimes routine and sometimes ad hoc bundling of practices of, for example, viticulture, marketing and ethical trade that (de)stabilise certain assemblages through their emergent capacities (Strengers et al., 2016).

Fairtrade positions itself as 'working in and against the market' (Bacon, 2010: 44) but the potential for this reformist rhetoric to be practised at the ground level is arguably curtailed by the global assemblage of Fairtrade. Mainstreaming has opened Fairtrade out beyond its original focus on SPOs to also include multinationals (Trauger, 2014) but stakeholders in Caupolican and La Fortuna argued that this was further entrenching the latter's market monopoly and excluding small and medium wine producers through the costs of accreditation (€2400, paid annually) and licensing (2% of sales, paid quarterly) (Quality and Certifications Manager, La Fortuna, Interview, 2016). Power is fundamental in shaping how Fairtrade is composed at the local and global scales as well as who, or what, has the capacity to do certain practices. McFarlane (2011a) reminds us that power's operation across space is provisional, and that different actors possess different resources and capacities to act (Anderson et al., 2012b). The very heterogeneity of assemblages, seen here in terms of Fairtrade's differing and multiple spatial and temporal compositions, allows for inequalities to persist (Saldanha, 2012); bringing the ethos and concept of assemblage together

with that of practice ensures an engagement with the unequal power dynamics that shape these fluctuating and multiple alliances.

It is clear that the particular assemblages of Caupolican and La Fortuna are varyingly integrated with other assemblages of different scales (Haarstad and Wanvik, 2016, Wanvik, 2014) - such as the Chilean wine grape market, organic regulations and consumer wine cultures. The limitations posed through other assemblages for each local formation are illustrated by considering the relations between La Fortuna and its wine buyers. La Fortuna's commercial manager reflected that the paperwork and bureaucratic controls of Fairtrade were hindering business, with traders becoming dis-incentivised. Fears were expressed by both managers and the workers that this was putting pressure on the market, which remains export-focused:

> '…it is much more complicated for them to sell a product certified Fairtrade than one without certification … I spend time with the clients from England, I am afraid that they are tired and suddenly they go 'ciao'. To continue with only the organic...' (Commercial Manager, La Fortuna, Interview, 2016)

Distant regulatory and commercial actors can be significant assemblage converters, with extensive capabilities and resources to influence how Fairtrade is practised at La Fortuna. For example, how many sales are made determines the social premium, which projects are funded, how many people can benefit and the very sustainability of maintaining Fairtrade accreditation. As in many capitalist commercial relations, small producers and workers arguably have limited power to determine the transnational assemblages in which they are entangled, which in Fairtrade's case have become relatively fixed through the label, which has significant global exchange and brand value (Vandergeest et al., 2015).[iv] The product and trade requirements imposed by transnational retailers, together with the influx of big companies, shifts the power to do the critical boundary work, defining, claiming and controlling (ibid) what counts as Fairtrade production and trade practices, leading Fairtrade to be experienced on the ground through an inherently unequal landscape of resources and capabilities. This determines which practices and practitioners are included or excluded, who 'curtails the possibilities for those practices' (McFarlane, 2011a: 662) and by whom the global Fairtrade assemblage is being practised and with what consequences for local formations.

Fairtrade emerges as always, and simultaneously, subject to forces of territorialisation and deterritorialisation, which seek to ensure that a particular assemblage is composed and made durable through creating and maintaining certain alliances. Following Vandergeest et al (2015: 1908), territorialisation is understood as 'a process of creating a territory through the delineation of boundaries, and claiming the authority to control what people do inside these boundaries through enforceable rules'. The power relations between different actors and institutions attempting to territorialise particular Fairtrade assemblages becomes apparent when considering the market challenges faced by Caupolican,

who became stuck between the competing practices of a transnational retailer and the UK's Fairtrade Foundation. For a time, the global supply of red wine significantly outstripped demand meaning that Caupolican had a backlog of vintages from 2012-2014, which they struggled to sell:

> '…I started trying to sell at low, I mean, at cost price, for under or whatever, I need cash to eat… So <retailer> made an offer and he forgot forever that he had said $0.90, and he said "OK, so your price is 65". I said yes and I was happy to sell and I knew was under minimum Fairtrade…but I didn't, you know, insist so much … we earned nothing but got out of, rid of the stock and we had some cash … the London Fairtrade Foundation has a lot of contact with us and ask for prices and ask how you doing? … I said "Yes, actually, this happened". "No, this is not legal, we are going to take care of this." "Yeah, but don't get in now that we want to sign the second contract for next year because … we lose this client immediately" … We had to borrow $50,000 to keep running. …They're destroying us, there's absolutely no logic into it. No long term view.' (Producer 10, Interview, 2016).

This incident highlights the variety of internal and external forces and actors at work in how Fairtrade is practised, and that it can never be understood in isolation; the practice(s) of a Fairtrade assemblage are always and constantly in interaction with those of other assemblages. Here, we see the power and impact of the cyclical nature of the global wine industry; a combination of environmental and socio-economic forces meaning that supply exceeded demand; the economic imperative on producers to sell; the promises made; the negotiations over price; the Fairtrade minimum price; the Fairtrade Foundation; the fear of losing a valuable contract; an external bank; a loan of $50,000; and the imperatives of a neoliberal market system. This means that, for those in Caupolican, Fairtrade was experienced rather equivocally as a simultaneous de- and re-territorialisation of a conventional trade assemblage. While solidarity is promoted within the association, even 'ethical' buyers are engaged in practices that establish Fairtrade as a continuity with, rather than a challenge to, conventional trading systems. To some extent, business is business and even those engaged in ethical systems need to remain financially viable. This is the inherent tension within Fairtrade's broader mainstreaming strategy and highlights the limited capacity within the system to challenge inherent inequalities in global commodity trading networks. This emphasizes that assemblages are ephemeral and finite (Dewsbury, 2011, Marcus and Saka, 2006), consisting of a constant negotiation between stability and transformation with properties contingent upon dynamic interactions between changeable actors (Haarstad and Wanvik, 2016). More generally, what is now hegemonically understood as Fair Trade is different to what it was in the 1970s, 1980s or 1990s. It has adapted and endured across differences and amid transformations (Anderson et al., 2012b) to engage and persist in a socio-economic world of changing demands.

We can see that both the local assemblages of Caupolican and La Fortuna as certified wine producers and the global assemblage of Fairtrade persist but are always subject to multiscalar forces of both

territorialisation and deterritorialisation, which act to open up or close down possibilities. In 2009 Cadbury's Dairy Milk became the first mainstream Fairtrade chocolate brand but in late 2016 Cadbury's announced that it was withdrawing to focus on its own 'Cocoa Life' scheme. In mid-2017, Sainsbury's similarly moved away from Fairtrade tea to its own 'Fairly Traded' label. Standards and prices are regularly subject to consultation, and members of the board of FTI – the global regulator – come and go, leading to different areas, products, needs and themes being prioritised depending on their ideals. New products and producers are certified and so '…it is perhaps the interplay between stability and fluidity that should interest us most' (Müller and Schurr, 2016: 226). Thinking Fairtrade practices through assemblages keeps us open to the unpredictability inherent in any given situation with the latter's non-linearity avoiding pre-given causal explanations of what matters in a particular context (McFarlane, 2011b). Furthermore, this helps to destabilise some of the scalar hierarchies around the Fairtrade system by challenging assumptions as to how governance and power relations will play out. Certain heterogenous entities work together for a time to stabilise a certain Fairtrade (Müller, 2015) in a place but, as new alliances form and the context changes (Anderson et al., 2012b), we see that Fairtrade is less coherent than it first appears. After all, the process of assemblage 'describes a tendency towards stabilisation rather than the achievement of it' (Duff and Sumartojo, 2017: 424), leaving space for precarity, novelty and randomness (Müller and Schurr, 2016, McFarlane, 2011b).

Fairtrade emerges as assembled across space and time by practices that promote certain interests through normalising particular ways of doing or thinking fairness or trade justice, and shutting down undesirable alternative meanings and values (Ingram et al., 2007, Røpke, 2009). Some practices are included, while others are excluded leading to particular enactments of Fairtrade in specific space-times as the assemblage of practices orients the ways in which producers and workers engage with, and through, the multiscalar Fairtrade system. While Fairtrade governance and standard setting, for example, may predominantly be practised at the regional or global scale, it is experienced by all those in its systems at the level of the everyday and, in turn, is subject to the existing spaces, subjects and objects in these distinct places (Vandergeest et al., 2015). The contextuality and possibility for changing alliances within assemblages of practices gives them their inherent capacity to be co-opted and re-determined at any scale – from the board of FTI taking a decision to include multinationals, the retailer demanding a certain price to the association manager promoting a community focus to social premium activities. Despite being governed by a standardised set of certification criteria, stakeholders in Caupolican and La Fortuna clearly play a central role in producing, maintaining and re-appropriating how Fairtrade is assembled at the microscale (Shove and Walker, 2010).

Connections to the global assemblages of Fairtrade and wine markets were similarly present in La Fortuna but here interactions with others at a local scale were foregrounded through the relations between Fairtrade and organised labour. While all those working at La Fortuna could participate in the assemblies

and benefit from Fairtrade, the practice of the latter was mediated through its interconnections with Chilean labour rights. The GdF estimated that only 9% of Chilean workers are unionised and legislation has weakened the labour movement with negotiations occurring at a firm level, which have the right to subdivide unions, and the benefits achieved through collective bargaining also extending to non-union members (Rosselot and MacAuliffe, 2015). This tepid environment was highlighted by the GdF as a challenge to building Fairtrade within Chile; accreditation requires freedom of association and yet, while companies 'cannot write that actually, it's prohibited but, you know, that is the message that they give' (Interview, 2016). She considered that this tension between different practices of labour rights has reduced the number of hired labour certified organisations, as:

> '…the standard asks to give the information to the workers related with the unions. If you're going to give the information to my workers, this is going to put the wrong ideas in their minds. So, actually, "No, thank you."'

A union has been active at La Fortuna for over 50 years and negotiates on behalf of the workers; the introduction of Fairtrade practices has enhanced this, establishing new relations between management and workers because 'while it is true we had unions before… with the arrival of Fairtrade it has given more importance to the worker' (La Fortuna Worker 8, Focus Group, 2016). While this union has connections to the national organisations *Corporación Unida de Trabajadores* and *Direccíon del Trabajo* - which offer support in terms of training, updating of legislation, rights and obligations - workers ultimately belong to a local rather than a national body, which arguably weakens their collective bargaining power. Furthermore, there are certain exclusions inherent to the union's operations because it is only composed of the 53 workers with indefinite contracts; the seven temporary workers are not eligible. Union members argued that including the latter would have legal ramifications restricting their bargaining position with the company; however, sometimes they did make a case for negotiated benefits to be shared with the temporary workers. The language used here arguably serves to mask the exclusionary power relations at work. The four temporary workers I spoke with emphasized that they were **permanent**, just not on indefinite contracts:

> 'We have a contract for a specific task, not even per season… every 20 days they renew our contract, it is per specific task…that is why we do not earn severance pay…they don't pay us a bonus either, only the wage that we earn daily and nothing more' (La Fortuna Worker 1, Focus Group, 2016)

However, each of these 'temporary' workers had been with La Fortuna for 16-30 years and for the majority of each year – 'it was a month without work, usually May' (La Fortuna Worker 8, Focus Group, 2016). Therefore, their contention that 'they should include us because we work here, doing the same things that they do…' (La Fortuna Worker 2, Focus Group, 2016) appears valid although the capacity to achieve this is restricted by national legislation that excludes workers with temporary contracts from joining a union

(Rosselot and MacAuliffe, 2015). The temporary workers agreed that a union to represent their needs would help improve their negotiating power within the company and challenge the precarity of their employment. Here, the interactions between the local composition of Fairtrade and the larger, multi-scalar assemblage of La Fortuna, which is in turn interconnected with others including that of different trade unions and national labour legislation, is apparent. The potential contestations and interruptions of these different and dynamic relations emerged when the temporary workers reflected that this marginalisation was not replicated in Fairtrade. This shows the latter's capacity to challenge the union's boundary work, destabilising its practices of inclusion/exclusion as temporary workers start to question why they are only eligible to participate in certain spaces and to receive some benefits.

Power relations mean that any assemblage of practices is experienced through an inherently unequal landscape of resources and capabilities (Jaeger-Erben and Offenberger, 2014, Shove et al., 2012). Fairtrade is never experienced identically because of the variations in both context and practitioners. After all, it does not exist in isolation and so in different spaces it connects, is reinforced or eroded in varying ways through its interactions with other practices (Shove and Walker, 2010, Spaargaren, 2011). Different practices matter and are performed differently in different spaces, and so assembling Fairtrade in a locality depends on the whole nexus of skills, materialities, discourses and relations unique to that space-time. It is therefore important to understand the on-the-ground practices that assemble Fairtrade. The utility of practice theory in engaging with the *performances of* change, the social and engagements between the various scales offers a useful way of engaging with the spatialities of assembling Fairtrade economies, and the forces that support or disrupt particular stabilised meanings.

## 5    Conclusions

Despite the homogeneity and standardisation enforced through the global certification criteria and governance structures, Fairtrade is not a unified system. Caupolican and La Fortuna certified within a year of each other and yet their individual contexts have strongly influenced the form of Fairtrade that continues to be assembled in each place. What has also emerged from this discussion is how both practices and assemblages can be bundled together, interconnecting across spaces, times and scales; as Delanda (2006: 3) contends 'at all times we are dealing with assemblages of assemblages'. The production spaces of Caupolican and La Fortuna are integrated in fluctuating ways into the global assemblage of Fairtrade, and both these local and global compositions combine with other similarly multi-scalar assemblages to contest or promote a particular stabilised and bounded territory. If the global Fairtrade system is iterative and performative, so too are the micro-scale assemblages that compose Fairtrade in Caupolican and La Fortuna. Understanding the practices at work, which each have their own inherent tension between different discourses, relations, skills and materialities, supports a critical analysis of how alternate meanings from various actors interact and endure (Sohn, 2016). In the differing and dynamic contexts of Caupolican and

La Fortuna we saw how discourses of fairness, solidarity and trade; relations of trust, intersubjectivity, domination and exploitation; skills of marketing, communication and negotiation; and materialities of capital, bottles, bicycles and grapes work to keep the Fairtrade assemblage of practices in motion. Who controls the opportunities for (re)definition and (re)appropriation? The potential for Fairtrade to be otherwise through new alliances or shifted boundaries? While the nature of the assemblage diffuses this across the networks, scales and interactions that perform it, reflecting on practices reminds us that actors have very different capabilities to act. The assemblage converters played particularly pivotal roles in opening up or curtailing the possibilities for how Fairtrade was practised in these production places.

Fairtrade is therefore fluid, always subject to both territorialising and deterritorialising forces that shape which practices and practitioners are possible. While there is a tendency towards stabilisation the key word here is *tendency* and, as the withdrawal of major manufacturers and retailers from Fairtrade has shown, the alliances on which a composition depends are fragile and transient. While the experiences of these empirical places have demonstrated the presence of deterritorialising forces that disrupt the praxis of Fairtrade as an alternative system of solidarity, transparency and care, its interactions have also served to destabilise other assemblages. In La Fortuna we saw the potential impact on union activities, in Caupolican on trader standards (Fairtrade International, 2015) and, indeed, while Fairtrade has been critiqued as ineffective and co-opted, the interest and involvement of the big Chilean multinationals and government highlights the innovative potentials of the system. As Healy (2009: 341) notes it 'could just as easily be represented as a powerful innovation, one that has injected an ethical sensibility into trade that did not exist 20 years ago'.

While unceasing relational work assembles a variety of local or global compositions of Fairtrade, the system as a whole persists. GPN analyses provide an effective account for the causality of bigger, systemic transformations but promoting a sense of Fairtrade as a globally integrated totality is arguably less successful in engaging with the specific ruptures and instabilities that are key in governing how local stakeholders experience Fairtrade every day. Assemblage theory can therefore complement GPNs by making space for this, offering insights into the cultural political economy of Fairtrade through conceptualising the multiplicity of relations, actors and places within Fairtrade economies and spaces. These are territorialised through multiple and heterogenous elements coming, and holding together, without becoming homogenous through relations of exteriority (Allen, 2011). Through bringing assemblages together with practice theories, the constant work involved in composing and maintaining what are sometimes very disparate and tense co-functionings is foregrounded: the disempowering relations with buyers; the materialities of a school library or dentures; and the discourses of solidarity, authority and care all, amongst others, reveal the wider Fairtrade system as a set of resonances across multiple local sites (McFarlane, 2011b) and challenge hierarchical notions of scale (Wanvik, 2014). In turn, this offers an analytical lens through which to explore the practices of power and recognise the inherent

and continuing inequalities within Fairtrade.  Shove et al. (2012) argue that change is easier to enact at the micro-scale, therefore understanding how these compositions come and hold together, change and adapt through localised disruptions offers the potential to challenge conventionalisation and so promote system-wide transformation.

These experiences of Fairtrade connect into broader debates around conceptualising fixity and change (Cote and Nightingale, 2012) and multi-stakeholder governance (Grosser, 2016, McMahon, 2011), and present an opportunity to work with GPNs to connect what are often separate accounts of production and consumption.  While there is the potential for Fairtrade to be assembled as a care-full practice of trade justice (Author, under review), acting to destabilise neoliberal capitalism, the constant negotiation and work inherent to its multi-scalar assemblages opens it up to forces of deterritorialisation from the latter. As Fairtrade has grown, bureaucratic structures and governance systems have attempted to stabilise a particular meaning which, despite the system's discourses of inclusion and participation, continues to be defined by global elites (Besky, 2015, Jaffee, 2012).  Bureaucratic governance also contributes to a conventionalisation of the system as it dampens the unpredictability that is a vital characteristic of assemblages.  While this contains the danger of disintegration, no assemblage is forever and it is only by acknowledging local reorientations and interruptions, making space for everyday appropriation by those who are living and practising Fairtrade, that enhancing and progressive alternatives can take flight.

## 6    References

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[i] Following common convention, 'Fair Trade' refers to the movement as a whole, while 'Fairtrade' signifies the market regulated by Fairtrade International (FTI) and Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO-Cert).  Fairtrade is the focus of this paper as it represents the hegemonic model of fair trade in the contemporary marketplace.

[ii] CLAC is one of three regional producer networks that, together with Fairtrade Africa and the Fairtrade Network of Asia and Pacific producers, own 50% of FTI.

[iii] For further details, please see Author (2018b).

[iv] Despite changes in the constitution of FTI, critics question the extent to which these groups are involved in its global governance (see Bacon, 2010; Besky, 2015, McDermott, 2013).