Creating Quality Relationships in the Organic Producer to Consumer Chain

From Madagascar to Germany

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Abstract

The relationship between Southern producers and Northern consumers in organic agriculture is impoverished. Although producers and consumers are actually connected through lengthy commodity chains, there is generally a strong sense of felt disconnection. They do not feel part of the same system. People in the chain lack physical presence for one another: they exist in the realm of ideas, if at all.

In order to find ways of creating quality relationships between producers and consumers, the emerging agenda of social certification in organic agriculture is examined. A quality of life toolkit, which is capable of capturing the needs and aspirations of smallholders and plantation workers, is developed in order to contribute a new 'bottom-up' methodological approach to the process of social certification. Extensive research with organic smallholders and plantation workers was carried out in Madagascar in the development of the toolkit.

The concept of a new social label that could be applied to organic products is also explored. Such a label could be validated by data and information produced by the quality of life toolkit during the process of social certification. The prototype label that is developed occupies quite different ground to labels dealing with the conditions of production, or trading relationships, or international labour standards. Attention is paid to the values and aspirations that producers actually hold. The aim is to ensure that these are supported, rather than eroded, through the process of production for the Northern market.

An important feature of the label is its ability to acknowledge and build upon the ethical values held by the consumer. Research based on surveys, interviews, and focus groups was carried out in Germany in order to assess the receptiveness of organic consumers to such a label in the context of their own ethical *lifeworlds*. The thesis concludes that social labelling invites actors in organic producer to consumer chains to engage in a richer and more meaningful relationship that extends the realm of legitimate values included in the market exchange of products.

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To

Roger Farnworth

For being the loveliest of fathers.

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List of Contents

List of Boxes

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Maps

List of Photographs

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AGÖL	Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft (German organic foodstuff federation)
ASOS	Action-Santé-Organisation-Secours (health action charity organisation)
BIOGUM	Biotechnik, Gesellschaft und Umwelt (Biotechnology, Society and Environment), a department of the University of Hamburg in Germany
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy (in Europe)
CEG	Collège d'Enseignement Général (general education college)
CISCO	Circonsciption Scolaire (school district)
CSB	Centre de Santé de Base (health post)
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DFID	Department for International Development, UK
ECOCERT	Organic certifying body with headquarters in Germany and representation in France
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FAFED	Fédération des Associations Femme et Développement (Federation of Women and Development Organisations in Madagascar)
FAL	Bundesforschungsanstalt für Landwirtschaft (Federal Agricultural Research Centre, Braunschweig, Germany)
FLO	Fairtrade Labelling Organisations (based in Bonn, Germany)
GEPA	Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Partnerschaft mit der Dritten Welt mbH (Company to Promote Partnership with the Third World – the largest fair trade organisation in Germany)
GMOs	Genetically modified organisms
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (Society for Technical Cooperation, Germany)
HDI	Human Development Index
IDS	Institute of Development Studies (at the University of Sussex, UK)
IFAT	International Federation for Alternative Trade
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
IIED	International Institute for the Environment and Development
INRA	French Agronomical Research Institute
ISEAL Alliance	International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance
LDI	Landscape Development Interventions (part of USAID)
NAC	Nutrition Assise Communautaire (local nutrition advice provider)
nef	New Economics Foundation
PMD	Plantation MonDésir
PNUD	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
PPNs	Produits de première nécessité (daily necessities)

6

PROMABIO	Groupement Professionnel des Operateurs en Agriculture Biologique (Malagasy organic umbrella organisation for producers)
SÖL	Stiftung für Ökologie and Landbau (Foundation for Ecology and Agriculture) in Germany
Tavy	Slash and burn cultivation
TBT Agreement	Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
USAID	US Agency for International Development
ZMP	Zentrale Markt-und Preisberichtstelle für Erzeugnisse der Land, Forst und Ernährungswirtschaft GmbH

Exchange Rates at Time of Study in 2001	10 000 FMG (Malagasy Francs) = approximately £1 Sterling / 1.54 Euro

All photographs in this thesis were taken by the author unless otherwise stated.
All translations from German and French sources were made by the author.

Chapter One: A Quality Relationship to the World

To land after land without time
The wild geese return.[1]

How can quality relationships with the world be conceptualised, created and captured? The thesis explores this question. The field of analysis is producer-consumer relationships in organic agriculture.

   The chapter has four parts. Part 1.1 outlines the problem statement, the author's assumptions, and the aims of the thesis. Part 1.2 presents an overview of the producer to consumer value chain in order to (a) contextualise the problem statement and aims, and (b) provide a 'real world sticking place' for the theoretical concepts to follow.   To this end the concept of global commodity chains is explored, and the importance of the North-South nexus to the research project is examined.

   Part 1.3 introduces the theoretical and analytic threads that knit the work together: constructionism, gender analysis, ethics, and soft systems thinking. The author's concept of a 'quality relationship to the world' is built upon as the discussion develops. Part 1.4 presents an overview of the rest of the thesis. Box 1.1 begins our discussion by examining one of the key concepts in this thesis: Quality.

Box 1.1: Key Concept: 'Quality'

The word 'quality' originates from the Latin *qualitas*, meaning 'howness'. The quality of a thing denotes its property. Kvale ([1977] in Tingstad, 2002: 1) adds that quality can mean 'what kind' – the essential character of something.

The pre-scientific viewpoint asserted that the object of one's observation is without doubt reality, but Galileo (1564-1642) distinguished between primary and secondary qualities. The primary qualities are those properties that belong to things themselves – extent, solidity, shape, movement, number and size. They are objective and independent of whether they are experienced or not. Secondary qualities, Galileo argued, are properties that things do not own in themselves, but are only experienced by us – colour, sound, smell, heat, taste *etc*. These experiences result from an interplay between our sensory organs and the external thing's primary properties. These properties, he said, cannot be measured.

In time this viewpoint came to be criticised, yet criticism has not led to any widely accepted solution to the problem. Steiner argued that particular

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1 Shumpa (1749-1810).

properties do exist in reality, but that we do not know how to treat them scientifically (mathematically).

What 'quality' means in respect to food depends largely on the place of the stakeholder in the production chain: the farmer, food industry official, health regulator, retailer and the consumer. Agronomic quality comprises aspects such as resistance to pest and disease, whereas market value is based primarily on external sensory qualities such as the product's shape and colour. Technological quality includes properties such as packaging and keeping qualities. Consumers can be interested in a range of qualities, for instance a food's nutrient qualities, satisfying quality, social quality, sensory qualities, aesthetic and enjoyment quality and, increasingly, its ethical quality. So-called primary and secondary qualities are important to most stakeholders.

Source: Adapted from Tingstad (2002).

Box 1.1 makes it evident that defining and capturing the term 'quality' is problematic. The positioning of the stakeholder relative to the product is important when seeking to determine what quality means (Schiere, pers. comm. 02/04). Farmers and health regulators might not have a common understanding of the concept. On the other hand, Renard (1999, in Barham, 2002: 12) argues that *'new, socially constructed, shared values […] are leading to a new model of consumption'* based around a composite picture of quality. These new values include ecology, nature, place, convenience, and adaptability to new lifestyles (ibid). This list makes it clear that the values informing the qualities that consumers read into food are not necessarily harmonious with one another. The enjoyment quality of a food might be at odds with its nutrient, or ethical quality, for example. In this thesis the particular focus of concern is the way in which people attach ethical qualities to a product. It explores the values that inform this process.

1.1   Problem Statement and Aims of the Thesis

This thesis begins by asking: *How can quality relationships be conceptualised, created and captured?* Human beings exist in an ever-creating world. Like our fellow creatures human beings are not simply made. They participate in a process of co-creation, in a perpetual interaction that makes the world different to what it was yesterday. It is increasingly accepted that non-human animals shape the world through building physical structures, through behaviour derived from instinct and also – for some species, a degree of formal reasoning and goal-orientated behaviour (see Gould & Gould, 1999, for evidence of this). However, this thesis proposes that human beings create in a specific and unique way, namely through actively seeking to develop and fix a qualitative relationship to the world. In order to tackle the lead question the author makes four key assumptions:

1.   We are able to think about the kind of relationship we want to have with the world.

2. This relationship can be ethical in character (as well as being aesthetic, for instance).
3. We can take responsibility for the effective working of that relationship.
4. We try to seek coherence between what we think about the world and how we act in the world.

Organic agriculture was chosen as a framework within which to address the research problem. It represents a distinctive approach to sustainable agriculture in that the market is used to support a range of environmental, social and animal welfare objectives. As a consequence detailed production standards and certification procedures have been developed. In many countries a regulatory framework has also been established (Lampkin *et al.* 1999: 1). The links between producer and consumer are thus highly formalised. They are distinguished by a number of trust-building mechanisms run by intermediaries like organic certification bodies.

Nevertheless the author considers that the producer-consumer relationship in organic agriculture is impoverished. Although producers and consumers are linked by a physical organic product, potatoes for example, the broken-up nature of the production chain means that consumers and producers tend to inhabit different 'realities' with little knowledge of each others' lives and aspirations. *'The idea that people actually <u>live</u> at different stages of the production chain is being forgotten by consumers'* (Nieberg, pers. comm. 09/03). This is all the more so when the material commodity chain spans continents. People in the chain lack physical presence for one another. They exist in the realm of ideas. This lack of connection is not just a theoretical problem. It has a bearing upon how people are able to live their lives in the real world.

Farmers' markets in the North are seeking to re-connect these two stakeholders in organic agriculture through shortening the production chain. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) enables consumers to share the risks associated with food production with the farmer. Individuals or families contract with a farmer to provide food for all or part of the year, or engage in other deals, such as sponsoring a cow and receiving dairy products throughout the year (Kinnear, 2004; Pilley, 2004; see www.cuco.org.uk for more information on CSA). The Slow Food movement supports the local and regional production of organic foods (Kinnear, 2004). However, enriching relationships between Northern consumers and Southern producers scarcely exist. Why does this matter? One reason is that Northern consumers who want to translate their ethical values into effective purchasing action find their room for manoeuvre limited. The information flow from the producer is limited and mediated by other stakeholders in the food chain, rendering the platform upon which ethical decisions are made by the consumer shaky and open to question. Southern producers (in this thesis, smallholders and plantation workers) likewise tend to lack effective decision-making power with respect to markets, and often have little understanding of consumers. A finely-textured quality relationship cannot be created, or thrive, in these circumstances.

10

In order to develop an enriched understanding of the concept of quality relationships, the author decided to study - and help co-create to differing degrees - three initiatives to develop quality relationships and the structures necessary for their maintenance in the real world. These are:

1. Social certification in organic agriculture.
2. The development of a quality of life toolkit to develop and capture criteria for well-being among organic smallholders and plantation workers.
3. The development of a social label to enable organic consumers to reward 'more than purely price' values in the marketplace.

Clearly each of these initiatives, or domains, is wrought with tension and contradiction – they are not neat packages but rather bubbling cauldrons of contested meanings and unequal power relations. The first aim of the study was therefore to unpack each initiative and, by thinking through some of the key issues, contribute to a clarification of the debates in each domain. Figure 1.1 thus presents each initiative as a separate box.
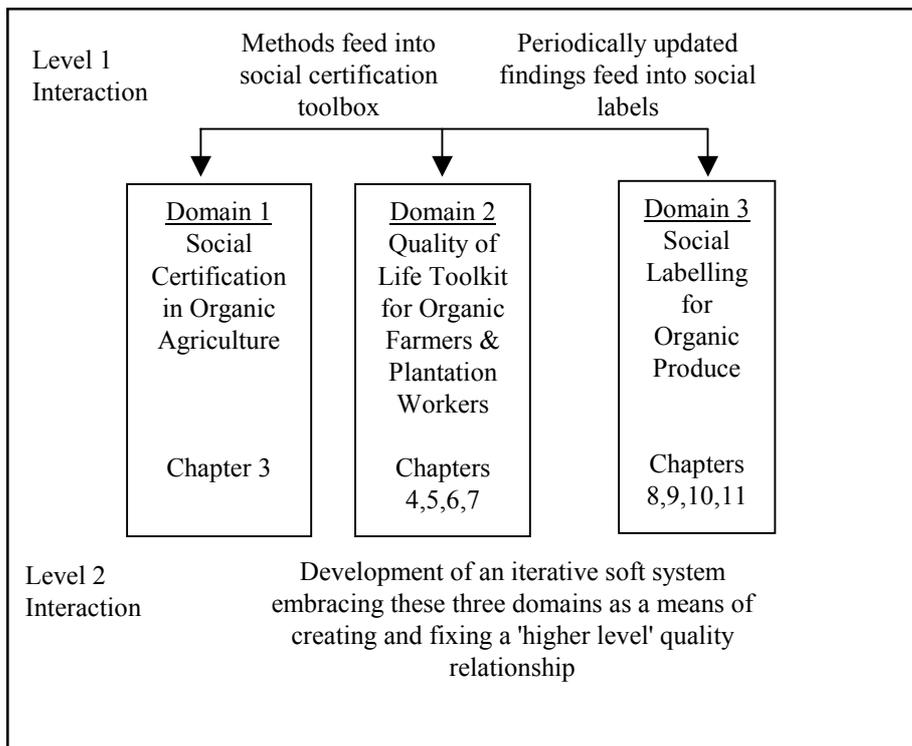
Figure 1.1: Overview of the Research Domains.

Domain 1: *'Social certification in organic agriculture'*, existed prior to the author's study. A number of actors, including the Soil Association (the leading organic certifier in the UK) and IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) have recently started examining how to certify the

production chain not only for its organic properties, but also for its contribution to producer well-being. The author gained enhanced understanding of the debates by attending conferences on organic agriculture, reading widely, and by becoming a member of a 'social stewardship' management committee[2] with a remit to organise further debate on this issue.

For Domain 2: *'The development of a quality of life toolkit to develop and capture criteria for well-being among organic smallholders and plantation workers'*, the author developed and piloted a quality of life toolkit in Madagascar. The first objective was to assess the toolkit's ability to assess producer well-being, thus providing a new method for social certification in organic agriculture. The second objective was to contribute to improved producer-consumer relationships through providing information for social labels. The toolkit was developed and tested in Madagascar with organic smallholders and plantation workers.

For Domain 3: *'The development of a social label to enable organic consumers to reward 'more than purely price' values in the marketplace'*, the author developed the concept of a new kind of social label, one that reaches far beyond questions of ethical sourcing or trade. According to Blowfield (1999: 5-6) fair trade aims to establish a partnership between producer and buyer based on long-term commitment, stable prices and greater producer involvement in marketing. In contrast, many other environmentally and socially responsible initiatives, like those that address the cut flower industry, are about managing production. They do not address trading relations *per se* (ibid). The social label conceptualised by the author occupies quite different ground. Attention would be paid to other values and aspirations producers hold. The aim would be to ensure that these are supported, rather than eroded, through production for the Northern market. An important feature of the label would be its ability to acknowledge and build upon the ethical values held by the consumer. Indeed, a central selling point of such a label would be its dynamic character. It should evolve as quality of life aspirations among organic producers and consumers change. An iterative learning process would need to be set up between producers and consumers to achieve the goal of a true social label. Research was carried out with organic consumers in Germany in order to assess their potential receptiveness to such a project.

In Figure 1.1 the term *'Level 1 Interaction'* refers to the author's attempts to bring the domains together in a practical manner. This was achieved by feeding the findings produced by the Malagasy quality of life toolkit into the work performed by the author in domains one and three. The following questions, arising from this activity, are addressed in the thesis:

- *Do smallholders and plantation workers benefit from being involved in certified organic agriculture? How can we know this?*
- *Can, and should, social certification standards be shaped in part by producer values? That is, can the development of standards play a role in enabling producers to create the world they seek?*

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2 This initiative is led by RAFI-USA (Rural Advancement Foundation International) and associates.

- *Should social certification have a remit to contribute to 'development', in the sense of leading to growth (however defined) in the community? Or should it be simply about measuring adherence to particular standards?*
- *How can German organic consumers connect and engage with the lives of producers in meaningful ways?*
- *Can, and should, social labels be shaped in part by producer values?*

The term 'Level 2 Interaction' refers to the author's reflections on the work carried out under 'Level 1 Interaction'. It examines some of the issues that arise through asking further questions:

- *Is it possible to create new relationships between producers and consumers?*
- *What are the pre-conditions for the forging of successful quality relationships?*
- *What difference might the emergent properties/ higher values arising in such relationships make to the three initiatives?*
- *Fundamentally: who is the system for?*

The overall aims of the study are to contribute to knowledge formation (information and understanding), development (real world relevance and applicability to systems in use), and methodology (ways to formalise values and incorporate these in the food chain). The next part situates the research project in the global organic commodity chain. It comments on factors affecting the capacity of effective and empowering relationships to be built across the commodity chain. These include the character of North-South relations.

1.2   The Value Chain in Organic Agriculture

From a purely economic point of view, there are different ways to measure the value of organic agriculture. One can analyse figures for organic production, trade, the relationship between supply and demand, or the prices and price premiums on organic food (Hamm *et al.* 2002). The approach taken will determine the relative importance of organic vis-a-vis the conventional sector, between organic products, or between countries. Therefore it is hard to present a simple picture of the economic value of organic agriculture. Chapter ten presents some indicative data from Germany. Here it is emphasised that numerous sources indicate that the organic sector is growing more or less strongly across the European Union (see for example Michelsen *et al.* 1999; Hamm *et al.* 2002). In the opinion of Harris *et al.* (2001: 10) the expanding European market offers huge potential to developing countries to increase the volume of organic foodstuffs sold to Europe, as well as to exploit new markets for crops such as nuts, spices, essential oils and other climate-specific crops. The way in which producers in Madagascar are responding to this potential is outlined in chapter six. The point being made here is that organic farming is moving out of the niche market and is challenging the *status quo*. This is important because organic farming is subject to different rules and conventions than industrial agriculture (Hubert, pers. comm. 04/04).

The Global Commodity Chain

It is helpful to examine other ways to value organic agriculture. One way is through using the concept of the global commodity chain. This refers to the whole range of activities involved in the design, production and marketing of a product (Gereffi, 1999: 1). The discussion carried out below makes it clear that there is a complex interplay between structure and agency in such chains. Figure 1.2 depicts a simple global producer to consumer chain. It provides a useful overview of the key actors in the organic coffee chain. In so doing it demonstrates the lack of contact between producer and consumer, as far as handling the product is concerned. The relationships these stakeholders have are primarily to local buyers and retailers, respectively.
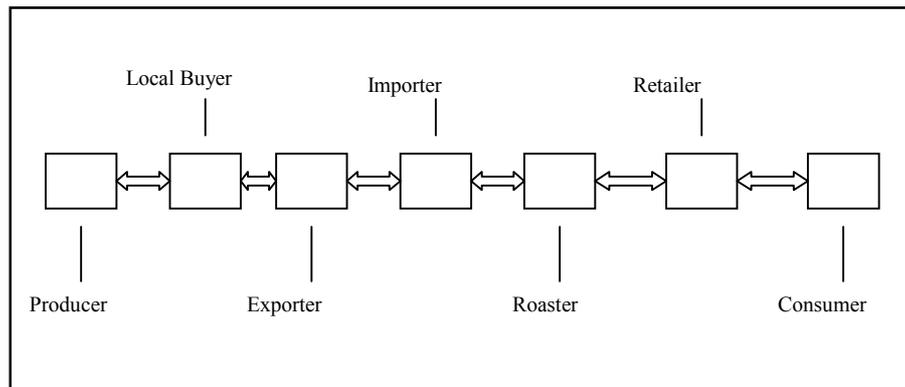
Figure 1.2: Simple Global Producer to Consumer Chain for Organic Coffee
Source: Adapted by the author from Courville (2001: 80)

According to Gereffi (1999; see also Raynalds 2002, Gereffi [1994], in Barrientos & Tallontire, 2003; Rammohan & Sundaresan, 2003) the four key dimensions of global commodity chains are (i) the value-added sequence in the production and consumption of a product (ii) the geographical concentration, or dispersion of, production and marketing (iii) the power relations, or governance structure, determining how material, human, and financial resources are distributed within the chain, and (iv) an institutional framework that identifies how local, national and international contexts influence activities within chains. Commodity chain analysis is critiqued by Raynalds (2002: 406) for providing an overly static and deterministic view of agro-food systems. She adds that its analytical power is limited since it is normally taken only to the point of sale to the consumer. Dixon (1997, in Guthman, 2002: 298) agrees that there is a methodological and conceptual break here. When the consumer arrives home to prepare the food the value added through this process is not acknowledged. Given that women are often responsible for preparing food in the home, a significant aspect of gender relations is thus set aside. Bearing in mind these limitations, Gereffi's four dimensions provide a useful framework with which to develop an understanding of commodity chains.

Value-added sequencing (dimension one) can be studied through examining the passage of a material commodity from production to consumption. This permits

14

process standards (which require action across a process) and performance standards (which require the meeting of certain thresholds) to be developed. Such standards enable the quality of the commodity, in some of the different ways outlined in Box 1.1 above, to be defined and controlled throughout the chain. Figure 1.3 depicts a material commodity chain for organic vegetables in Germany. Although the vegetable chain shown is national rather than international, Figure 1.3 provides a good overview of a material commodity chain. It shows that the percentage of vegetables marketed direct from the producer to the consumer is 30%. The remaining vegetables pass through processors, conventional and organic wholesalers to supermarkets and speciality shops before they reach the final point of sale, the consumer.
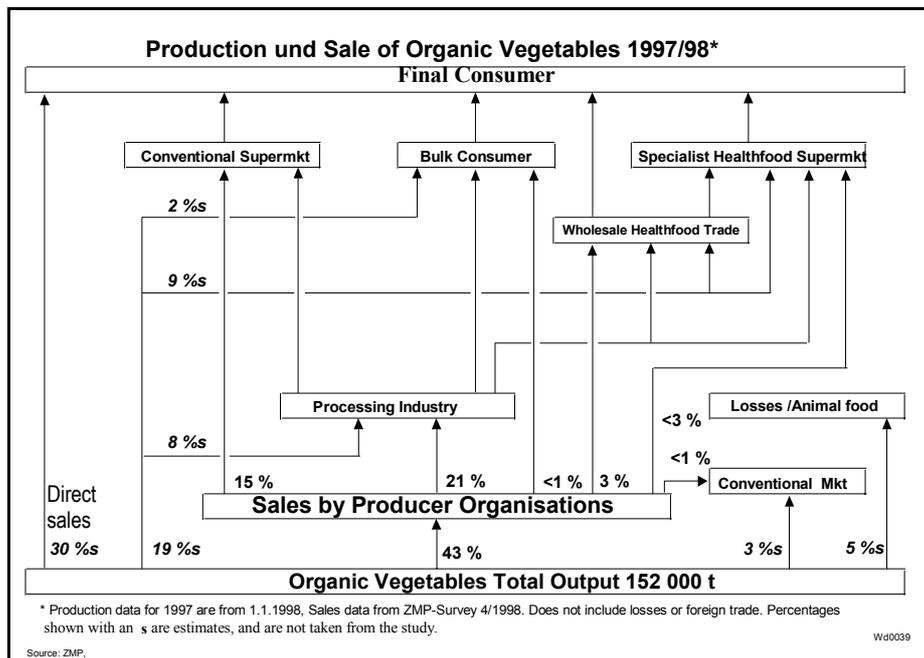
Figure 1.3. Commodity Chain for Organic Vegetables in Germany
Source: Translated and adapted by the author from Wendt (1999: 74)

The two figures just presented make it plain that a wide range of institutional actors are involved in the material production to consumption chain. However, through the veiling of their human identities (by the use of terms like processing industry) the fact that there are people, who are stakeholders in the chain, is hidden. It is however possible to conceptualise the producer to consumer chain quite differently. This involves explicitly situating the material commodity chain in human systems. If this is done, two things can happen. First, paying attention to the well-being of people working in the chain has been shown to improve productivity.[3] Second, there is room for surprise and creativity to emerge. Novelty

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3 Trist & Branforth ([1951] in Stacey, 1994, and Handy, 1993 : 193) showed in a pioneering study of coalminers that

changing a technology from one that required small group work to three-shift working had a disruptive effect on the

can be an emergent property of an iterative relationship between a hard system (the material commodity chain) and a soft system (the human system). Box 1.2 describes two approaches to adding value to the producer to consumer chain. Both focus on building the capacity of stakeholders in each chain, as well as improving the material product.

Box 1.2: Case Studies of Value-adding Relationships Across the Producer to Consumer Chain

A study by the Women in Rice Farming Systems (WIRFS) project in the Philippines found that the task of processing rice by hand was laborious and time-consuming for women. Raw material was limited since the glutinous rice varieties the women were growing were low yielding. Little land was devoted to glutinous rice cultivation. Glutinous rice was not, therefore, a high priority for plant breeders. However adding value to the rice through processing enabled it to be sold as a speciality product. As a result of the WIRFS study a new, early-maturing, higher yield variety was developed. At the same time de-hulling machinery was developed in collaboration with the women processors. This led to improvements in labour efficiency and reduced the drudgery involved in hand pounding. The value-added gross returns were 70%. The income derived from selling the processed rice helped women to fulfil their responsibilities for key household inputs and food management (Paris 1989; Paris 2000, in Kaaria & Ashby 2000, both cited in Farnworth & Jiggins, 1993: 24).

The organisers of a Swedish project, entitled *'Lifelong Learning Within the Food Chain in Scania, Sweden'*, argue that *'people are [often] very eager to concern themselves with only their own subsystem without giving a single thought to the ... losses that can be generated by not observing the interface'* (Lundqvist, 2002). One aim of the project is to develop human competencies along the food chain in order to benefit the individuals involved, many of whom occupy low-paid, low-skilled jobs. A second aim is to create opportunities for learning across the sectors. The organisers expect that new values will arise as a consequence of this project, which are beneficial to individuals and the food sector as a whole. For example, they expect that bringing a range of women smallholders together will result in *'new meeting places for the exchange of experience, personal development, competence development and the development of entrepreneurship'* (ibid).

Rammohan & Sundaresan (2003) consider the implications of Gerreffi's second dimension, the geographical concentration/ dispersion of production and marketing. They argue that, *'the specific attributes of the chain are shaped by the disparate elements of the varied societies through which they traverse.'* They then take the example of labour costs, saying that, *'Social and cultural domains extend*

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relationships of the men, and thence on productivity. This study profoundly influenced management theory, leading to attempts to link what Trist & Branforth called the ‹technical› and ‹social› subsystems of an organisation.

into the economic … it is not that labour is 'born' cheap in the periphery. Rather, labour is formed into an important, cheap element in the global commodity chain. This is not solely due to the economic power of capital or its power at the workplace, but because the labour it recruits is 'socially' priced a priori. The pricing may be of female labour, as labour of 'low' and 'out' castes' and therefore considered intrinsically of lower worth' (ibid: 905).

Barrientos *et al.* (2003) draw upon Gereffi's third dimension, power relations, to argue that horticultural producer to consumer chains are characteristic of buyer-driven chains. Supermarket chains define not only what is to be produced, but also how and under what conditions. Retailers have adopted just-in-time production methods, passing the costs of demand instability to producers. This drives labour costs down and avoids many of the non-wage costs of employment. Informal, highly gendered work arrangements are becoming the norm. This point links into the one just made by Rammohan & Sundaresan, namely that the economic terrain is already configured by social markers such as gender and caste.

Barrientos *et al.* (ibid: 1513) then turn to Gereffi's fourth dimension, the institutional framework, to argue that the changing nature of consumption patterns in the North has increased the importance of branding and product differentiation. The focus has shifted away from price-based competition towards quality, innovation and value-added. It is in this space, they say, that codes of conduct are being developed.

As already mentioned Raynalds (2002) takes issue with Gereffi's framework. She argues that commodity chains should be understood as interconnected discursive, as well as material, flows across production and consumption arenas. Commodity chains are, in reality, *'complex, dynamic and fluid networks'* (ibid: 407). We can examine the organic producer to consumer chain in the light of Raynald's contention. It obviously involves a sequence of financial exchanges between actors along the material chain (Figures 1.2 and 1.3 above). At the same time it can be posited that the organic chain involves the creation of, and trading in, complex values. Figure 1.4 shows that in Germany (as in other countries) organic produce is marketed as both conventional and organic. Although full information is lacking[4], around 50% of organic milk is sold as a conventional product, and 34% of beef. Fresh organic products, such as vegetables and fruit, are marketed mostly as organic, with only around 5% entering the conventional chain (Wendt, 1999: 88). Currently German supermarkets are using organic fresh produce to achieve a particular profile, but *'the strategies of companies change constantly'* (ibid: 89). Figure 1.4, and the statistics just given, point not only to financial exchanges but also to the flexible nature of trading in meanings. A particular quality of the organic product, namely that it was produced in an organic system, may or may not be given a value.

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4 This is due to the lack of an organic database. Retailers are reluctant to share information which might reduce their competetiveness. It is often only possible to trace links from the producer to the first point of sale (Wendt, 1999).

Production	Processing	Trade	Consumption

Organic Agriculture

for sale as organic products — *via* AGÖL, Naturkost, neuform

Direct sale

Smallscale food producers

Processing industry
- Naturkost
- AGÖL
- Reformwaren

Foodtrade

Wholesale — Healthfood Reformwaren | Retailer — Organic shop Reformhaus

Restaurants, Catering

Sold as organic product

for sale as conventional products — via conventional food processing industry

Processing industry

Foodtrade — Wholesale | Retailer

Restaurants, Catering

Small scale food producers

Sold as conventional product

Consumption of organic agricultural products in Germany

Figure 1.4: Conventional and Organic Marketing Pathways of Organic Produce
Source: Adapted and translated by the author from Wendt (1999: 87)

Guthman (2002) explores three kinds of added value in organics. These are (1) the 'taste of reflexivity', in which the value added to the product is knowledge and/or trust, (2) the 'taste of distinction', in which the value added to the product is the aesthetic and/or rare, and (3) the 'taste of simplicity', in which the value added to the product is transparency and/or avoidance. She concludes that whilst the taste for organic draws upon all of these values, it is *'heightened reflexivity that best characterises the organic eater: the need to avoid social anxiety by doing the right thing … it means opting for health over indulgence, care over convenience, extravagance over economy and … novelty over tradition'* (ibid: 304-5). Her remarks allow us to see that consumers attach complex values to organic products in ways that might disregard the 'primary' qualities of the products themselves, like size and shape.

Guthman's analysis aims to foreground the importance of the consumer as a decision-making agent. Goodman (2002) comments that the realm of consumption is, compared to production, under-theorised. Consumers are *'abstractly figured as 'discerning,' 'affluent,' and so on'* (ibid: 272). It is important however, to accept *'the importance of actors' cultural and knowledge negotiations in defining the meaning of food'* (Arce & Marsden, 1993, cited in ibid: 271). These arguments are examined more closely in chapter eight on ethical consumption (along with the role

of the retailer and other actors in co-shaping consumer wants). The purpose of introducing them here is to demonstrate that the producer to consumer chain is interactive and contested. It is laced with the creation and flow of meaning between stakeholders.

It is recognised here that many organic farmers eschew incorporation in global commodity chains, since involvement in international trade does not sit well with the reasons why they chose to become organic farmers. Producers like these appeal to sets of meanings concentrating on organicism, political change and novelty, (Guthman, 2002). Organic producers, according to several European studies, generally expect an enhanced quality of life (Howard & Jansen, 2003). Two studies of [sustainable] Canadian farmers discovered that values were strongly gendered. Chiappe & Flora (1998) found that Canadian women farmers thought that quality family life and spirituality was part of sustainable farming vision. Meares (1997) found that both men and women Canadian farmers felt themselves to be part of a movement for sustainability. According to her study, women generally articulated their values in terms of their gendered roles and responsibilities on the farm, whereas men aligned themselves with the broader movement.

Courville (2001), in her study of global organic coffee chains, finds that producer to consumer chain is composed of two sub-systems, production and consumption. They are linked primarily by international trading in the New York C market. Here there is a relationship between the exporter and importer. Organic and fair trade certification and labelling schemes provide additional links. However the flows within each sub-system are much richer and denser than the flows across the entire system. Courville concludes that, *'given the volatility of international trade through market fluctuations and the relative weakness of international regulatory systems, a strong and stable relationship between importer and exporter is all the more important, as are any additional linkages between the sub-systems to improve resilience. These include ... fair trade and organic certification and labelling systems'* (ibid: 309).

This thesis is about the potential of the commodity chain in organic products to engender quality relationships between producers and consumers. This involves examining information flows between producers and consumers. As Courville suggests, the chief mechanisms by which information is passed are the certification of organic production systems, and the labelling of the final product. These are particularly important in global food chains, given the geographical distance between producer and consumer. However, the potential of these two mechanisms to create quality relationships has not been properly exploited. One reason is that producers and consumers have not been able - or have not fully realised their ability - to shape these two mechanisms in an iterative, learning fashion.

The North-South Nexus
The author has chosen to examine producer-consumer relationships in organic agriculture across international boundaries, that is, between North and South. It is therefore important to acknowledge the North-South nexus in the global commodity chain. Two aspects of this nexus are important. Firstly, many Southern

producers face great difficulties in accessing Northern markets. Vorley (2004) argues that even if unjust trade rules were to be reformed, *'disparities in bargaining power, scale, market access, information, or access to credit may still entrench anti-poor and anti-rural bias in markets'*. He goes on to discuss the international dominance of a very few corporations in the food sector, the concentration of profits at the retail end of the chain in importing countries, the lack of retail demand for important Southern products like cereals and oilseed, the role of subsidies to Northern farmers in skewing the market, and the concentration of processing facilities in the North. Hubert (pers. comm. 04/04) argues that whilst South to North trade can lock small producers into new forms of neo-colonial relationship, trade in organic products offers opportunities to Southern producers. It is crucial, he argues, that consumers develop their understanding of the issues at stake.

The North-South nexus also affects the creation of meanings in social certification and social labelling. In Courville's (2001: 6) view, the current regulatory system governing international trade is an objective problem that needs to be tackled in a way *'that is sensitive to context: to local experiences, perspectives and ecological systems.'* This is important. However, her approach lacks an appreciation of the way the local and global intertwine and interrelate. We are not speaking of a cosy, mutually-equal kind of interrelation, but rather one fundamentally defined by an ever-changing, unequal constellation of power across historical time. People in the North and the South are irretrievably involved and entangled with one another on a number of levels: economic, political and social - and in the realm of ideas. In terms of the research process, 'othering' can serve to both disempower the 'researched', and to hinder feedback upon the process of research (Beyene, 2002: 37). If this occurs, the prospects for effective mutual learning are diminished.

Said (2003), focusing on the East-West nexus, discusses the complex phenomenon of *Orientalism*. The Orient, he says, is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in, and for, the West (ibid: 5). He continues by saying that the relationship between Occident and Orient is one *'of power, of domination'* (ibid). These observations also hold generally true for the North-South nexus. In this thesis, the complexity of the North-South relationship is not explored in depth, but it is explicitly acknowledged. The terms North and South are used in preference to terms like developed and developing world, or first and third world. These latter terms conceal, in the author's opinion, negative value judgements. Whilst the 'developing world' may indeed be considered to be 'less developed' in terms of infrastructure, for instance, it is all to easy to extend the term, even if unconsciously, to include the inhabitants of these places. The terms North and South describe not only a place but also a political idea: Australia is in the geographical south, but is considered, using this terminology, to be North. The idea being conveyed by these terms is that power relations between North and South are not, and have not been, equal (Farnworth & Magombe, 1997). At the same time people in the South have agency. They resist, submit to, shape, overcome – and all the other ways in between - the North-South dichotomy. The same can be said for people in the

North. Such agency has a significant bearing on the research project, because it affects the ways in which quality relationships can be formed between producers and consumers.

Part 1.3 now presents the theoretical and analytical threads which, when interwoven, bind the research project together. Their purpose in this thesis is to enable an understanding of the ways in which people try to achieve a quality relationship to the world.

1.3 A Quality Relationship to the World

The problem statement and aims outlined in the opening pages of this chapter could be examined through a great number of theoretical lenses.[5] Each of these could bring valuable insights to bear. In order to have a manageable task, however, the author has selected three theoretical strands: constructionism, ethics and systems thinking. The following sections present an overview of these – further nuances will be introduced in the following chapters. Gender as an analytical thread is also discussed. Particular concepts useful to the analysis are presented at appropriate points throughout the thesis.

This thesis does not interrogate theories and concepts, or to subject them to a sustained internal critique. Rather, it draws out their ability to illuminate and enrich the exploration of the problem statement. Although the theories are presented in isolation they interrelate iteratively with each other. The interrelationship is pursued throughout the thesis and consolidated in chapter twelve.

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5 It is preferable to work with an explicit theoretical base rather than rely on common sense (which rests on unacknowledged theory). Dunphy & Griffith (1998, in King, 2000: 31) say that *'theories allow us to construct models of social processes, to structure and interpret shifting social realities. Theories simplify reality by identifying critical variables and then indicating how these variables relate to each other. Theories help us to simplify a complex reality, to understand its key elements and their interrelationships, and how it works overall.'*

Photograph 1.1   Weaving the Theoretical Threads Together

Constructionism

The theory of constructionism is an essential pre-requisite for situating the author's idea of a quality relationship to the world. In this part, constructionist approaches to understanding the world are explained. The concept of a quality relationship is then presented.

Constructionism can be contrasted with that which it is not, namely positive realism, in order to allow a fuller understanding. Positivist realism adopts the ontological position that an objective reality exists. Since the laws and facts forming this reality are assumed to exist independent of our influence, the associated epistemological approach is adopted whereby it is believed that research can be detached from what is researched. Research neither influences, nor is interdependent with, the researched (Beyene, 1999: 22). The task is to apprehend and represent reality as effectively as possible. The models derived are understood to be <u>representations</u> of a separately existing reality.

According to the constructionist paradigm, however, what passes for reality is understood to be actively 'constructed' by people in specific contexts and at specific times. The models thus derived are understood to be <u>perceptions</u>, as opposed to representations, of reality. Maturana (pers. comm. 09/04) explains that, *'We are active participants in the world we create.'* Röling & Wagemakers (1998: 13-14) outline the following three features of constructionism:

- Reality is created in the discourse of, and negotiations among, people as social actors. Socially negotiated agreements can become experienced as 'objective' truth (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, in ibid).
- If it is people who construct perceptions of realities, there must be multiple perceptions of reality.
- There is an environment external to the observer and it is necessary for the organism to maintain contact with it. However, the constructions necessary for survival are not self-evident, nor is their interpretation unambiguous.

The constructionist paradigm therefore stands somewhat apart from the position of pure relativists that all realities are merely opinions and that all opinions are equally valid. The necessity of correspondence, which allows survival in a 'domain of existence' between the perceiving organism and its environment, requires constructions that are effective in context, and neither arbitrary nor purely self-willed (Jiggins, pers. comm. 04/01). Box 1.3 outlines Maturana & Varela's observations on the biology of perception and cognition in order to make this point clearer.

Box 1.3: The Biology of Perception and Cognition

The question Maturana and Varela posed themselves, as neurobiologists, was: How does the frog 'see', *i.e.* make representations of its environment, such that it can catch a fly = prey? That is, how can it make representatives that are effective for action?

The sensory biology of the eye is such that it receives light waves rather than direct representations of the external world. It is the inner cognitive processes that translate perceptions of light waves into movement, light and dark and colour. The same processes turn these into representations of the external world and our relation to it. The process that tells the frog: *'This pattern of light waves that I am perceiving is a fly = prey'* is thus a representation constructed by internal cognitive processes. The mind is *'informationally closed'*. It does not, and cannot, receive direct representations of 'the world', and nor can any other sensory organ. Sensory data thus connects the sensing organism to the environment, but the key point is that these data are interpreted through internal cognitive processes.

These internal representations of an external world are also made available to the perceiver through the recollection of experience. They thus become available for further interpretation and action. We treat what we read the same way.

However, perceptions are not arbitrary. They are what relate the frog to its environment. If the perceptions are not effective, through sensory or cognitive impairment or loss, the frog catches no flies and dies. Hence the conclusion that *'knowledge is effective action in the domain of existence'*. It is in this sense that Maturana and Varela talk about bringing forth 'a' world -

a world that is indirectly perceived and interpreted by the cognitive processes of the sensing organism - and not about bringing forth 'the' world through directly accessing how it is.

Thus what all biological organisms can know are non-arbitrary, internally-constructed representations of a world that is perceived. People can extend what is sensed, and how it is sensed, through the use of various instruments. This expands the power, scope and scale of the relation between people and their environment. However, people are still left with the unavoidable conclusion that it is how they interpret these perceptions that allows them to construct effective action in the domain of their existence - or not.

Source: adapted from Jiggins (pers. comm. 10/03)

Maturana & Varela are therefore able to say that *'cognition is an integral part of the way a living organism interacts with the environment. It does not react to environmental stimuli through a linear chain of cause and effect, but responds with structural changes in its non-linear, organisationally closed, autopoietic network ... Each living system builds up its own distinctive world according to its own distinctive structure*'[6] (Capra 1997: 262). As Varela puts it *'mind and world arise together'* (1991, in ibid). Capra (pers. comm. 07/04) explains further, *'there is a reality, but it is not <u>objective</u>, i.e. independent of the observer. Its outlines ('objects') differ for different (human and non-human) observers. Different species have different sensory ranges, and therefore perceive different outlines of the 'objects' around them. This is why the frog sees 'a' fly (a 'frog-fly') and not 'the' fly. Human observers are unique (with the other apes), because we have an inner world of concepts and abstract thought. Thus, we bring forth concepts, including the notion of objects, through 'languaging'. We describe the world that we bring forth together in terms of these concepts and objects. By continually weaving our linguistic web, we ensure that our descriptions of the world remain consistent, at least within a cultural group over some period of time.'* Midgley (2000: 54) adds, *'the multiple realities thus generated (one for each observer) have overlapping content because of the use of shared language. Through mutual structural coupling, individual living systems are part of each other's worlds.'*

The constructionist paradigm thus insists upon the necessity of considering *'other ways of reasoning'* (Hacking, 1983, in Chambers, 1994). It also suggests that knowledge is continually being re-made in the dynamic flux of contingent history, social interaction, and changing context (Jiggins, pers. comm. 04/01). From this we might conclude that, in terms of method, it is important to capture processes of knowledge production - rather than seeking to capture enduring and absolute truths. In terms of content this understanding leads us to appreciate the fragility of any truth claim, and the need to situate it in its appropriate ontological and epistemological context. At the same time we can agree that something can very much be 'true' for particular people at particular times.

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6 Autopoiesis means 'self-producing'. An autopoietic structure is one that acts to maintain its internal organisation.

(Maturana & Varela, 1992, in Midgley, 2000: 54).

Three points emerge from these last remarks. Firstly, the processes of knowledge generation are not neutral but involve relations of power, with all the complexities around empowerment and disempowerment the term implies. Second, it is legitimate to ask: Upon what framework of ideas is a particular reality constructed and by whom? Whose construction of 'reality' holds more sway in a specific environment? Third, we can ask: What happens when realities constructed in one 'system' of thinking and interaction come into contact with realities produced in a different system? Constructionism implies that people are not entering a 'level playing field'; indeed it suggests that the playing field is different for each player.[7]

With respect to the organic food chain, Box 1.1 pointed out that different stakeholders are interested in different qualities of a particular product. For example retailers are interested in a food's shape and colour, whereas farmers are, among other things, interested in the resistance of the same food crop to pests and disease. We can now add the observation that different sorts of quality are not only recognised by different stakeholders, they are called into existence by these different stakeholders. Quality has historical, spatial and structural dimensions. Stakeholders will hold different 'realities' about the same product, and these realities will change over time (Beyene, pers. comm. 09/03).

The important point to take away from this short discussion is that constructionism does not, of itself, demand that we take an ethical view of the world, though it helps us understand the complexity of this task. The next section therefore expands on how it is possible for us to achieve the detachment necessary for the modelling of quality ethical relationships.

A Quality Relationship to the World
It has been suggested that the *'Copernican revolution led to a denial of the view that the universe had been created for humans; humans no longer had unique status in the cosmos'* (Wye College/Open University, Block A, Part 3, 1997a: 6). That is to say, people were dis-empowered. This, the author argues, is a rather disingenuous comment. When people were dislodged from a pre-ordained place in the 'great chain of being' they were set free to make their world. This is in fact very empowering. The *'sun-centred theory'* (ibid) not only enabled scientists from Galileo onwards to scramble free of religious stricture; it also led to the slow end of the idea of trying to decipher pre-determined purpose in the world. [8]

When Descartes said, *'I think, therefore I am'*, he meant that the only thing of which one can be sure is that 'I' exist (see Descartes, 1970, for his exposition on doubt). He even argues, *'it may be a pious thought to believe that God made all*

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7 The author's understanding of constructionism is that species enter the same geographical space, but they construct it quite differently according to the characteristics of their kind. If this is so, it renders the conceptual basis of 'natural laws' like 'the survival of the fittest' dubious because these imply that the playing field is level (and the same for all kinds) to start with. The story is much more complex.

8 Though creationists and a few other groupings still seek pre-determined purpose.

things for us … it is yet by no means probable' (Descartes, 1853, Part III).[9] Descartes' doubt helped to lead to a later understanding that human beings (and all creatures) pattern the world continuously as they process signals from it in a manner significant to each organism. Unique among animals however, human beings have come to realise that they ascribe meaning to the world. The world is out there, but the truth is not. Maturana & Varela (1987, in Capra, 1997) do not assert that *'nothing exists',* but rather that *'no things exist'* independent of the process of cognition: the map-making itself brings forth the features of the territory. Since individual organisms within a species have a similar structure, members of that species bring forth similar worlds. Furthermore, people, by virtue of their abstract world of language and thought, can bring forth their worlds together (ibid: 263).
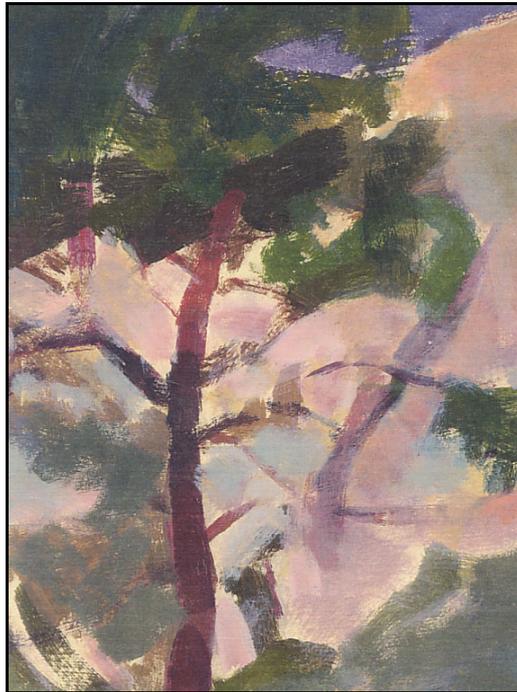
Photograph 1.2   A Quality Relationship to the World: Pine Trees and Mountain
Source: Roger Farnworth

The understanding that the human observer is <u>free to create meaning in their world</u> rather than having to search for pre-given purpose is fundamental. We are now in the position to establish our own relationship to phenomena and, consequent upon this, to establish our ethical behaviour in the real world. This relationship is not restricted to the merely necessary, it goes much further. Human beings can determine their <u>personal responsibility</u> for the quality of that relationship. This is surely astonishing, for it endows us with huge power and creative potential.

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9 The author is not suggesting that Descartes did not believe in God.

The ideas of Mae-Wan Ho (2000) bring a special slant to bear on the author's concept of quality relationships. Ho is a physicist working with quantum systems theory. Commenting on her work with liquid crystallinity, she maintains that *'the organism is coherent beyond our wildest dreams. Every part is in communication with every other part.'* Organisms are not only coherent, she continues, organisms are intermeshed with one another since '*invisible quantum waves are spreading out from each one of us and permeating into all other organisms. At the same time, each of us has the waves of every other organism entangled[10] within our being'* (2000: 23). Ho translates the findings from her work into the social domain by arguing the following points.

- Each organism needs to achieve maximum coherence in order to become its *'maximum self'* (pers. comm. 01/01). Drawing upon the ideas of Whitehead, Ho explains that *'each organism is a field of coherent activities that draws upon its experience of its environment to make itself whole, while aspects of itself are communicated to others. The realisation and maintenance of self are thus completely intertwined'* (Ho, 2000: 22). She adds, *'We are constantly co-creating and re-creating ourselves, shaping our common futures, making our dreams come true, and realising our potentials and our ideas'* (ibid: 23).

- The observer and the observed become *entangled* with one another. This is not a neutral affair, which might be better expressed in words like inter-connection. [11] '*The so-called observer actually takes part in determining the outcome.'* Ho provides the example of two people who intend to join the same conference. From this moment on, she says, they start to become entangled with another. Once they have interacted, they remain entangled with another (ibid.). The commodity chain in organic agriculture is another example.

Ho's first point, the construction of maximum selves, enable two questions to be posed with respect to the organic producer to consumer chain:

- Are producers, or consumers, able to be their *'maximum selves'* in the producer-consumer production chain?
- If not, what are the constraining factors?

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10 Ho (2000: 22) explains that Schrödinger introduced the concept of entanglement in 1935 to describe the phenomenon of non-locality. Particles can be produced at different and unrelated sources. As soon as one is measured, the effect of the measurement (the collapse of the wave system) is instantaneously communicated to the other. Rather than engage in a complex discussion of quantum systems theory here, the reader is referred to Ho's (2000) paper for a short introduction, and her book, *'The Rainbow and the Worm: The Physics of Organisms'.* See also Gribbin (2000) *'Schrödinger's Kittens and the Search for Reality'.* This thesis is not interested in engaging with the physics behind the concepts of entanglement and maximum self, but rather with Ho's translation of these into the social domain.

11 Remark made by the author of this thesis.

In his *'autobiographical novel'* Gao ([1990] 2001: 180) asks the woman protagonist, *'You acknowledge the existence of a women's world beyond a man's world, don't you?'* A query like this gives a first insight into the hurdles involved in answering these two questions. It is interesting to consider the ways in which theoreticians, and practitioners, have tried to define the *'self'* of women. Their work provides a starting point for considering how women might achieve their maximum selves in the real world. It shows that the development of theory has proceeded with great difficulty. Box 1.4 presents critiques of some attempts. The two authors cited here do not use the term *'maximum self'*, but the theories they discuss are clearly grappling towards a similar concept.

Box 1.4: Are Maximum Selves Gendered?

Eckersley (1992) examines two arguments that maintain that women have different selves to men. The *'body-based'* argument asserts that women identify with nature due to their reproductive and nurturing capabilities. Eckersley argues, however, that women can be complicit in dominating nature. Moreover, men can participate in body-based forms of identification. The 'oppression' argument considers that women occupy a separate social reality due to the gender division of labour. Eckersley points out that men can be oppressed by masculine stereotypes, and that other cross-cutting oppressive institutions exist, like racism.

Plumwood (1992) examines two ways in which women might attain their maximum selves. She terms one of these *'uncritical equality'*. This model involves slotting women into masculine models of humanity and culture. However, argues Plumwood, the equality thus obtained is illusory because this model defines itself against women. She then turns to the *'uncritical reversal'* model. The model involves rejecting masculine ideals and masculine culture and replacing these with feminine and natural values. Plumwood rejects this on the grounds that it offers nothing more than simplistic dualism.

Box 1.4 demonstrates that the constitution of a *'maximum self'* is far from easy to define and agree upon. This difficulty is pursued throughout the thesis. Ho's second point about entanglement is likewise fundamental to the concept of quality relationships between organic producers and consumers. A conscious effort to work on the quality of this relationship would seem to be a key ethical decision that both producers and consumers can make. We can ask:

- What new qualities in organic producer to consumer chain might arise through *'entanglement'*?

Gender: an analytical strand

The concept of gender, as can be seen from the preceding discussion, is contested. One reason is the fact that the *'gender'* is a composite term. It developed in a specifically English tradition[12], with roots in linguistics, anthropology, development studies and feminism. Each of these has contributed layers of meaning (El Bushra, 1999: 2). It is arguable, though, that this lack of consensus gives the term its conceptual power, enabling the researcher to draw upon the manifold meanings it embodies.

As a term gender is poorly understood by the English-speaking lay public. For speakers of other languages there is frequently no equivalent term. The English word is either adopted wholesale, as in German, or translated, as with the French term *genre* – which in everyday parlance means type, genre or manner. This lack of linguistic equivalence is potentially quite serious in terms of researcher relationships with study partners, leading to the risk either of oversimplification of the term, or its imposition as an analytic category.

Nevertheless although the word is problematic, gender is certainly one of the key ways in which all societies demarcate rights and responsibilities (Feldstein & Jiggins, 1994: 2). The inability of many project planners and policy makers to recognise the importance, and complexity, of gender relations has led to frequent failures in development programmes. The consequences of failing to recognise that women are involved in productive, as well as reproductive, activities has impacted negatively on several water and irrigation projects for instance. Examples are given in Box 1.5.

Box 1.5: Gender as a Cross-cutting Analytical Construct

Women as users of water in the context of their productive role are entirely overlooked in the documents planning Zimbabwe's realisation of the Water Resource Management Strategy (WRMS). The Government's *'Programme for the Development of a National Water Resources Management Strategy for Zimbabwe: Final Project Document'* mentions women in two sentences in over eighty pages and then only as domestic consumers. It asserts for instance that the WRMS, with its objective of maximising the potential of groundwater, will *'impact positively and directly on the burden of women in rural areas, who generally take care of water in rural households'* (GoZ/MLWR 1995: 39). Another paper, *'Water Resource Planning in Zimbabwe'*, is guilty of a single reference in like manner (Dougherty *et al.* 1995: 3).

Zimbabwean rural women use water for activities that generate income. Beer-brewing is a woman's occupation in Chiweshe Communal Land, and many women raise small livestock like chickens, goats and pigs. Moreover they sell, exchange, barter, give and also consume vegetables grown in their riverine and kitchen gardens. This form of irrigated agriculture (and by implication expertise) is ignored in the Zimbabwean WRMS literature, although it is

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12 The author of this thesis would prefer to say, Anglo-American.

estimated women cultivate approximately 20 000 ha under dambo (wetland) and small garden irrigation conditions (GoZ/LTC Vol. 2 1994: 403).

Explicitly gendered analyses of irrigation schemes do exist, although they are yet to affect mainstream policy and action in Zimbabwe. This is unfortunate since some of these studies show irrigation schemes elsewhere have had a *'generally negative impact on women relative to men'* (Dey, 1990: 1). Studies in the Gambia (Carney, 1988; Dey, 1981), the Cameroon (Jones, 1986) and Kenya (Hulsebosch & Ombara 1995; Povel 1990) point repeatedly to an intensified gendered struggle over resources and benefits following the introduction of irrigation schemes. In the Gambia the Jahally-Pacharr project explicitly set out reverse the failures of previous schemes by awarding women irrigated land, yet compound heads gained *de facto* control of these plots and also over the irrigated crop (Carney, 1988). This happened because project planners had failed to understand the social structure of production, especially intra- and inter-household patterns of resource allocation and acquisition. They had not analysed the farming system involved, and changing patterns of resource access, sufficiently (ibid: 75).

Source: Farnworth (1996a)

In this thesis gender is recognised as a cross-cutting analytical construct. It will be taken to mean, *'People's understandings of female and male as social and cultural categories, and the ways in which these understandings are intertwined with other social and cultural dimensions in specific settings and contexts'* (Woodford-Berger, 2000: 70). This definition enables the highly contextual nature of the term to be expressed. Perhaps it does not articulate powerfully enough the relational, shifting nature of gender, or the active role of women and men in constructing their identities: in 'doing gender'.

Applying a gender lens to a situation cannot produce all round clear images of the gender relations in play. Rather, the particular approach to gender taken by the researcher brings certain aspects into sharp focus and leaves others partially glimpsed or blurred. Social psychologists Howard & Hollander (1997) present understandings of gender contributed by four different approaches:

- The essentialist position reminds a researcher otherwise unconvinced by essentialism that people's lives are influenced by biological potentials.
- The socialisation approach contributes the insight that gender is learned and maintained through modelling, rewards and punishments. However, gender is more dynamic and fluid than many socialisation approaches suggest.
- The structural approach argues that gender is dependent on social position. Much of what is understood to be gendered behaviour is driven not by individual characteristics but by one's position in various social hierarchies. Race, class, age and sexual orientation all intersect and interact with gender.

- These approaches are complemented by a social constructionist perspective, which studies how gender is negotiated in interaction against a backdrop of cultural expectations.

It is worth restating that gender embraces both women and men as analytical categories. The concept recognises that men as well as women may suffer from gender-specific inequities (in terms of health[13], for instance), or be discriminated against by social and economic structures.[14] As such gender analysis does not of itself imply a political stance in favour of women, although the findings of a gender analysis may well urge activists and policy makers to address the inequalities thus laid bare.

It should be clear, however, that gender analysis is not just limited to encouraging separate investigation into women's and men's livelihoods and carefully disaggregating data. It also involves asking the question: *What does it mean to be a man or a woman in a specific place and time?* (Grown & Sebstad, 1989). Nussbaum (2001) explores the lives of two very different Indian women in order to develop insights about how such women might be empowered *'to be and to do'*. Iwasaki (2003), in describing her life as a geisha, provides the reader with great insight into how femininity in a particular culture is constructed.[15] Xinran (2002), in recounting the lives of specific Chinese women, illustrates how women struggle against their socially determined identities. Some fail hopelessly in the process, though other women are successful in exercising their agency. hooks (1981) analyses how the identities of black women are constructed, and also the way such identities can be subsumed in terms like *'women and black people'*. A German study based on census data shows that considerably more university-educated women than less-qualified women will never have children. German academic women are more career-focused than other German women, yet their peers in France and in Scandinavian countries are more likely to have children despite a similar investment in their careers (Wirth & Dümmler, 2004, see also Hofäcker & Lück, 2004, for an international comparative study on women's attitudes to men as solo breadwinners).

In this thesis, gendered actions are considered to be an important aspect of ethical behaviour in producer-consumer relationships. Gender thus appears in various chapters as both a methodological and analytic construct.

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13 The Health Variations Programme in the UK, run by the Economic and Social Research Council, has now completed a range of studies into the relations between gender, class and race in terms of morbidity and mortality (www.lancs.ac.uk/users/apsocsci/hvp.htm)

14 For readings on men and masculinities in development, see www.brad.ac.uk/acad/dppc/gender.html, and Cleaver 2000.

15 Mineko Iwasaki is the only geisha to have told her story.

Identifying an Issue as an Ethical Issue
It was stated earlier that quality relationships with the world depend upon an active ethical – and profoundly human – framing of that relationship. This part, which is based entirely on Des Jardins (2001:17-22) explores the basic concept of ethics and justifies the study of ethical theory in general. In the chapters that follow particular ethical theories will be examined and applied. According to Des Jardins, ethics can be approached on three levels: customary, normative and philosophical ethics:

1. Customary ethics: every society has its own ethics in the sense that it has typical beliefs, attitudes, and standards that determine what is customary. This is about 'what is done'.
2. Normative ethics involves reflecting critically upon customary ethics: *Why do we believe the things we believe? Should we change our values? Are our values justified?* At this first level of abstraction, customary behaviour is examined by appeal to what ought to be, or should be, done. This stepping back from everyday experience is essential to enable us to identify an issue as an ethical issue.
3. Philosophical ethics involves a second level of stepping back or abstraction in order to permit analysis and evaluation of normative judgements and their supporting rationale. This enables the underlying values in any conflict to be assessed.

Ethical theory is an attempt to provide systematic answers to the philosophical questions raised by customary and normative approaches to ethics. Questions raised from an individual moral point of view include: *What should I do? What kind of person should I be? What do I value? How should I live?* Questions of social philosophy or public policy include: *What type of society is best? What policies should we follow as a group? What social arrangements and practices will best protect and promote individual well-being?*

The study of ethical theory brings four clear advantages. Firstly, ethical theories provide a common language for discussing and understanding ethical issues. Second, given that customary and normative ethics tend to shape the way people think, ethical theories help people become aware of the patterns and assumptions in their thought. Third, these theories provide a mechanism for guidance and evaluation. Theories can be applied to specific situations and be used to generate specific recommendations. Fourth, it is possible to reflect critically upon the theories themselves, given that they inform so much real world practice – and arguably are the cause of many problems. Key terms that arise frequently in this thesis are outlined in Box 1.6.

Box 1.6: Key Ethical Terms and Concepts

Terms
- Moral considerability: A being or thing is to be taken into account in its own right in ethical judgements. To enable such judgements particular criteria need to be devised.

- Moral community: Who or what is a worthy recipient of our respect? Where do we set the boundaries?
- Intrinsic value: The value of an object does not depend on its contribution to the value of another object. Rather, its value resides within itself. Each object is considered to have a good of its own.
- Instrumental value: The value an object possesses can be used to obtain another value.

Concepts
- Anthropocentric (human-centred) ethics: The natural world is seen as a store of material to be used as we see fit to maximise human welfare. Weak anthropocentrism promotes enlightened human self-interest and considers the welfare of future generations. Unlike strong anthropocentrism, weak anthropocentricism can have an environmental agenda.
- Biocentric (life-centred) ethics: Humans are not the only locus of intrinsic value. Rather, intrinsic value is distributed across all living things. Each thing has a good of its own.

Sources: Wye College/Open University, Block A (1997) and Des Jardins (2001).

Ethical values are not likely to be equally or uniformly distributed among the stakeholders in the producer to consumer chain in organic agriculture (Beyene, pers. comm. 09/03). Divergence between stakeholders is likely to be deepened by the discontinuities in the production chain referred to earlier and, in particular, the different *'realities'* inhabited by Northern consumers and Southern producers. Some Northern consumers may not consider that Southern producers belong to their moral community, for example. They set boundaries that exclude producers from being the subject of their ethical concern. At the same time it was suggested above that though the gaps between people holding different realities can lead to conflict (or simply ignorance of, and disinterest in, their fate), an emergent property of bringing people together in an iterative learning cycle can be enriched understandings.

Soft Systems Thinking

Bawden (1991: 2367) points out that the systems movement derives from two quite different intellectual traditions. These are reflected in the methodological approaches adopted. The hard systems approach uses the word system *'to describe ontological realities as they are accepted as existing in the 'real' world – a farm is a system, in this language.'* Analysis of a hard system, Bawden continues, usually proceeds from two questions: *Which system is being investigated? What constitutes an improvement in its performance?*

Schiere *et al.* (2003: 7) suggest that hard systems approaches, in order to reduce complexity, tend to conceptualise a system as a *'temporary frame taken out of a sequence of events'*, that is, the influence of context and feedback loops are minimised. Trade-offs and externalities, such as the long-term effects of heavy use of chemical inputs in farming, typically tend to be ignored (though some models are currently being developed to address these deficiencies). Even so, these models

remain technical in nature and refuse to connect with societal decision-making procedures. In other words hard systems thinking is part of the positivist-realist tradition.

A soft systems view is quite different. Packham (pers. comm. 01/01) argues that it is impossible to take a 'systems approach'. Rather, he argues that a systems view is an all-embracing way of looking at the world, a *Weltanschauung*. When we talk about systems, he says, we are not referring to things in the world, but a way of <u>organising our thoughts about the world</u>. A key assumption is that the observer becomes part of the system through the choice of parameters and methods made (Schiere *et al:* 2003: 5). In soft systems terminology the word 'system', Bawden (1991: 2367) says, refers to an epistemological device for knowing about the world. The issues associated with the farm are thought about *as if* they were in some way or another interrelated. Analysis proceeds from questions like: In this messy and complex situation, *'What seem to be the issues that people perceive as problematic? How can systems of enquiry (systemic thinking and practices) be used to explore and improve them?'*

A systems view of the world thus suggests that a system cannot be understood by examining only its parts in isolation, nor the whole as merely an aggregation of parts. Indeed taking this view actually destroys and renders incoherent the object under study. A holistic understanding is vital. As Capra argues (1997: 36), the *'essential, or systemic' properties (of systems) are properties of the whole, which none of the parts have. They arise from the organising relations of the parts.'* Packham (pers. comm. 01/01) asserts therefore that:

- A system is an assembly of components, connected together in an organised way.
- The components are affected by being in the system and the behaviour of the system is changed if they leave it.
- This organised assembly of components does something.
- This assembly as a whole has been identified by someone who is interested in it.

Systems analysis perceives systems as 'nesting' within other systems. A switch in attention between different levels provides different systemic insights. Different levels in a system represent different levels of complexity, with higher levels exhibiting properties that do not exist at lower levels. The systemic properties that appear at a particular level are known as <u>emergent properties</u> since they first emerge at that level. Emergent properties result from the interactions of the system as a whole rather than from one or two parts in isolation (Midgley, 2000: 40). Furthermore, the properties that emerge at a particular systems level cannot be predicted on the basis of knowledge about the properties of lower level components and their interaction (Goodwin, 1997, 2000). To take an example: von Bertalanffy (1968, in Midgley 2000: 41) points out that 'life' is an emergent property of organisms as whole systems. Life cannot be explained by the independent functioning of their organs. Water is another example. Its wetness and other properties cannot be predicted by a knowledge of oxygen and hydrogen.

34

Water is thus an emergent property of a specific form of interaction of these components. In other words, the whole is different to the sum of its parts.

Goodwin (2000) considers that the principle of <u>consistency</u> applies to emergent properties, that is, consistency between the emergent property of a system and its components. He argues that these components contain a 'whiff' of what will emerge at the systems level (pers. comm. 01/01). Ho (2000b: 7) interprets consistency thus: there is a *'crucial aspect to organic wholeness: every local part contains the whole, contains traces of the whole. So the ancient idea of the microcosm embodying the macrocosm is right.'* Both Ho and Goodwin are arguing that something does not come from nothing.

A further fundamental element of systems thought is the concept of <u>boundaries</u>. Packham (pers. comm. 01/01), reminding us that when we talk about systems we are not referring to things in the world, but a way of organising our thoughts about the world, points out that when we define a boundary it does, in fact, become 'real'. Indeed, *'once we acknowledge'*, says Midgley, *'that no view of the world can ever be comprehensive, the boundary concept becomes crucial'* (2000: 36). The values that inform where boundaries are drawn determine how issues are seen, and from thence, the actions that will be taken. The drawing of boundaries thus involves relations of power. It is particularly important to be aware, adds Midgley (ibid: 137) that boundaries exclude as much as include. The drawing of boundaries involves ethical choices.

To summarise the discussion so far: this thesis follows Bawden (1991: 2366) in his proposition that systems analysis is about connection and the interrelatedness of wholes within wholes. Systems analysis cannot only be about linear cause and effect relationships, nor problems and solutions, nor starts and finishes. Rather, problematic situations – such as the producer-consumer relationship in organic agriculture - are understood to *'represent many 'faces' of a complex 'mess' of issues held in relationships of mutual influences'* (ibid). The emphasis is not upon solving discrete problems, but rather upon working in problematic situations in order to improve the whole system and its relationship to the environment.

A soft system is a construct. It is an artefact created for a purpose. The notion of 'purpose' relates centrally to notions of ethical behaviour and to the creation of quality relationships in the organic food chain. Röling & Jiggins (1997) stress that one cannot say that actors are a system. Indeed *'in all likelihood they are not, in that there is no potential synergy among their potentially complementary contributions to innovative performance. But by looking at them as potentially forming a soft system, one begins to explore the possibilities of facilitating their collaboration and hence the possibilities for enhancing their synergy and innovative performance. Innovation in this sense can be seen as an emergent property of a soft system, that is, it emerges from the interaction of social actors who form a soft system to the extent that they begin to see themselves as forming such a system ... The soft system is a deliberate and often facilitated social construction.'* Jiggins (pers. comm. 01/01) adds the following question: *What is*

35

this system for, that is, what do the actors in the system perceive or desire its purposes to be?

The author engaged personally with varying degrees of intensity in the three study domains (1) social certification in organic agriculture, (2) the development of a quality of life toolkit to develop and capture criteria for well-being among organic smallholders and plantation workers, and (3) the development of a social label to enable organic consumers to reward 'more than purely price' values in the market place. It was hoped that setting up a dynamic, iterative learning process between all three domains would enable the production of new knowledge not only in each domain, but also across the domains. This would in turn bring greater analytic clarity to the over-arching research task: *How can quality relationships between producers and consumers in the organic chain be forged and fixed?*

1.4   Conclusion

It has been argued in this chapter that there is a lack of felt connection between organic producers and consumers in the global commodity chain. This is a disempowering state of affairs for both parties. The concept of a quality relationship to the world offers a solution. It recognises that people are not only 'structurally coupled' to the world in their capacity as perceiving organisms, they are also able to take ethical responsibility for that relationship.

'Reality' has been construed as particular to the perceiving organism. However, it is possible for people to share their individual realities with other people through language. They can call forth their worlds together. Action for change can be enacted in this space. The discussion of the global commodity chain in organic agriculture made it clear that there is an interplay between structure and agency. People are not entirely free to create their worlds. They live and act in disjointed, constrained spaces. The concepts of 'maximum self' and 'entanglement' provide a way out of this muddle. They suggest in themselves ideal end states. At the same time they offer a means of analysing constraints upon achieving such end states.

Especial attention has been paid to gender analysis. It has been argued that boundaries are drawn on the basis of how gender is constructed in particular times and places. These boundaries have the power to include or exclude women and men in development processes; to enhance or to reduce the ability of men and women to attain their maximum selves, and to reveal or to conceal particular aspects of women's and men's lives. The concept of gender is used in this thesis to track certain features of quality relationships in producer-consumer chains in organic agriculture.

Chapter two is the first of three chapters that makes a specific contribution to the author's overall aim of contributing to methodology (ways to formalise values and incorporate these in the food chain). It raises a series of questions around methodology and method before presenting the overall methodological approach taken by the author.

Chapter three sets out the main operational issues related to the research aims of this thesis. It opens by introducing the terminology around codes of conduct and social certification in organic agriculture. It then situates social certification initiatives in wider discussions about the kind of society people might want and to how to achieve it. The author argues that a range of concerns that have taken shape in this wider arena influence both the way social certification initiatives are conceptualised, and how they are expected to relate to organic agricultural practice. Since social certification in organic agriculture is very new, the lessons that can be learned from the practice of organic certification form a special focus. Specific issues facing Southern organic producers are then examined within the framework provided by commodity chain analysis. The chapter concludes by arguing that the quality of life approach to social certification propounded by the author would make a special and significant contribution to the social certification toolkit. It suggests that the author's approach contributes to a process that enables producers to work towards achieving their 'maximum selves'. This is a necessary corollary to 'entanglement' between producers and consumers.

Chapter four situates the author's work on 'quality of life' in Madagascar within a conceptual framework. The focus is upon exploring the problematic concept of quality of life, and on how to render this concept 'usable', that is, to enable action-orientated measurement. By this is meant descriptions of the world that enable change. The chapter thus commences by defining quality of life. It then examines the quest for universality in quality of life studies before turning to a review of subjective and objective approaches to capturing quality of life.

Chapter five represents the second contribution made by this thesis to methodology. It elaborates nine principles drawn from the discussion in chapter four on quality of life. These principles inform the construction of the author's Malagasy quality of life toolkit, which is presented here.

Chapter six commences with an overview of the macro-economic and socio-economic situation in Madagascar with respect to agriculture. It then discusses the organic sector. The research sites are presented and the findings provided by the quality of life toolkit are analysed.

Chapter seven begins by placing the Malagasy findings in the context of the 'noisy', risk-laden environment surrounding and immersing the respondents. The interpretation is angled in order to explore the strategies the respondents have developed in order to construct and maintain their 'maximum selves'. An integral part of these strategies involves considering the nature of one's relationship to the wider environment. Links may be welcomed, or denied. The implications of the findings for successful, transformative relationships between producers and consumers are assessed. Particular attention is paid to understanding how the fieldwork findings bear upon social certification initiatives in organic agriculture. On the basis of the findings the author argues that social certification needs to have a two fold agenda (1) to support local understandings of how to achieve maximum selves, and (2) to promote entanglement. Finally, the effectiveness of the quality of life toolkit in terms of the aims it sought to achieve is examined.

Chapter eight contributes to the foregrounding of the consumer as an analytic category. The chapter opens by examining some of the difficulties involved in conceptualising and measuring ethical consumption. It then provides an overview of current ethical consumption trends with particular reference to the organic sector. Following this, the discussion explores the contention that there are no easy answers for people interested in pursuing more sustainable and ethical consumption patterns. The question: *How much is enough?* is posed as a *'leitmotif'* around which differing views – rather than answers - can be drawn together. Although producers and consumers in the international commodity chain are functionally connected with one another, the discussion suggests that this relationship is fundamentally involuntary, and frequently harmful. Felt disconnection arises due to the complex, systemic nature of the relationship. Real world connection is at odds with perceived disconnection. Finally, the potential of organic, fair trade and eco-labels to help ethical consumers to 'reconnect' with producers is explored.

Chapter nine provides the third contribution to the methodological aims of this thesis. It opens a discussion on 'entanglement spaces' by analysing the roles of the state and of retailers in providing ethical framework conditions that enable consumers to take meaningful ethical purchase decisions. The chapter then explores the concept of the reflexive consumer. It suggests that we gain considerably in our understanding of the potential of the consumer to change the market if we focus not on organised consumer groups, but on the consumer's *'decentred ability to act'*. The concept of moral considerability is then introduced. It provides a means of understanding how consumers delimit their *'circle of concern'*: What - and who – counts? The chapter concludes with a presentation of the methods toolkit devised by the author for use with German organic consumers.

Chapter ten provides an overview of the organic sector in Germany. It then presents the research sites before turning to an analysis of the research findings. The aim is to provide an insight into how the German respondents translated some of their ethical values into real world action

Chapter eleven builds upon the analysis presented in the previous chapter in order to suggest ways in which producers and consumers can work together in order to produce outcomes that do not only address and ameliorate some of the difficulties that we have been discussing, but move far beyond them to create *'a quality relationship between producers and consumers'*. In particular, ways in which a new social label could be developed to help to meet this goal are outlined. This chapter thus brings the thesis to a conclusion.

Chapter Two: From Theory to Practice

The black crow that I always despised,
And yet, against the snowy dawn ...[16]

One of the overall research aims of this thesis is to contribute to the methodology and methods toolbox in the arena of social certification. However, deciding upon a methodology - the way in which theories are translated in practical tools for 'doing research', is far from straightforward. It is not easy to gain insights into perceptions of reality. As Coffey *et al.* (1992 in Beyene, 1999: 20) argue, *'We cannot remain innocent about the methods of data collection for social and cultural exploration, or the methods we use to reconstruct and represent social worlds. It is necessary to think also in terms of contested approaches to research methodology.'*

Rapley (2003: 84) says, *'it is a basic principle in all social scientific work that the purposes of the research, and the specific research questions, should determine the methodology employed to seek answers ... the adequacy of any research study is thus, to a greater or lesser extent, (pre)determined by the ability of the methodology adopted to provide sensible answers to the questions asked.'* Sensible answers to the research questions posed in chapter one are needed if these answers are to shed light upon, and contribute to, real world debates. However, given that the methodology chosen by the researcher will largely determine the answers produced in the course of the research journey, a methodological approach has to be followed which recognises this waywardness.

Part 2.1 of this chapter examines (1) constructionist approaches to research practice, (2) the implications of chaos theory for a 'complete picture', (3) discusses whether heterogeneity in method is desirable, (4) discusses the question of quality, and finally (5) scrutinises the researcher-respondent relationship. The aim is to raise issues necessary for the author to advance to Part 2.2: how the research was actually enacted. The research teams in Madagascar and Germany are introduced and an overview of the research process is provided. Some initial comments on how analysis of the research outputs might be conducted are made in Part 2.3.

2.1   Linking Methodology and Method

Constructionist Approaches to Research Practice
The constructionist paradigm when applied to questions of methodology suggests automatically that knowledge cannot be treated as if it were something 'out there', to be found, collected, analysed and presented. The term 'data collection' is misleading - it implies a unitary truth to be uncovered, rather than the potential existence of a multiplicity of truths and meanings. Furthermore, the constructionist paradigm suggests that knowledge is produced in a process of interaction, that is, knowledge comes into being and is not pre-existent.

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16 Bashō (1644-1694).

Table 2.1 usefully highlights in simplified form differences between the positivist-realist and constructionist positions in research. Key words that can be associated with the constructionist column are: shifting, movement, no end point, self-acknowledged limited relevance of the research findings, activist role of the researcher, embedded-ness. Depending on your frame of mind, these words can express something true about how to gain an understanding of reality, and their very fuzziness can be construed as exhilarating and empowering. Yet it is also clear why positive-realists would find such expressions deeply worrying.

Table 2.1: Choices Between Methodological Issues in Relation to Positivist-Realist and Constructionist Positions in Research

Issue	Alternative Positions	
Nature of Reality	Realist Single	Constructionist Multiple
Starting Point	Theory Technical Language Outside	Observation Lay language Inside
Role of Language	1:1 correspondence with reality	Constitution of social activity
Lay Accounts	Irrelevant Corrigible Trans-situational	Fundamental Authentic Situational
Social Science Accounts	Generalisable across social contexts	Specific in time and space
Researcher	Subject-to-object Detached Outside expert	Subject-to-subject Involved Reflective partner
Objectivity	Absolute Static	Relativist Dynamic
Theory of Truth	Correspondence Political	Consensus Pragmatic
Aim of Research	Explain Evaluate	Understand Change

Source: Blaikie (1993, in King 2000: 33)

Although the thesis as a whole is positioned within the constructionist tradition, quantitative as well as qualitative research methods have been used. Questions posed in quantitative research are 'etic', outsider questions (Rapley, 2002: 104). For example, questions like this can be asked: *'Is the quality of life of people in Madagascar better than that of people in Germany?'* Quantitative methods seek to measure the 'amount' of something, using (apparently) objective indicators. Typical quantitative methods include closed questionnaires, weighing and measuring (for instance to assess the physical development of children) and counting. In contrast, qualitative methods foreground the insider perspective. 'Emic', insider questions are posed like: *'What do Malagasy people understand by a good quality of life?'* Qualitative methods are often participatory in character. They invite the involvement of the respondent. In the best participatory work, there

is an explicit acknowledgement that the researcher and the researched are partners in the co-creation of 'reality'.

The author used quantitative methods (questionnaires) in order to (i) gain a first insight into the thinking of organic consumers, and (ii) develop questions that she wanted to explore in further depth in focus groups and seminars. Data derived from quantitative work by other researchers was employed to provide indicative pictures of the research domains in Madagascar and Germany.

The implications of chaos theory for a 'complete picture'
Laplace ([1814] cited in Schiere *et al.* 2003: 57) claimed that '*a sufficiently vast and considerable intellect, knowing the complete laws of microscopic physics and the physical state of the universe at any moment, could calculate the state of the universe at all subsequent times; all prior ones, too, if the laws are reversible.*' Today, this confidence seems misplaced and naïve.

Chaos theory suggests that '*there are many situations in nature and in ordinary life that depend extremely critically on initial conditions[17]*' (Thuan, 2001: 65). Chaos, '*to a scientist ... does not mean lack of order. Rather, it denotes indeterminacy, or impossibility to make long-term predictions. Because the final state depends so critically on the initial conditions ... this fundamentally limits our ability to predict what the final outcome will be. We should remember that our knowledge of the initial state suffers irrevocably from some degree of uncertainty, no matter how small*' (ibid: 65-66).

Jiggins & Röling (2000: 30) reflect upon the implications of carrying out research in open, non-linear systems. They argue that in such systems it is impossible to build a body of scientific knowledge capable of prediction and control. Whilst one can map and model single - or even multiple – relationships, it is impossible to do so with evolving interactions. Should we therefore agree that chaos theory applies not only to the physical world, but also to social worlds, then it must be stated that complete knowledge of initial conditions in any research area is impossible. This has profound implications for expected outcomes. Chaos theory implies for real world reasoning that not only can a data set never be complete, it will be partially redundant by the time it has been analysed and the implications fed into planning processes.

Is heterogeneity in method desirable?
Heterogeneity in methodological approach and in the methods toolbox might seem to be one way to unpack the complexity of the real world and to deal with the implications of chaos theory. Ashley & Carney (1999) argue for instance that heterogeneity improves understanding of livelihoods. Yet, as Salmon (2003: 25) warns, '*it is a rare researcher who thinks through an epistemological position before choosing a method ... in reality researchers ... use the methods they have learnt to use and that they <u>can</u> use*' The problem with this is that a failure to think back to the methodological principles means that, on one level, that there can be a

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17 The state of a dynamical system at the start of its evolution (Thuan, 2001: 343)

lack of coherence between methodology and method. On another level, understandings of what 'reality' is are not explicitly expressed. Salmon points out that qualitative methods, for example, can *'serve a researcher who believes that research discovers underlying reality as easily as they serve one who believes that researchers' interaction with research participants constructs reality'* (ibid: 24). In other words the profound implications of following the positive-realist tradition or the constructionist tradition can be skated over.

It is as well to be aware that methods are limited in what they are able to do. They should be seen as tools rather than keys. This is an important distinction that can be easily overlooked. Under a researcher's guiding hand methods are used as much to control and delimit 'information', as they are used to open gateways to new and surprising understandings - even if this is not a conscious research intention. This is because methods are designed to produce certain types of information. The type of information a method will produce is – most often - inherently predictable and therefore, even if it seems odd to claim this, the answer is often known by the researcher even before the question has been asked in the real world. Seasonal calendars regarding cropping patterns or incidence of illness are a good example[18]. That is to say, the definition and representation of reality tends to remain with the researcher, however apparently participatory the method is.

Another implication of the heterogeneity approach means that an 'anything goes' attitude can result. For example in an IDS Bengali study the main emphasis was on questionnaire-based surveys. The researchers *'had to take this approach'* since there were 26,852 individuals in the study area selected and, they explain, given the time-scale and resources available extensive use of qualitative methods would not have been feasible (Toufique, 2000: 4). The idea that the study area could have been reframed, sampling methods altered and so on, in order to permit proper use of qualitative methods does not appear to have arisen. It is tempting to conclude that personal bias, rather than reasoning back to theoretical principles – and to the very objectives of the research exercise - played a key role in this case.

Another way of dealing with complexity is to adopt the principle of 'optimal ignorance'. Researchers are urged to save their own time and that of the hard-pressed respondents by deciding *'not to know'* many things (Chambers, 1994a: 18). Although Chambers portrays this principle as a radical reversal of Western thinking, the delicacy of this process is seldom acknowledged; deciding not to know means losing sight of interconnectedness and also implies silencing particular voices. A useful image is that of a spider's web – if you cut out segments you not only have a knowledge gap, the remaining part tends to crumple and lose form. A potential solution might be focus on one level of the world under study when applying the principle of optimal ignorance, as opposed to applying it to categories of information.

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18 Such methods can make visible information and meanings. As such they can be powerful discussion tools.

It is also so that people, in our information-rich but arguably knowledge-poor world, are in a profound sense deeply ignorant. By this the author means that individuals simply cannot have a rich picture about many things. This has significant implications for the usefulness of social labels. How can consumers connect with producers in the absence of access to rich pictures of the producers' lives?

The Question of Quality
It should have become clear by now that, in the author's view, participatory methods cannot necessarily be associated with constructionist approaches to research, even if they would seem to be inevitable allies. It is likewise important to appreciate that, such is the strength of the positive-realist tradition, the efficacy of qualitative methods is often determined by positive-realist criteria rather than by constructionist criteria. What, then, constitutes research quality in the constructionist tradition?

Rapley (2003: 96) notes that, with respect to the adequacy of any quantitative measure, *'it is a canonical requirement that the instrument should produce the same results when applied to the same item by separate raters.'* Yet – and this is only one problem he highlights - much quantitative quality of life research seeks to ascertain the quality of life of people who find it difficult to provide accounts of their views, for instance children or intellectually challenged people.

Salmon (2003: 24) agrees that criteria for judging quantitative research *'can be reliably operated by examiners or referees anywhere. They can ask, for instance: Were the groups allocated randomly? Was the sample big enough? Were appropriate statistics used? Note that these judgements are about methods, or procedures. In effect, and without necessarily thinking in these terms, the examiner or referee is applying an epistemology of 'methodologism'; the research is good if it has been conducted according to certain methods.'* Salmon then moves on to make his crucial point, with specific reference to research in psychology, that methodologism is beginning to shape qualitative work also. Yet, he continues, *'Methodologism is a limited epistemology. It is a forlorn belief that quality can be guaranteed simply by following procedures.'*

Farnworth & Jiggins (2003: 12), speaking of participatory gender analysis, comment that *'it is precisely the mingling of 'pure' data with users' own interpretations that worries many who come from a natural science tradition, in which the power and right to give meaning to data through interpretation belongs to the scientist. It is not uncommon for research teams to seek to 'validate' the results of participatory gender analysis by demanding they be cross-checked by statistical research. However this demand would seem to conflate the purposes for which each approach is most suited. Participatory gender analysis can describe what a sub-population does, and can explain why the sub-population does what they do; statistical approaches to gender analysis can describe what the whole population does and correlate associated behaviours in the whole population.'* The authors (ibid: 22) go on to suggest that the reason for this is that participatory research methods have been transferred to the biological sciences without adequate

explanation of the research principles within which each method is lodged, or of the disciplinary histories from which participatory methods derive.

Miles & Huberman (1984, in King, 2000: 57-8) point out that multidisciplinary teams are now commonplace, with *'combined qualitative and quantitative enquiry carried out by a team of researchers whose data collection and analysis methods must be executed in a formalised, comparable way.'* Given this, they seek to overcome latent conflict by advising that *'social phenomena exist not only in the mind but also in the objective world – even if people do not apprehend the same analytical constructs as those derived by researchers, this does not make such constructs invalid.'* In other words, although Miles & Huberman are proponents of qualitative research they explicitly subject qualitative enquiry in the last instance to the laws of positive-realist approaches to knowledge.

Rapley (2003: 104-5) says that most qualitative approaches to research are based on two assumptions (Sacks, 1992, in ibid):

1. Cultures show order at all points. In examining fragments of a culture (for example, how people talk about the quality of their lives), that which operates across a culture will come into view.
2. Descriptions of activities, persons and their qualities may be 'correct' in infinite ways.

Furthermore

3. Data is often provided for the reader to inspect (as opposed to just providing end results) in order to enable them to interrogate the adequacy of the analysis, and
4. The quality of qualitative work is judged against criteria of analytic rigour, fidelity to previously documented instances, and aesthetic power. That is, the merit of qualitative work is judged in terms of the persuasiveness of the argument presented.

Another point should be added, namely that coherence of the story is not necessarily the aim of qualitative work. Gladwin (1989, cited in Skerrat & Midmore 2000: 4) urges *'acceptance of a systems view, drawing together detailed views into a complex, holistic picture, developing understanding directly through human experiences, which accepts conflicting, or even incoherent realities.'*

All this is not to say that positive-realist approaches to research cannot bring important understandings to bear upon particular situations. It has, however, been argued here that the subordination of constructionist approaches to positivist-realist approaches is flawed. The merits of such approaches should be evaluated using criteria derived from the theoretical framework within which they are embedded. The author urges, therefore, a partial inversion of conventional practice by allying quantitative methods with qualitative methods on equal terms, stressing the unique contribution of each to the toolbox.

The Researcher- Respondent Relationship
In Table 2.1 above Blaikie notes that the researcher-respondent relationship in the positivist-realist tradition is construed as subject-to-object by a detached and

outside expert. This 'clean' and well-bounded relationship is contrasted with the implicitly messy constructionist understanding of such relationships. These are depicted as subject-to-subject and involved, with the researcher taking on an additional role as reflective partner. Not only can different research outcomes be expected, the researcher is heavily and inescapably intertwined in the research. Moreover, he or she has very different responsibilities to the respondent.

Table 2.1 does not make it clear, however, that researcher-respondent relationships in both approaches are equally laced with untidy power dynamics and the fallibility of the researchers themselves. For instance, Salmon (2003) pointed out above how limiting a 'research factor' the researcher herself, or himself, can be. Cook (2004: 6) comments that, *'researchers' identities and practices make a big difference. They can't hover above the nitty-gritty power relations of everyday life. Research can only emerge out of them. Tainted by them. Reproducing them. Perhaps. Wealth. 'Race'. Nationality. Class. Gender. Sexuality. Age. (Dis)ability.'* Researchers are not only irredeemably ,situated' in these socio-economic ways; they have thoughts and feelings about the research topic. Bloch (1995: 64) an anthropologist working in Madagascar, admits to his great concern about the vanishing rainforest: *'In the field, with my post-Rousseau, post-Sibelius sensitivities, strengthened every evening by the BBC World Service's lachrymose accounts of the disappearance of the world's rain forest, I tried as hard as I could to get my co-villagers to tell me how much they deplored the change in their environment and the extinction of all the biological species which goes with it. I failed to get the slightest response.'* This needling and pushing of the respondents does not seem unreasonable, so long as it is acknowledged by the researcher in the presentation and analysis of their findings.

As a researcher one cannot fully escape one's own mutable and immutable characteristics and the way the signals these send are received and interpreted by the recipient population. And only with great difficulty can the researcher escape from his or her perceptions of the 'other' (Said, 2003). In Madagascar for instance it is impossible to be unaware of the legacy of colonialism and the struggles of the post-independence governments to define an 'authentic' Malagasy way forward – this is just another layer of complexity and interruption to add to the list produced by Cook above.

Bennet (2000, summarised by Crang, 2002: 651) discusses the *'inter-subjective anxieties so often buried in accounts of 'good research', the contingencies, and the strains of relating the imperfectly performing 'me' to muddled and always partial sense of a true 'I', let alone understanding them – the respondents.'* Any understanding will be fragile. This is particularly so when a researcher arrives from a different place. Decades of conscious and unconscious learning undergone by local people about their world simply cannot be accessed by the researcher overnight. Indeed, if a researcher accepts as a starting point of their work the idea that multiple realities exist, it is a moot point as to whether an external researcher can ever have an 'understanding' of the lived and felt worlds of the respondent. Would it not be fairer to say that a researcher might be able to gain an appreciation

that these realities exist, and from thence, note the basic characteristics of their form? Perhaps a greater claim to knowledge dare not be made.

It is also important to be ever alert to the fact that researchers and respondents may be thinking in different conceptual categories. Even an experienced researcher like Deniz Kandiyoti can find herself caught off guard. Whilst working in Uzbekistan she realised that the concept of household that she was using to categorise her data was inappropriate (1999: 2-3). As a consequence of this experience she decided that domestic units were best conceptualised as the site of multiple and interlocking sets of processes. These processes activate different sub-sets of individuals, who constitute appropriate levels of analysis depending on the research question posed. Kandiyoti concludes in her paper that households can have *'elusive boundaries'*. Similar points are made by Ekejiuba, O'Laughlin and Peters in their contributions on African concepts of family and household (in Bryceson, 1995). Since the exploration of these boundaries is part and parcel of the research process, there is a sense in which units of analysis may sometimes emerge *a posteriori*. Experiences and observations like these have ramifications for methods like wealth ranking (Grandin, 1988). This is used to classify households for the purposes of further, stratified research. Although this method aims to elicit respondents' concepts of wealth and wealth categories, it often seems to create a snapshot of clearly differentiated households, rather than a perhaps truer - if blurred - image of institutions in constant flow.

At the same time recognition of the 'otherness' of the researched may blind the researcher to the working of agency. Agency can be defined as the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. It can take the form of decision-making, of bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance, as well as the processes of reflection and analysis (Kabeer, 2000). All of these strategies can be employed by the respondents - not just the researcher. The author's own research with a community group in the UK showed how swiftly a particular group grasped the potential of chapati (venn) diagrams to indicate their perceived exclusion from decision-making processes. In particular, they understood that they could use the researchers to convey their grievances to other parties rather than having to speak themselves (Farnworth, 1998a: 9-12).

2.2 Consequences for the German and Malagasy Research

The consequences of our discussion for the German and Malagasy research are examined here. The author explains how she sought to ameliorate the researcher-respondent relationship through working with locally-embedded researchers. She then provides an overview of the research process, taking as its entry point the fieldwork in Madagascar. The aim here is to show in simple form some of the learning dynamics set in motion as the results from the quality of life toolkit were fed into other problem domains. The quality of life toolkit used in Madagascar is presented in chapter five. The toolkit for the German fieldwork is presented in chapter nine.

Two preliminary comments can be made with respect to the research process in Germany and Madagascar. Firstly, it was hoped that the need Bailey *at al.* (1999, in Crang, 2002: 652) identify for idiosyncrasy and creative insight, as well as for generalisations, would be met. Second, attention was paid to gender issues at all stages, bearing in mind that gender analysis is not only about disaggregating data throughout the different research processes, but also considering what it means to be a man or woman in a particular situation (Grown & Sebstad, 1989). Box 2.1 explains some key terms used in gender-sensitive research.

Box 2.1: Terms Used in Gender-Sensitive Research

Gender Analysis: the discovery through systematic enquiry of gender roles in a particular place.
Gender Sensitive: methods, analyses, policies, practices, behaviours *etc.* that recognise gender issues as important and seek to institutionalise or mainstream attention to gender issues.
Gender Sensitive Methods: these allow discrimination among variables on the basis of gender differences, or allow insights into gender relationships. Three questions are asked:
- Who does what, when and where?
- Who has access to, and control over, resources?
- Who benefits?

The aim of these questions is to force implicit assumptions to be made explicit and to be tested in context.

Source: Farnworth & Jiggins (2003: 3)

Ameliorating the Researcher- Respondent Relationship
Many of the difficulties noted in this chapter regarding the subject-to-subject relationship cannot be overcome, but only ameliorated. The employment of local researchers was a significant way of overcoming the problematic outsider-insider dynamic, enabling much quality 'insider' (emic) data to be created in both Germany and Madagascar. The author was, however, almost always present. This would have had a bearing upon what occurred. Furthermore, the Malagasy researchers were strangers to the research sites. The German research team did not personally know any of the respondents.

The research team members and their roles are introduced here. Although the author does not provide a response, it is worth considering the ethical implications of using local researchers whilst reading. Questions such as these can be posed: *Does the use of 'embedded' researchers imply gaining access to ideas that would otherwise be hidden to external persons? How can this be justified? And how far do locally-embedded researchers resist incorporation into the lead researcher's project?* The Malagasy research team is presented first, followed by the German team.

The author lived in Madagascar for almost two years (2000 – 2001). The first eighteen months were spent learning French and setting up the research through

building up theoretical knowledge on how to define and measure quality of life, identifying key players in the organic sector, developing a reasonable understanding of Madagascar and making several visits to the research sites. The fieldwork element of the research took two months.

Initially, a local research team of two was employed. Vanona Angelo Ramaharo was recommended by Karen Schoonmaker-Freudenberger, a researcher of international renown for her work in participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and rapid rural appraisal (RRA). Ms Schoonmaker-Freudenberger has been working in Madagascar for several years and has worked closely with Mr. Ramaharo. Suzanne Razanabahoaka likewise had research experience and was an older woman capable of generating – and demonstrating – deep respect from and to the respondents. She had an acute understanding of local sensibilities from having worked in neighbouring areas in the past. Aimé Hajarivelo Raharinaivo, the driver, was employed as a third researcher at a later stage because he consistently engendered considerable rapport with the respondents, perhaps because of his respectful yet humorous manner. He swiftly acquired the basics of participatory methods.

All the research was planned and discussed in French between the research team and the author. The actual research was carried out in Malagasy. In many cases the research was carried out in gender-specific groups. At such times the author accompanied Ms. Razanabahoaka. When the groups were gender-mixed the author accompanied one of the two male researchers in order to have a good overview of the research process in each situation, and to guide if necessary. In this way three research activities could be carried out at any one time. The findings were discussed every evening and summarised on flipchart paper (as well as in the author's notebooks) before the activities of the following day were planned.

The work in Germany was conducted in German, a language in which the author is fluent. The questionnaire surveys were rigorous and constrained in the choice of answers permitted. However the author's colleagues, Dr. Nieberg and Ms Otto, spent time following completion of the questionnaire engaged in deeper discussion with the respondents, providing they were interested. Some of the comments made by respondents helped to structure the questions asked in the focus groups. Rich understandings were thus generated by the questionnaire survey and by those ideas that initially escaped the immediate bounds of the survey.

The author then employed two researchers, Mathias Boysen and Wolfgang Raabe, to assist with the focus group and seminar work. During the planning of the sessions, Mr. Boysen and Mr. Raabe commented on the appropriateness and phasing of the questions proposed, in particular as to whether they would be easily understood by the respondents. The words 'ethics/ethical' (in translation) for example, whilst popular in the UK, are generally not well understood by German speakers. Mr. Boysen facilitated all the focus groups and Mr. Raabe taped and later typed up all the sessions. The author observed the process as it unfolded in each group, and, with her colleagues, agreed on any modifications that needed to be made for the following session. One seminar, moderated by the author, was held. The protocol was taken by Mr. Raabe.

48

An Overview of the Research Process

Figure 2.1 presents the research process in visual form, taking as its entry point the fieldwork in Madagascar. The term 'reflection' in the boxes refers to the process of feeding the findings into further research and discussions with other stakeholders. For example organic consumers in the German focus groups were asked to consider whether they would support community initiatives (via the selective purchase of products that supported these initiatives) in Madagascar that might run counter to initiatives they would normally support. The example given (slightly adapted from the male plantation workers' dream map, which is discussed in chapter six) was to finance the building of a video salon instead of a primary school. In this way quite a complex dynamic of respondents commenting upon respondents was set up, thus blurring further the researcher-respondent nexus.

The research process was more complex than the diagram is able to convey, given that the research process with organic consumers, social certification bodies and smallholders ran parallel to one another. Taking any one of these as an entry point would have produced a different diagram. Furthermore, the iterative links between each of the four reflections have not been shown in order to avoid too much complexity. The aim of Figure 2.1 is, therefore, to show one set of links as a guide to understanding the research process.

Research Situation in Madagascar

enters

Researcher

takes part in

Reflection on the Findings 1
Author with Malagasy respondents & fieldwork team

Action in the Situation
Development of Quality of Life Toolkit

Reflection on the Findings 2
Author via peer feedback - conference presentations & academic papers

enables

Reflection on the Findings 3
German organic & fair trade consumers in seminars & focus groups

Reflection on the Findings 4
Social certification bodies & action groups, retailers

Figure 2.1: The Research Process Taking the Development of the Quality of Life Toolkit as a Starting Point
Source: Loosely based on Checkland & Holwell (1998)

2.3   Analysis of Fieldwork Data

It is argued here that seeking patterns in quantitative and qualitative data is one way of enabling useful and valid understandings to emerge. Feeding such understandings back into real world processes is a way of testing validity. Some of the dangers inherent in telling a good story when solid data are lacking are examined. The process of *Verfremdung* (alienation), in conjunction with the respondents, provides a way of 'refreshing' the data set.

King (2000: 56) warns that *'qualitative research takes as its starting point an awareness of the gap between the object of study and the way we represent it, and the way interpretation necessarily comes to fill that gap. The process of interpretation provides a bridge between the world and us, between objects and*

our representation of them, but it is important to remember that interpretation is a process, a process that continues as the world keeps changing. We have to follow that process and acknowledge that there will always be a gap between the thing we want to understand and our accounts of what they are like.' This observation accords well with those made earlier on chaos theory. It is impossible to gain comprehensive knowledge of initial conditions to enable a complete understanding of any one situation.

What is at stake methodologically is the potential for reflexivity and accountability. Jiggins & Röling (2000: 30) believe that it is possible to understand the underlying processes and principles of dynamic systems behaviour and its consequences despite the mass of surface complexity. Jiggins (pers. comm. 10/04) adds that 'understanding' arises from stories about the world that are persuasive because they are situated, evidential and effectual. The richness and validity of such understandings can be tested when one observes what happens as they are fed back into the processes under examination.

With respect to both quantitative and qualitative data, it is important to consider how analysis should proceed and the way conclusions are drawn. De Vries (2004: 29) asserts that when Eli Lilly, a pharmaceutical company, was faced with very disappointing sales on the drug Xigris (activated protein C, for use in intensive care), it *'reframed its marketing problem as an ethical problem.'* In response to the conclusion of the New England Journal of Medicine that, *'there is not sufficient evidence at present for [Xigris] to become the standard of care'*, Lilly set up a *'Values, Ethics and Rationing in Critical Care Task Force (VERICC)'*. VERICC's remit was to examine rationing practice, the implication being that physicians were not prescribing Xigris due to its cost. De Vries is thus suggesting that companies sometimes recast a marketing problem as an ethical dilemma when a data set is weak. Rapley (2003: 104-5) suggested above that the persuasiveness of the argument presented is key. However, the example just provided highlights the dangers of mere persuasiveness. Analysis, and the arguments derived from analysis, must be solidly based on the quantitative and qualitative data set.

It is important to verify data with the respondents, as was done in Madagascar with the smallholders and the plantation workers. This is necessary to ensure good data quality, and to demonstrate respect towards the respondents. However, a poem by Mary Oliver sheds light on a limitation of this approach. It says (1986: 65) *'The mind clings to the road it knows/ Rushing through crossroads/Clinging like lint to the familiar.'* It is useful to attempt almost the opposite of verification through *Verfremdung*, that is, to find ways to de-familiarise and alienate the data. This needs to be done in an intelligible fashion, perhaps through theatre, in order to shift respondents out of well-worn thinking grooves. The aim would be to re-invigorate thoughts on, say, the constituents of a 'good' quality of life and how to achieve these. The process of *Verfremdung* could be a way of engendering new ideas of how we want to relate to the world.

2.4 Conclusion

Chapter one addressed the general lack of connection between producer and consumer in the global organic commodity chain. It was argued that these two stakeholders lacked rich pictures of each other's worlds. At the same time it was suggested that producers in the South and consumers in the North are fundamentally, if unwittingly, involved with one another not only through economic exchange, but also in the realm of ideas. The concept of 'entanglement' was put forward as a way of making <u>conscious</u> this involvement. It can also be used as a device to build quality ethical relationships. This chapter has deepened this preliminary analysis by examining a range of methodological concerns. These concerns bear upon how mutual understanding, a first step towards reflexive entanglement, might be achieved.

Constructionist approaches to knowledge, as defined in chapter one, argue that multiple perceptions of reality exist. Each perceived reality is specific to the perceiving organism. However, it was maintained that these realities (or rich pictures) can be shared through language: worlds can be called forth together. The arguments presented in this chapter suggest that though this might be so, social markers such as race, age and gender influence (though they do not pre-determine) the ability of the observer - the researcher in this case - to access the perceived reality of another person (another perceiving organism).

The proposal that cultures show order at all points enables researchers to partially overcome their situatedness in the research situation. Although a perception of reality might be specific to a particular respondent, this perception is not entirely <u>owned</u> by them. Our individual perceptions of reality are pre-configured by the slots in time and space that we occupy. However, elements, though not all the constituents, of this pre-configured way of perceiving can be dislodged, either by involuntary changes in circumstances, or by conscious effort. In so doing several things can happen. First, an understanding of what is necessary to achieve one's 'maximum self' might start to gel. Secondly, a space for learning may be opened up. Happenings like these enable further steps towards positive entanglement with others to be taken.

The arguments outlined in this chapter suggest that the methods used in this research, and the analysis of research findings, provide mechanisms for first and second-order structuring of people's perceptions of reality. It would seem that the way methods and analytical tools are employed demonstrate a 'longing for control' by the researcher. Even heterogeneity in the methods toolbox rarely escapes this longing to impose patterning on the world. This is not such a bad thing in itself, but researchers need to be aware that the methods they select will largely pre-determine what is found.

Chapter Three: Social Certification in Organic Agriculture

The wild geese
Ate my young blades of barley
But see them go …[19]

The focus of this chapter is certification in organic agriculture. Certification can be construed as a means of conceptualising, creating and fixing quality relationships to the world. Social certification assesses the well-being of producers in farming.

Currently it is being proposed that organic producers opt for social certification in addition to organic certification (Soil Association Fair Trade Pilot, 16/07/03). However social certification is likely to become an integral part of certification on organic holdings. The Soil Association, which is developing pilot fair trade and organic standards for application in both the North and the South, says that *'the Soil Association may in the future, and after due consultation, consider introducing these additional standards as an integral and mandatory element of the Standards for Organic Food and Farming'* (ibid: Paragraph 1.4). Just as organic certification defines, more or less, what the term 'organic' means, social certification will come to 'officially' express the humane values which organic farming espouses. Decisions about what the standards for social certification will include, and what process might be used to formulate them, are thus central issues. In this chapter, producers in the South form the focus of discussion. It is acknowledged that organic producers in the South and North face certain – but not all – issues in common.

The chapter is divided into three parts. They set out the main operational issues related to the research aims of this thesis. The overall aim of Part 3.1 is to situate social certification initiatives in wider, ethical discussions about the kind of society people might want and to how to achieve it. It suggests that a range of concerns that have taken shape in this wider arena influence both the way these initiatives are conceptualised, and how they are expected to relate to organic agricultural practice. The discussion opens by introducing the complex nature of the terrain in social certification. It distinguishes between a range of regulatory mechanisms, such as standards, laws and codes of conduct. This is important because certification initiatives are built upon the framework provided by these mechanisms. Because social certification initiatives in organic agriculture do not yet exist, the author then examines the theory and practice of organic certification and points out areas of contention. She moves on to examine two current dilemmas, sustainability and biodiversity. Some stakeholders, like a good number of organic consumers, consider that organic agriculture provides a partial response to these (a theme pursued in chapters eight to eleven). The discussion therefore proceeds to consider the way in which the organic sector - in Europe - is

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19Okada Yasui (1657-1743)

increasingly expected to carry the concepts of 'public goods' and 'goal integration'. These two concepts, which incorporate social agendas, can be cast as potential solutions to concerns around sustainability and biodiversity.

Part 3.2 examines concrete issues in agriculture that social certification will need to address. To do this it revisits the global commodity chain framework presented in chapter one. It concludes with an overview of some new multi-stakeholder initiatives in order to explore some novel approaches to formulating and implementing standards for certification in organic agriculture.

Part 3.3 takes the discussion forward. It explains why the quality of life approach suggested by the author would make a special and significant contribution to social certification in organic agriculture. It examines how social certification could contribute to a process that enables producers to work towards achieving their 'maximum selves'. This is a necessary corollary to the improvement of relationships, or entanglement, between producers and consumers.

3.1   Situating the Social Certification Debate

Codes of Conduct and Social Certification

A number of steps need to be taken for the purposes of certification. These are: (1) considering the principles one wants to support, (2) lending the principles value by giving them appropriate weighting; that is, by transforming them into standards to be met, (3) developing indicators which can credibly and effectively measure the standards, (4) deciding upon the means of implementation and monitoring. If third party monitoring is accepted, then step (5) working with certification and accreditation bodies, follows. If assessment is successful, the applicant is certified as having met the standards (see Font & Harris, 2004: 3). The key point is that social certification is not about 'making explicit' a range of social goods in organic agriculture, it is rather about creating these goods and then fixing them into a set of codified practices. The poet Edwin Muir remarks:

> For with names the world was called
> Out of the empty air,
> With names was built and walled,
> Line and circle and square. [20]

In order to organise our discussion, Table 3.1 provides a glossary of the key terms.

20 Published in The Labyrinth (1949). The poem *'The Animals'*, from which this excerpt is taken, is available online at several internet sites including www.oldpoetry.com

Table 3.1: Key Terminology in Certification Initiatives

Code of Conduct	This is a voluntary agreement regulating core rights and responsibilities by particular stakeholders at different points in a consumer to producer chain. Utting (2000, in Barrientos *et al.* 2003) defines codes of conduct as *'a set of ethical principles and standards that attempt to guide a firm's performance'.* Several codes of conduct, such as the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) Base Code and the Soil Association's Fair Trade Pilot Project, include some of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Core Conventions. These establish standards for labour rights worldwide. Codes of conduct can be operationalised through developing indicators for each standard. Monitoring can be done in different ways: self-assessment, self-monitoring with reporting structures in place, or third-party verification.
Standards	Standards are quality systems developed by the organic sector that offer guidance to the operator and can be applied more flexibly than laws (i.e. they do not have legal status). IFOAM has developed organic standards over a number of years. It is trying to harmonise international standards that recognise local diversity and permit international trade. IFOAM provides minimum standards to organic certification programmes to enable them to develop detailed production standards. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has developed Core Conventions binding on all 174 member states. Important civil society codes include SA 8000. This code covers issues such as child labor, forced labor, health and safety, freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, discrimination, discipline, working hours, compensation, and management systems. The ETI Base Code is another code of labour practice[21]. All these codes are widely used as reference points for the development of social standards.
Regulations	Regulations are laws. They regulate the production, sales and trade in organic goods in order to protect consumers from dishonest marketing, and to ensure fair competition among producers. An example is EU Council Regulation 2092/91. According to this regulation, only products that have been produced and supervised in accordance with the Regulation may be marketed as organic within EU.
Certification	Third party monitoring of an organisation's adherence to a code of conduct. With respect to private schemes like IFOAM, the guarantee system encompasses production standards and an accreditation system. With respect to regulations, all bodies inspecting organic production must conform to European standard EN 45011 (or ISO65). ISO65 covers the inspection organisation's structure and procedures. It places

21 Bendell (2001) provides a critique of the 'codes in action'. His study of women workers on a banana plantation in Costa Rica found several gaps in the codes, including how particular terms were interpreted (like collective bargaining), and how different auditors might understand and verify the codes. Sexual harassment might be seen, for example, by women as 'normal' male behaviour and therefore might claim not to suffer from sexual harassment (= no sexual harassment in the auditor's check box).

	strict demands on the documentation of procedures.
Accreditation	Quality control of certification bodies. The guarantee that the certification bodies conform to the EN standard can either be given by an official accreditation organisation, or in the case of EU members and 'listed' countries, by the 'competent authority' in the country. The IFOAM Accreditation Programme is seeking to harmonise certification programmes.

Sources: Font & Harris (2004); Barrientos *et al.* (2003); Utting (2000, in Barrientos *et al.* 2003), and Lampkin *et al.* (1999).

Codes of conduct, as defined in Table 3.1, are entering the mainstream of trading relations. They enable organisations to build financial, social and environmental value into their work. This is known as the triple bottom line. Although in the past codes of conduct were often developed unilaterally by companies, these days a range of actors is frequently involved. These actors include retailers, importers, exporters and local trade associations. Utting (2002: 2) suggests that multi-stakeholder initiatives have arisen as a consequence of the perception that codes of conduct which have been unilaterally designed by companies are*' weak and aimed more at public relations than at substantial improvements in social and environmental performance.'* He contends that the rise of civil regulation reflects changes that are occurring in the balance of social forces (particularly with respect to NGOs and consumer pressures) and in concepts of *'good governance'*. These emphasise the importance of collaboration and partnership.

Font & Harris (2004: 4) place the development of standards in the discourse of the sustainable society. Although environmental standards have been around for some time, attempts by industry to develop social standards as part of the sustainability agenda are more recent. Such moves, they argue, are symptomatic of wider shifts in thinking as exemplified in the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 (ibid.). Blowfield (1999: 7) considers that it is relatively simple for companies to install mechanisms for accounting, auditing and reporting on the social and environmental aspects of their business. Similar mechanisms for finance, safety, quality and so on were developed decades ago. *'Companies have simply increased their lexicon and applied it to a grammar which they had already mastered'*, he concludes. Other commentators (Zadek, 1999; Sterns, 1999, and Font & Harris, 2004 for example) are less certain. They argue that the challenge for companies is greater than Blowfield implies, given the newness and complexity of the social justice terrain in particular. Companies are *'learning by doing'* (Sterns, 1999: 15) and a whole new set of tools is being developed (Zadek *et al.* 1997, for examples of such tools).

Table 3.1 also distinguishes between voluntary standards and regulations (laws). According to the ISEAL (International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling) Alliance, the rise of voluntary standards as a complement to government laws and regulations represents an evolution of the regulatory framework. As such, governments and civil society are in the process of defining how these two regulatory instruments relate. The most likely source of conflict between voluntary standards and trade rules is the Technical Barriers to Trade

56

(TBT) Agreement of the World Trade Organization. The ISEAL Alliance goes on to argue that *'is in the best interest of international standard-setting organisations to ensure a favourable interpretation of their standards under these agreements. In practice, this means that standard-setting bodies should take a proactive role to influence the existing dialogue on defining appropriate procedures for setting standards, and ensure their own compliance with whatever procedures are eventually accepted. If standard-setting bodies themselves can help to define the guidance on what is considered a legitimate international standard, and then meet the criteria that are espoused in that guidance, then their standards will be in a better position to be recognized by governments'* (ISEAL Alliance, 2003b: 1-3).

Performance standards were, until recently, popular. They measure performance against a specified set of criteria and indicators. Performance standards are, however, increasingly being criticised for being too static, and for encouraging performance to be measured on a pass/fail basis (Blowfield, 1999: 16). As a consequence, a number of international labelling initiatives are adopting standards that focus on progress towards a goal (procedural or process standards). Such standards are sometimes criticised for being overly complex for small producers, and sometimes very low goals are set. A common solution is to start with performance standards and then to move onto process standards. This enables labelling initiatives to bring a wide range of companies on board (ibid; see also IDS Policy Briefing, and Font & Harris, 2004, for in-depth discussions on these distinctions).

In the organic sector, there are a number of initiatives working on standards development for the purposes of social certification. Actors involved in the discussion process include RAFI (Rural Advancement Foundation International), the Soil Association in the United Kingdom, The SASA (Social Accountability in Sustainable Agriculture) Project, and IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements)[22]. A few private initiatives also exist. For example Rapunzel, a German organic and fair trade food company, has set up a scheme entitled "Hand-in-Hand" which addresses social issues.[23] Activity is not confined to the organic sector. Conventional operators are increasingly interested in developing codes of conduct. They are thus not only reducing the differential between conventional and organic agriculture, but also potentially setting the terms of debate. An example is a major initiative within the coffee industry that aims to produce a global code: *'The Common Code for the Coffee Community.'*[24] The Deutscher Kaffee-Verband e.V. and the GTZ (Deutscher Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit) are working with the industry, trades unions and NGOs on the code. EUREPGAP (Euro-Retailer Produce Working Group - Good Agricultural Practice) and SAI (Sustainable Agriculture Initiative) are other

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22 www.ifoam.org , www.soilassociation.org, www.isealalliance.org/sasa.

23www.rapunzel.de (currently in German). Contact Rapunzel directly for details of 'Hand in Hand' by using the contacts link on their website.

24 www.sustainable-coffee.net

examples (see Vallejo *et al.* 2004 for an assessment of these industry-led initiatives).

Blowfield (1999: 11) notes that many impacts caused by the activities of a company are generally not captured in the standards that are typically included in codes of conduct. For example, downstream water sources may become polluted, and waste may be dumped on common ground, as has happened in African horticultural initiatives. The growth of labour intensive industries such as cut flowers may attract migrant workers. Pressure may be put on the resources of previously small towns, putting up rents, overloading sewage systems and causing health problems. The gender division of labour in the household may change. All these are under-researched areas. Nor is there scope for addressing land issues under existing standards. For example it is theoretically quite possible for a company or individual producer to have acquired land by coercion and to sell the products to the fair trade market (ibid; see Zadek *et al.* 1998, for similar remarks). The approach to social certification suggested by the author in the final part of this chapter, and in chapter seven, would overcome some of these problems.

In order to provide a concrete example of a social certification initiative, Box 3.1 presents a short excerpt from the Soil Association's 'fair-trade pilot standards' (Soil Association, 16/07/03). They are being developed for application to Northern, and Southern organic producers. The pilot standards take as their starting point the *'Principal Aims of Organic Production and Processing'* in the IFOAM Basic Standards 2002. These are (1) to recognise the wider social and ecological impact of and within the organic production and processing system, (2) to provide everyone involved in organic farming and processing with a quality of life that satisfies their basic needs, within a safe, secure and healthy working environment, and (3) to support the establishment of an entire production, processing and distribution chain which is both socially just and ecologically responsible. Some of the Soil Association's proposed standards for employment are given here. They incorporate some of the ILO Core Conventions. Other areas covered by the pilot, but not discussed here, are (1) general standards (2) origin of product or ingredients (3) trading relationships (4) rules for cooperatives and associations (5) social and cultural conditions, and (6) labelling.

Box 3.1: Sample Standards for Employment Conditions in Organic Agriculture (Soil Association Fair Trade Pilot)

Principles
Ethically based employment conditions ensure that acceptable living wages are paid, hours of work are not excessive, working conditions are decent and that the workforce is empowered.
Required
Employment of all employees must comply with national requirements as a minimum, or ILO standards, if they are higher. The operator will need to demonstrate they are aware of national legislation and show evidence of their compliance.

<u>Terms of employment</u>

All employers must provide written terms and conditions of employment to all employees, both permanent and temporary, complying as appropriate with the employment policy and specifying: wages, method of payment, location and type of work (job description), hours of work, overtime, access to trade unions and/or complaints procedure, health and safety, disciplinary procedure, holiday pay, sick pay or sickness benefit, compensation for injury, other benefits (pensions, maternity/paternity)

<u>Employment policy</u>

Companies who have more than 10 employees must have a written employment policy. This must include:

- The provision of written terms and conditions of employment to all employees, permanent, temporary or casual.
- No discrimination on the basis of race, caste, sex, sexual orientation, religion, political opinion, nationality, social origin or other distinguishing trait.
- All employees will receive equal pay for equal work.
- No use of forced or bonded labour.
- Sickness or injury provision to cover loss of earnings.
- Temporary employment on a permanent basis is prohibited. Temporary employment may not last more than two years.
- A standard working week of maximum 48 hours with an uninterrupted rest period of at least 24 hours each week.
- Provision for paid holidays after a period of continuous service.
- A documented disciplinary procedure with a system of warnings before any dismissal. Dismissed employees must be given full details of the reasons for their dismissal.
- No use of child labour. Only workers 15 years of age or older, or above the compulsory school-leaving age shall be employed. No worker less than 18 years of age shall be allowed to undertake any hazardous employment.
- Where meals and other food supplies are only available to the workers directly by the employer or a contractor, their prices must be reasonable. (ILO 110)

Source: Adapted from Soil Association (2003)

A number of questions regarding standards for the purposes of social certification arise from this preliminary discussion. The lead questions are (1) Who are the standards for? (2) How are standards created? And (3) How are standards maintained? Sub-questions derived from these are presented below. The aim is to flavour the remainder of the discussion in this chapter by foregrounding the fact that the setting of standards is problematic and complex. Chapter seven, which examines the relevance of the Malagasy fieldwork findings for the purposes of social certification, provides responses to some of these questions.

1. Who are the standards for? Questions arise all along the production to consumption chain.

- Farmers and Workers: Are standards only about gaining and maintaining access to overseas markets? Can standards be about improving quality of life? Or do they only hinder the endeavours of farmers and workers to create the world they seek? Should social standards have a 'development agenda' – or does this mean stepping beyond what they should be asked to do? The Institute of Development Studies (IDS, 2003) asks: Which workers benefit, in what ways and with what costs?
- Local suppliers and firms: IDS asks: Which firms will benefit, in which ways and with what costs? (ibid)
- Certification Bodies: Do they want simple rules to follow? What is their level of trust in the producer? How can they operationalise a concept like trust?
- Retailers: Are standards only about gaining market edge, or is their implementation about genuine conviction and a wish to change? How will retailers build consumer confidence in the product? How flexible and responsive to producer values can social labels be?
- Consumers: Are standards only about increasing the desirability of a product that has demonstrably undergone strict quality control? Or do standards enable consumers to implement their ethics in the real world, that is, do standards enable consumers to expand their 'circles of concern' beyond their own family and friends to wider humanity?

2. **How are standards created?**
   - With respect to the standard-setting body: How much participation from other stakeholders do they allow? Do they see widespread debate as a means of enrichment, or as a source of confusion?
   - How can the institutionalisation of values that standard-setting demands avoid excluding or ignoring the values of weaker stakeholders, for example unorganised women workers in horticulture or on plantations?
   - Is it thinkable that the process of creating standards might enable producers to start shaping, as well as responding to, markets?
   - How can global standards be made to work better for Southern firms and workers? (ISEAL, 2003b)
   - What constitutes adequate stakeholder consultation? (ibid)
   - What constitute acceptable local variations in standards? (ibid)
   - How can objectivity in standards be obtained so as have consistent assessment? (ibid)
   - How can standards be developed which are credible to players at the international level (EU or USA) as well as to people on the ground?

3. **How are standards maintained?**
   - How will compliance be monitored? Will assistance of achieving compliance be offered? What forms will sanctions on non-compliance take? As part of this, what will be the role of local stakeholders in the process of monitoring and evaluating standards?
   - Will there be a mechanism for capturing farmer learning and self-regulation by peer review? (ibid)

60

It is clear that stakeholders cannot <u>automatically</u> concur with one another by reason of their structurally different placing along the producer to consumer production chain. They may have different interests and different values in action. However, the author suggests that if the emphasis is placed upon consciously creating new kinds of relationships between various stakeholders, then these difficulties could be resolved in part. Problems that seem insurmountable on one level can be tackled by considering them in theoretical fashion on another level. The purpose of this thesis is to suggest ways of doing this.

We now explore how standards for organic certification have been derived. The aim is to stimulate thought on how agreements are reached between stakeholders, on how some ideas gain more currency than others, and on how particular values become 'solidified' into standards, and others do not.

Quality Relationships to the World: Organic Certification
Organic agriculture has the <u>potential</u> to be a site of multiple values. These values can echo along manifold ethical and sustainability axes and therefore have the potential for capture by a range of stakeholders, resulting in a variety of deep relationships to the world. Indeed Frost (2003: 1) considers that supporters of organic agriculture *'see themselves as part of a movement, one that claims to be more than an alternative system of agricultural production and more than a niche market.'* He quotes Wettasinha (2003, in ibid.) who asserts that *'organic agriculture is not simply agriculture without chemicals. (It is) an ecologically sound, socially just, economically viable, and therefore sustainable form of agriculture. [It] strives to maintain the ecological balance in the farming system and to utilise the resource base in a sustainable manner, whilst paying keen attention to socio-economic aspects of production. Nutrient recycling, optimal use of available resources, diversification, site specificity are important ecological aspects of organic agriculture. Socio-economic aspects such as food security, fair trade, capacity building etc are no less important.'* This holistic understanding of 'organic' underpins social certification debates, and it competes with more limited interpretations of what 'organic' is. Wettasinha's interpretation, however, is not of itself 'more true' than others. It is a construction or wish as much as any other and as such occludes the fact that the values listed are a battleground. The fair trade agenda is far from fully embraced by IFOAM (Nickoleit, pers. comm 06/03; Kalus, pers. comm, 07/03) for example.

The development of standards for the purpose of social certification can be understood as an attempt to freeze a particular relationship to the world. The 'freezing' effect has obvious trade and consumer recognition advantages, but it is also problematic:

> First, the formulation of codes of conduct, and their translation into standards and indicators for the purposes of implementation, is a mechanism to ensure that this desired relationship continues over the long term in the particular form selected by the proponents of the code of conduct. Crucial to this endeavour is the fact that regulatory mechanisms, of their very nature,

act to maintain a stable state in the organism being governed. As the world moves on lack of fit is likely to increase and become more obvious.

Second, although codes of conduct and standards might seem dry, they express sets of deeply held values and therefore their formulation cannot ever be a simple, value-free process. Rather, their configuration displays a particular set of power relations, a set that dominated at the time of their making. Particular stakeholders may benefit from the final configuration of rules much more than other stakeholders in the process.

Third, there is a process of loss as ideas are operationalised. Rules can never capture the richness of principles (Milestad 2003: 41). Actors can benefit by adhering to rules without sharing in the philosophy that gave rise to those rules.

Fourth, codes of conduct and standards rest upon a particular concept, or *Wahrnehmung*, of the world to be maintained. Certain values, certain needs, will not have found expression. Silencing is part of certification too.

Fifth, once rules are in place, people have to submit themselves to them. If the lack of ownership is profound then this can be very difficult.

It is therefore not surprising that a roughness and a lack of ease run through the debates around certification. In order to tease out these difficulties, organic certification is examined here. Unlike social certification, organic certification is well-established. An examination of issues which have arisen in the course of its practice provides good scope for learning. The next few paragraphs suggest that the rules of organic certification have been conceptualised, albeit slowly, within a particular framework. It has not been possible for stakeholders to settle upon one meaning of 'organic'.

Valuing Organic Agriculture

The author contends that the current system of governance in organic agriculture - organic certification - represents primarily a positivist-realist understanding of farming. Organic certification assesses whether the agricultural practice under examination is being carried out according to the laws of natural systems. If it does, it is seen to be contributing to ecological sustainability. Deliberate fit with ecological processes is sought in organic agricultural practice (von Koerber & Kretschmer, 2001; Doherty & Rydberg, 2002). Lampkin (1998: 574) explains that, *'Organic farming is clearly not simply conventional farming without the use of inorganic pesticides and fertilisers. Whereas conventional farming methods attempt to substitute for natural processes, organic farming attempts to enhance them, using a system which, to a large extent, mimics natural ecosystems.'* He continues by saying that *'the most fundamental element of this mimicry ... is the mix of arable and livestock enterprises which enable these farms to maintain many of the cyclical processes characteristic of natural ecosystems.'* Beneficial soil organisms and insects occur much more frequently on organic farmed land, thus enabling the farm to benefit systemically from these ecosystem services (Belfrage

et al., 2004). *O*rganic agriculture enables spatial and temporal diversity. In contrast, monocultures often leave wildlife without resources at key times of the year, leaving them dependent on ever-diminishing non-crop habitat for their needs (Lampkin, 1998: 574).[25] Photograph 3.1 shows a cabbage grown on an organically managed plot in Madagascar.

Photograph 3.1 Organic Cabbage, Mahambo, Madagascar

The emphasis upon 'ecology' in this environmentally rooted, systems-based strand of thinking leads to the alternative term 'ecological agriculture' being used in many European countries. The focus is upon organic agriculture's contribution to biodiversity and natural capital, that is, to components of systemic health. People are seen as stewards of nature[26], helping to guide and maintain the system. Organic certification speaks to a view of people as being essentially 'without', rather than 'within' the system. Organic farmers are conceptualised as patrolling and maintaining the boundary, as managers of the system.

Organic farming is unique in that it is the only approach to farm assurance, agri-environmental sustainability and agricultural sustainability that is supported by a

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25 Some of these arguments are contentious. The purpose of the discussion here is to elaborate upon what some of the proponents of organic farming think 'organic farming' is and means. See Macilwain (2004) and Giles (2004) for a short overview of some studies that refute organic claims, and literature references.

26 The idea of 'stewardship' as an environmental ethic has been adopted by the British government. It provides a guiding principle that underpins environmental policy (Wye College & the Open University, 1997a, Block A, Part 2: 11). Important writers on stewardship include White Jr (1967), Passmore (1980), and Palmer, C. (1992).

legal definition and backed by international agreements (Lampkin *et al.* 1999: 90; Darnhofer & Vogl, 2003: 11). However, the translation of natural system 'rules' (for which read a positivist-realist but holistic understanding) into soft system procedures for the purposes of organic certification is highly problematic. Settling upon a definition of organic <u>is</u>, is far from easy. Particular qualities need to be selected. These need to be interpreted and valued. Processes need to be devised by which these values can be maintained. That is to say, there is nothing 'natural' or given about organic. It is thus inevitable that certification standards and procedures, being a profoundly human soft system, will sometimes fail to connect with particular stakeholders.

Harris *et al.* (2001: 25) explain that *'in order to be marketed in the EU as organic, goods that are imported into the EU from third countries must meet strict production and procedural standards, as well as specific import rules, which are outlined in Article 11 of Regulation (EEC) 2092/91. The general principle applied is that of equivalence. The regulations do not have to be identical, but must prove comparable effectiveness. This allows third countries to develop their own organic food production and certification systems.'* It is also possible to placed on the *'List of Third Countries'*. For this to happen countries need to have enacted organic farming legislation, and they need to have a fully functioning system of inspection and monitoring (Darnhofer & Vogl, 2003: 12). In practice equivalence is extremely hard to prove (Harris *et al*, 2001: 25). Nabs Suma (email communication to ISEAL Discussion on Local Variations in Certification, 05/03) adds that *'certifiers argue that higher standards are there to protect their consumers (and I would not disagree with that), but ... for me, organic standards are as much about protecting the producer as they are about protecting the consumer. Equivalence requirements often give the producer little protection.'*

Equivalence also means meeting pre-determined European standards, rather than introducing other concepts of what organic may mean (see Wendt, 1999: 25). Yet European standards themselves are not 'givens'. They represent the outcome of decades of discussion and dissent. Von Weiszäcker (pers. comm. 01/01) explains how, in Germany, the concept of 'organic' remains contentious. Organic actors include Demeter, an organisation run according to Steiner principles, Naturland, consisting of people who have identified a market niche for organic produce and Bioland, who tend to be *'leftish farmers'* of the 1960s/ 70s generation with an interest in international justice issues. Such organisations were not set up to establish control systems (see Lampkin *et al.* 1999: 93). Nevertheless the temporary cohesion arrived at by these organisations on what organic means fed into European level deliberations to form the current structure of EU Regulation 2092/91 (Schmidt, 2002), which now acts as a 'real world' body. It provides the rules to which European practitioners in organic agriculture, as well as importers into the EU, must adhere. EU Regulation 2092/91 has been amended over 40 times in an effort to increase its specificity and to close loopholes. Some issues may be decided at a national level (Darnhofer & Vogl, 2003: 11).

64

Disagreement among German actors has, however, not been quelled. Members of the Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft (into which AGÖL[27], the former umbrella organisation for producers, has been absorbed) in Germany comply with additional, 'stricter' definitions of organic production (see Wendt, 1999: 26; Reisch, 2003, and chapter ten in this thesis for more discussion).

With respect to the South, many resource poor farmers practice 'organic agriculture' either by default, due to the high cost of inputs (Scialabba, 2000: 12; Harris *et al.* 2001: 49), or through conscious application of traditional ways of knowing. For instance Kabelele (2003, in Frost, 2003: 1) suggests that organic agriculture *'revives in a way the dying indigenous knowledge (which was) eliminated during the colonial time.'* Tan (2003: 2) tells us that in China farming has been carried out according to the generating and controlling five elements - water, fire, metal, wood and earth - for thousands of years. He says, *'During the generation cycle it is difficult to avoid ecological destruction and pollution. Therefore nature requires the controlling cycle to protect the environment and to conserve natural resources. This controlling cycle is to make sure of nature's environmental protection'.*[28] The point being made here is that particular stakeholders might recognise certain characteristics of their own system as being organic, and therefore wish to use the appellation 'organic'. But for stakeholders immersed in what has become the mainstream organic tradition this seems wrong. Thus Southern producers are expected to undergo lengthy and expensive 'conversion' and to adhere to certain standards before being certified. Increasingly Southern producers are struggling to bring their own understandings to the table. Some comments made at the IFOAM Conference in 2000 in Basel by Southern delegates are cited in Figure 3.1 below. They convey vividly the anger and frustration of some participants in the debate.

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27 Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ökologischer Landbau.

28 According to Tan (pers. comm 02/04) the farming practices outlined here were written down over 3 500 years ago in the great plan of the Emperor Yu (who was known as Hong Fan). The great plan is attributed to Prime Minister I Yin who was a chief minister of Emperor Tang. According to the Chinese historian Shu-ma Qian, Prime Minister I Yin lived until 1713 B.C. These and other documents are found in the Book of History (Shangshu), a collection of documents dating back to 2357 B.C. Tan acknowledges that these farming practices are under threat. The author of this thesis adds that it is worth noting that the modern understanding, and demand for, organic can potentially result in over-exploitation of sensitive resources. In China some people have started to collect natural products for export as organic, leading to widespread natural resource destruction. This suggests a need to firmly align understandings of 'organic' within well-understood local traditions.

We need to ask: Where are the standards set? What are the requirements to be fulfilled by production? Who is doing the monitoring? How do small farmers pay costs for these regulatory approaches?

Regulations in the EC are changing all the time. It is so hard to keep up. You need to put everything on paper, but our culture is more oral, so it is difficult.

Standards emphasise certifiers, farmers count for less in the final decision. An emphasis on ethics and ecosystems is being undermined by commerce.

Do you have to be literate and have a computer to be an organic farmer?

Sustainable development of an interdependent world rests on the vitality of local people, ecosystems and interactions.

Northern power controls the rest of the world.

Figure 3.1: Comments Made by Southern Delegates about Organic Certification to the IFOAM Conference in 2000
Source: Author's conference notes (August 2000).

Frost & Walcher (2003: 3) likewise consider that organic agriculture should not be seen as a kind of monolith. They critique cohesive, linear accounts of the development of organic agriculture, suggesting that organic agriculture cannot be understood as the development of a sequence of ideas. Rather, they emphasise instead its unsteady development over the last century. They also point out that organic agriculture is very much a material system of agricultural and economic practice. In particular, they continue, structural changes in the late twentieth century effected substantial changes in the production and marketing of organic food, bringing in a range of new actors. Darnhofer & Vogl (2003: 18) maintain therefore that organic farming cannot be reduced to checklists, since it is a social

and ecological *movement*. Standardised production methods and certification cannot cope easily (Rundgren, 1997, in ibid).

Guthman (2002: 295-6) argues that the construction and enforcement of organic meanings through the regulatory process have enabled small producers to prosper in otherwise inhospitable markets. They have been able to retain *'excess profit'* (rents) through this process. Lockie *et al.* (2002: 23-24) suggests however that organic farming is being compromised by increasingly large scale and industrialised production methods, the development of highly processed and nutritionally suspect organic foods, and the energy intensive transport of organic produce to export markets (see Milestad, 2003, for similar arguments, and Brand, 2002, for further models and scenarios). These observations and comments suggest that there can be a loss of *'ethical consistency'*, at least for some stakeholders, in the shift from principles to standards. Some organic farmers may adhere to the rulebook of organic farming, but they may not subscribe to the philosophy, or philosophies, which generated those rules.

To summarise the discussion so far: it is not merely preferable, it is <u>necessary</u> to see the conceptualisation and practice of certification in organic agriculture as contested, conflictual, disparate in character, an uneasy playing ground between ideology and practice. If quality is about fluid, changing, dynamic, lived experience then this does not sit well with the freezing effect of certification. Devising standards for social certification must involve struggles around what kinds of meaning should be created, captured and fixed – and for how long. The process itself will be controversial. Yet it is an exciting task. Hubert (pers. comm. 04/04) says that certification is about the production and construction of norms. It helps people to agree on something when things are uncertain. New issues open new uncertainties. This allows space for action.

Expanding Organic Meanings
The material presented in the paragraphs above suggests that organic certification expresses a reduced relationship to the world. It is unable to take on board all the different values that organic agriculture is capable of offering. Strangely enough, it seems that richer understandings of organic have been compressed, and even lost, over the past century. Conford (2001, see also Conford, 1998, and Harvey, 2001) describes the evolution of organic farming in Britain prior to World War Two and explores the reasons for its resounding defeat by industrial agricultural practice. In those early days, according to Conford, organic farming was as much about maintaining the social fabric of the countryside (workplaces, living communities) as about maintaining the ecosystem.

It is important to acknowledge that the social thread in organic agriculture has persisted, and has been taken up by current practitioners. Following Frost & Walcher (2003) above, however, it is equally necessary to read the current expression of this social thread as new, and as resulting from historically different combinations of factors. We therefore address four themes that are currently 'co-creating', if indirectly, the social certification agenda in organic agriculture. These

are (i) concerns about sustainability, (ii) concerns about diversity, (iii) the concept of public goods, and (iv) the concept of goal integration.

These themes have been selected to contribute to particular discursive strands across the thesis. To take an example: in chapter four it is argued that particular approaches to capturing quality of life, such the functionings and capabilities frameworks, set aside an understanding of nature (biodiversity, natural capital and other understandings) as an object of intrinsic value[29]. However, both producers and consumers might contend that their participation in the organic system rests upon their understanding that this system best recognises the intrinsic value of nature. The discussion on nature as a locus of intrinsic values accordingly continues in chapters six and seven, which present and interpret the fieldwork with Malagasy producers. Chapters eight to ten on ethical consumption take up the debate.

The author acknowledges that other concerns, such as food safety and the validity of creating genetically modified organisms, affect people's perceptions of both organic agriculture and government policy (see for example Joly, 2001; Marris *et al.* 2001; Lockie *et al.* 2002; Grankvist, 2002; see Reisch, 2003, for a discussion of the German case, and Kinnear, 2004). However, concerns like these are not explored here due to a need to set a limit on the discussion.

The Dilemma of the Sustainable Society
Gao Village in China's Jiangxi province has changed dramatically over the past forty years. A longitudinal study carried out by Gao, M.C.F (1999) shows that *'fish, shrimps, crabs and so on used to be a very low cost source of protein in the villagers' diet. Waterweeds used to be natural food sources for pigs and other animals. Chemical applications [for paddy] have destroyed nearly all of them'* (ibid: 259). Fish is now bought from fish farms, floods are frequent due to erosion, and fights over water are common. Another Chinese observer makes similar observations about the consequences of ecological destruction in other areas of China (Gao [1990] 2000). The eco-challenge is not restricted to China; it affects every country in the world.

Röling (2003: 25) contends that the eco-challenge is the main human predicament of our times. It is, he says, caused not by forces outside ourselves, but by ourselves, meaning that we have to learn how to *'deal with ourselves'*. Norton (1992) maintains that there is a <u>moral</u> obligation to protect the natural processes that form the context of human life and culture.

Folke *et al.* (1998: no page) argue that a chief reason for the lack of fit between institutions and ecological processes is *'the mental separation-from-nature that has arisen in modern societies. The modern world creates and tightens inter-system linkages, hierarchies, and interdependencies between local resource users*

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29 The value of an object does not depend on its contribution to the value of another object. Rather, its value resides within itself.

and the wider society, the market, political control, and social networks.' The consequence of this tightening is *'to distance resource users from the resource base, to disconnect production from consumption, and to disconnect the production of knowledge from its application.'* Organic farming attempts to tackle this disconnection. Sriskandarajah (2000: 7) suggests that *'the developments, over the past few decades, of organic farming systems as an alternative to high external input farming systems ... can be described as society's move towards reincorporating nature.'* Allen & Kovach (2000, in ibid.) consider that organic farming as an alternative approach not only attempts to strengthen nature-society relations, but also reveals these relations as explicit practice.

Alrøe & Kristensen (2000) examine philosophical meanings of sustainability. To do so they discuss Thompson's work (1996, in ibid: 2). Thompson distinguishes between the concepts of 'resource sufficiency' and 'functional integrity'. Sustainability as resource sufficiency implies an instrumental relation to nature. The focus is upon the foreseeable use of resources, food production and food distribution. Sustainability as functional integrity implies a systemic relation to nature. Alrøe & Kristensen continue, *'agriculture is seen as a complex system of production practices, social values and ecological relations, where the functional integrity of the system can be nurtured or disrupted by human practice. Sustainability in this sense supports strategies for increasing the resilience of the system and avoidance of irreversible changes, and is therefore closely related to the concept of precaution.'*

The practice of organic agriculture is clearly associated with the concept of functional integrity. It is an 'engineered approach' to recognising ecological inter-dependence. Organic agriculture implicitly acknowledges that the ecological crisis lies in the way people conceptualise and shape the world, that is, in their failure to think and to make coherent connections between themselves and the world 'out there'. Leopold's (1949) *'Sand County Almanac'* was one of the first attempts to link an understanding of ecology with moral obligation. He argued that the survival and prosperity of people depends on the integrity and stability of the land (ecosystem) to which they belong as constituent parts. This integrity and stability could only be achieved if people recognised that the land is an entity which has intrinsic value and towards which they have moral obligations. The extension of moral concern to the land is, says Leopold, both an ecological necessity and an evolutionary possibility, given the tendency of interdependent individuals to develop modes of co-operation.

According to Röling (2003: 26) *'a sustainable society requires recognition of interdependence. It is built on conflict resolution, the management of social dilemmas and on negotiated agreement.'* Kumar (pers. comm. 01/01) calls for a *'Declaration of Dependence'* (in contrast to a Declaration of Independence). The demand for social certification in organic agriculture is an example of how stakeholders are trying to acknowledge and negotiate the delicate path towards social and ecological interdependence.

The Dilemma of Biodiversity

Biodiversity 'sustains' a sustainable society, though the degree of diversity required to maintain the planet's life support systems is contested (Lawton, 1991). Biodiversity brings richness and complexity to the world, yet a failure by people to actively connect different kinds of diversity, to interrelate these meanings in dynamic, responsive, interactive fashion, can lead to impoverishment and to disconnection. This is not only due to an objectively measurable decline in, say, the number of species but also because fewer relationships, whether ecological or aesthetic in character, are possible. Furthermore, those relationships that are possible may suffer a decline in quality. Borza & Jamieson (1987: 11) scrutinise two philosophical arguments relevant to this discussion. The first suggests that a richer, more complex world is <u>objectively</u> better than a simpler, more uniform one. According to this, such an assessment does not depend on the interests or purposes of the valuer; rather, it is an irreducible fact about value. The second suggests that people place more value on complex worlds than simple ones, perhaps because of their aesthetic value, or other interests people may have. Borza & Jamieson accept that it is difficult to justify and operationalise arguments about value since they are not open to simple quantification. Norton (1987, in ibid) points out that biodiversity is not merely about numbers: it is also constituted by the varied associations in which species live. Rather, such arguments flow from *'ideals and principles'* (Sagoff, 1981, in ibid: 13). The values that might be measured could be *'an artefact of our technique'* (Borza & Jamieson, 1987: 13).

Although natural capital, including biodiversity, underpins a diverse world it is being eroded by human activity (Thomas, C. *et al.* 2004, for a sample text). Philip Larkin (in Jones, 1999: 84-5) captures the fear of loss thus:

> I thought that it would last my time
> The sense that, beyond the town,
> There would always be fields and farms,
> Where the village louts could climb
> Such trees as were not cut down;
> I knew there'd be false alarms …
>
> - But what do I feel now? Doubt?
> Or age, simply?
>
> It seems, just now
> To be happening so very fast;
> Despite all the land left free
> For the first time I feel somehow
> That it isn't going to last …

Human knowledge is simply incapable of reconstructing the richness of natural capital. This is because we are not talking merely of substituting one thing for another (in the already impoverished sense of use-values), but also because we have to consider the multi-layered and intertwined relationships between these things. These relationships bring forth the object – it cannot emerge, nor continue

70

to exist, without them. On one level this matters to human society in terms of the range of values people might associate with an object, whether these values be anthropocentric (the prime emphasis being upon the usefulness of an object for humans) or biocentric (the prime emphasis being upon the value an object has itself) in character. On another level richness of natural capital is essential for resilience to shocks and stresses. Thuan (2001: 253-4), a physicist, maintains that *'the principle of life simply wilts away in the face of the cold perfection of overly precise symmetry ... we are here because symmetry was broken. The importance of being imperfect is evident in many areas ... minor errors, slight flaws, trace impurities, tiny exceptions to the rule ... all are essential to the successful operation of a system.'* It is impossible to imagine that humanity could manufacture imperfection to the extent necessary for resilience. Norton (1992: 108) argues that *'complexity is directly related to self-organisation, and self-organisation is an essential part of ecosystem health and integrity* (see Goodwin, 2000, 1997, and Harding, 2001). Ikerd (2003: 32) says*, 'We know that biological diversity is necessary for life; diversity that distinguishes cells, organs, and living organisms from one another; diversity gives resistance, resilience, and the regeneration ability to living communities.'* Drawing upon arguments like these, Pearce *et al.* (1989), assert that natural capital should not be permitted to decline through time, arguing for equity between the generations, and between the rich and the poor (see WCED: *'The Brundtland Report',* 1987; Hamilton, 1999, and Dasgupta, 2001, for similar arguments).

Organic agriculture operates according to the principles of sustainability and biodiversity (Lampkin, 1998; Pretty, 2000; Doherty & Rydberg, 2002) and therefore provides a solution of sorts to the dilemmas just outlined. It helps maintain the 'global commons'.[30] In the organic sector and beyond the importance of integrating human actors into ecosystems is also becoming better understood. Indeed, over the past few years a deepening appreciation of the contribution organic approaches might make to our common future has been embraced by the mainstream. The following two sections, on public goods and goal integration, examine the <u>implementation</u> of this understanding.

The Concept of Public Goods
Evidence that modern farming techniques have incurred a range of 'public costs', not directly felt by the farmer, has accumulated (Pretty, 2002; Doherty & Rydberg, 2002). Dunne & O'Connell (2003: 7) maintain that these costs *'accrue to society as a whole'*. These public costs afflict a range of 'things' now argued to be part of the global commons, such as water, soil and biodiversity. These things are known as 'public goods'.

The University of Essex has developed a framework to study the public costs (or negative externalities) of UK agriculture on public goods like these. The

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30 See Hardin (1968) for a classic text 'The tragedy of the commons'. See Steins (1999) for a critique of the rational choice paradigm upon which Hardin's work is based. She presents theoretical and case-study work on common-pool resource management arguing that this can provide a mechanism to transcend the commons dilemma.

framework enables measurement of (1) damage to water, air, soil and biodiversity, and (2) damage to human health by pesticides, micro-organisms and disease agents. The researchers arrived at a figure of UK£2 billion per annum. Similar calculations place the costs for the USA at UK£13 billion pa (Pretty, 2002: 57-8). Many of these costs are directly paid by consumers, for instance in the form of water clean-up bills. Others are captured in the costs of projects seeking to restore public goods, by increasing biodiversity for instance. Consumers 'pay' in other ways, too. Benbrook (2003) has made a detailed appraisal of the effect of pesticides on human health. His paper refers to a range of studies showing that almost all Americans consume pesticides on a daily basis, and that infants and babies in particular are much less able than adults to detoxify these pesticides.

Dunne & O'Connell (2003) trace the development of the Common Agricultural Policy over the last years of the past century and note in particular an ever-increasing preparedness to pay farmers for maintaining public goods. They go on to claim that, *'in the affluent EU society of the 21ˢᵗ century with an abundance of food, agriculture and food policy will be mainly driven by the economic and social goals of this new society. In this society the value placed on an extra unit of food production is declining and possibly negative, but the value placed on public goods consumed in food production is increasing. As a consequence, the mix of agricultural production and public goods that this society is prepared to support financially is changing rapidly'* (ibid: 7). Organic agriculture in particular benefits from direct payments made to farmers by European governments in order to protect public goods (Darnhofer & Vogl, 2003: 11).

However, the concept of public goods is contentious. This is because they are generally viewed as 'market goods' that can be paid for. The Countryside Commission (1993, cited in Thomas, E. 2003: 205) speaks of *'...<u>countryside products</u> which farmers and land managers may choose to provide in response to payment schemes, and which the agencies who run these schemes are effectively buying on behalf of the public.'* The difficulty with this approach is that attributing market values to widely different goods is a highly problematic exercise. O'Neill & Splash (2000: 10) argue that *'the environment is composed of objects of moral concern'*. These objects resist capture by a single monetary measure of value. The values attached to them are plural and not commensurable with one another. Furthermore, these objects exist in complex interrelation with one another. An ecosystem cannot be broken down into discrete units for the purposes of economic valuation (ibid: 9). The concept of goal integration is pivotal to organic policy initiatives. Bearing in mind the points just made we turn now to an examination of this concept.

The Concept of Goal Integration
Organic agriculture is seen as a particularly effective mechanism for the delivery of a range of public goods (Lampkin *et al.* 1999). EU regulation 2092/91 explicitly acknowledges the way multiple value strands can meet in organic agriculture. It states that organic agriculture may *'contribute towards the attainment of a better balance between supply of, and demand for, agricultural products, the protection of the environment and the conservation of the countryside'* (Schmidt, 2002). A

72

number of European countries are developing action plans to develop new, and integrate existing, policies conducive to the spread of organic agriculture. Society as a whole is seen to be benefit from the reduction in external costs that organic farming can deliver; this perception lies behind policies to support conversion (Lampkin *et al.* 1999: 44). The German government has set itself a target of having 20% of agricultural land under organic production by 2010 (Kuhnert *et al.* 2002; Künast, 2003; Nieberg, 2003).

Implicit and explicit in such endeavours is the recognition that the non-farming community - walkers, painters, poets, nature conservationists, people looking out of their windows – with all their different ways of seeing and building quality relationships with the world - have a stake in how farming is organised. The 'joined up thinking' so popular these days in many governments on one level seeks to make connections among diverse functional values like these. The German government has initiated a nationwide programme, the *Bundesprogramm Ökologischer Landbau*, to support activities along the entire organic value chain (Künast, 2003: 19-20; Yuseffi *et al.* 2003). A German educational institution, Fachhochschule Eberwald, is echoing this initiative through encouraging joined-up thinking among students. It has just introduced a new, and so far unique (in Germany) BSc degree, *Organic Farming and Marketing* that addresses the whole producer to consumer chain (www.fh-eberwald.de/oelbv).

Strangely enough though 'joined up thinking' runs the risk of obviating difference when it is operationally translated into 'goal integration'. Thomas. E. (2003: 203) defines goal integration as the *'integration of environmental, economic and social dimensions in such a way as to secure a simultaneous realisation of the goals of each in a single policy, programme or project intervention.'* He goes on to cite Barbier (1987, in ibid.) who suggests that sustainable development involves meeting *'simultaneously the biological system goals (genetic diversity, resilience, biological productivity), economic system goals (satisfaction of basic needs, enhancement of equity, increasing useful goods and services), and social system goals (cultural diversity, institutional sustainability, social justice, participation.'*

Goal integration appears to provide a definition of sustainable development that is remarkably close to definitions provided by proponents of a holistic vision in organic agriculture, like Wettasinha above. The Rural Advancement Foundation (RAFI) International say, *'We envision a food system that begins with stewardship of the land, which produces food with respect for the ecology of the field, the farm, the watershed, the region and the earth, that uses appropriate, non-violent technology and distributes its benefits fairly. Such a food system would be based upon agriculture that is respectful of the soil and the environment, harmoniously situated in the landscape, through livestock, crop and horticultural enterprises, creating living wage jobs'* (Henderson *et al.* 08/10/02: 5).

However, the language used by RAFI-International suggests that its writers hold a range of values that cannot be contained within the market paradigm. Trade-offs between values appear to be necessary. Social certification in organic agriculture

may affect overall profit levels for the farmer employing workers, or social certification may capture values important to producers that are, however alien to other stakeholders in the producer to consumer chain. Furthermore, some trade-offs may not be possible. Goods to which certain stakeholders attach value can be irredeemably damaged by the actions of other stakeholders.[31] Thomas, E. argues (2003: 211), *'The very concept of intrinsic value appertaining to a range of different entities, each with its own interests, defies their integration into a single set of goals ... A plurality of interests implies a plurality of goals, since not all interests are capable of being integrated together.'*

Concluding Comments

Part 3.1 aimed to show that the call for social certification in organic agriculture should be situated in the context of wider and richer debates about the kind of society people might want. Although the complexity and sophistication of the thinking in each of the areas touched upon can only be hinted at, the main purpose has been to show that there are likely to be profound conflicts at the level of values and about how to explicate them in the real world. Goal realisation is a strategy adopted by official bodies to try and capture the multiple values organic agriculture is seen as capable of expressing, but it necessarily fails because these values are fundamentally different to one another. The debate on values is continued throughout this thesis. For our current purposes we can take the idea from this discussion that standards for social certification might not necessarily harmonise with one another, or with other values important to proponents of organic agriculture. Part 3.2 outlines some of the issues facing social certification initiatives. Short case studies are presented.

3.2   Selected Key Issues Facing Social Certification in Organic Agriculture

The Global Commodity Chain

Chapter one introduced Gereffi's (1999) concept of global commodity chains. As a reminder, according to Gereffi the four key dimensions of global commodity chains are (i) the value-added sequence in the production and consumption of a product (ii) the geographical concentration, or dispersion of, production and marketing (iii) the power relations, or governance structure, determining how material, human, and financial resources are distributed within the chain and (iv) an institutional framework that identifies how local, national and international contexts influence activities within chains. Some initial reflections and comments on the four dimensions, as well as critiques of this way of conceptualising the chain, were also made in chapter one (Raynalds 2002; Rammohan & Sundaresan, 2003; Barrientos *et al.* 2003). Gereffi's global commodity chain is used here to structure further observations relevant to social certification in organic agriculture. We start with the second dimension. Gender examples are given throughout.

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31 Windfarms are a case in point. They are dividing rural communities across Britain. The government is supporting the greatest and fastest expansion of wind energy in the world in response to global warming, yet other stakeholders claim that wind energy is not green and is wrecking the countryside (see Vidal, G., 2004).

Gereffi's <u>second dimension</u> is the geographical concentration/ dispersion of production and marketing. Rammohan *et al.* (2003) argue that the specific characteristics of each segment of the chain depend on the society within which it is located. Jiggins (pers. comm. 10/03) comments that the main difficulty in avoiding the gendered biases embedded in social structures and institutional relations is that markets reward the <u>owners</u> of land, labour and capital. These tend to be men in most societies. Some of the key gender issues in both conventional and organic agriculture are (i) labour issues for women farmers and workers (ii) women's involvement in the market (iii) control over export crops (iv) identification of farming experts, and (v) food security. These are discussed here. Gender data for Madagascar on some of these issues is presented in chapter six.

With respect to the first issue, organic agriculture in particular can be very labour-intensive, involving as it does the application of specific techniques. Concerns are mounting regarding the ability of women to manage changes in (i) the content of farm work: the possibility of defining tasks, or developing and applying knowledge (ii) labour relations: relations of control over work and its conditions, including the type and amount of work (iii) working conditions: intensity, arduousness, health and safety, and (iv) terms of employment (Howard-Borjas, 1999: 11; see Jackson, C. 1997, for different ways of conceptualising and measuring effort). Kasente *et al.* (2000), in a study in Uganda on the organic export sector, found that whilst the labour of women smallholders can be central to the production of export crops, they often have little incentive to increase their labour because it is unpaid. Furthermore, since women are also responsible for household labour and food production, there may be little room for increasing the amount of labour time which they can put into export organic crop production without a decrease in the amount of time spent on domestic work or on food production. A study on organic farming in the European Union showed that labour requirements were on average 10-30% higher, and up to 160% higher for some crops, compared to the conventional sector (Offermann *et al.* 1999, in Howard & Jansen, 2003: 13). A Bolivian study (Charlier *et al.* 2000: 90-91) showed that women's workloads increased markedly following a switch to organic production methods, but that, at least in the short-term, renegotiation of the gender division of labour had not taken place. However, the authors contend, organic farming may induce men to stay in the community rather than seek work elsewhere.

The findings of Barrientos *et al.* (2003: 1515) with respect to their study of the global value chain in horticultural products from Africa, show that in Kenya, South Africa and Zambia women agricultural workers *'tend to be crowded into a narrow range of seasonal occupations characterised by long hours and few opportunities for meeting domestic responsibilities (due to insufficient childcare, social provision and maternity leave). Informal female employment is accompanied by job insecurity, risk and lack of employment or social protection, often with the poorest conditions of employment amongst horticultural workers.'* Men are concentrated in the fewer permanent jobs (ibid: 1514). Du Toit (2001), in his survey of the South African wine industry, makes similar observations.

The second issue is that of women's involvement in the market. It is often assumed that women are particularly interested in subsistence production for the domestic needs of the household. However in many economies women are self-evidently the main traders in informal markets and have substantial interests in processing crops for formal market sale (Farnworth & Jiggins, 2003). Rabary (pers. comm. 11/01), discussing her work with villagers in a mountain region of Madagascar, comments, *'Women were very interested in planting new cash crops ... They thought that the price for the crops they were currently growing was too low since everyone was offering them. In the household women and men discuss what to grow, but it is the women who consider the price element first'*.

At the same time the ability of women to respond to market incentives can be constrained, despite the efforts of many governments to restructure the agricultural economy towards expanded production of tradable crops through liberalizing markets and relative price changes. The Ugandan study just mentioned (Kasente *et al.* 2000), found that women faced gender-specific difficulties in accessing markets for organic produce and in accessing credit. Women also lacked information. These problems, according to the study's authors, arise out of women's unequal burden of domestic labour, and asymmetric power relations within the household. Women are generally excluded from a process of feedback between price incentives, increased production, increased revenue and yield enhancing measures. Researchers in Bolivia (Charlier *et al.* 2000: 59) made similar observations, noting that women farmers were less informed than men with respect to product pricing, agricultural techniques (animal health, modern technologies), peasant organisations and how to access credit. Charlier *et al.* attribute this state of affairs to the assumption by NGOs and other organisations that men will pass information on to their wives. However, in practice knowledge transfer is inadequate.

The third issue is that of women's control over export crops. Policy makers and other external actors often view export crops as primarily men's responsibility. Frequently, their understanding is that the product is controlled by a male household head. If the men receive payment from the purchaser/ exporter direct then women may lose out. The author's own research in Zimbabwe found that the policy of the Grain Marketing Board was to pay male heads of household twice a year. Women did not *necessarily* know the sum of money received by their male partners, rendering it difficult for some women to negotiate the household budget (Farnworth, 1996a, 1997). Sen (1990), in his work on 'co-operative conflicts', argues that though family members might cooperate to bring income into a household, we cannot assume that this income is divided according to the contribution of each person. Women in particular often lose out. They may of course develop cunning strategies to produce and market crops unbeknown to men, but of necessity such strategies are small-scale (Vijfhuizen, 1996, 2003; Farnworth, 1996a, 1997). To render them explicit, for example by seeking to identify and work with women producing cash crops, without careful consultation and planning has the potential to dis-empower women.

The fourth issue concerns how farming experts are defined and identified. Sometimes men are viewed as 'progressive' farmers and are thus targeted as

potential partners by marketing companies. However, bean research in Malawi and Rwanda pinpointed women farmers as the key producers of beans, as the custodians of bean seeds and seed selection, and as the most knowledgeable about the target crop and associated agro-ecosystems (Sperling *et al.* 1996, in Farnworth & Jiggins, 2003: 40). In Peru, only men were trained in the care of llamas by a producer organisation, though women were responsible for these animals (Charlier *et al.* 2000: 59). The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) realised that innovative women farmers were not being identified. It emerged that husbands or other male household members typically claimed innovations made by women. The use of male researchers by the IIM blocked contact with women farmers. The IIM changed its practices to enable women researchers to work in the field. As a result the proportion of documented women to men innovators rose to 20:80 (Patel, cited in Farnworth & Jiggins, 2003: 41).

The fifth issue is food security. Family food security is frequently part of women's responsibilities. Production for export, including organic production, may threaten women's ability to farm enough land for subsistence production. The Ugandan study referred to above shows that *'for the rural poor, survival depends on food self-sufficiency, and that a monetized life-style is foreign. In this situation, if smallholders are to diversify and specialize, they must be able to trust the markets'* (Kasente *et al.* 2000: 17). In buyer-driven chains the market is not always guaranteed. This point is discussed next.

Gereffi's third dimension involves examining the power relations, or governance structure, of a global commodity chain. These determine how material, human, and financial resources are distributed within the chain. Barrientos *et al.* (2003) explain that horticultural producer to consumer chains are characteristic of buyer-driven (rather than producer-driven) chains. In buyer-driven chains, *'large retailers or brand-name companies make key decisions about the structure and activities of actors in the chain without owning any manufacturing facilities themselves'* (ibid: 1512). Increasingly, buyers are dealing direct with producers rather than wholesalers in order to have more control over product sourcing and quality. Some of the ways in which buyer-driven chains can affect producers and workers in the fresh produce industry (not necessarily organic) are examined below.

First, supermarkets demand high cosmetic quality standards. This means that much produce is rejected, resulting in a large financial loss to the growers. This practice is environmentally wasteful. High cosmetic standards act as a disincentive to continue production for export (NRET, 2002, 2003). A Bolivian study showed that the demands of fair trade consumers in the North for 'quality' products undermined local preferences for particular colours and shapes – and by implication the survival of landraces (Charlier *et al.* 2000: 85). The need for homogenous products, to enable mixing into larger batches, is problematic when small producers farm widely varying plots of land (ibid: 89). Second, supermarkets sometimes pay late. This creates cash flow problems for exporters and growers. It is hard for them to pay out-growers on time. However out-growers need a steady flow of cash to pay for the inputs that will ensure quality and maintain sustainable farming systems (NRET, 2002, 2003). In Bolivia, some fair trade organisations

lack sufficient capital to pay producers in full upon delivery of produce. The farmers have to wait until the produce is sold, causing financial difficulties to families (Charlier *et al.* 2000: 88). Third, last minute orders, or changes to orders, force long working hours or result in wastage (NRET, 2002, 2003). Photograph 3.2 shows smallholders at Brickaville, one of the author's research sites, bringing cinnamon leaves for weighing. This is the first transaction in the commodity chain for essential oil of cinnamon. The essential oil is sold to buyers in South Africa, Europe and California.

Photograph 3.2 The First Transaction in the Commodity Chain for Essential Oil of Cinnamon

In Madagascar private companies seeking to export horticultural products complain that major purchasers in the North are simply unreliable. Major purchasers source globally. Even if they request a certain tonnage of products for the following year from a local private company, they do not necessarily turn up to buy the products when they have been harvested. Phaelflor is a private organic company with whom the author worked. It acts as a middleman between smallholders and large overseas purchasers. Even if its overseas trading partner's orders do not materialise, Phaelflor respects its commitments to the smallholders, given that they live in a high state of risk, and buys up what they have produced. This state of affairs is however very difficult to manage, given that Phaelflor is so small and is run on 'commercial' lines (Farnworth, 2002c). Dependence on the vagaries of the international market, reliance on just a few trading partners, and the ability of producers elsewhere to capture the market are risks faced by smallholders all over. In Bolivia, some producers are, in response, trying to develop a more diverse palette of products and to create a local market (Charlier *et al.* 2000: 86).

This is happening to a very limited extent in Madagascar, but processing facilities are few and the local market for organic produce remains very small.

Howard & Jansen (2003: 9), in their survey of organic holdings in Europe, observe that many small-scale agricultural enterprises use family labour in order to compete with larger-scale, more capital-intensive enterprises. In addition, many depend on off-farm employment or secondary farm-related enterprises. They suggest that the labour of women and children can be rendered invisible on such farms. They can lack a concomitant increase in their rewards, labour satisfaction or decision-making capabilities (ibid: 28). Brand (2002) points out the women in organic enterprises are often heavily involved in direct sales. This takes up much of their time. Larger organic farms can be industrial in character, lacking any elements of an 'organic vision'. Box 3.2 presents two case studies of organic farms in the United States. They indicate the effect buyer-driven chains <u>can</u> have on labour and on incomes in both the small-scale sector and on large farms. Retailers can switch from national to international suppliers easily. One result is that farm workers and farmers – both of whom are 'producers' – can become locked in struggle with one another. These observations may be transferable to Southern producers.

Box 3.2: The Effects of Buyer-driven Chains on Some Organic Producers in the United States

Phillips Mushroom Farm in eastern Pennsylvania is a large mushroom farm with around 400 year-round harvesters. It is mostly conventional but has a small organic division. The labour practices in the organic division are, however, no better than in other mushroom farms. Practices include unjust firings, high accident rates, and anti-union activity. The management has participated in legal battles to strip their workers of organizing rights, as well as pushing for an increased guest worker programme. This is a highly exploitative pro-employer immigration programme in the States. Lately Phillips has been firing older Mexican workers who have begun to earn more money due to seniority, and replacing them with contracted Cambodian workers who earn far less. This sort of pitting one ethnic group against another is common (Mandelbaum, pers. comm. 02/04)

A spokesperson for Whole Food Markets said that the definition of organic had nothing to do with labour issues. And most organic farmers remain unlikely to push the issue when retailers can just as easily buy cheaper overseas. *'Right now most of the farmers aren't getting the minimum wage either, because it's pretty lousy out there,'* says Brian Leahy, head of California Certified Organic Farmers. *'It's needed, but it's more than the [organic] movement can handle now.'* (Some labour problems arise) because organic farms do not use pesticides. Organic crops must be weeded far more often than crops treated with chemicals, and after California banned short-handled hoes as dangerous to workers' backs, some organic farmers sent labourers out with no tools at all, forcing them to hunch over for hours in the baking sun. Long hoes would allow workers to stand upright, but some

farmers believe these tools can damage crops (Roane, in Nation & World 04/22/02, example provided by Mandelbaum, pers. comm. 02/04).

It is possible, though, for producers to benefit from integration into buyer-led chains under certain conditions. A Latin American study showed that though some producers were shut out of the market due to their inability to comply with buyer demands for volume, continuity and quality, others benefited from technical and financial support. A large melon firm fixes the prices and shares the risk with clients in Europe. It offers a guaranteed minimum price to producers. Raspberry producers have begun selling direct to foreign supermarkets. This has enabled them to improve post-harvesting processes, including packaging and labelling, as well as to export new products (Guaipatin, 2002: 8).

So far we have been exploring some of the gender issues in organic agriculture and we have outlined some of the difficulties smallholders and workers can face in buyer-driven horticultural chains. The discussion has provided a good indication of the issues standards for social certification need to address. The opening pages of this chapter initiated a discussion on standards, regulations, certification and codes of conduct. We return to this now, reminding ourselves of one of the key questions: *Who are the standards for?* The sub-questions, with respect to farmers and workers, are:

- *Are standards only about gaining and maintaining access to overseas markets?*
- *Can standards be about improving quality of life? Or do they only hinder the endeavours of farmers and workers to create the world they seek?*
- *Should social standards have a 'development agenda' – or does this mean stepping beyond what they should be asked to do?*
- *Which farmers and workers benefit, in what ways and with what costs?*

Gereffi's fourth dimension helps us to explore these questions. It provides an institutional framework that identifies how local, national and international contexts influence activities within chains. Barrientos *et al.* (2003: 1513) consider that the changing nature of consumption patterns in the North has increased the importance of branding and product differentiation for retailers. Underlying this trend is increasing concern among consumers about the environmental and social conditions under which products are produced (ibid; Barham, 2002). Codes of conduct provide, at least in theory, a means of meeting the concerns of a range of stakeholders. Uttings (2002: 2) observes that codes of conduct created through multi-stakeholder negotiations address some major weakness of codes of conduct associated with corporate self-regulation. These include labour rights, the responsibilities of suppliers in chains controlled by transnational corporations, and the need for independent monitoring.

However, as discussion of Gereffi's second dimension above made evident, codes of conduct operate in complex and highly differentiated environments. Labour markets are configured by social constructions of caste, class and gender (Rammohan *et al.* 2003; Barrientos *et al.* 2003). A failure to find ways of dealing

80

with such complexity means that codes can be clumsy instruments. Here, some ways in which codes of conduct in action *can* negatively affect smallholders and workers are outlined. Following this, the gender pyramid developed by Barrientos *et al.* (2003) in order to assess the gender sensitivity of codes of conduct is presented. Comments on the North-South dialectic are also made.

For smallholders, a failure to comply with standards can mean losing access to key markets. However, the procedural effort needed to demonstrate compliance is very demanding. Smallholders need to provide evidence in the form of written documentation. Furthermore, they have to pay and prepare for multiple audits, and fill out multiple forms. This is difficult for producers who are illiterate and impoverished (NRET, 2002, 2003). In Madagascar documents pertaining to organic certification are in French, a language that almost no smallholders farmers speak or read. They are in the main illiterate in Malagasy also. However they are expected to maintain a diary in French about their organic farming practice (a requirement in fact tacitly overlooked by local representatives of the main certification agency currently working in Madagascar, ECOCERT). A source of deep concern to the Malagasy farmers is the necessity of signing documents. Their fear is that they might be signing away their land (Farnworth 2002c).[32] Another study shows that external certification agencies do not always operate in the same way. Quinoa produced by a Bolivian organisation received organic certification in 1997 from a French body, but not from a German one, meaning that it could not be sold as organic in the latter country (Charlier *et al.* 2000: 84).

With respect to standards governing employment conditions for workers, eliminating child labour can threaten family incomes. This is because children's income can help pay for basic household necessities. If children are not employed as farm labourers the danger is they may seek riskier work as prostitutes or hawking. Furthermore, the conditions of non-permanent workers are generally not covered by social codes since such codes usually focus on ensuring reasonable conditions for permanent workers (NRET, 2001, 2003; Barrientos *et al.* 2003; Zadek *et al.* 1998). However, in the horticultural industry the majority of workers are employed on casual or seasonal contracts (NRET, 2001, 2003). Du Toit's (2001) examination of the Ethical Trading Initiative's (ETI) Base Code in action leads him to conclude that it does not address the most pressing issues faced by horticultural workers in the South African wine industry, namely the shedding of permanent positions in favour of casual and outsourced labour, two thirds of whom are women. He contends that there is a danger that the ETI, by reducing the issues to ethical sourcing, enables retailers to avoid addressing the wider ways in which they create inequitable power relations in trade and agro-food networks between North and South.

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32 Some of these problems are dealt with by organisations working with producers in Madagascar. Phaelflor, a commercial company, covers the cost of organic certification (500$), as does VOARISOA, an NGO. VOARISOA ask for repayment in terms of products or by requiring that organic smallholders use their new knowledge to train further farmers (von Hildebrand, pers. comm. 2001).

Research carried out by IDS (2003) leads them to frame three conclusions. First, global labour standards have helped many horticultural workers through better working conditions, and improved labour conditions. But there is no evidence that standards bring about an improvement in incomes. Violations, such as the sexual harassment of women workers, or the lax enforcement of stipulations on working hours, continue despite the presence of standards. Secondly, workers in smaller firms, subcontracting units and informal economy are the most likely to be squeezed out by the imposition of standards. Thirdly, professional auditing of standards often involves a 'tick box' approach. This is sometimes carried out with minimum consultation with workers or local stakeholders. They can thus fail to genuinely address working conditions, argues Bendell (2001). Utting's (2002) survey of fourteen codes of conduct leads him to conclude that many need to be improved. Notwithstanding their multi-stakeholder character, he argues that some codes of conduct have marginalized a range of actors, particularly those from the South. Worker participation in monitoring and verification has been insufficient. The scaling up of codes of conduct has proved problematic (see Dillier, 1999, Blowfield, 1999, and Burns & Blowfield, 1999, for similar remarks).

Barrientos *et al.* (2003) have developed a 'gender pyramid' to examine the gender sensitivity of codes of conduct. The pyramid is divided into three interlinked levels: formal employment issues (segment A); employment-related issues (segment B) and the wider socio-economic context that affects an individual's ability to access particular types of employment (segment C). Barrientos *et al.* then scrutinise a wide number of codes of conduct. In their conclusion they state that although codes of conduct have arisen as a result of the pressure from civil society to ameliorate poor working conditions, they *'form part of a governance structure systems within global value chains that itself encourages the use of informal workers'.* They argue that with respect to the gender economy, which is predicted upon a division of labour between productive and reproductive work, *'women's primary responsibility for reproductive work constrains their access to formal paid employment ... It also conditions their specific gender needs as workers ... They face intensified gender risks, such as a lack of reproductive rights, maternity leave and childcare, and do not have adequate job security or employment protection to cope with those risks'* (ibid: 1523). Given this, it is disappointing to note that the final draft of the Soil Association's *'Fairly Traded Organic Standards Pilot'* (Soil Association, 16/07/03) makes no explicit reference to gender (apart from urging equal pay for equal work and condemning sexual harassment). The issues just outlined by Barrientos *et al.* (and many other researchers such as Charlier *et al.* 2000, on the uneasy division between productive and reproductive work for women, and the heavy workloads involved) are not addressed.

The North-South dialectic is integral to the problematic. Du Toit (2001: 2) maintains that codes of conduct, which he terms *'technologies of ethics'*, are globalising institutional strategies. Compliance has to be audited across transnational chains. This, he argues, *'places powerful constraints on the contents of codes'.* The North, he continues, is the more powerful player. It is able to define *'acceptable international norms'.* These are *'intimately linked to their public*

credibility and defensibility in retailers home markets'. Second, he suggests that *modes of local articulation* of these international standards have to be found. Although this creates important terrains of negotiation and contestation, Du Toit contends that 'consultation' is still controlled from the North (see Blowfield, M. 1999, for similar arguments).

To summarise the discussion thus far: we have outlined the complex nature of the terrain in which codes of conduct operate. The author has argued that a failure to acknowledge the way gender and other socio-economic constructs already prefigure the landscape in different sections of the chain means that codes of conduct (and their operationalisation for the purposes of certification) do not necessarily enhance the well-being of producers. They are, at times, too clumsy an instrument. However, codes of conduct remain a promising mechanism for enhancing well-being. We now examine five progressive multi-stakeholder initiatives addressing some of the difficulties just outlined. They are either led by the organic movement, or have a direct bearing upon it.

Examples of Multi-stakeholder Initiatives
The analysis here explores how stakeholders are being involved at different stages in the process, from formulating standards to monitoring adherence to these standards. A number of points are drawn out which are relevant for the author's own work. The initiatives presented here are:
1. The ISEAL Alliance Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards
2. The Ghanaian Code of Practice for Pineapple Producers and Exporters
3. The IFOAM Code of Conduct for Organic Traders
4. The International Federation of Alternative Trade (IFAT) Code of Practice
5. Internal Control Systems in Organic Agriculture

Initiative 1: Developing a Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards
The ISEAL (International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling) Alliance is a formal collaboration of the leading international standard-setting and conformity assessment organisations focused on social and environmental issues. The purpose of the ISEAL Alliance is to promote communication and collaboration amongst members who develop and accredit social and environmental standards. To do this, it develops capacity building tools to strengthen members' activities and by promoting voluntary social and environmental certification as a legitimate policy instrument in global trade and development.

The *Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards* is an initiative that aims to set benchmarks to assist standard-setting organizations, such as IFOAM, to improve how they develop social and environmental standards. In order to develop the code, the ISEAL Alliance engaged in a broad-based consultative process with standard-setting organizations and other stakeholders. The aim was to define broadly accepted best practices in voluntary international

standard-setting procedures. The process incorporated research and discussion elements in order to guide the voluntary standard-setting community toward consensus on guidance for credible standard-setting practices. The steps in this process included (i) Initial research to document standard-setting practices of a wide range of standard-setting organizations (ii) Analysis of existing compatibility with international guidance documents (iii) Email discussion to arrive at a list of criteria that are important for effective standard setting and elaborate some of the complex issues (iv) Position papers on each of the more complex elements of standard-setting (v) Public technical workshop to seek consensus on best practices (vi) Draft guidance document on standard-setting procedures for review, and (vii) Development of a process to assess compliance with the draft guidance (ISEAL Alliance, 2003a). The *Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards* can be viewed on www.isealalliance.org.

Initiative 2: The Ghanaian Code of Practice for Pineapple Producers and Exporters

DFID, the Department for International Development in the UK, funded a research project in Ghana that was trying to introduce an ethical (rather than an explicitly Fairtrade) dimension into the horticultural export industry. It had become apparent to the project holders that codes developed by European (and particularly UK) supermarkets did not address the key issues in the South, and actually had the potential to cause more harm than good. A research team from the Natural Resources Institute (NRI) of the University of Greenwich in the UK and Agro Eco from the Netherlands began work with Ghanaian pineapple exporters and growers in 1998. The team consulted workers, smallholders, large growers and exporters over this period, identifying their needs and priorities in relation to social, environmental and food safety issues in the pineapple industry. These priorities were drafted by the research team into an initial code of practice. In November 1999, the Working Committee on Ethical Trade was established. Committee members included representatives from smallholders, growers and exporters, as well as representatives from the Horticulture Association of Ghana (HAG), Sea Freight Pineapple Exporters of Ghana (SPEG), the Ghana Export Promotion Council (GEPC) and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA). Over a period of several months the Committee met weekly to review and refine the initial draft code.

The underlying rationale for the Code is to ensure that the Ghanaian export horticulture industry meets the food safety, social and environmental requirements of the European market, while at the same time protecting the interests of the Ghanaian industry. A specific aim is to ensure that the following five principles are upheld (1) To ensure the health and safety of the consumer (2) To protect the environment (3) To ensure the well-being of workers (4) To ensure the well-being of out-growers and smallholders (5) To ensure the well-being of exporters. In addition, NRI and Agro Eco began work on an internal control system that could be used by the industry. The purpose was to lend the Ghanaian Code credibility in the European market (Ghana Working Committee on Ethical Trade *et al.* 2000). Gallett (pers. comm. 08/03) adds, *'The project was then overtaken by events, namely a headlong rush into EUREP GAP certification. Once EUREP GAP*

became a dominant force in Europe, producers realised that the best way of safeguarding their market share was to comply with it. Other, more ethical considerations, were pushed aside.' Further work on the code is planned to make sure that it covers important areas addressed by EUREP GAP.

Initiative 3: The IFOAM Code of Conduct for Organic Traders
Traders play a key role in mediating between the demands of consumers for socially and environmentally responsible products, and the abilities of producers to supply products that meet these demands. Given that IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) has now developed some basic social standards, the organisation is working on a *'Code of Conduct for Organic Traders'* that seeks to address social issues within the supply chain at a level where significant benefits can be achieved. It is considered by IFOAM to be a step in the process towards a comprehensive social agenda for organic agriculture. The code will be a guideline to demonstrate adherence to the standards. It will be based on ILO conventions, the UN Charter of Rights for Children and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Various drafts of the code have been circulated to organic traders for comment, and special meetings have been held with other stakeholders.

One point flagged up for discussion is the nature of supply chain relationships and the strength of enforcement of the code. The relationship can be defined in three ways. One way would be to aim towards continual improvement. Traders would work with suppliers to improve the social and environmental conditions in order to comply with the code. A second way would be to state that observance with the code is a prerequisite for doing business. A third way would involve differentiating between current suppliers and new suppliers. For current suppliers, the focus would be on continual improvement and working with the suppliers to meet the requirements of the code. For new suppliers, observance would be a prerequisite.

The *Code of Conduct for Organic Traders* would primarily be a code addressing the behaviour and activities of organic trading companies. However the activities of trading companies are intricately connected to the activities of suppliers and subcontractors. Thus the elements of the code that address labour conditions would be observed at both the trader and supplier level. With respect to the relationship between the organic trader and supplier, the authors of the draft code suggest that negotiations take into account the costs of observing the code by the supplier/subcontractor. The financial responsibility to ensure compliance with the code would be a shared responsibility. The authors also suggest that the implementation of the requirements in the code should allow for special consideration in the case of small-scale producers and companies. Such special consideration should not remove responsibility on the part of the company to meet the requirements of the code; instead, it could provide a framework of continual improvement to work towards observance of the code.

Three different monitoring mechanisms have been put forward. These are (i) Self-monitoring (ii) Self-monitoring plus reporting structures in place, and (iii)

Third party verification. Once the code has been agreed, a body will be created to oversee its implementation (Courville & Rijninks, 2000).

Initiative 4: Self Assessment of Standards by the International Federation of Alternative Trade

The International Federation of Alternative Trade (IFAT) has adopted a *Code of Practice for Fair Trade*. This provides the basic philosophy and core principles of the Fair Trade movement. A working 'hands on' version of the code has been developed called *The Standards* (Ronchi, 2002). The aim of *The Standards* is to produce overarching international standards and indicators, and a monitoring system for all fair trading organisations. There are eight standards: Reaching the Poor, Transparency and Accountability, Capacity Building, Promoting Fair Trade, Improving the Situation of Women, Working Conditions, the Environment and Payment of a Fair Price. IFAT members monitor their adherence to *The Standards* every two years. To help them do so, IFAT has developed self-assessment guidelines for stakeholders across the producer to consumer chain (producers, exporters, importers, Northern ATOs - Alternative Trading Organisations - and retailers). Self-assessment is complemented by mutual review and external verification. The self-assessment process involves five stages: (i) Organisational review of standards and corresponding indicators (ii) Stakeholder discussion (iii) Report on meeting with producers, information on consumers (iv) Completion of a table detailing targets remaining to be reached (v) Sharing information learnt with producers or consumers.

For the purposes of the stakeholder discussion (stage two), stakeholders are defined as board members, manager, staff and volunteers, buyers and producer group representatives and consumers. The specific blend of stakeholders depends on the member (Northern ATO, Southern exporters *etc*.). A range of questions is suggested by IFAT for use in the stakeholder meeting, though members are free to devise their own. They include (i) How do you know that the price you pay for a product ensures a fair wage for the producers (whether formally or informally organised)? What do you take into account when you negotiate a price with a producer? (ii) In what ways is your commitment to improving the livelihoods and well being of marginalized producers demonstrated? (iii) What capacity building support have you provided to producers in the last year (either directly or through Southern ATOs)?

In stage three, producers are asked questions by exporters and producer organisations in a specially convened meeting. Sample questions are (i) Ask producers if they know who their buyers are. Then, ask what do they understand by 'fair trade'? (ii) What does someone worse off than themselves look like? Ask them to describe that person. In this way we can gain an understanding of what they consider is an improvement in life (iii) You might ask them what they consider a fair price to be. This may not be what you expect or even realistic, but it is a part (and probably a very interesting part!) of the story we are telling through self-assessment (iv) Ask them about any skill/capacity building activities and how they found them (summarised from Ronchi, 2002).

86

Initiative 5: Internal Control Systems

According to EU Council Regulation 2092/91, each organic farm has to be inspected annually. In the South where many resource-poor farmers cultivate small plots of land this system is difficult and expensive. To overcome the difficulties of external certification of large numbers of small farms, group certification based on an internal control system (ICS) is an option, with designated staff responsible for monitoring. This can take the form of a 100% regime of inspection and record keeping by growers' groups, with random sampling by the certification body and re-inspection of a certain number. Some EU nations consider that re-inspection should be near 100%, others much lower. To facilitate the inspection process of these groups, IFOAM has developed a set of guidelines and definitions for the implementation of ICS inspection and certification (Pyburn, 2004). An accredited inspection body then need only inspect a proportion of the group to grant a certificate, provided that 100% internal control can be guaranteed (Harris *et al.* 2001: 34).

Pyburn adds (pers.comm. 09/03) *'in the organic internal control system, the groups develop their own criteria, but they have to include the external criteria so as to maintain organic integrity. What is interesting and challenging, I think, is to combine producer values and learning with international/certification body standards and regulations. This way the internal control system facilitates market access by meeting the external criteria, but the producer also 'owns' their own criteria - the internal control system reflects their own goals.'* The SASA Project (under the auspices of the ISEAL Alliance) undertook a study of two organic ICS in Thailand and Burkina Faso. The findings show that are conflicts of interest centring on the dual inspection/ extension role that are integral to the ICS. Documentation is a heavy burden. The SASA Project also examined the potential of the organic ICS for social certification, and for development purposes beyond this. Discussion is on-going (Pyburn, 2004).

Comment on the Five Initiatives

These five initiatives share considerable common ground. They have all engaged in wide-ranging consultative exercises throughout the process of developing, implementing and monitoring codes of conduct (or practice) with a range of stakeholders. The initiative by the ISEAL Alliance aims to enable and promote good practice in this area. Special activities have been designed by some organisations, for example IFAT and the research group working on the Ghanaian code, in order to ensure producer participation. Codes which address particular segments of the producer to consumer chain, like the IFOAM *'Code of Conduct for Organic Traders'* recognise the interconnected nature of the chain. They thus address the activities of other stakeholders that have a direct bearing upon the central target of the code.

Surveys of what already exists with respect to codes of conduct have been carried out. The principles, standards, indicators and means of verifying adherence to the code have been agreed through consensus-building activities. There is usually room for locally relevant definitions. The idea of continual improvement is embodied in all the initiatives.

A range of monitoring tools is proposed in order to verify adherence to a particular code. These range from self-assessment through to self-assessment with reporting, mutual reviews and external verification (certification). IFAT uses all of these. It is unclear which option(s) the IFOAM *'Code of Conduct for Organic Traders'* will finally adopt. The ICS is trying to resolve tensions focused on its use as a control mechanism for the purposes of meeting EU Regulations, and its use as a locally-owned development and learning tool.

It is clear that the one of the factors spurring the initiatives is the clear lack of fit between the needs of Southern producers with the demands of European codes of conduct and regulations. Nevertheless, initiatives in the South that try to achieve local relevance struggle to win recognition on the international scene. The Ghanaian code of practice and ICS are still striving for full acceptance by the EU. They are working to incorporate externally defined criteria with locally defined criteria.

A central feature of all of these approaches is the way a flow of meaning from broadly defined principles to nitty-gritty indicators is envisaged. That is, meaning cascades downwards, becoming ever more precise and liable to capture. Verification provides a means of assessing the effectiveness of this capture.

Summary of Discussion Held in Parts 3.1 and 3.2
In order to draw the strands of the discussion together before proceeding to Part 3.3, we bring together the main points made. In Part 3.1 the adequacy of organic certification as a real world mechanism to create and capture an understanding of organic farming acceptable to a range of stakeholders was examined. It was argued that organic certification strongly embodies particular values and ways of seeing of the world. Lack of fit with other perceptions and values is not only evident, it is also inevitable. It was then suggested that attempts to 'use' organic farming to both embody, and meet, a selection of socially desirable goals is likewise a complex and fraught process. This is because some of the values lying behind the goals are incommensurable with one another. Since organic agriculture is being increasingly conceptualised as a social good, it is attracting more and more stakeholders who are prone to note a discrepancy between the hard but holistic system goals it has come to expound in the real world, and the soft system goals many people consciously or unconsciously espouse.

Part 3.2 used Gereffi's concept of the global commodity chain in order to structure a presentation of some concrete issues that codes of conduct (and their operationalisation as social certification initiatives) need to address. Gender as an analytical thread was pursued. These questions helped to provide ways in which to think about these issues:
- *Are standards only about gaining and maintaining access to overseas markets?*
- *Can standards be about improving quality of life? Or do they only hinder the endeavours of farmers and workers to create the world they seek?*

- *Should social standards have a 'development agenda' – or does this mean stepping beyond what they should be asked to do?*
- *Which farmers and workers benefit, in what ways and with what costs?*

It became evident that codes of conduct are potentially able to address the concerns of a wide range of stakeholders, particularly when codes of conduct are formulated by multi-stakeholder initiatives. However it would seem that the standards built into codes of conduct are irrelevant to some sectors of the workforce. In buyer-driven chains, they can serve the interests of retailers more than workers. With respect to gender, codes of conduct need to find ways of accommodating and supporting women's productive role in the context of the reproductive role. They also need to prioritise ways of supporting a highly marginalized, and often feminised, workforce. It is essential to recognise that smallholders operate in risk-laden environments, and that participation in organic production for export may be one survival strategy among many employed simultaneously. The North-South dialectic needs to be addressed. Above all, wider and deeper participation at the formulation stage by the targets of these codes of conduct is essential. All this is needed if codes of conduct are to be means to enable producers to create the world they seek. In sum, codes of conduct are active players capable of deepening or alleviating inequality. They are highly political power-laden instruments operating in an 'unbalanced world'. The discussion concluded with a brief review of five on-going initiatives relevant to the organic sector. It was argued that they share a particular feature. Meanings (values) are cascaded downwards, shifting from a relatively abstract level to a concrete one.

3.3 Creating a Quality Relationship to the World through Social Certification

The author now proposes quite a different approach to tackling the domain of social certification. To frame the discussion it is useful to return to the questions posed in chapter one:

- *Can, and should, social certification standards be shaped in part by producer values? That is, can the development of standards play a role in enabling producers to create the world they seek?*
- *Should social certification have a remit to contribute to 'development', in the sense of leading to growth (however defined) in the community? Or should it be simply about measuring adherence to particular standards?*

To start answering these questions the author puts forward the contention that social certification initiatives, on the evidence supplied by our analysis of codes of conduct and organic certification, are unlikely to enable the 'maximum selves' of producers to properly flourish. This is because such initiatives do not acknowledge the <u>felt and experienced</u> world of the producer. However, such an acknowledgment is necessary if social certification in organic agriculture is to be 'meaningful' to the producers. To enable this to happen the process of developing social standards could be reversed. Rather than having a system whereby abstract ideas take form as

they cascade downwards, it should be possible to capture meaning on the ground and then to fix these in the form of principles, standards and indicators. This means staying with the particular, the specific and the local. It also means working with aspiration. The benefits of this approach are:

1. Producers would not be expected to work within the constraints of a social certification framework generated and legitimised by processes and stakeholders working within a different domain of existence.
2. The quality of life toolkit that the author puts forward as a mechanism for the purposes of social certification would enable producers to articulate what is important to them, in their specific niche of time and space. Given that a quality of life approach recognises change and development in what constitutes a good quality of life, application of this approach as part of social certification would enable progress to be measured over time.
3. The use of, and the findings from, the quality of life toolkit would demonstrate to ethical consumers in the North that they are contributing to a process that enables producers to achieve the world they seek (as opposed to one valorised by others).

We need to remind ourselves of the ideas of Ho on entanglement at this juncture, since it enables us to start developing the concept of a felt and experienced world. Ho (2000) argues that being one's maximum self is a pre-condition to successful 'entanglement' with others. It can be hypothesised that Southern organic producers cannot be 'maximally themselves' due to the constraining effects of particular real world structures. These include the top-down nature of the global producer to consumer commodity chain in horticulture and the character of North-South relations, which have been bent through history to disadvantage the South. The question is then about how the agency of producers can be built upon to enable expression of 'maximum selves'. Embedded-ness is key.

Pretty (2002: 2), commenting on the meaning of environment, or landscape, says that *'agricultural and food systems, with their associated nature and landscapes, are a common heritage and thus … a form of common property. They are shaped by us all, and so in some way are part of us all.'* With these words Pretty seems to suggest that we are profoundly permeable rather than bounded and defined by our corporeal state. Through the properties of the collective cultural mind such systems are not only perceived, they interact with and become part of us. How does this happen? In the early chapters of his book, Pretty traces historical and cultural trajectories to show the reader that across time and space people have not only created deeply local landscapes, they have created stories linking themselves to their special worlds – their lifescapes. [33]

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33 Nazarea *et al.* (1998) distinguish lifescapes and landscapes as follows: Landscape = a mosaic of interacting

components with both commonalities and differences (SANREM CRSP 1991 in ibid); Lifescape = the imposition of

human intents, purposes and viewpoints over environmental features, consisting of patterns of production, consumption

and distribution (UPWARD 1991 in ibid).

These lifescapes are both spatial and temporal in quality. One of the author's informants in Madagascar, Tangisy (a plantation worker), said that a discussion never dies, it continues from generation to generation. His connection with landscape was strongly felt: *'When farmers chop down and burn the trees[34] how do they know where they are?'* In similar fashion, Williamson's diaries and stories (1948) capture the strange blend of intense wildlife observation, local belief systems and great poverty in the nature-bound world of pre-First World War villagers in Devon. Landscape is therefore not just a place, but also '*a behaviour, a human relationship to space'* (Kaeser, 2003: 18). Hepworth, a sculptor, remembers how much she was influenced by her childhood excursions, *'All my early memories are of forms and shapes and textures ... the hills were sculptures; the road defined their form. Above all, there was the sensation of moving physically over the contours of fullness and concavities, through hollows and over peaks – feeling, touching, seeing, through mind and hand and eye. This sensation has never left me. I, the sculptor, am the landscape. I am the form and I am the hollow, the thrust and the contour.'* Thomas, E. (2003: 208) adds however that *'the centre of our valuing and the conferment of meaning is not deep within us in some secure and private recess. It arises from our interpretative framework, which, itself, arises from immersion in a pre-existing and communally forged way of seeing the world.'*

Cooper (1992: 167) suggests that the environment should be thought of as *a 'field of significance'*. By this he means that it is not something a *'creature is merely in, but something that it has.'* This kind of environment is <u>known</u>, whether by animal or human, in a practical, unreflective way, and in a way absolutely particular to that being. He continues by saying that, firstly, each creature has an intentional relation with the environment, and secondly, that the items within the environment *'signify or point to one another, thereby forming a network of meanings'*. We can draw from this the idea that the felt world is the important world. It is the *active* engagement with, and knowing of, the environment (understood here as natural and human) that it is important. It is the loss of that practical, unreflective familiarity which provides impetus to the discussion. Indeed, it is surely this 'unknowing knowing' that has largely been destroyed by the industrial agricultural complex, which Pretty decries as *'single-coded, inflexible and monocultural ... In treating food simply as a commodity, it threatens to extinguish associated communities and cultures altogether'* (Pretty, 2002: 3; see Ikerd, 2003 for similar remarks). It is useful to have an idea of what these communities were like. Keast (2004), now 80 years old, remembers how in her minute Cornish village[35] there used to be two grocery shops, a cobbler cum barber, a reading room with newspapers, two butchers, a post office, a blacksmith, a carpenter and a school. Milk and cream was sold on various farms. The last shop closed on the death of its proprietor in 2004, and now only the carpenter, again a family business, remains.

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34 As part of 'tavy' – slash and burn: these days often all vegetation is removed.

35 Mount probably had a population of around 100 people in the first half of the twentieth century.

We can now try to combine the idea of a felt and experienced world and the concept of maximum selves with a new idea, that of interrelation. This is the second part of the agenda: inter-relating actors along the production to consumption chain in the interest of creating quality relationships between producers and consumers.

Inter-relation

Pretty (2002), in his book *'Agri-culture: reconnecting people, land and nature'*, argues that *'re-connection'* is needed between all components of the system in order to radically reform it in ways necessary for human survival. The author of this thesis asserts however that this is a weak term since it suggests that coherently bounded bodies (social and natural systems) that have swung out of orbit can be brought back into alignment. Yet it can be plausibly argued that all ecosystems, to which social systems are supposed to reconnect, have already been significantly affected by human activity on earth. They are, to a greater or lesser degree, 'out of joint'. The unknown, but certainly vast, number of species lost in recent historical time is one poignant testament to this. Rolston (1992: 6) testifies that extinction *'kills birth as well as death ... A shut down of the life stream is the most destructive event possible'*. Extinction also shuts down distinctive ways of knowing the world. The tiger world is not the same as the elephant world, or the beetle world.

Turner *et al.* (1990) believe that systemic global climate change, through greenhouse gas emissions for instance, is changing the conditions of the system itself. They contend that stress is so considerable that sudden and irreversible shifts to different levels of operation are likely (Borza & Jamieson, 1991, make similar points). Thomas, C. *et al.* (2004) estimate, using three different climate change scenarios, that between 15-37% of all species will become *'committed to future extinction'* in the next fifty years to 2050. That is, they may not all become extinct within fifty years, but the climatic conditions – and corresponding habitat loss – prevailing during this time will ensure their extinction within decades.

A different slant on the reconnection debate is to take as a starting point the view that people do not see things in cohesive ways. Although people try to *'bring forth coherences of explanation that appear to make it appear as though we are revealing a coherent world'* (Maturana, pers. comm. 09/04), it can nevertheless be argued that ways of seeing can be terribly tangled within one person. Other ways continue to exist, intermingle and evolve. It is in this messy space that human relationships to the real world are created. For this reason the term *'interrelation'* seems better able to capture the mutual, highly dynamic, shaping process between world and observer. It emphasises that we do not remain ourselves when in contact with the 'other', rather, that we are changed by this encounter. If this change – an emergent property of the encounter - is consciously recognised then it may be possible to capture the conditions necessary for qualitatively different (not only new) relationships to survive.

92

3.4 Conclusion

Global producer to consumer commodity chains act in an already configured world. Markets reward the owners of capital, land and labour. The particular ways in which gender and other attributes are constructed, particularly at the producer end of the chain, can be exploited like fault-lines by more powerful actors. The strength of buyers in the horticultural chain means that room for manoeuvre by workers and smallholders is constrained. Codes of conduct have entered this scene. They promise to restore and strengthen agency to producers. Yet codes of conduct are also actors in an imperfect world. They operate within structures of disadvantage. The degree to which they can, and do, challenge these structures, is pivotal.

Social certification in organic agriculture is one way of creating, capturing and fixing meaning. The process, from developing standards through to verification, offers a means by which producers can become more empowered and start moving towards attaining their maximum selves. It is important, though, to consider the nature of the 'entanglement' between producer and consumer that is implicitly envisaged by typical social certification initiatives. *Are producers meant to be means to an end (providing a range of ethically satisfactory goods to consumers). Or are they to be considered as ends in themselves? What are the theoretical and practical implications for social certification of construing producers as both means and ends?*

In response to questions like these the author has started to outline a tentative answer.
   1. If producers are considered ends in themselves, then organic agriculture has to have a development agenda. If standards for social certification are to treat producers as ends in themselves, then producers have to be engaged in the conceptualising, creating and fixing of these standards. This process might help producers move towards achieving their 'maximum selves' on their own terms. The rules and regulations that they will need to follow have to derive from values they recognise and feel, as well as understand, to be right.
   2. However, a central implication of being involved in a global producer to consumer commodity chain is that producers have to accept that they are also means to other people's ends. They need to become *'entangled'* with other stakeholders in the world of ideas and in practice. They might need to accept that the priorities of other stakeholders place certain constraints on their own priorities, for instance.

The provisional answer provided here is fleshed out in the following chapters. Chapter four explores issues central to conceptualising and measuring quality of life. The author's quality of life toolkit is presented in chapter five. Chapter six presents fieldwork data from Madagascar. Chapter seven interprets the relevance of these findings for the purposes of social certification in organic agriculture.

Chapter Four: Quality of Life - A Conceptual Overview

Some villages have no sea bream
Some no flowers
But all see tonight's moon.[36]

This chapter situates the author's work on 'quality of life' in Madagascar within a conceptual framework. The focus is upon exploring the problematic concept of quality of life, and on how to render this concept 'usable' for the purposes of action-orientated measurement. It asks: *How can we produce descriptions of the world that enable a degree of planned change?* Chapter five draws upon the discussion conducted here in order to formulate 'nine principles' that can inform the construction of a quality of life toolkit.

The debates around quality of life are rich and complex. In this chapter the author refers to major actors in the field of quality of life studies, as well as to lesser-known but innovative thinkers. Some writers cited here locate their work in the areas of gender analysis or ethics, as to opposed to making explicit reference to quality of life, but their insights have proved valuable to the author's analysis.

The chapter is divided into three parts. In Part 4.1 three themes are discussed. These are (i) defining quality of life, (ii) the quest for universality and (iii) subjective and objective approaches. An appreciation of the historical development of quality of life studies is extremely useful. However this cannot be tackled here. Two superb accounts are provided by Noll (2002a, 2002b) and Rapley (2003).

Part 4.2 focuses upon the 'functionings and capabilities' approach to understanding the concept of quality of life. Its theoretical justification will be examined before Amartya Sen's model is presented. Three significant contributions to his model are then outlined before this part concludes with two critiques of the functionings and capabilities approach. These critiques are potentially significant to consumers and producers in the organic chain.

4.1   Key Themes in Quality of Life Studies

Defining Quality of Life
There is no generally accepted definition of the term 'quality of life'. Veenhoven (2000) suggests that this is because meanings tend to be confined to their own discourse communities, because there is a marked divergence between scientific definitions and lay usage, and because the inclusiveness of the term makes it difficult to operationalise.

Watson (2000, in Rapley, 2003: 26) outlines the problematic relationship between lay usage and scientific attempts to control the meaning of such terms as

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36 Ihara Saikaku (1641-93).

follows: *'Ordinary or lay usages of technical terms, and the mundane conceptions of society they routinely convey ... operate in the background through the shaping or moulding of the professional usage ... The ordinary language usage of such terms cannot be wished away or redefined by fiat ... [we] cannot command a word to mean whatever [we] want it to mean.'*

Rapley (2003: 27) points out that not only are definitions of what constitutes quality of life abundant, these definitions are also impossible to reconcile with one another. Cummins (1998: 37) agrees that 'no grand theory' of quality of life yet exists. To create one *'is clearly such a vast enterprise that ... it is really not worth even considering at this stage.'* However, he continues, *'this is no way detracts from the excitement of the chase, in trying to contribute understanding of the component parts which, at some future time, may form part of a grand whole.'* Cummins makes the important assertion that quality of life does not need to be fully defined before it can be intelligently measured, *'I do not agree with this at all. Quality of life ... does not need to be fully comprehended before we can investigate it empirically. The term is useful ... as an indicator of researcher intention, that is, that they believe their research bears upon the construct.'* That is to say, insights derived from practice can contribute to the development of theoretical constructs of quality of life.

Nevertheless, intellectual rigour with respect to conceptualising quality of life should be sought by researchers. The author contended in chapter two that inadequate conceptualisation can result in a substantial lack of coherence between theory and practice, in an 'anything goes' kind of approach which might offer perhaps some thought-provoking images, yet leave loose ends and snippets which cannot be adequately gathered into a tapestry of meaning. Cobb (2000: 6) stresses that although common sense might appear to be an adequate basis for devising quality of life indicators, *'common sense or conventional wisdom does not truly avoid theorising. It merely treats theory unconsciously and takes for granted the fundamental questions that need to be addressed. As a result, the implicit theories on which common sense is based rely on untested and often conflicting assumptions. When people depend on conventional wisdom as a guide, they tend to presuppose ... that the values of their subculture are universal, when they are not.'*

It is useful to highlight some of the conceptual fault lines of the quality of life debate. The aim is, first, to demonstrate the knotty and controversial nature of quality of life studies and secondly, to situate the functionings and capabilities approach discussed in Part 4.2. It is important to note that the author is deliberately leaving aside some significant discussions, including (i) individual versus population-level constructs, (ii) the distinction between means and ends/ input and output in quality of life studies, and (iii) newer approaches to measuring quality of life such as life satisfaction, descriptive social indicators and the community

indicators approach (these debates are handled by Cummins, 1998; Noll, 2002a,b and Rapley, 2003).[37]

The Quest for Universality

Ideas about what constitute the good life lie behind all attempts to operationalise it in the real world. Cobb (2000: 6) suggests that it was only in the past century that people became *'bold enough to imagine'* that they would be able resolve the debate, running over thousands of years in all cultures, of what constitutes the good life through arriving at a common agreement on its basic components.

This recent striving for universality should not, the author of this thesis contends, be dismissed as cultural arrogance or naivety. Although the practical effects of such striving often result in the hateful subsuming of other ways of knowing, it is necessary to ask: *Is this an inevitable consequence of the attempt to universality? Or are we confusing the messenger (imperialists, experts) with the message?*

Further, we can ask: *Is it not possible to arrive at some shared understanding that quality of life is fundamentally concerned with that which binds all people – the fact of being human?* That is, we could all agree to treasure the human condition - however difficult it is to grasp conceptually and to define - on the basis that it has intrinsic value. By intrinsic value we mean that an object is valuable in itself and is understood to have a good of its own. This value is independent of the interests, uses and needs of anyone else, and is found and recognised rather than given (Des Jardins, 2001: 133). From here might flow both a judgement and an act. With respect to the judgement: the human condition is of itself whole and cannot be broken down into constituent parts. With respect to the act, we might celebrate this shared understanding, whilst disagreeing on how to enable full expression of the human condition in the real world.

Of course, this is where all difficulties start. Kavka (1978: 190-91) seeks to pre-empt these, in a way, by establishing a common platform. To do this he puts forward the fundamental moral claim that all people are equal and are worthy of equal consideration. '*When we say that all men are equal, we are asserting that they are alike in certain important respects. Clearly, people are <u>not</u> alike, but are widely diverse in their cultural practices, political ideologies, religious beliefs, life-styles and values. [However] people <u>are</u> alike in significant ways ... their vulnerability to physical and mental suffering and to death, their capacity for enjoyment (including the enjoyment of complex activities and interactions with others), their self-consciousness, their capacity for long-range planning and action, and their capacity for co-operation and identification with others. These general features ... are what make human beings capable of entering into and benefiting from moral relations with others; they are ... the valid basis for the claim that all men are equal.'*

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37 This is because the author was not aware of these debates when constructing the quality of life toolkit for use in Madagascar. Furthermore, these debates would bring further complexity to these pages, but not enough new insight in the present instance.

96

Kavka (ibid) goes on to make two crucial points. First, there cannot be degrees of membership in the human moral community. Secondly, membership cannot be dependent upon possessing any particular substantive concept of the good life. Let us agree with Kavka theoretically. How do his two key points fare in the real world and what do their successes and failures imply for quality of life research?

We begin with the first point: there cannot be degrees of membership in the human moral community. Clearly this is flouted continuously – the idea of *'life unworthy of life'* (Rapley, 2003: xiii), or of *'life less worthy of care'* still clings across the world. One example is given in Box 4.1.

Box 4.1: Masculine Bias in Sex Ratios – an expression of life less worthy of care?

Where equal nutrition and healthcare are present women live, on average, slightly longer than men. Nussbaum (2000: 5) takes as a baseline sex ratio 102.2 women to 100 men.[38] This is the current sex ratio in sub-Saharan Africa. She deliberately avoids taking as a starting point European and North American sex ratios (about 105:100 female to male) as, she argues, it is inappropriate to compare developing and developed countries. Nussbaum then asks the question: *How many more women would there be if country C had the same sex ratio?* Her rough index gives the figure of 2.4 million more women in Southeast Asia, in Latin America 4.4, in North Africa 2.4, in China 44, in Bangladesh 3.7, in India 36.7, in Pakistan 5.2 and in West Asia 4.3 million more women.

Harriss & Watson (1987) strongly stress that the reasons for the intensification of the masculinity of the sex ratio over time in India are highly complex. Nonetheless, they insist that the social forces of discrimination, oppressive practices and exclusion in the subcontinent, when women are at their most physiologically vulnerable, play a role in reducing female survival rates. Jackson, C. (1998) argues that food deprivation, combined with myriad other forms of neglect, such as unequal health care, helps to explain the absence of girls, or their stunting, in particular communities. Kynch (1994, in ibid) found that in a northern Indian village mortality rates for 0-5 year old boys declined from 22% - 5% between 1958 and 1994, whereas for girls in the same age bracket mortality declined from 19% to 17%. Jackson (1998) stresses, however, that we must acknowledge women's agency in sometimes subverting ideals of feminine self-denial behaviour (and thus ideals of whose life is 'worthy of care') through snacking, eating during food preparation, and consuming left-overs.

Box 4.1 demonstrates that the consequences of the belief that women's lives are less valuable or worthy of care seriously affect the claim to life of some women and girls. Another example of a life considered less valuable, or less worthy of

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38 Sex ratio: the number of women and men, relative to each other, in a given place.

care, is indicated by the state-permitted selective abortion of foetuses identified as having congenital syndromes such as Down's Syndrome in some countries. Rapley (2003: 107-9) presents several studies which show that some people with Down's Syndrome *'live creative, rewarding and fairly independent lives ... much more social research ... is required, if prenatal screening policies and counselling are to be evidence-based'* (Alderson, 1992, in ibid: 109). It would seem that the belief that the holders of particular kinds of life cannot aspire to, or consciously enjoy, the kind of quality of life deemed acceptable by the wider community renders them - in the eyes of that community - ineligible for life.

These two examples demonstrate that Kavka's first injunction frequently is not applied in practice. It should nevertheless be appreciated that the reasons for bias involve deep-seated values, giving rise to discussions that are far from facile.

Kavka's second point, that membership of the human community should not rest upon people sharing substantive concepts of the good life, is clearly a difficult one. If substantive concepts are not shared within a society, let alone between societies, then what is our benchmark for measuring quality of life, and for deciding what constitutes an acceptable quality of life (or an unacceptable one)? Johansson (2001: 8) says that this question haunted the Swedish Low Income Committee for quite a time during the 1960s. Was a concrete specification of the good life necessary in order to structure what should be included in *'welfare or well-being in a wider sense'*? In the end the Committee agreed to direct and restrict information to those areas where the political process could affect living conditions through social policies. Separate systems of indicators were developed for each sector (such as housing or health).

The examples in Box 4.2 below show, however, that quality of life research can go astray when it is assumed (perhaps unconsciously by the researchers) that substantive concepts of the good life are shared. Such assumptions have significant consequences for the type of information elicited. First, there might be swathes of silence in areas that might really matter to the subjects of the study. Secondly, there could be strong implications for effective policy development. This could result in a substantial lack of fit between the ways policy makers seek to create the conditions for a particular version of the good life, and the way the subjects of those policies actually want to live their lives.

Box 4.2: Judging the Value of a Life

Rapley (2003: 58) points out that *a priori* assumptions inherent in most function-based understandings of health-related quality of life actually render many researchers blind to significant happiness in the lives of children with cancer. For instance, the involvement of children in social activity is assumed to be positive. Those children too ill to visit friends or go to school thus score low on the quality of life scale. However *'at least some adolescents and their families view the time at home positively, as an opportunity to be together, (to) focus on friendships that endure'* (Haase *et al.* 1999, in Rapley, ibid).

98

Rapley goes on to discuss many other cases. One study of Aborigines with diabetes, for instance, showed that when they spoke of trying to stabilise their blood sugar levels, they wove their reflections into discourses about their individual and community struggles to maintain a sense of coherence, control and stability in their lives in the present and future (Thompson and Gifford in ibid). Rapley (2003: 60) concludes that interventions designed to further the public good, the quality of services, or the well-being of individuals … may *'serve to promote the misallocation of services and/or to actually damage or put at risk the connectedness of persons to important social structures.'*

The point being made here is not that quality of life cannot be rooted in a universal concept, but rather that attempts to measure it using *apparently universal* lower level concepts of the constituents of the good life can be deeply flawed. Cummins (1998: 13) argues that quality of life must be defined in the same way for everyone, but that special measuring instruments have to be devised to cater for, for instance, people with an intellectual disability. The ComQol-15 scale that he has been working on shows that the subjective quality of life of such people *'is no different to that of the general population.'*

These examples suggest that findings based on erroneous claims by researchers to a universal conception of the good life can be harmful when utilised by powerful actors like policy makers. More profoundly, those claims to universality that infringe upon other conceptions of the good life are, without doubt, <u>failed claims</u> because they fail to acknowledge the bias in what they conceive to be the constituents of the good life.

It is important to embed diversity and difference in substantive concepts of the good life. Although we might agree that universality is our 'quality of life foundation stone', its expression in the world – as a set of quality of life values – *must* be highly diverse <u>and</u> contested. The challenge thus becomes less an acknowledgement of this point, than of the struggle to devise an adequate analytical framework capable of taking complexity on board and operationalising it. An important dichotomy in quality of life research, namely the dichotomy between subjective and objective approaches to measuring quality of life, bears heavily upon the construction of such a framework.

Subjective and Objective Approaches to Capturing Quality of Life
First, a general point: all measures of quality of life are proxies, that is, they are indirect measures of the true condition we are seeking to judge (Cobb, 2000: 5). Cobb says that *'We want to be able to talk about the elements of the good society in a clear manner, and yet every effort to describe what we regard as important will be slightly out of focus and never quite subsumed by any description.'* The debate on the validity of objective and subjective indicators of quality of life should be situated against Cobb's observation, because this debate seems to

revolve around contested understandings of how to arrive at 'what is more true' – an understanding for which clarity is surely essential.

What are objective and subjective indicators? Objective social indicators, says Noll (2002a: 173), are statistics that represent social facts independent of personal valuations, whereas subjective social indicators are measures of individual perceptions and evaluations of social conditions. Table 4.1 provides examples of some commonly used indicators in each category.

Table 4.1: Typical Objective and Subjective Indicators

Objective Indicators	Subjective Indicators
Life expectancy	Sense of community
Crime rate	Material possessions
Unemployment rate	Sense of safety
Gross domestic product	Happiness
Poverty rate	Satisfaction with 'life as a whole'
School attendance	Relationships with family
Working hours per week	Job satisfaction
Perinatal mortality rate	Perception of distributional justice

Source: Adapted from Rapley (2003: 11)

Historically, says Clark (2002), the objective/ subjective dichotomy can be traced back to the ancient Greek world. The state of having an objectively desirable human life – *eudaimonia* - was a central concern of much ancient philosophy and can be contrasted with both the philosophies of the Stoics and Epicureans, *'who saw the good in the achievement of mental tranquillity; and from modern concepts of utility, which are concerned with the achievement of a subjectively satisfactory life'* (Clark, 2002: 830). In modern times, the objective/subjective dichotomy underpins two radically divergent approaches to capturing quality of life and the rationale for so doing, the so-called Scandinavian and American approaches (Rapley, 2003).

The Scandinavian Approach
Erikson (1993: 77- 8) argues that what he calls *'descriptive indicators'* (in strong preference to the term *'objective'*) are fundamental. Pointing out that welfare research has been historically coupled to societal planning in Scandinavia, he says, *'I find it quite essential that descriptive indicators should be used […] goals for planning should be set up in terms of factual conditions, not people's satisfaction with these conditions.'* The Scandinavian approach nevertheless accepts that some needs elude definition and capture in the marketplace (such as the need for close relationships with other people). Welfare is understood to be more than purely economic in character. According to Johansson (2001: 11) *'welfare can be defined as the individual's command over resources in terms of money, possessions, health, education, family, social and civic rights etc., <u>with which the individual can live his life</u>.'*

Erikson (1993: 78) considers that the true place for people to express their opinions and desires is through the democratic political process. Johansson (2001:

18) makes the Scandinavian position even clearer when he says, '*Social reporting is not needed [...] in order to obtain answers to the questions on how it ought to be and what should be done.*' This, he argues, should come about through discussions among citizens. The crucial difference between answering these questions, and the question on 'how it is' (a factual description of society as it is at present) is that thinking about 'how it is' does not depend on discussion, or voting, or on the opinion of experts. Johansson concludes that '*social reporting based on comprehensive living conditions surveys [are] citizen reports on social and economic change*' (ibid: 17).

The American Approach

The modern 'American' approach, in contrast, suggests that welfare '*is perceived by individual citizens and can be judged best by them*' (Noll, 2000, cited in Rapley, 2003: 11). From this flows the argument that both subjective and objective states should be measured. In Germany for instance, Noll says, individual quality of life is defined as '*good living conditions that go together with positive subjective well-being*' (ibid: 23).

Cummins (1988: 9-10) maintains that if we agree that quality of life has both subjective and objective components that should be measured, the objective axis will incorporate norm-referenced measures of objective well-being[39], whereas the subjective axis will incorporate measures of perceived well-being. The latter axis will include those measures that cannot be measured accurately by anyone other than the person actually experiencing that state. Box 4.3 presents Cummin's influential definition of quality of life, which has been operationalised in the Comprehensive Quality of Life Scale.

Box 4.3: Cummin's Definition of Quality of Life

Quality of life is both subjective and objective, each axis being the aggregate of seven domains: material well-being, health, productivity, intimacy, safety, community, and emotional well-being. Objective domains comprise culturally relevant measures of objective well-being. Subjective domains comprise domain satisfaction weighted by their importance to the individual.

What do the indicators look like in practice? In the Comprehensive Quality of Life Scale, three items measure objective health and two items measure

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39 Well-being is another term that eludes simple definition, since definitions will depend on the theoretical starting point of the person attempting to define the term. A briefing by the New Economics Foundation (nef, 30/7/03) suggests that many factors are involved in the creation of the societal conditions within which people live their lives (such as the development of human and social capital, improving environmental conditions through sustainable development approaches, global footprinting and the like). The outcome of these conditions is '*how people experience the quality of their lives – we call this their sense of well-being.*' Sen ([1994] 1998: 298-300) distinguishes carefully between well-being and the standard of living. Sadness, say, at the fate of another does not affect the living standard, but it does affect well-being. Camfield (2003) provides a useful discussion of the term.

subjective health. For the latter, two questions are asked *'How important to you is your health?'* and *'How satisfied are you with your health?'*

Cummins accepts, and welcomes, the fact that these domains are open to empirical challenge since this might lead to new understandings of quality of life (ibid: 15). However, Cummins is clearly attempting to provide a universal basis from which to proceed, even if the terms themselves have no universally agreed meaning.

The discussion hitherto suggests that the objective and subjective positions in quality of life research are logically coherent and well bounded, with each demanding a different set of instruments for their effective measurement. However, this conclusion is problematic. A number of queries arise when measurement is actually attempted:

- How objective is objective?
- Is it possible to access someone's interior world? How can we (the researchers) find out what is important to them (the respondents)?[40]
- There is often a wide divergence between objective and subjective accounts of quality of life. Why is this and what does this mean for policy?

How objective is objective? Noll (2000, in Rapley, 2003: 10) points out that *'using objective indicators starts from the assumption that living conditions can be judged as favourable or unfavourable by comparing real conditions with normative criteria like values or goals.'* Noll argues though that a political consensus is needed about the dimensions relevant for welfare, a consensus about what bad and good conditions actually are and, finally, that there needs to be consensus about the direction in which society should move. However, consensus on all these points is far from easy to achieve (ibid).

Cobb (2000: 20) tackles the apparent neutrality of the objective approach, asserting that the *'ideological character of official indicators [in the USA] is buried under a mountain of denial.'* He goes on to state that *'even the driest and most technical statistical work has a value orientation, represented by the choice of categories'.* Cobb supports his contention by tracing the development of social statistics from the 1830s, in particular noting how their ideological character was (often unconsciously) hidden (ibid: 18-20). These two points are echoed by Rapley (2003: 66) who argues that apparently objective scores ... *'are not only products of a complex set of interactions (between researchers and participants) but also of a prior set of value judgements about what to count as quality of life.'*

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40 The corollary to this question is: How can they (the respondents) find out what is important to us (the researcher)?

This question is not addressed in the thesis.

Furthermore, Johansson (2002: 2) feels that *'variation in individual preferences make objective measurement theoretically impossible,'* a point Cobb (2000: 5) enriches with his observation that *'survey responses and observed responses both emanate from subjective attitudes, and they are both made objective to an outsider (the interviewer or observer) ... it is more useful to compare "stated values" (based on surveys) and "revealed values" (based on observations of what people do). Both types of evidence can be understood as simultaneously objective and subjective.'*

We now turn to the second question: *Is it possible to access someone's interior world? How can we find out what is important to them?* Camfield (2003: 8) suggests that it is important to measure locally valued experiential states as well as *'more prosaic needs for material, relational, and cultural resources'.* This is far from simple. In order to do this, Cobb (2000: 5-6) points out that the researcher needs to presuppose that *'people are conscious of and able to articulate nuances of feeling, that transitory feelings represent durable conditions, that feelings are equivalent to values, that happiness or other reported feelings fully account for valued conditions, and that feelings can be quantified.'* He concludes that the process by which individuals infer their feelings is hidden from the researcher. The indirect character of any indicator persists.

The crucial point being made here is that people do not have a direct line to truth about themselves that they may deliberately choose (or not choose) to reveal. Rather, they are engaged in making sense of their world through the use of metaphor. That is, they cannot have a perfect knowledge of themselves that they might choose to disclose, or not. The question for the researcher therefore is not: how close to the 'truth worlds' of the researched can one hope to get (as in holding up a mirror to gain an accurate reflection), but rather to appreciate that one will be dealt a hand of *constructed realities*. This is the important point at which questions about the agency of the researched, the effectiveness of their constructions for living in the world and so forth might start to be asked.

Moreover, if we are seeking to establish what is important to people then it is necessary to appreciate that their preferences do not arise from a perfect state of knowledge[41]. Goodin (1983: 4) says that *'when stating their preferences, people always act at least partially in ignorance. Even if they 'knew' all the relevant facts intellectually, they would often be psychologically incapable of conjuring up the sort of vivid image of what it would be like to experience that state of affairs which is necessary to form a proper preference for it ... Furthermore people's preferences do not predate experience, but rather grow out of it.'* Nussbaum

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41 The debate around preference satisfaction is complex and vast. The points being made here relate directly to the current discussion. It is important not to simplify or distort the wider debate around cost-benefit analysis and utilitarianism through over-hasty discussion. See Nussbaum (2001: 111-166) for a discussion of the distinction between actions and preferences, a critique of welfarist approaches to understanding preferences, and defining 'true preferences'. She also discusses preference deformation and conditioned satisfaction. Alkire (2003) discusses the issue of preferences and choices in relation to the capabilities approach.

(2000: 14) agrees, pointing out that women often have no preference for economic independence, say, before they learn about ways in which other women similar to them pursue such independence. Alkire (2003: 20) argues that for these reasons an expansion in choice *per se* is meaningless. Likewise, says Nussbaum (2000: 14), many men have a strong preference that their wives do all the housework and childcare, as well as working outside the home. In her view, therefore, *'a preference-based approach typically will reinforce inequalities, especially those … entrenched enough to have crept into people's very desires'*. O'Neill (1993) makes a similar point, arguing that preference satisfaction does not have an easy relationship to human well-being since the latter may be influenced by a person's ideals or their psychological state. Furthermore, in his opinion values are more important than preferences and wants, and thus should be given greater weight.

We now explore the third question: *There is often a wide divergence between objective and subjective accounts of quality of life. Why is this and what does it mean for policy?* Box 4.4 summarises three quality of life studies that bring different data and insights to bear on this question. Importantly, it should be noted that they are not harmonious with one another in the conclusions they reach.

Box 4.4: Divergence Between Subjective and Objective Accounts of Quality of Life: three case studies

Nazarea *et al.* (1998) carried out a quality of life study in the Manupali watershed in the Philippines. Interest centred on understanding how people along the watershed 'see', decide and act upon the various components of the environment. The research team took as a starting point the view that *'indicators as currently applied to development projects are essentially externally-imposed criteria on local circumstance, opportunities and constraints'* (Frank, in ibid: 159) and that there is an *'assumption that beneficiaries of development projects invariably operate in a more mechanistic mode than the rest of us and somehow behave following a … more or less predictable, stimulus response curve'* (Nazarea *et al.* 1998: 159). Such biases result in indicators, the authors assert, which are technocratic/ academic; urban/ mainstream; production/ economic/ ecological-orientated; time frozen/ short term, and uni-dimensional/ aggregated. Development projects tend to <u>universalise</u> and thereby <u>decontextualise</u> parameters (*e.g.* income, potable water supply, civil liberties, loss of biodiversity).

The quality of life approach taken by the research team aimed therefore to measure understanding of the local population's own internally defined standards, many of which are qualitative, non-monetary, non-material, long-term and which *'often define what makes life, society, and the environment worthwhile'* (ibid: 160). According to Rhoades (1997, in ibid) such standards may include aesthetic, moral, emotional, religious, cosmological, and even inter-generational or 'bequeath' considerations. These can all have a direct bearing on resource management and sustainable agriculture. The findings of the study showed that long-term, intangible, subtle considerations

dominated the population's perception of natural resources, with *'beauty of environment'* and a *'sense of interconnectedness'* coming out strongly. There were substantial differences in perception and weighting of criteria according to gender, age and ethnicity (Nazarea *et al.*: 163). The authors conclude that the quantitative, operational indicators of sustainability and quality of life indicators used in development planning are not co-terminus with the indicators that the local community, or sectors thereof, consider relevant and significant (ibid: 166).

Eckermann (2000), in her study of quality of life indices in the Australian health sector, explores the policy and planning implications of her findings. She discusses the seemingly puzzling discrepancies between objective conditions of well-being and subjective perceptions, highlighting the fact that in Australia eating disorders, high rates of suicide and heroin abuse among people having all the objective conditions of 'good health' point to the reality of people feeling disaffected with way the world is organised (ibid: 29). Quality of life indicators, she concludes, need to reflect more accurately people's lived experience. This can only be achieved by abandoning universalistic assumptions. Specifically, Eckermann pleads:

- The need to establish theoretical and methodological purchase in deconstructing concepts of what is 'normal', and in establishing what counts as 'other'.
- That *malestream* methodologies and *malestream* data do not necessarily reflect either women's objective or subjective experience of health, illness and disability.
- That the androgenizing 'total population' tendencies in health promotion research and in traditional epidemiology have been inappropriate for women and also for particular population groups. In Australia aborigines live in 'third world' conditions in a 'developed' nation.

A study by Richmond *et al.* (2000) correlates with the Nazarea *et al.* (1998) study in that correspondence between socio-economic status and subjective perception was found. The researchers carried out a study of rural non-farm residents in Ontario. Their aim was to understand this population's perceived quality of life in comparative terms (with respect to neighbours *etc*), and absolute terms (for themselves personally). The study attempted to establish indicators of satisfaction with personal life, community, environment, and quality of life and then to correlate these indicators with 'objective indicators' such as age, income and length of residency. Hypotheses were developed postulating that such objective indicators would have a bearing on subjective perceptions of quality of life. The researchers found that there was indeed a strong correlation with respect to income, length of residency, children at home and also, in declining order of importance, gender, age, marital status, amount of land surrounding the home, and education.

Box 4.4, and the preceding discussion, highlight some of the difficulties of delineating what counts as 'objective' (and the political nature of this enterprise) and of capturing 'subjectivity'. A further insight is provided by Firouz (2002: 288) in her novel about love and politics in pre-1979 Iran. *'We have two countries; the one they have designed for us, and the one we've got. They have movers and shakers and social engineers with policies and blueprints and facades, but without that flash of revelation at what we are from the inside out. They don't see it, that great force of a man's private history.'*

We are speaking here not merely of inadequate conceptualisation, say, of objective domains or of presumed universality in substantive notions of the good life. Rather, Firouz's point leads us to consider that two separate worlds might exist, each running along independently and each, possibly, seeming to do quite well according to the measuring devices applied. In other words, there is a lack of dynamic correspondence between objective and subjective appraisals of the 'same' situations. It is at this point that we might start to be troubled by the 'Scandinavian' insistence that *'we try to assess the individual's level of living in a way which makes it as little influenced as possible by the individual's evaluation of his own situation'* (Erikson, 1993: 77).

Erikson (ibid) argues that many fictional 'futuristic hells' rest on the assumption that the planning and executive organs of the state act to influence people's happiness and it is this that he so desperately wants to avoid – hence the emphasis on the political domain as being the proper domain for citizen feedback. However, a number of objections to this might be made. One is that many citizens do not in fact make use of the political process to provide feedback on the state's efforts to provide a reasonable material quality of life to its citizens. Although non-participation might be construed as feedback it quite clearly fails to provide sensible feedback on the state's efforts to provide an adequate quality of life *per se.* Second, the political process has a particular and highly complex dynamic of its own. Extraordinarily complex feedback loops oscillate between citizens and different political parties, weaving their own fictions. The link to basic quality of life data is extremely tenuous and far from 'objective'. Third, a state's insistence on improvement in the objective conditions of quality of life obscures a whole range of costs that should be associated with this enterprise. The extraction of resources from elsewhere in the world in order to support a particular standard of living, other 'externalities' such as pollution, or indeed the choices people make (such as to discontinue farming in many parts of Sweden, see Vergunst, 2003[42]) literally cannot be comprehended by the objective standard of living approach. Yet such costs have a powerful bearing, at least in the long term, upon its success.

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42 Vergunst (2003) in her doctoral thesis, examines this phenomenon through applying the concept of 'liveability'. She argues that the *'practical act of living in the countryside has become cumbersome'*, and that Swedish farmers have failed to compete effectively on the European level following Sweden's entry into the EU in 1995, and its corresponding observance of the Common Agricultural Policy (ibid: 7-8).

In other words, the locking of subjective appraisals of objective living conditions into a different analytical domain enables direct feedback on those conditions to be avoided. It also allows the challenge posed by the often substantial discrepancies between 'subjective' and 'objective' findings to be side-stepped. The author maintains that it is preferable to understand such discrepancies as a form of valuable feedback, enriching if puzzling. Coherence is not necessarily a virtue, as was discussed in chapter two. The tightness of *correspondence*, or the lack of it, between so-called objective and subjective indicators should be a locus of enquiry.

Another significant approach to understanding quality of life is to view it as a process, rather than merely as a state. Lane (1996, in Noll, 2002: 177) maintains that *'the subjective elements of a high quality of life comprise: (1) a sense of well-being and (2) personal development, learning, growth ... The objective element is conceived as quality of conditions representing opportunities for exploitation by the person living a life.'* This definition accords well with the functionings and capabilities approach discussed in Part 4.2 below because these approaches embrace a notion of human development which includes not only *'having'* but also *'doing'* and *'being'* (Cobb, 2000: 13). Cobb (ibid: 10) argues that *'a society that enables its citizens to aspire to greatness, to develop virtues and loyalties, to become skilled and artistic, and to attain wisdom is far better than a society that merely provides the means to attain desires.'*

4.2 The Functionings and Capabilities Approach

Part 4.2 highlights, first, what is special about the functionings and capabilities approach to assessing quality of life. Second, Sen's model and its rationale are discussed. Third, three complementary theoretical contributions to his model are presented and finally, two critiques of the functionings and capabilities approach are outlined. We commence with a glossary of the terms (Sen [1994] 1998: 294):

- Functionings are personal features. They tell us what a person <u>is</u> doing or achieving.
- The capability to function reflects what a person <u>can</u> do or <u>can</u> achieve.

People as Ends in Themselves: the meaning of development according to the functionings and capabilities approach
Clark (2002) describes the yawning gap between widespread interest in defining and implementing development strategies from the 1970s-1990s and the lack of agreement about what 'development' might actually mean and consist of. The focus at the time tended to be upon a narrowly defined set of human needs. Over the last two decades of the twentieth century, however, Amartya Sen began to construct a comprehensive framework for conceptualising human well-being and development. Rather than focusing on people as the <u>means of development</u>, he emphasised that people must be seen as <u>ends in themselves</u>. In this way *'Sen has revolutionalised the way in which social science understands the concept of development'* (ibid: 832).

Box 4.5 below highlights the difference it makes when one views people as ends in themselves rather than as means to another goal. The *categorical imperative* provides the conceptual framework for this differentiation. It was developed by Kant, an eighteenth century German philosopher. Kant formulates the categorical imperative in three different ways[43]:

1. (Universal Law formulation) Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.
2. (Humanity or End in Itself formulation) Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means but always at the same time as an end.
3. (Kingdom of Ends formulation) All maxims as proceeding from our own [hypothetical] making of law ought to harmonise with a possible kingdom of ends.

Fundamental to an understanding of the significance of the categorical imperative is the assertion that people are free and rational agents. Also fundamental are the words *'everyone and always'*. Kant was trying to establish that maxims are only moral if they can be universalised. One cannot set a different standard for oneself than for the rest of humanity. To do so is immoral. It would not be fair (Farnworth, R. pers. comm. 08/04). The example in Box 4.5, provided by Kant himself, demonstrates the importance of securing agreement between people when embarking on an action. It also establishes that people have the duty to *'treat other people with respect (and places primary value) on the rights of equality and freedom'* (Des Jardins, 2002: 30). Sen's thoughts emphasise the necessity of viewing the kinds of lives people live as conceptually distinct from the worlds in which they might be embedded.

Box 4.5: Key Concept: People as ends in themselves – Kant and Sen

Kant (1948, cited in Wye College/Open University T861 B, 1997: 8) said: 'Now I say that man … exists as an end in himself, not merely as a means for arbitrary use by this or that will: he must in all his actions, whether they are directed towards himself or to other rational beings, always be viewed at the same time as an end … Rational beings are called persons because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves … (and is an object of reverence).

'The man who has a mind to make a false promise to others will see at once that he is intending to make use of another man merely as a means to an end he does not share. For the man whom I seek to use for my own purposes by such a promise cannot possibly agree with my way of behaving to him, and so cannot himself share the end of the action.'

Sen (1990, in Clark, 2002: 832) asserts, 'Human beings are the agents, beneficiaries and adjudicators of progress, but they also happen to be –

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43 Taken from www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Categorical_Imperative: 20/08/04.

directly or indirectly – the primary means of all production. The dual role of human beings provides a rich ground for confusion of ends and means in planning and policy-making. Indeed it can – and frequently does – take the form of focusing on production and prosperity as the essence of progress, treating people as the means through which the productive process is brought about (rather than seeing the lives of people as ultimate concerns and treating production and prosperity merely as means to those lives).'

Notwithstanding these remarks development policies are still frequently shaped with a view to ends that reach way beyond the individuals they target. Nowhere is this more clear than in the realm of education, where it has become standard to argue that investment in girls' education provides a range of societal benefits, including lower rates of childbirth (Markandya, 2001, cites studies making this link), and thus should be promoted for this reason alone. The Federal Minister for Education in Pakistan, Zubaida Jalal, for instance, maintains that *'investment in girls' education is particularly important because it has so many positive impacts on family health, well-being and economic development'* (cited by Rizvi, 2003: 18). The question of whether education might, or might not, enrich the lives of the girls' concerned, perhaps - but not necessarily - in the ways outlined by Cobb (2000: 10) above '*to aspire to greatness ... to become skilled and artistic, and to attain wisdom'* is not addressed.

Nussbaum & Sen (1993: 1-2) stray far from *'mechanical formula'* in their attempt to *'really know'* about what they term *'the thriving'*[44] of people. They argue that knowing about income levels, say, in a given population is not enough. It is necessary also to know about the nature and quality of education as well as its availability, the nature of the work people undertake, about gender relations, and about the political and legal freedoms citizens enjoy. *'We need, perhaps above all, to know how people are enabled by the society in question to imagine, to wonder ... [to know] ... that the human being ... is an 'unfathomable mystery', not to be completely 'set forth in tabular form' ... To think well, we seem to need a kind of rich and complex description of what people are able to be and to do'*. To measure and assess human lives, Nussbaum & Sen continue, people need to face this problem *'with wonder ... with a sense, that is, of the profound complexity of assessing a human life.'* In the author's view, a point that emerges strongly from this analysis is that whilst researchers must attempt to capture the complexity of human lives in their work, they have to recognise that they will ultimately fail in this endeavour. As Cobb (2000) noted above, indicators are only proxies. An ancient cave painting of a buffalo, however beautiful and rich, is not the buffalo, or as the artist Magritte – celebrating the idea that art is about perception - titled one

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44 The concept of thriving or flourishing relates to Aristotle's belief that all living things act towards some distinctive goal or purpose (telos) in a purposeful fashion. A living thing flourishes through development of its inherent capacities and faculties. Each living thing has a good of its own because each life has direction, a goal, a telos (Des Jardins, 2001: 141, and Wye College/Open University T861 A Part One, 1997: 14). Maturana (pers. comm. 09/04) dismisses this understanding, however. He says that *'Biological processes do not occur with an intentionality. All we can do is reflect upon our living.'*

of his pictures (1929) of a pipe, *'Ceci n'est pas une pipe'* (this is not a pipe). Photograph 4.1 captures an element of the idea being conveyed by Nussbaum and Sen: despite the intentness of our looking we cannot fully capture that which we are looking at in all its dimensions. The researcher's task is, therefore, to create an approximation that seems to ring in some way true to people's felt and experienced world.

Photograph 4.1 Perception: Cathy and Laura in Kafue, Zambia
Source: Roger Farnworth

As mentioned, the functionings and capabilities approach was specifically developed to tackle and redefine the concept of development. In order to do this, poverty as a concept also needs to be 're-understood'. Fusco (2003: 4), an adherent of the functionings and capabilities approach, argues that *'the complex reality of poverty makes it difficult to capture … via either a single uni- or multidimensional definition or measure. We argue that each different existing definition and measure takes into account a peculiar facet of poverty. Each definition contains part of the truth, but no single definition holds the truth in defining poverty.'* Fusco (ibid) goes on to suggest that *'uni-dimensional measures only plead for transfer mechanisms that alleviate poverty in the short term, whereas multidimensional measures permit us to recommend structural socio-economic policies that could break the inter-generational reproduction mechanism of poverty in the long term.'* The multi-dimensional nature of the functionings and capabilities approach thus makes it particularly attractive to those who acknowledge complexity in the real world. Furthermore, its *'radically different way to conceive the meaning of well-being'* (Martinetti, 2000, in ibid: 7) distinguishes it from other multi-dimensional approaches.

110

The special nature of the functionings and capabilities approach lies in its desire to create a rich picture of how people live – and wish to live - their lives. The foregrounding of the human in this approach is especially noteworthy because, though context is far from ignored, people in all their specificity are seen as the proper focus of attention. Constructs like modernity or progress lose their *raison d'être*; they are merely potential means to enabling the 'flourishing' of each person.

The Functionings and Capabilities Approach: Sen's model
Sen explicitly sets his model against the utility model, offering a number of critiques of the latter. For instance, Sen argues that the utility approach needs to demonstrate that possession of commodities translates into well-being, as traditionally posited by economists. He considers however that the possession of goods does not translate automatically into well-being since possession is different from the <u>ability to benefit</u> from the characteristics of these goods (Fusco, 2003: 7). In his essay *'Co-operative Conflicts'* (1990) Sen shows, for instance, that household gender relations profoundly affect the intra-household distribution of commodities (see also Nussbaum, 2001).

Sen adds that the utility approach does not address the phenomenon of *'physical condition neglect'* (1985, in Saith & Harriss-White, 1998: 2). Physical condition neglect is important in the context of assessing caste, class and gender differentials. For instance a poor women may be resigned to her state, or have internalised cultural norms that allot her an impaired status. When she is judged by the metric of desire or happiness fulfilment, therefore, she may seem to be doing quite well although she is physically quite deprived (ibid). Box 4.6 provides an example of physical condition neglect. It also emphasises the importance of assessing context.

Box 4.6: Physical Condition Neglect: an example from Rajasthan

A study by Ahluwahlia shows that the workload of women (collecting fodder and firewood) increased by up to three hours a day following the enclosure of the village commons in a community in the Nayakheda Watershed, Rajasthan at the initiative of a development agency. Women did not participate in the decision to enclose the commons but bore the costs. Ahluwahlia (1997: 33) states that although the women complain of overwork and fatigue none openly question decisions taken by men. She comments, *'This is not surprising as the institutions which subordinate women, and repress their desires, speech, ideas and even emotions, remain very strong in this part of Rajasthan.'*

Source: Ahluwahlia (1997)

Nussbaum (2001: 62-3) discusses how women may feel *'conditioned satisfaction'* with their (harsh) lives. However, she argues, such women may have only been able to pursue one kind of life. Had they been offered an education, say, a whole array of different options may have enabled them to live quite differently.

The idea of freedom is central to Sen's work ([1994] 1998). People need to be able to choose between different alternatives in order to achieve what he *terms 'a valued capability set'*[45]. Poverty can thus be understood as an inability to make meaningful choices (Fusco, 2003).

Sen's functionings and capabilities model (Sen [1984] 1998) posits that is not possession of the commodity or the utility it provides that proxies for well-being, but rather *what the person actually succeeds in doing with that commodity and its characteristics*. This is the <u>functioning</u>.

The person's utilisation of commodities – the <u>commodity vector</u> - in their possession (for instance, a sack of rice or a bicycle) provides a list of functionings. This results in a <u>functioning vector</u> for the person. In this case the functioning vector could be 'moderately nourished, mobile'. The functioning vector captures the person's 'state of being'. Alternative uses of the same or other commodity vectors results in different functioning vectors. For example not using the bicycle and therefore saving energy may result in the functioning vector 'well-nourished, non-mobile' (Sen, 1985, in Saith & Harriss-White, 1998). Martinetti (2000, in Fusco, 2003: 7) points out that *'the functionings achieved are strictly related to the intrinsic characteristics of the people (age, gender, health and disability conditions) as well as to environmental circumstances (the socio-economic and institutional levels ... the household environment).'* He goes on to say that the process of converting the resources available into well-being relates to, and is dependent upon, such individual and environmental features.

The set of all possible functioning vectors is called the <u>capability set</u>. If a person only had access to the commodity vector above (rice, bicycle) the capability set might be (moderately nourished, mobile) or (well-nourished, non-mobile). The capability set, says Sen (1985 in Fusco, 2003: 8) *'represents the various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that the person can achieve.'* Sen himself is unwilling to make a list of basic functionings, believing that to do so would intrude too much upon the rights and abilities of individuals and groups to identify their own priorities (Gough, 2003: 2). However, researchers attempting to operationalise the concept consider that such functionings range from elementary ones like nourishment and shelter to more complex ones like self-esteem and community participation (Chopra & Duraiappah, 2001; Clark, 2002; Alkire, 2003). An example of how the functionings and capabilities model has been operationalised is provided by the work of Saith & Harriss-White (1998). They attempted to assess three basic functionings on the basis of already extant indicators. Box 4.7 provides an overview of their conclusions.

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45 Since the process of evaluation and preferences varies from individual to individual, this approach might appear to confound any straightforward comparisons of well-being. However Sen (1985, in Saith & Harriss-White, 1998) argues that it may be possible to agree on minimum constraints on the different states of well-being, particularly when dealing with basic functionings. For instance, everyone might agree that the well-being of a person with a functioning vector (moderately nourished, mobile) is less than one with the functioning vector (well-nourished, non-mobile). Well-being cannot thus be measured exactly, but it can be approximated. See Sen (1998) for more on this.

Box 4.7: Assessing Basic Functionings

Saith & Harriss-White discuss three basic functionings: being healthy, being nourished and being educated, in order to arrive at a gendered understanding of well-being in developing countries. They argue that these three functionings are so elementary as to be necessary for well-being. Moreover, they assume that a differential in any one of these functionings results in a differential in well-being.

Their research aimed to assess the extent to which some indicators may be more sensitive than others in picking up gender disadvantage. Although they found that in many countries gender differentials exist at the level of such basic functionings, they learnt (1997: 7-8) that indicators say very little about the causal processes that give rise to outcomes. This is important, they argue, since a good understanding of causal processes is necessary for policy. They also point out that a multi-dimensional approach to the measurement of well-being is essential, citing the case of Sub-Saharan Africa. Here, significant female disadvantage in education persists alongside near-equality between boys and girls in nutrition and juvenile mortality. Equality in one dimension may not therefore be accompanied by equality in another.

Source: Saith and Harriss-White (1998)

Theoretical Contributions to the Functionings and Capabilities Approach
We now discuss three important theoretical contributions to the functionings and capabilities approach. The first concerns activating the concept of choice by explicitly linking it to feminist thinking on empowerment. The second focuses on Nussbaum's independently realised account of capabilities. The third examines an implication of Sen's functionings and capabilities approach for social sustainability.

Empowerment, Choice and Capabilities
According to Sen, G. (1997: 11) the word 'empowerment' originated in the women's movement. Feminist activists were trying to give a name to the process of change in women's sense of self-confidence and ability to deal with the world, changes which could be seen on the ground. Kabeer (2000: 26) maintains that empowerment remains a fuzzy concept because feminists have used it in many ways. Indeed for many feminists its value lies in this very fuzziness, providing as it does spaces for activists to create their own meanings. Feminist definitions of empowerment, she continues, are constructed around a cluster of concepts such as power, capacity, rights, interests, choices and control (Kabeer, 1997: 10).

How might we conceptualise empowerment? According to Kabeer (1997; 2000) one way of thinking about power is in terms of the ability to make choices: to be dis-empowered, therefore, implies to be denied choice. The notion of

empowerment is inescapably bound up with the condition of dis-empowerment and refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability. In other words, empowerment entails a process of change. People who already exercise a great deal of choice in their lives may be powerful, but they cannot be empowered because they were not dis-empowered to start with. Jiggins (pers. comm. 12/03), notes however that powerful people can become dis-empowered. She adds, *'empowerment implies a process of discovering new ways to exercise choice, or new domains in which choice might be exercised.'*

   It is important to qualify the term 'choice', says Kabeer (1997, 2000). Choice implies options, the ability to choose otherwise. There is an association, she says, between poverty and disempowerment. An insufficiency of means for meeting one's basic needs often rules out the ability to exercise meaningful choice. Furthermore, some choices have greater significance than others in terms of their importance for people's lives. It is useful, therefore, to make a distinction between first and second order choices. First order choices are strategic life choices, such as choice of livelihood, where to live, who and whether to marry, whether and how many children to have, and so on. These are critical for people to live the lives they want. First order choices help frame second order choices which may be important for one's quality of life, but do not constitute its defining parameters. The ability to exercise choice can be thought of in terms of three inter-related dimensions:

Resources (preconditions) ➜ Agency (process) ➜ Achievements (outcomes)

- <u>Resources</u> include material, human and social resources which serve to enhance the ability to make choice.
- <u>Agency</u> is the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. Agency can take the form of decision-making, of bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance as well as the processes of reflection and analysis. Agency has positive and negative meanings in relation to power. In the positive sense of *'power to'*, it relates to people's capacity to define their own life choices and to pursue their own goals. *'Power over'* refers to the capacity of those to override the agency of others. Power can also exist in the absence of any apparent agency. For example, the norms and rules governing social behaviour tend to ensure that certain outcomes are reproduced without obvious exercise of agency. Jiggins (pers. comm. 12/03) adds *'power with'*, meaning the capacity to augment power through collective action
- Resources and agency together constitute <u>capabilities</u>: the potential people have for living the lives they want, of achieving valued ways of being and doing.
- <u>Achievements</u> (outcomes) refers to possible inequalities in people's capacity to make choices, rather than differences in the choices they might make

Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach
Sen and Nussbaum developed their capabilities approaches separately. However, they realised during a period of collaboration in 1986 that ideas he had been pursuing in economics, and that she had been pursuing in Aristotle scholarship, had

114

a great deal in common. Their approaches are different in some respects, though they share substantial common ground (Nussbaum, 2001: 11-15).

The capabilities approach propounded by Nussbaum (1998, 2000, 2001) is philosophical in tenor and promotes a cross-cultural normative account of human capabilities. In particular, she contends that there should be basic constitutional principles respected and implemented by all governments. These principles should focus on *'human capabilities, that is, what people are actually able to do and to be – in a way informed by an intuitive idea of a life that is worthy of the dignity of a human being'* (2001: 5). This is a plea for a society in which every individual is treated as worthy of regard, and in which he or she is in a position to live *'really humanely'*. Nussbaum identifies a list of central human capabilities – unlike Sen - and sets them in a context of political liberalism. Her list is deliberately general – a *'thick vague conception of the good'* (Nussbaum, 1998: 318; see Appendix A for a list of the capabilities she identifies). The generality of her list is designed to enable these capabilities to become the object of an overlapping consensus among people who would otherwise have very different conceptions of the good. She adds, *'the capabilities in question should be pursued for each and every person, treating each as an end and none as a mere tool to the ends of others'* (ibid). Although these capabilities should be sought for both men and women, Nussbaum argues throughout her book, *Women and Human Development* (2001) that women, far more frequently than men, are treated as means to ends: reproducers, caregivers, sexual outlets, agents of a family's general prosperity (ibid: 2). Whereas unequal social and political circumstances mean that women have unequal capabilities in every country, poverty coupled with gender inequality can result in a particularly acute gendered failure of human capabilities. Nussbaum contends that in such situations, *'Women [...] lack essential support for living lives that are fully human'* (ibid: 4). A feminist approach attentive to the special problems faced by women is required.

Nussbaum's capabilities approach is explicitly harnessed to normative concepts. She readily agrees that it is problematic to use concepts that originate in one culture to describe and assess realities in another, particularly if that culture has been colonised and oppressed by the describer's culture. However she contests charges of colonising and westernising. Cultures are scenes of debate and contestation. They contain dominant and weak voices. The voices of women in particular are not necessarily heard. Furthermore, cultures are dynamic and subject to constant change. Indeed, Nussbaum critiques the assumption that western cultures should be seen as dynamic, critical and modernising in contrast to other cultures (see Nussbaum, 2001, for an extended discussion of the relativist, diversity and paternalistic arguments against – and partially supportive of - the capabilities approach).

One of Nussbaum's central points is that people need to be in a position to exercise their rights: *'We should prefer a universal normative account that allows people plenty of liberty to pursue their own conceptions of value, within limits set by the protection of the equal worth of the liberties of others ... [we need to include] in our account not only the liberties themselves, but also forms of*

economic empowerment that are crucial to making the liberties truly available' (Nussbaum, 2001: 55; see Kabeer 1997, 2000, and Alkire, 2003, for similar arguments). Many women who have the 'choice' to be economically independent, for instance, lack access to credit. From here Nussbaum (2001: 54-5) argues that the state will have to *'take a stand'* on the distribution of wealth and income, the distribution of property rights, and in enabling access to the legal system. Even if taking a stand means interference in the activities that some people may themselves choose, interference is necessary to enable other people to have a choice.

Nussbaum (1998: 315) notes that people vary in their ability to convert resources into functions. Pregnant women need more nutrients than non-pregnant women, children need more protein than adults, physically disabled people need more resources than able-bodied people to be mobile. It is therefore important not to operate only with an index of resources, but to ask, particularly in poor countries, how people are actually doing in the various areas of human life, in order to find out to what extent resources have been able to engender capabilities. Redressing the situation means paying explicit attention to power relations: *'Women who begin from a position of traditional deprivation and powerlessness will frequently require special attention and aid to arrive at a level of capability that the more powerful can more easily attain'* (Nussbaum, 2001: 68).

The contribution of the functionings and capabilities approach to social sustainability

Ballet *et al.* (2003) assess how Sen's model might be used to move towards social sustainability. They argue that programmes to achieve economic, ecological and social sustainability are not necessarily destined to work harmoniously together. Strong economic growth, for example, does not automatically lead to an improvement in social sustainability. Ballet *et al.* thus draw a clear distinction between the struggle against economic poverty and sustainable social development. They present the following definition of social development: *'Development which guarantees to present and future generations improvements in well-being capabilities (social, economic and ecological) for all, through the pursuit of the equitable distribution of these capabilities between generations on the one hand, and their inter-generational transmission on the other'* (ibid: 6).

The particular focus of Ballet *et al.* (ibid: 7-9) is upon the importance of capabilities in situations of risk. They suggest that a person's relative vulnerability depends on the quality of their total capacity set at a given time (this includes their level of education, their state of health, their ability to work, their social networks, their financial means *etc.*). The capability sets of poor people, they maintain, are characterised by horizontal social networks and a dependence on their educational level and ability to work. Such people lack financial means and vertical social networks. Even the capabilities they do possess, such as a particular education, are fragile in the face of technological change. Whilst the poor in general have weak capacity sets, the authors suggest that women can be at a particular disadvantage due to a *'long inequality chain'* (comprising heavy workloads, family responsibilities and lack of time for example). This chain significantly constrains the ability of women to adapt to, or shape the process of, change.

116

From here, Ballet *et al.* (ibid: 10-11) argue that it is necessary to define principles of social precaution within a framework of ethical responsibility. The social precautionary principle must be instituted in the social domain in recognition of the fragile capability sets of the poorest. That is, it is an <u>ethical responsibility</u> of policy makers and all other significant actors to evaluate the potential effects of particular decisions upon the capability sets of the poor in a world *'marked by uncertainty'*.

Potential Limitations of the Functionings and Capabilities Approach
The functionings and capabilities approach is clearly anthropocentric. This raises issues around the commensurability of values held by a range of stakeholders. Anthropocentricism sees the natural world as a store of materials, to be used as people see fit to promote human welfare. Weak anthropocentrism promotes enlightened human self-interest and considers the welfare of future humans. It can accommodate respect for nature without the need to consider whether nature has intrinsic value. This view lies behind several concepts of sustainable development (Wye College/Open University, 1997a). Kant himself explicitly excluded *'non-rational beings'* from his categorical imperative (as noted in Box 4.5 above), and the author has yet to come across literature which suggests that Sen's model does other than place nature at the service of humankind. Nussbaum, in her *'thick vague list'*, does include *'being able to live with concern for, and in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature'* (Nussbaum, 1998: 319) and she supposes that promoting this capability will require some legal regulation of individual choices (ibid: 334).

Though the functionings and capabilities approach seems to have so much to recommend it, its anthropocentricism may hinder realisation of the task of this thesis: to create quality relationships across the producer to consumer chain. First, some organic consumers view the world in a biocentric way (see chapter ten for evidence of this). They consider that nature has intrinsic value. Producers might also feel the same way, if so, the functionings and capabilities approach would have difficulty capturing their views unless they were expressed in weak anthropocentric form. Admittedly, the ESCAPE (Ecosystem-Capability Augmentation Poverty Eradication) Approach put forward by UNEP - which is an attempt to link capabilities to the environment - recognises spiritual uses of the environment (Duraiappah, 2002). This is not the same however as saying that nature or the environment has a value independent of human use. Box 4.8 captures some of the ways people try to express their sense of nature as being beyond themselves.

Box 4.8: Nature as Having Intrinsic Value

'Yes, I do see Fort Crag now, the herring gulls on ledges, others idling on the wind or floating on the swell. And I can hear it too, for every now and then most of the birds would beat upwards and form a clacking cloud – only to go quiet and descend again. At such times I never knew why they'd risen

or why come down. That was their joy for me, or part of it. I loved their unknowness' (Farnworth, L. 1981, speaking of Jersey).

'With the falling of evening the vault of the sky brims with tranquillity like a goblet of lapis lazuli, while the immobility of afternoon reminds me of the border of a golden sari wrapped around the whole world. Where is there another land to fill the mind so?' (Tagore, 1894, speaking of Bengal. Cited in Pretty, 2002: 48).

'Nature's strangeness and indifference to our concerns is not only something that we cannot overcome, but also something that we ought not even attempt to overcome' (O'Neill 1993: 151, pleading for an appreciation of nature based in its lacking of any human significance in itself).

'Some distance away is a white azalea bush which stuns me with its stately beauty … This is pristine natural beauty. It is irrepressible, seeks no reward, and is without goal, a beauty derived neither from symbolism nor metaphor and needing neither analogies nor associations' (Gao [1990] 2001: 61).

McKibben (2003: 48) argues that *'an idea, a relationship, can go extinct just like an animal or a plant. The idea, in this case, is* nature, *the separate and wild province.'* Katz (1993) considers that the domination of nature is wrong because it considers nature an artefact[46] (*i.e.* as a means to an end). He criticises the 'sustainable management' of forests thus: *'Entities and systems which comprise nature are not permitted to be free, to pursue their independent and unplanned courses of development, growth and change'* (ibid: 230). Katz insists that no blueprint for nature exists, contrary to the thinking behind such programmes. Hopkins ([1879] in Mackenzie, 1991) speaks of the ease with which nature can be *'unselved'*. In his poem, Binsley Poplars, he argues that nature is not general, but particular. When trees are felled, a *'sweet especial rural scene'* is lost. Nor can nature be reconstructed: *'Even where we mean to mend her we end her.'*[47]

The conceptualisation of nature as instrumental, in the anthropocentric tradition, arguably (though not necessarily) weakens its ability to survive in complex form. There is considerable debate among many scientists as to the level of complexity an ecosystem needs in order to deliver a particular level of goods and services. This is important because several sustainable livelihood texts (see in particular Chambers & Conway, 1991) point to the success, marvellous as it is, of poor people in revitalising degraded lands – and indeed they comment on higher livelihood values of such lands compared to primary forests. The ESCAPE approach (Duraiappah, 2002) likewise conceptualises the ecosystem in terms of a range of services. The ESCAPE working paper considers that the boundaries of these ecosystem services depend upon the constituent of human well-being

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46 *'Artefacts, as human instruments, are always a means to the furtherance of some human end'* (Katz, 1993: 22).

47 For different views on the possibility, or otherwise, of 'restoring' nature, see Elliot (1982) 'Faking Nature', and Attfield (1994) 'Rehabilitating Nature and Making Nature Habitable.'

addressed. For instance the boundary that enables the *'ability to be adequately nourished'* is different to the one that enables the ability to be free from avoidable disease.

The discussion on human-ecosystem interaction is clearly couched in terms of trade-offs and contradiction, yet this is potentially dangerous. We need to ask: *Are trade-offs actually possible if we want to survive in the long-term? Does this kind of language actually mask new ways forward?* Lawton (1991) asserts that extremely species-poor communities probably would not threaten the planet's life support systems per se. He argues further that most species have not the slightest chance of *'ever being useful'* and thus to argue for their preservation on the grounds of their actual, or potential, usefulness is an argument that *'lacks a soul. Nature is beautiful, let's say so.'* Lawton leads us back to the idea that nature possesses intrinsic value. Katz (1993) develops Kant's categorical imperative by urging that we consider nature a subject with its own history of development, one that is independent of human cultural intervention. This development would enable us to treat nature as worthy of moral consideration, an end in itself. Goodwin (1996) brings insights from the sciences of complexity, which suggest that organisms are self-generating entities, to bear upon Kant's view that we should experience the coherent wholeness of beings as something of value in itself. He concludes that we should consider species as natural kinds that express distinctive natures. This places limits upon their use as functional commodities (see Verhoog, 2001, in particular on animal integrity).

4.3   Conclusion

This chapter has contributed to a deeper understanding of the key strands being pursued in this thesis. Gao ([1990] in trans. 2001: 15) brings some of these strands together when he says that *'reality only exists through experience, and it must be personal experience. However, once related, even personal experience becomes narrative. Reality can't be verified and doesn't need to be ... Reality is myself, reality is only the perception of this instant and it can't be related to another person.'* These words return us to chapter one, in which Maturana and Varela (discussed by Capra, 1997: 262) declare that *'each living system builds up its own distinctive world according to its own distinctive structure.'* If we agree that the world is experienced in a profoundly personal way then it is possible to agree that 'objective' conditions are filtered by this process of experiencing. This point underlines the importance of trying to capture the 'felt and experienced' world of smallholders and plantation workers if we are to gain a reasonable idea of how their lives are being affected for better or for worse by their participation in the organic producer to consumer commodity chain.

Gao reminds us also of the instantaneous nature of reality. It shifts into narrative moment by moment, and from this point becomes selective through the process of remembering. This point takes us back to those made in chapter two about the implications of chaos theory for fieldwork: (i) it is impossible to gain a full knowledge of initial conditions, and (ii) the knowledge gained will be partially

redundant by the time it is analysed and fed into planning processes. Nevertheless, all is not lost. Correspondence between these pictures and stories, and the real world, can be sought by consciously feeding them back into discussion and learning processes. In this way information about the already experienced world is dialectically linked to the ever-emerging world.

Gao argues that reality is profoundly personal. Yet the preceding chapters contend that much is shared. Chapter one suggested that it is possible for people to link their life worlds by virtue of their capacity for abstract thought and language. Chapter two maintained that cultures have order at all points. In chapter three, Thomas, E. (2003: 208) substantiates this point by saying that *'the centre of our valuing and the conferment of meaning is not deep within us in some secure and private recess. It arises from our interpretative framework, which, itself, arises from immersion in a pre-existing and communally forged way of seeing the world.'* Despite this immersion, and the importance it has for the argument that we need to recognise the felt and experienced world, chapter four has suggested that we are agents, capable of challenging pre-given ways of perceiving the world, and modelling new ways of relating. We are able to weigh <u>qualities</u> of a life and decide which blend constitutes a good quality of life. In so doing we lend these qualities value. A quality relationship between producer and consumer is constituted by a dynamic, iterative flow of 'valued qualities' in a controlled process of learning.

This chapter has also considered how spaces can be created to enable people to work towards articulating their 'maximum selves'. This is a precondition for appropriate entanglement with others. The functionings and capabilities approach suggests that the ability of people *'to be'* and *'to do'* rests upon a bottom line: *'to have'*. It is necessary to ensure that people live fundamentally decent lives. Material poverty hinders the activation of meaningful choice.

Chapter Five: Developing a Quality of Life Toolkit

Without a brush
The willow paints the wind.[48]

The author's quality of life toolkit needs to have considerable exploratory power if it is to contribute to the methodology and practice of social certification in organic agriculture, and if it is to provide the base for a new social label for organic products with the ultimate aim of creating quality relationships between producers and consumers. To achieve these objectives the toolkit must be capable of producing quality base-line data in order to report on 'how it is'. The norms, and the aspirations, of the producers need to be captured in this first step. The second step requires the conceptualisation of standards, and the development of indicators, that will provide the producers with the necessary framework conditions to help create the world they seek. This involves thinking about 'how it ought to be'.

This chapter represents the second contribution made by this thesis to methodology (ways to formalise values and incorporate these in the food chain). It commences by elaborating nine principles for the creation of a quality of life toolkit. These are drawn from the discussion conducted in chapter four. It must be made clear that these principles were developed in an iterative process. The author undertook a review of the quality of life literature before developing the toolkit. This enabled her to develop guiding principles based both on this reading, and on the author's experience of participatory research conducted at other points in her career. Reflection during, and after, the fieldwork upon the effectiveness of the toolkit in achieving the author's aims permitted the original principles to be refined. It was not until the author embarked on further substantial reading in preparation for writing chapter four that the final nine principles could be developed.

In the second part of this chapter the author presents the quality of life toolkit that she developed for use in Madagascar. The conclusion highlights some of the main points made.

5.1   Principles for Creating a Quality of Life Toolkit

Nine principles are outlined here. They are interlinked and aim to be mutually supportive. The numbering does not indicate the priority of any principle. The aim is rather to create a flow of logic between each one.

1.   Quality of life research means thinking about real lives

In the morass of theory it is easy to forget, sometimes, that we are talking about real people living real lives. Thus the endeavour to measure quality of life is not

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48 Saryū (surname and dates unknown).

just about objective indicators such as the state of housing. It is also about appreciating human emotions like hope and aspiration, desperation, suspicion, anger and pleasure.

2. Assessing quality of life is an ethical issue

Des Jardins says (2001: 18) *'One of the first and most serious challenges in any study of ethics involves identifying an issue as an ethical issue. We all need to practice this stepping back in order to recognise ethical issues in our everyday experience.'* Kavka (1978) presented two fundamental ethical guidelines against which, he argues, assessments of quality of life must be made:

1. There cannot be degrees of membership in the human moral community
2. Substantive concepts of the good life need not be shared.

Evidence provided in chapter four demonstrated, however, that these guidelines are frequently flouted in the real world. For one reason or another, particular categories of people suffer severe disadvantage. Researcher ignorance of these two principles, whether conscious or not, can compound such disadvantage. This is why it is imperative to *'step back'* and recognise everyday issues as ethical issues. Ballet *et al.* (2003) take this view to a logical conclusion, saying that actors connected in one way or another to poor people are placed under an ethical obligation not only not to harm, but also to enhance the effectiveness of the capability sets of poor people. The implications are profound with respect to the responsibilities of various stakeholders in the organic producer to consumer chain.

Recognising quality of life as an ethical issue takes us closer to understanding what is necessary for people to achieve their 'maximum selves' (Ho, 2000). Ho's concept of maximum selves shares ground both with Kavka's (1978) injunction that there cannot be degrees of membership in the human moral community, and with Sen's (1990, in Clark 2002) insistence that people be viewed as ends in themselves. The concept of intrinsic value is embodied in these three approaches.

The data presented in chapter four suggests that a person's gender, among other markers, can affect the likelihood that he or she is seen as a bearer of intrinsic value.

3. People's subjective understanding of their life-worlds is important

Chapter four outlined several difficulties with actually capturing the way in which people subjectively experience their 'life-worlds.' However, it was argued that it is necessary to recognise that people experience their particular situations in myriad forms, and from this basis aspire to different goals. This insight should be built into the research project. The aim is to gain a rich picture of what actually matters to people. We are speaking about trying to really understand how people create 'quality relationships to the world', and the ingredients necessary for this endeavour.

Blindness to that *'flash of revelation at what we are from the inside out'* (Firouz, 2002: 288) can lead to a profound disconnection between internal and external appraisals of the same situation. Indeed such disconnection could lead to unwitting removal by policy makers of the conditions necessary for a subjective sense of well-being to thrive. This has tremendous implications for social certification and social labelling initiatives. It is however possible to establish some degree of correlation between markers such as gender (others include race, disability *etc*.) and how people experience their world.

At the same time acceptance of 'puzzle' and 'strangeness' is vital. It is not possible to fully know *'the unique random blend'*[49] of other human beings. Furthermore, acknowledgement that many values are incommensurable is crucial.

4. All indicators are proxies

Indicators are signs trying to signify something. There will always be a gap between 'what is', and what we think 'is'. The aim of research can only be to seek a reasonable approximation.

5. The naturalistic fallacy must be avoided

Ethics is concerned about how we should live, how we should act and the kind of persons we should be (Des Jardins, 2001: 132). We need to acknowledge that although quality of life is fundamentally concerned with ethics, we have to be particularly careful not to commit the naturalistic fallacy, that is reasoning from facts (what is) to values (what ought to be). Descriptions of the world do not commit one - as the Scandinavian approach makes clear - to particular conclusions about how the world should be.

The discussion in chapter four also made it clear that it is possible to commit another kind of error. This is based on an inability to recognise that substantive concepts of the good life might not be shared, namely reasoning from value to fact. In combination, these two errors set up a self-reinforcing feedback loop admitting of no new knowledge.

6. The concepts of agency and meaningful choice are critical

The ability to shape one's world depends on the ability to make meaningful choices and thus to move forward. Developing new preferences depends on a person being able to imagine and to experience alternatives. It is here that the concept of agency arises, along with the need to create the framework conditions that make meaningful choice possible.

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49 Quote from a poem *'Ambulances'* by Larkin, P. (in Jones, ed. 1999: 134)

7. Quality of life is not only a state of persons, it is a process

An understanding of quality of life as a process is crucial to any robust concept of quality of life. As Ho (2000) suggests, people are not themselves coherently bounded entities. Naess (1973) argues for an appreciation of human embeddedness in the world, the idea that <u>relationships</u> constitute who we are.[50] The author adds that one can conceptualise people as being in a state of flow. They are in dynamic interaction with their world, which is itself ever changing. A consequence of this perception is that concepts of what constitutes 'the good life' will likewise be in a state of flux.

The concept of process is ineluctably bound up with the concept of time. Inter-generational and intra-generational processes need to be considered. Other time processes relate to seasonality and the pattern of daily activities. Understanding how time is conceptualised in a particular place enables a better insight into how concepts of the good life are transmitted, and also how to break poverty cycles through strengthening the capability sets of poor people.

8. The material conditions of existence form an important platform for a good quality of life

The functionings and capabilities frameworks, and the Scandinavian approach, both overtly proclaim the necessity of providing certain material conditions in order to allow people to achieve basic functionings (such as being healthy, being nourished and being educated). Enabling *'people to live really humanely'* (to have) is a prerequisite for them *'to be'* and *'to do'*. The necessity of a reasonable standard of life is also acknowledged in the American tradition.

9. Bounded thinking is of limited value

Chapter four made it clear that quality of life is a multi-dimensional concept that can be analysed across a series of subjective and objective domains. Correlations between subjective and objective axes may or may not be sought.

Yet category-based models run the risk of binding and limiting what we understand. Perhaps, and also, they bear little relation to the ways that real world people actually think and behave. The researcher runs the risk therefore of 'making sense' of complex information by slotting it into a particular category whilst at the same time snipping away at the links which give this information meaning. The researcher therefore needs to pay attention to the effectiveness of category thinking

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50 Naess (1973) bases his ideas in part upon gestalt theory. He insists upon *'rejection of the man-in-environment image in favour of the relational, total field image. Organisms as knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations. An instrinsic relation between two things A and B is such that the relation belongs to the definitions or basic constituents of A and B, so that without the relation, A and B are no longer the same things.'*

and to consider whether, and when, it might be useful to blur the boundedness of the concepts he or she is using.

An explicit application of the concept of emergent properties is also useful. In order to do this, perhaps it is useful to consider each level as a sub-system (of a particular community, say). Emergent properties arising from one sub-system could be mapped and analysed. An example is the phenomenon of co-operative conflict at household level postulated by Sen (1990). According to this, household members co-operate in order to enhance household wealth. However this wealth is often divided unequally among household members, regardless of their actual contribution to its formation. In such cases the distribution of household wealth mirrors unequal power relations in a household. Sen suggests that women in particular often receive less than what would seem to be a fair share. Co-operative conflict can therefore be understood as an emergent property of gendered relations among household members. The working of villagers on agricultural plots in co-operative fashion would produce different emergent properties.

It is important to note that the concept of emergent properties precludes the simplistic drawing of flows or links between levels. For example, if indicators are derived from work with a group they do not have to be traceable back down to constituent components of the group, but rather focus on what is special and different about being in a group[51].

5.2   The Malagasy Quality of Life Toolkit

Although the theoretical considerations informing the nine principles are complex, the tools selected for the fieldwork in Madagascar had to be simple to use. This is because the quality of life toolkit has to be flexible enough to be used anywhere, specific enough to produce unique meaning in a particular situation, and yet universal enough for the results to be understood and operationalised by other stakeholders. The toolkit was prepared in advance, but adapted day to day as fieldwork progressed. The criteria for the tools selected, which relate back to the principles just outlined, are highlighted in Box 5.1.

Box 5.1: Criteria for Selection of Tools

Tools need to:
- Be capable of picking up different kinds of disadvantage. They must be gender-sensitive.
- Allow respondents to express their own concepts of the good life. There will certainly be more than one story in any community.
- Permit assessment of whether the respondents do in fact have a material standard of living which external observers could consider reasonable.

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51 Some methods, such as ranking, generate results on which indicators can be based. These are usually developed in groups. In this case, the results are expressed as an aggregation of individual choices, but are derived in a process of interaction among group members (Jiggins, pers. comm. 12/03).

- Permit consideration of the specific constraining factors to producers achieving their maximum selves.
- Have a process character. They must to be able to deal with changes in the respondents' perceptions and aspirations regarding quality of life over time.
- Permit examination of how inter-generational processes of transmission work, and evaluate the effectiveness of these.
- Understand that respondents may be working with different and multiple concepts of time.
- Allow an insight as to the degree to which respondents in a particular situation are able to exercise agency and to make meaningful choices.
- Be sensitive to dynamics at a particular systems level.
- Allow new and surprising insights to emerge.

Permission to move around each village was sought from the village head – the *Tangalemena*. The meetings with the Tangalemena were crucial in establishing rapport and in providing first insights into the constraints facing each community, into locally relevant quality of life components, and beyond this the aspirations of village members.

The author chose to weight the Malagasy toolkit with widely-used participatory methods such as transects, participatory maps, seasonal calendars, daily activity diagrams, historical calendars and the like. An access and control profile was also elicited (see Pretty *et al.* 1995; Mikkelsen, 1995; Chambers, 1994, and Feldstein & Jiggins, 1994, for examples and discussion of these and other participatory methods). The methods chosen aimed to elicit spatial and temporal data, the thought being that quite simple, easy to use tools could create a complex picture if used flexibly and imaginatively. A sampling frame was designed with the objective of canvassing opinion from different groups (by wealth) in each of the three communities sampled. Photograph 5.1 overleaf shows women workers at Plantation MonDésir, one of the two research sites, preparing their seasonal calendar.

It should be noted that the methods to be used in a particular situation were not decided upon in advance. Rather, extensive discussion with smallholders and plantation workers took place in the first instance. Such open-ended discussions provided a clear picture of the main concerns of the respondents. In other words, themes were permitted to emerge. In order to understand these themes further, specific participatory methods were then selected to enable 'fit' between the theme and method. Furthermore, methods were adapted *in situ*. For example a 'well-being transect', not known to the author from the literature, was devised. This was adapted to be not only spatial, but also temporal, in character because the well-being of both ancestors and children appeared important to the respondent population. Gender sensitivity was woven into all stages of the process. Women and men were usually interviewed separately by someone of the same gender. Data remained gender-disaggregated throughout.

126

Photograph 5.1 Plantation Workers Preparing a Seasonal Calendar: Marta, Chrissiane, Zoma and Rosa Millienne

With the specific aim of allowing surprising findings, new themes, and fresh ideas to emerge thematic apperception tests (TAT) were also used. TATs were devised by Murray (1943, in Nazarea *et al.* 1998: 161). In its original form cards with ambiguous representations are presented to individual respondents. The respondent is asked to tell a story about each card and the account is recorded verbatim. The premise behind this is that informants identify with some of the figures. In the process of story telling the respondents reveal their own self-concepts and deep wishes. The method as it was adapted for use in the Malagasy study is described in Box 5.2. A further remark: visual tools and story telling are often valuable when working with non-literate groups.

Box 5.2: Thematic Apperception Test (author's version)

1. Photos of common local scenes are shown to the respondent.
2. The respondent is asked to 'tell a story' about each photo.
3. The stories are tape recorded, transcribed and translated into French.
4. The evaluation team reads these stories.
5. Dominant themes emerging from stories relating to contextually sensitive definitions of quality of life are identified.
6. The themes in each story are then scored by three individuals from different cultures and disciplines.

7. A score 0-1 is given depending whether a particular theme is absent or present in a story.
8. Statistical Analysis System is then used to calculate the mean and standard deviation of total scores.
9. Analysis of Variance (General Linear Model Procedure) is carried out to determine statistical differences in score means of themes across gender, ethnicity and age.

Source: Adapted by the author from Nazarea *et al.* (1998)

The main consideration when adapting the TAT for the Malagasy study was the number of photos to be used. Eight were selected in contrast to the twenty used in the original Philippino study. This decision was taken to avoid tiring the respondents, and to make the data set manageable. The author took the photographs in consultation with research colleagues after several days in the research area. The intent was to capture everyday, yet slightly defamiliarised, scenes in a well-known landscape. In actual fact the process outlined in the box was not carried through to completion – the last three steps were omitted. This is because one member of the research team had difficulty transcribing and translating the tapes due to their unfamiliarity with the local dialect, thus slowing down the process. Comprehensive TAT interviews were therefore carried out with only four people – a young man/ older man, a young woman/ older woman. Although statistical rigour has not been obtained, the information the respondents gave was some of the most richly textured of the entire fieldwork. Furthermore, the multi-cultural nature of the research team greatly aided the discussion and analysis of the TAT findings.

In addition a simple camcorder was used with the plantation workers. The aim was to permit respondents to convey their sense of quality of life in their own words and images. The video itself was made after several days of discussion with the respondents on themes such as local conceptions of happiness and the components of well-being. Filming was done separately with men and women. Mr Ramaharo 'held' the camera. Ms Razanabahoaka, who had struck up a particularly good relationship with the respondents (partly due to her being older and also due to her familiarity with the dialect and region) facilitated the discussions. Interviews were also held on camera with the managers of the plantation. A transect taken diagonally across the plantation (Appendix B) was also filmed.

The author did not undertake any quantitative work in Madagascar. However, in order to study 'objective' quality of life indicators, statistical reports on the research sites issued by the *Ministère de l'Agriculture*, statistics compiled by local health and education workers (*Centre de Santé de Base; Collège d'Enseignement Général*) and by local and international NGOs (for example the *Fédération des Associations Femme et Développement* and *Développement Agro-ecologique Régional de USAID*) were collected. The research team also interviewed key informants from a range of organisations.

Triangulation of 'objective' and 'subjective' data was not, however, used as a way of achieving rigour – critiqued by Winchester (1999, in Crang, 2002: 252) as another attempt to seek empirical realist, objective generalisability. Rather, the purpose of seeking statistical data was to add to the rich texture of the data being produced from work in the field. At times discrepancies between emic and etic appraisals of the same indicators emerged, most significantly with regard to the health status of the respondent groups. This discovery enabled wide-ranging discussions on the topic of health to be conducted with the respondents. Triangulation of data should not be permitted to allow closure by ironing out irregularities and dismissing puzzling data. Rather, it should be taken as an opportunity to reflect upon what apparently incompatible data on one theme - acquired by use of different methods - might be telling us.

In summary, the quality of life toolbox does not seek to produce 'objective data' on the respondents' quality of life, by directly measuring the health status or checking the educational qualifications of the respondents for example. Rather, the aim is to capture the respondents' <u>perceptions</u> of their quality of life, in other words to gain some kind of insight into their lived and experienced world.

5.3   Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to translate some of the complex debates surrounding the conceptualisation of quality of life into practice. Nine principles, drawn from the discussion in chapter four, have provided a means of translating theory into real world action. In chapter six an analysis of the fieldwork findings is presented. In chapter seven the quality of life toolkit is set against the nine principles in order to assess its performance.

Chapter Six: Quality of Life - Findings from Madagascar

For the man who says
He tires of his child
There are no flowers[52]

In this chapter selected findings from the fieldwork carried out in Madagascar in 2001 are presented and analysed. Fuller accounts can be found in the author's two working papers, as well as in a range of other papers published over the past three years.[53] The aim here is to provide a vivid insight into how the respondents, workers on an organic plantation and independent organic smallholders, conceptualised the quality of their lives.

One general objective of the quality of life toolkit is to answer the question: *Do smallholders and plantation workers benefit from being involved in certified organic agriculture? How can we know this?* The chapter commences with an overview of the macro-economic and socio-economic situation in Madagascar with respect to agriculture. It then presents the organic sector. This permits an idea of the potential of export-orientated organic agriculture for ameliorating producers' lives to be gained.

Part 6.2 presents the two research sites.

Part 6.3 analyses the fieldwork findings. These are grouped by theme, rather than by research site. Important differences between the views of smallholders and plantation workers are highlighted. The findings are accompanied by maps, photographs, and other images drawn from the fieldwork. The purpose of this part is to provide an outline answer to the query as to whether organic farming can help improve people's lives. It also provides baseline data for the following two questions, which will be specifically addressed in chapter seven:

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52 Bashō (1644-94).

53 1. Farnworth, CR. & Razanabahoaka, S. (2002) 'Une étude sur le bien-être des ouvriers et ouvrières dans l'agriculture biologique à la Plantation MonDésir à Fénerive-Est, Madagascar'. Working Paper 1, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Rural Development Studies, Uppsala www.lbutv.slu.se/Publ./publication.htm)

2. Farnworth, CR., Ramaharo, VA. & Razanabahoaka, S., (2002) 'Une étude sur le bien-être des cultivateurs dans l'agriculture biologique dans trois villages autor de Brickaville, Madagascar'. Working Paper 2, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Rural Development Studies, Uppsala (www.lbutv.slu.se/Publ./publication.htm)

3. See for example Farnworth (2002d) 'Creating New Knowledge: producer-consumer relations in organic agriculture.' In Systemist: Special Conference Edition and also Farnworth (2002a, b, c and 2003a, b, c) and the author's video (2003e) 'Life on an Organic Plantation in Madagascar'.

- *Can, and should, social certification standards be shaped in part by producer values? That is, can the development of standards play a role in enabling producers to create the world they seek?*
- *Should social certification have a remit to contribute to 'development', in the sense of leading to growth (however defined) in the community? Or should it be simply about measuring adherence to particular standards?*

6.1 Overview of the Organic Sector in Madagascar

In order to provide a context for the organic sector in Madagascar an overview of the current macro-economic and socio-economic situations is presented here.

Macro-economic situation
During the 1970s and 1980s, in common with many other African sub-Saharan economies, Madagascar's blend of agricultural pricing policies, parastatal marketing boards, and overvalued exchange rates combined to keep agricultural producer prices low. Inadequate producer prices are held responsible for the stagnation of agricultural production and rural incomes that occurred during this period. For example between 1976 and 1982 producer prices for rice, the Malagasy staple, fell by 33 per cent in real terms (Bernier & Dorosh, 1993; Barrett & Dorosh, 1995). Higher agricultural prices became a major component of economic reform programmes from 1982 when Madagascar commenced a sustained period of structural adjustment (Vallée, 2000). Sen, G. (1997: 1-2) explains that the international New Poverty Agenda, which emerged during the 1990s, regards market-led growth as the most important method to address poverty. The role of the state and focused anti-poverty strategies, she continues, are viewed as secondary. Policies favouring agriculture and labour-intensive export sectors are considered to be most in line with these countries' factor endowments and comparative advantage.

Assessments of how structural adjustment has affected Madagascar have come to contradictory conclusions. According to one study, trade liberalisation increased incentives to produce tradable goods, an important source of income in rural areas (Bernier & Dorosh, 1993). Indeed today agriculture supplies 30% of gross domestic product (Ramboatiana & Randriamanantena, 2000: 16). Barrett & Dorosh (1995) consider that stabilisation and adjustment did not adversely affect the bulk of the poor in Madagascar, apart from rice-deficit households. However a more recent IMF/IDA report (2002) suggests that although high growth rates between 1997 and 2001 led to a significant reduction in urban poverty, rural poverty over this time period actually increased due to a failure to raise agricultural productivity. The growth areas of the economy (textiles, mining, fishing and tourism) failed to spread welfare to rural areas due to the latter's poor infrastructure and access to markets.

To date the author has not seen any gendered analyses of the differential effects of adjustment upon women and men in Madagascar. Evidence from other countries however suggests that women, especially poor women, often suffer

disproportionately. Such policies have tended to deepen existing inequalities in already gendered economies (Palmer, 1992; Messkoub, 1992; Elson, 1991; Moser, 1990).

Socio-economic situation
On the ground, social and economic inequality still seems to govern life across Madagascar. A large sector of the population lives outside the moneterised economy. Seventy percent of the population exists below the poverty line (World Bank, 1999, in Vallée, 2000: 3).

Although Fujisaka (1990) suggests that the *Betsileo* and *Merina* societies[54] are moving rapidly from closed societies structured by kinship to open societies based on market economies (see also Covell, 1987, and Kouwenhouven, 1995), measures of social stratification introduced in the 18th century leave families still identified as descendents of *andriana* (nobles), *hova* (commoners) or *andevo* (slaves), even though officially such distinctions are illegal. It remains the case that andevo have limited access to resources, and that andevo women are employed to carry out most of the weeding and transplanting in paddy (Fujisaka, 1990: 11). In contrast, ethnic identities are rather fluid, depending more on the type of life one leads than on one's parents (Bloch, 1995; see also Covell, 1987: 12-13).

The evidence from field studies is that substantial differences exist in terms of gendered access to, and control over resources, including land, labour and communual resources (Fujisaka, 1990; Wüstefeld, 1998; Schoonmaker-Freudenberger, 1998, 1999a, b; Rabary, pers. comm., 11/00). Merina farmers in the Antananarivo area continue to measure rice fields by the number of women needed to transplant one hectare (Fujisaka, 1990). Land ownership and usufruct rights are also highly gendered (Wüstefeld, 1998; Schoonmaker-Freudenberger, 1998, 1999a, b).

Knowledge of agricultural practice is accordingly structured by gendered rights and responsibilities. Studies show that men, for instance, often have a tremendous vocabulary for differentiating and describing different soil types, whereas women have a wide-ranging understanding of crop development from sowing to harvest, as well as of processing and marketing (Rabary, pers. comm. 11/00; Fujisaka, 1990).

Another typology commonly used is to divide rural dwellers into two groups on the basis of access to land (Ramboatiana & Randriamanantena, 2000: 17). One group has no land and cultivates foodstuffs according to a tenant system[55]. Their

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54 Betsileo (the many invincibles) and Merina (people of the high lands) live on the High Plateau. They were the particular focus of Fujisaka's 1990 study. In total there are 18 peoples in Madagascar.

55 Tenant farming is known as *métayage* in French – a term which has entered the Malagasy language. Métayage is illegal in Madagascar. This makes it difficult to get data on the issue. Fujisaka (1990) estimates, in a study of Madagascar's central highlands, that in some valleys up to 50% of farmers tenanted 30% of the land. Tenants reported paying a one third share. The plantation workers with whom the author worked all rented land under one of three kinds of métayage system. Details are provided later in this chapter.

share of the harvest aims to assure daily subsistence for a limited period. They also offer their labour to wealthier farmers, and harvest wild products (such as aromatic and medicinal plants) for their own use and for sale to companies. This group is tremendously poor. The second group of farmers work small or medium sized land parcels in better areas. They cultivate cash crops like vanilla and coffee, cereals and pulses and also practice animal husbandry on a small scale. There are a few large-scale farmers.

Argument rages as to why Madagascar seems unable to pull itself out of poverty, or rather why some people are so tremendously wealthy and the rest so poor[56]. Some observers assert that the *'mentality and power structures'* of the governments since Independence render progress impossible (Osterhaus, 1997: 112). Others claim that the governments were faced by almost insurmountable difficulties. According to Brown (2000: 301), the main problem, at least for the first post-independence democratic socialist government, was to convince a passive, conservative peasantry to produce more by working harder and using more modern methods. The slogan of the Social Democratic Party was *'asa fa tsy kabary'* (work, not speeches).

The view that the people, particularly in rural areas, are somehow to blame for their poverty is extremely common, not only among external observers but also among urban dwellers with whom this author has spoken. The following quote encapsulates this strand of thought: *'The potential for ameliorating the food situation is limited, due to the socio-cultural, ecological, economic and political realities observed [during the study]. The ecological environment is being degraded at the same time as the population is increasing rapidly. Tradition weighs heavily. The great majority of the population is attached to their tradition. This determines their entire lives. Consequently, people defy modernisation which seems to them to run against their tradition. One can see this in the difficulties the church has in converting people, in the attitudes which govern animal husbandry, in the rate of illiteracy and in the rejection of school education, in the roles which women and young people play in public life and the family'* (Wüstefeld, 1998: 6).

Such reports create 'facts on the ground' and are very powerful in terms of shaping development interventions. The concept of *vulgarisation* (meaning that examples of good practice are brought to the people and popularised) generally still guides practices in government services. Yet the principles behind vulgarisation run counter to the views currently expressed by many researchers and practitioners in agriculture, both Anglophone and Francophone, who argue for an actor-orientated and systemic approach (see Okali *et al*., 1994; Chambers, 1994a; Huijsman & Budelman, 1995; Pretty, 1996, 2000; Röling & Wagemakers, 1998, among many others).[57] Their aim is to develop the agency of rural people to shape

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56 Five percent of the population hold 50% of the nation's wealth, according to Osterhaus (1997: 90)

57 One example of a farmer-orientated approach in Madagascar is the system of rice intensification (SRI) which has been promoted since 1990 by the Association Tefy Saina, and evaluated by the Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture and Development. SRI is a radically different approach to rice cultivation: *'but improvement in rice yields*

their own development whilst creating or strengthening relationships among actors at different systems levels. The purpose is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public and private service provision (Jiggins, pers. comm. 12/03)

Export-orientated organic agriculture in Madagascar
There are thought to be one thousand individual organic farms in Madagascar (Willer & Yussefi, 2000, in Harris *et al.*, 2001: 13). Most of these will have been certified as members of collective groups. There is a small internal market for organic products. Homeopharma[58], based in Antananarivo, produces a range of organic homeopathic cosmetics and treatments for the local market. However most Malagasy organic production is aimed at the European, American and South African markets.

Malagasy players see in organic agriculture a way for the island to build upon its historic export strengths (spices, essential oils, medicinal plants and tropical fruits). They point to the *de facto* organic status of most farming and view organic produce as a means for Malagasy farmers to differentiate their produce in the highly competitive world market. Ramboatiana & Randriamanantena (2000: 2, 25) assert that integration into the world market leads *'necessarily to new strategies at the level of exchange ... Organic agriculture could be a way for Madagascar to engender positive effects at the economic, social and environmental levels given the multiple effects of globalisation.'* It is further maintained that promoting organic practice will help maintain Madagascar's unique, but seriously threatened, ecosystem (Vallée, 2000; Ramboatiana & Randriamanantena, 2000). In general the price differential between conventional and organic products is between 20-50 percent higher in favour of organic products. Table 6.1 shows the price differential for two products for the year 1998.

Table 6.1: Sample Price Differentials for Conventional and Organic Products, 1998

Products	Price in US$ per kilo: conventional	Price in US$ per kilo: organic
Essential oil of Geranium	115-124	146-169
Spices	35-45	70-90

Source: SYPEAM/ PROMABIO in Ramboatiana & Randriamanantena (2000: 16)

Moreover, many organic products from Madagascar are sold at greatly higher prices than the same products from competitor countries such as Sri Lanka. This is due, say Malagasy respondents, to their higher quality. However, much to local anger, buyers from the North continue to demand that Malagasy exporters cut their

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with SRI have been so extraordinary that, until lately, they have been simply ignored by scientists. SRI challenges so many of the basic principles of irrigated rice cultivation, and so many professionals have been entirely sceptical. But it is the number of farmers adopting SRI that is proof of its effectiveness and efficiency' (Pretty, pers. comm. 11/00).

58 Homeopharma is a member of PROMABIO Groupement Professionnel des Operateurs en Agriculture Biologique, Madagascar's organic umbrella body.

prices. Malagasy essential oils are, for example, twice as expensive as those sourced elsewhere. In 1996 India sold organic essential oil of pepper at 350-400 FF per kilo and Madagascar at 800 FF (Randriamanantena, 1998: 11).

Malagasy insistence that foreign buyers pay 'a fair price' for higher quality is viewed by some export-import agencies as having little to do with quality but a lot to do with dishonesty (Anon, Rapunzel, pers. comm. 08/00, and also Anon, GTZ, pers. comm. 03/01). Whilst it is undoubtedly so that several external agencies, including those seeking to set up fair trade partnerships, have had a very rough time in Madagascar, this author's conversations with Ramboatiana (pers. comm. 07/00) suggest that Malagasy suppliers generally believe that Northern partners should be prepared to pay a price appropriate to the quality of the product, rather than insist on terms of trade disadvantageous to the South.

The demands of organic certification agencies present a significant barrier. Firstly, documents pertaining to certification are in French, a language that virtually none of the farmers speak or read. A source of deep concern to illiterate farmers is the necessity of signing documents since they worry that they might be signing away their land. Second, organic certification is a costly process for farmers who are exceedingly poor. Third, another difficulty lies in the fact that the organic procedures which farmers are expected to follow do not necessarily acknowledge local conditions. For instance the use of animal manure is usually expected in organic farming (in order to maintain a closed cycle), but for some farmers handling manure is 'taboo'. Training in organic methods is not widespread and so pest and weed control remains a major worry. Traditional Malagasy agriculture relies on slash and burn – *tavy* - which offers a partial solution to these problems. However tavy is prohibited under organic procedures. Fourth, the Malagasy government offers no support to organic farming, financial or otherwise. Over seven years ago the Malagasy organic umbrella body PROMABIO devised and submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture regulations which would enable them to demonstrate equivalence with EU Regulation 2092/91, but a reply has yet to be received.[59]

Despite such problems, Malagasy suppliers of organic products feel that organic agriculture combines the reality of agricultural practice in Madagascar with the potential of exporting high quality tropical produce in demand in the North. They perceive the situation as, potentially at least, 'win-win'. Local smallholder farmers gain access to international markets, thereby greatly enhancing their income, the suppliers are likewise enabled to make a living, and the organic consumer is able to purchase an attractive product.

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[59] More details are provided in a discussion document the author prepared for an email discussion forum: Farnworth, CR. (2002c) 'Key paper for the Overseas Development Institute/AgREN email discussion on Globalisation and Pro-poor agricultural development' (www.rimisp.cl/agren).

6.2   The Research Sites

Both studies were carried out on Madagascar's rainy and fertile east coast in 2001, in the province of Tamatave (Toamasina)[60]. The first study involved working with smallholder organic farmers close to Brickaville (Ampasimanolotra). The second study involved working with plantation workers on an organic plantation close to Fénerive-Est (Fenoarivo-Atsinanana). The research sites are presented separately below. Statistical data cited here are taken from Ministère de l'Agriculture (1998).

Research Site 1: Brickaville
The research was carried out in the three villages of Sahalakana, Sombina and Sandranola. Map 6.1 was created by the smallholders during a participator mapping exercise. The primary forest, rivers and the national highway RN2 are prominent. People have chosen not to live together in tight communities, but rather to set up family homesteads surrounded by their fields.

Carte 1: Carte Participative de la region autour de Sahalakana
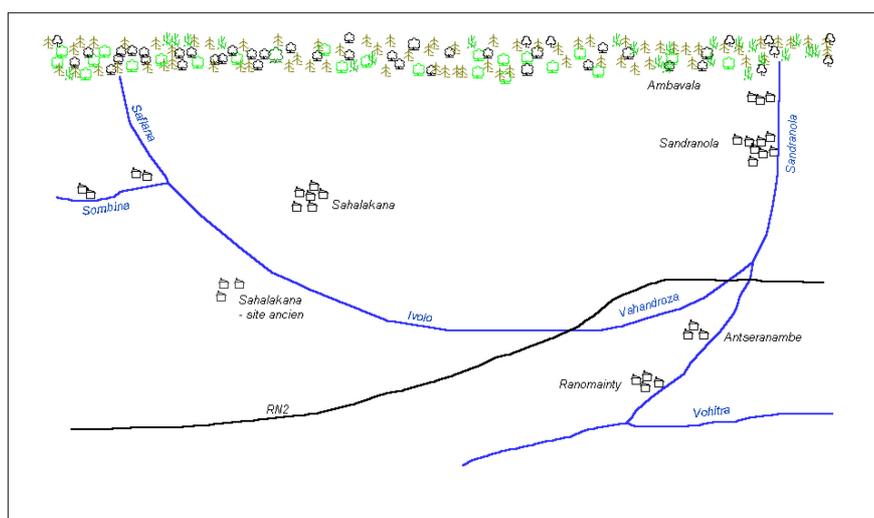
Source: Fait par les villageois de Sahalakana le 5 juillet 2001

Map 6.1 Sahalakana, Sombina and Sandranola
Source: Farnworth et al. (2003)

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60 Many places in Madagascar are named both in French and Malagasy. Where this applies, the author provides the French place name followed by the Malagasy place name in brackets. However, apart from the initial reference the author employs only the French place names. The rationale behind this is simply that the author worked in French and these were the place names used throughout the research process.
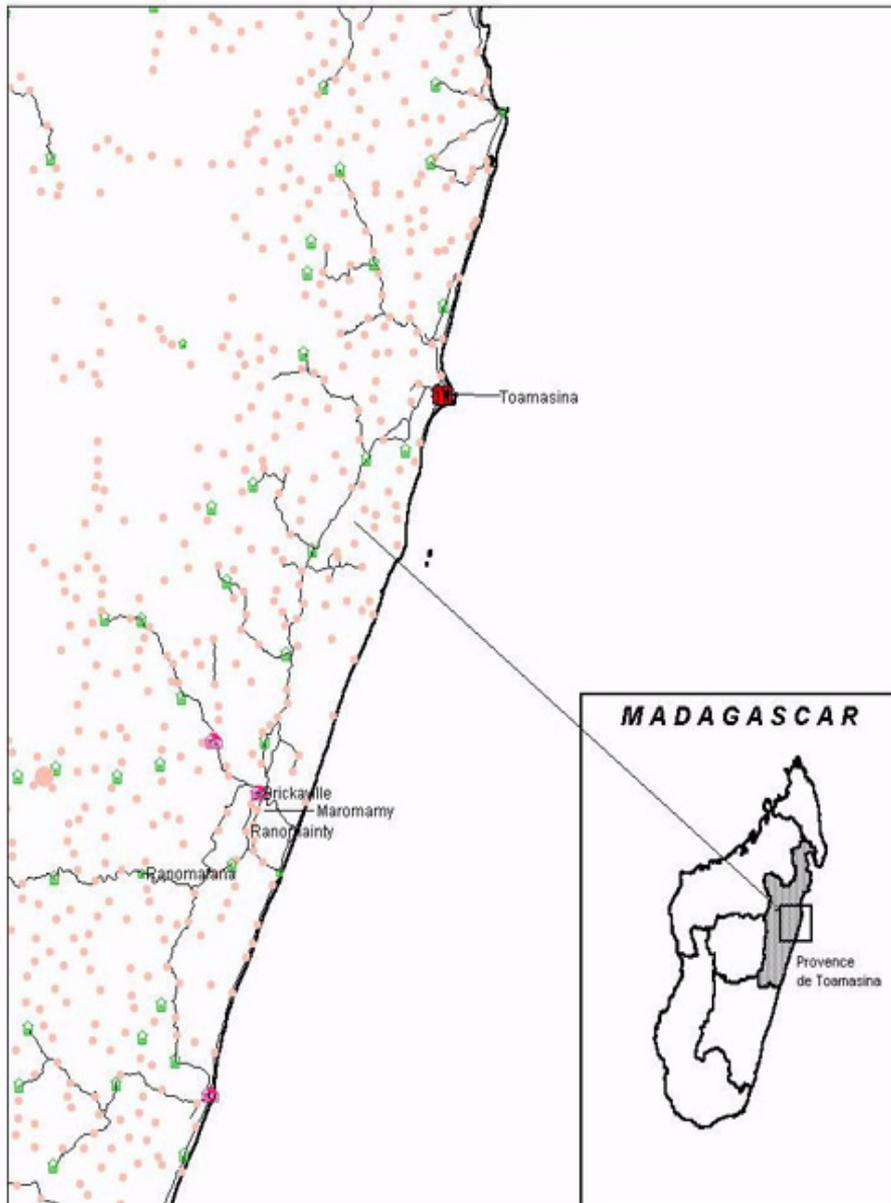
Map 6.2: Research Site 1 – Brickaville
Source: Farnworth *et al.* (2002)

Photograph 6.1 illustrates the mixed nature of the local landscape, with the presence of grasslands and bracken pointing to *tavy* – slash and burn cultivation. This is illegal in Madagascar, and also forbidden by organic certification regulations, but it is nonetheless widely practised. Smallholders want to reduce cover for wild pigs (which destroy their harvest), to create grazing for cattle, and to clear ground for dry rice plots on the steep hillsides. Bracken thrives on burning, however, compounding their problems.

Photograph 6.1 View Towards Sahalakana, Brickaville

The climate is hot and humid. It rains between 180-300 days a year, with January being the wettest month and September and October being the driest months. Cyclones are frequent – in 2000 for example there were two. They can be extremely severe.

The majority of the local population belongs to the *Betsimisaraka* ethnic group[61]. The average population density is 23 people per km². Population increase in the region is estimated to be 3% pa, slightly more than in Madagascar in general (2.8%). The average family size is 4.3 persons (higher in rural areas) and 50% of households at any one time are female-headed. Illiteracy among heads of households in the area studied is around 32%.

Self-sufficiency in food is crucial but villagers also sell their products in the towns of Brickaville (15-20 km distant), Maromany (10 km distant) and occasionally in Tamatave (120 km distant). Due to the great difficulty of accessing

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61 The many inseparables – a name which points to their mixed ethnic origins.

the villages (there are no roads, merely paths) middlemen do not circulate in this area. All produce is therefore carried to the main road, and thence to local markets, by the farmers themselves on their backs.

The area was chosen for research purposes because the smallholders harvest plantation and wild-sown cinnamon for Phaelflor, a small private Malagasy-owned organic company that exports a variety of essential oils to the USA and Europe. First order distillation of the cinnamon oil takes place locally, with further refinement in the capital Antananarivo. Cinnamon bark is also harvested. This enterprise is supported by USAID-LDI. It is seen as a way of preserving important forest biodiversity by encouraging economic use of the buffer zone between the forest and farmland. Box 6.1 introduces the plant and its uses.

Box 6.1: Cinnamon: an overview

Cinnamomum zeylanicum is a bushy evergreen tree of the laurel family (*Lauraceae*). It is native to Sri Lanka, the neighbouring Malabar Coast of India, and Myanmar (Burma). It is cultivated in South America, the Caribbean, and to a limited extent in the Seychelles and Madagascar. Cinnamon is an ancient spice mentioned several times in the Old Testament. The word 'cinnamon' can be traced back through Latin and Greek to the Old Hebrew word *kinamom*. It is possible that an early Malaysian language provided the original term, since the modern Malay and Indonesian word for cinnamon is *kayu manis*, meaning 'sweet wood'.

Essential oil of cinnamon is usually derived through steaming the leaves or bark. It is richer in aroma than ground cinnamon. The chief constituents are eugenol, eugenol acetate, cinnamaldehyle and benzyl benzoate. The oil is yellow to brownish in colour and smells warm, spicy, and woodsy. Oil derived from the leaves can be used as a substitute for cloves. Oil derived from the roots, which is 60 per cent camphor, is generally not used commercially. In Eastern medicine essential oil of cinnamon is used to treat flu, digestive and menstrual problems, and it is also used as a general stimulant. In aromatherapy essential oil of cinnamon is used to aid rheumatism, stress, digestion, spasms, colds, flu and circulation.

The familiar form of spice in the North is made from the dried inner bark. It is light brown in colour and has a delicately fragrant aroma and a warm, sweet flavour. In Western cuisine cinnamon is used to flavour mostly sweet dishes, and it is an optional ingredient of the classical French mixture *quatre épices*. Powdered cinnamon can be found in several other spice mixtures too, like the North Indian *garam masala,* in *curry powder* and in the Arabic *baharat*. African spice mixtures in Arabic style are Moroccan *ras el hanout* Tunisian *gâlat dagga* and *berbere*, an Ethiopian spice mixture with somewhat Indian character. So called 'cinnamon buds' are unripe fruits harvested shortly after the blossom. They look rather like cloves. They have

a mild, sweet flavour and need to be finely ground before use. They are used as a spice in Indian cuisine.

Sources:www.ang.kfunigraz.ac.at/~katzer/engl/generic_frame.html?;Cinn_zey.html
http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?eu=84859;
www.aromaweb.com/essentialoilsaf/cinnamon.arp (03-September-2004).

Research Site 2: Plantation MonDésir

Plantation MonDésir (PMD) is located 12 km from Fénerive-Est. The landscape is characterised by small steep-sided valleys and rivers that run towards the nearby coast. Along the main road, the RN2, tiny shops provide a range of goods. Fishing is important and there is some international tourism. The ethnic makeup is the same as in the Brickaville area. However, the population density is higher with around 72 people per km². Women head around 50% of households and illiteracy among household heads is 46%. Self-sufficiency in food is, as in Brickaville, a central concern. Therefore most crops are dual purpose, but lack of road access combined with frequent heavy rains means that many products never actually reach the market. Plantation MonDésir (PMD) is situated 12 km from the town of Fénerive-Est. It covers 40 ha, the land originally being appropriated during colonial times. It is now under joint Malagasy-Swiss ownership. Map 6.3 overleaf shows the research site in relation to Madagascar as a whole.

Organic farming began only in 1999 with about 7 ha currently under production. Careful attention is paid to organic principles. For example all waste from the plantation and distillery is composted. A forest-like milieu is being created in order to contain pests and diseases. In one area a fourfold strata has been developed. Patchouli grows at ground level, black pepper (second stratum) grows up *glericidia* trees (the third stratum – the trees are used as living stakes, and their leaves are used both as a mulch and to prevent weed growth around the pepper plants). Large trees like jackfruit (the fourth stratum) cast shade as well as providing fruit. Photograph 6.2 overleaf shows recently-planted cinnamon inter-planted with vertiver grass, which acts as a mulch and provides weedcover. The pepper plantation just referred to lies on the opposite slope. The same line of sight is depicted in the transect (Appendix B) made by the research team, which details the gender division of labour (GDL) on different sections of the plantation. The transect, and the organic farming techniques just discussed, are also presented in the author's video (Farnworth, 2003e).

The most important crop grown on the plantation is black pepper[62]. Other crops include cinnamon and vanilla, as well as plants used to produce essential oils like lantana and eucalyptus. All products are destined for export to South Africa (spices), France (essential oils) and Belgium (oils and spices). The aim is to produce high quality organic products for the charcuterie, perfume and pharmaceutic industries.

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62 Although pepper is grown elsewhere in the area, local farmers sell when the peppercorns are still green – and much less valuable. This is because they constantly need to turn their assets in cash (owing to poverty) and also to evade theft. A typical harvest from one plant at PMD is about 10 kg per plant, but local farmers only achieve 2-3 kgs.

CARTE DE LA ZONE DE RECHERCHE
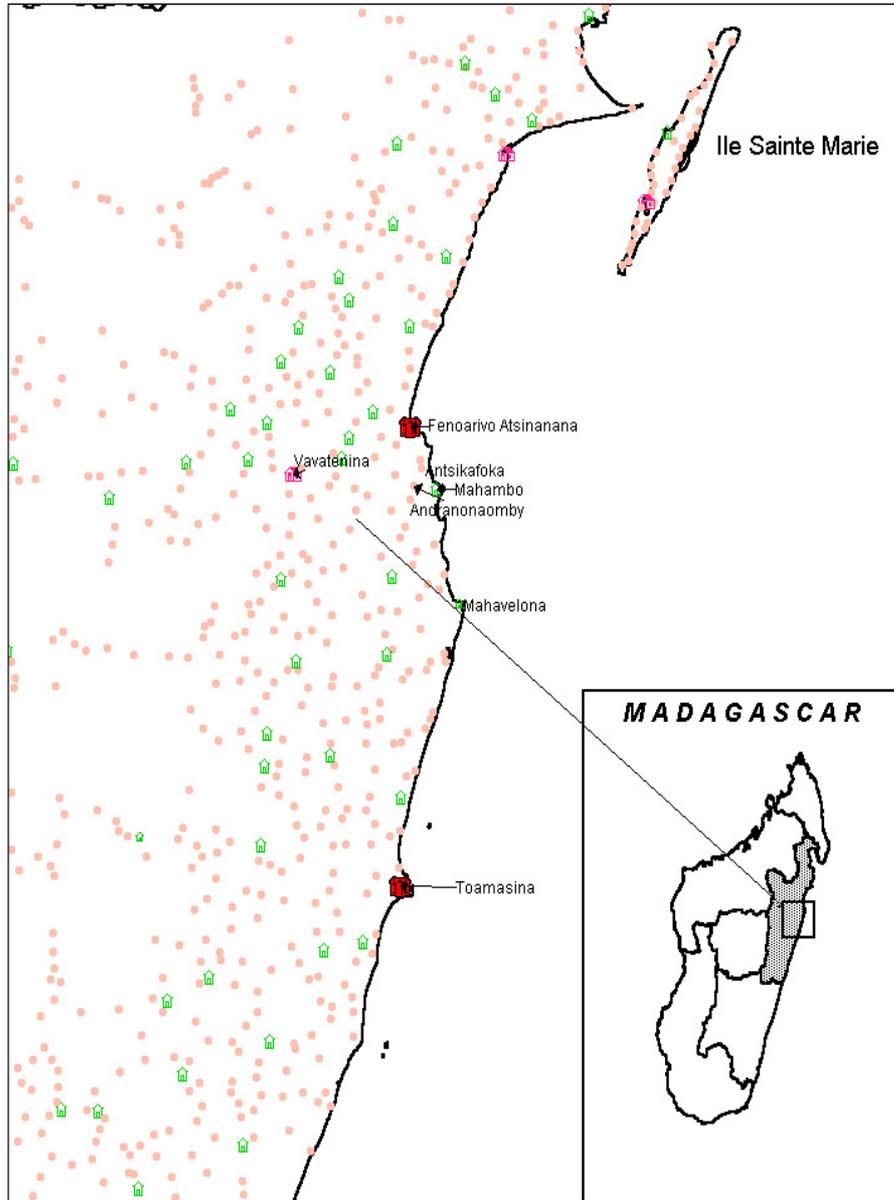
Map 6.3: Research Site 2 – Plantation MonDésir
Source: Farnworth & Razanabahoaka (2002)

Photograph 6.2 View Across Plantation MonDésir

PMD employs 35 workers, of whom 32 are manual labourers. Two managers, Clara and Marc, reside on the plantation. Only 12 manual workers, including 3 women, have a permanent contract. The remaining workers are employed on a daily basis. They receive 5 000 FMG[63] a day, payable at the end of the week. Permanent workers however receive a weekly wage of 7 500 FMG, payable twice monthly. They also benefit from 2 ½ days holiday a month. School fees for their children are paid and any medical costs are covered. Hours of work are 7.00-11.30 and 13.00-16.30 during the week, and 7.00-11.30 on Saturday.[64] Latecomers are not permitted to work.

6.3   Findings from the Quality of Life Toolkit

The main purpose of the author's research in the Brickaville area was to gain an understanding of how producing organic cinnamon for export might affect the quality of life of the smallholders involved in the programme. Research on the organic plantation at Plantation MonDésir similarly sought to elicit workers' perceptions on how their quality of life was affected by employment. As soon as

63 FMG (Francs Malgache): 10 000 FMG were equivalent to £1 sterling at the time of study in 2001

 (7 500 FMG were therefore roughly equivalent to 1 Euro).

64 To gain permanent status workers must demonstrate, according to Clara, one of the two onsite managers, that they

are ‚assiduous, serious, conscientious and have an aptitude for work'. She added that since the plantation lacked the

means to employ more permanent workers most workers 'fortunately' failed to meet these criteria.

research commenced, however, it became clear that a much wider understanding of the quality of life in the communities studied was required in order to be able to 'place' and embed the contribution of organic agriculture to overall quality of life effectively.

The research results could be grouped in many ways. Some resist easy categorisation. The grouping depends in part on a process of prior valuation. For instance, is a desire to overtly affirm local values primordial, or in part a response to situations of deep insecurity? Furthermore, the distinction between categories and processes is not self-evident. A desire for respect could be interpreted as an important category (an end state) or it could be considered a 'flow', a process of becoming. Malagasy respondents thought that respect was not only important in itself - in the course of discussing other issues they touched upon diverse ways to achieve respect, for instance through education, through running a business well, through generosity to others, or through ascriptive categorisation.

None the less, in order to enable analysis the constituents of quality of life have been categorised as follows[65]:

1. Social relations: the aim here is to provide a glimpse of how the respondents pictured themselves in their relationships to others.
2. The immediate environment: here the purpose is to report how the respondents related to the physical world immediately around them.
3. Nourishment: are the respondents adequately nourished?
4. Health: are the respondents healthy?
5. Education: are the respondents receiving an adequate education?
6. Time management: having examined spatial relations and then particular aspects of well-being, the aim here is to understand well-being in various temporal dimensions.
7. Money and markets: the purpose is to examine the respondents' integration in market relations.
8. Aspirations: what would the respondents like to change about their lives?

The results from the research with the smallholders and the plantation workers are distributed asymmetrically across these eight categories. As mentioned in the previous chapter and also in chapter two, a central guideline was to allow the respondents to shape the research process as far as was possible. Different themes, or weightings of the same themes, therefore emerged. The names of all the respondents, and the activities to which they contributed, can be found in Appendix E.

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65 More details of the actual results can be found in the author's two working papers referred to in the introduction.
Some of the information in the following parts derives from the video the research team made with the plantation workers, as well as from field notes maintained by the author.

Social Relations

This part aims to provide, however blurry, an insight into how the respondents viewed themselves. It is divided as follows: (i) indicates how wealth and poverty is defined in the region; (ii) looks at family relations by first noting the customary status of women and then by turning to what each gender considers the constituents of a happy marriage to be, and (iii) examines the gender division of labour. It is hoped that the data presented will bring the respondents 'to life' for the reader, as well as providing an important context for the findings presented in the remaining parts.

Definitions of Wealth and Poverty According to the Smallholders and Plantation Workers

The smallholders in the Brickaville area would be considered poor by any objective measuring instrument. Box 6.2 presents the respondents' own categorisation of poor, middle and rich families. Their cause and effect explanations for wealth and poverty are also given. The information was obtained through semi-structured interviews with smallholders, with the aid of wealth ranking (Grandin, 1988).

Box 6.2: Smallholder Definitions of Poverty and Wealth

Poor families have numerous children, around 10-12. They are not self-sufficient and therefore are compelled to search for work in order to purchase food, *'One has to search today for what one will eat today and one must search tomorrow for what one will eat tomorrow.'* This category supplies the wealthier categories with labour. In the opinion of some respondents the poor are poor because they are lazy: they relax after the rice harvest instead of planting other crops. However, others maintained that the principle reason was that poor people lack not only agricultural knowledge, but also time and business management skills. Everyone at Sombina and 90% of inhabitants in the other two villages were placed in this category.

A middle-income family has around 3-4 children. They are almost self-sufficient but they do not have any plates and therefore continue to use banana leaves. They have almost no kitchen utensils and very few clothes. However they have a 'perfect' command of crop rotation. They are always seeking to become rich but are at permanent risk of falling into poverty. Only 1 in 5 children of such families are able to maintain middle-income status as adults. The respondents placed 10% of families in this category.

Rich families (0.5% of the local population) have enough food not only all year round but also all their lives. They have plenty of money and plenty of zebu (between 20-50 animals) as well as a lot of land. Rich people think only of how to get richer, for example by buying new land. They never help others in the villages. Indeed, poor family members serve as paid labour to wealthy ones. When a tomb needs to be repaired poor and rich family members are expected to contribute equally regardless of income. In Sandronola there are several rich families.

Finally, respondents asserted that it was very easy to become poor, but extremely difficult to become rich. This could only happen through the *'grace of God'*.[66] The majority of the rich are immigrants who lack local family support and must, therefore, work very hard.

Source: Research Team, Brickaville, July 2001.   N = 10[67]

It is clear that wealth categories are extremely fluid, particularly in a downward direction. It is interesting to note that the cause of poverty was in general ascribed to the personal characteristics of those afflicted. The concept that the root causes of poverty might lie beyond themselves, for instance in poor producer prices for agricultural goods, or in a general lack of government investment in the region[68] did not appear, at least in this survey.

The respondents made a clear association between poverty and the number of children a family has. It is not known (through failure to ask) if the respondents considered how peaks and troughs in incomes across a family lifecycle might affect their wealth status. Working for others is seen as a significant indicator of poverty. For this reason smallholders resist, as far as possible, incorporation into wage labour relations. Box 6.2 also shows that wealth was viewed with decided ambivalence, for to stay wealthy meant, in essence, breaking locally approved social mores for the sake of personal security and physical comforts.

The respondents at Plantation MonDésir shared this ambivalence. They said, *'If you are rich*:

- *You are happy because you can have all that you want to have.*
- *You are self-sufficient and have a surplus too.*
- *[You have] something to share with others because this way communal life is at peace. [Otherwise] It is better to be poor among friends than to be alone when one is rich.[69]*
- *To be rich and alone is like a single idea – it doesn't bring anything.*

This hesitation about gaining a high level of material wealth - and thereby jeopardising one's friendships and standing in the community - has significant

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66 This is a translation of *'Grace au Dieu'*. It is important to appreciate that the Malagasy words 'Andriamanitra' and 'Zanahary' refer to forces different to the European version of a Christian God. God is not '*associated with a moral purpose but manifests itself as a destiny which is neither reward nor punishment, simply a state of affairs which affects you and which cannot be resisted'* (Bloch, 1995: 67)

67 This is a composite figure and only approximate. Three people did the original wealth ranking but in the course of the three-week fieldwork period respondents were frequently asked about how they classify wealth and poverty, and how they classified their fellow villagers.

68 For example, Cyclone Geralda destroyed all 35 primary schools in the area in 1994. They had not yet been rebuilt at the time of the research in 2001.

69 This is a local saying.

implications for the potential success or otherwise of externally-directed initiatives in the community. For instance Mr. Tandrimo, the local partner of Phaelflor, expressly rejected training to become a 'model farmer' since he did not want to acquire special status or unreasonable wealth in the local community[70]. The implications for how organic enterprises might work with such a community, and the kind of projects they might want to support, are discussed in the following chapter.

Family Relations

Regardless of age, women have the same status as children until they are married. Marriage is patrilocal (meaning that the woman moves to her husband's home). Male respondents at Brickaville indicated that though some heads of household were female, these were rare since following the death or divorce of the husband women search for another male partner to enable them to work the fields: *'to be able to live'*. The government statistics given earlier regarding female headship therefore should not be understood to represent a permanent state of affairs, but rather a snapshot in time. As such the overall statistic of around 50% would seem to demonstrate that there is great dynamism in household relations. One female respondent in Sandranola expressly said that she did not care to remarry. Instead, she had adopted two boys to help her with agricultural tasks.[71]

Although women have the status of minors before marriage, they do have a certain amount of decision-making room. Respondents at PMD explained that men have to pay quite a substantial bride price in order to acquire a wife. The bride to be sets her bride price (between 250 000 – 500 000 FMG, or a zebu). This is paid direct to her. This is quite unusual, since in many African countries bride price is paid to the bride's family rather than the bride herself (see for example Dupre, 1995, and Vourela, 1995). Male respondents added that, following marriage, they were expected to purchase jewellery for their wives, *'The girl you married is the power in your home so you have to take care of her, you have to do that because she's yours. You have to buy her gold.'* Other male plantation workers commented:

- *To get a woman you need love and money.*
- *If you look for work it shows that you are not lazy - women appreciate that.*
- *It is best to have just one woman to avoid problems of jealousy, they are not like zebus that you can keep in the same yard.*
- *I hope to live in a beautiful villa with the woman of my dreams.*

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70 Mr. Tandrimo, key informant interview (July 2001).

71 Ekejuiba (1995) discusses studies elsewhere in Africa that show how women manipulate the gender division of labour in their own interests. She cites the case of her maternal aunt in Nigeria who emerged from a 'failed' childless marriage. The aunt was discouraged from remarrying, but in time she 'married' another woman who, in time, produced four sons for their 'hearth-hold' (a term Ekejuiba uses in preference to household). By this time the aunt had a son of her own, too.

Women listed the ingredients of a happy marriage slightly differently, focusing above all on the nebulous quality of respect:

- *A blooming home, reciprocal respect between woman and man.*
- *To have your rights at home.*
- *Respect in a relationship is vital.*
- *If there is respect at home, then you can have everything you want.*

Children were seen by all the plantation workers as essential to a good quality of life.[72] They said that children are a source not only of labour in the fields, but also of togetherness and of joy. Children ensure that funeral rites for the parents are properly observed. They also justify all the hard work of today. Men commented:

- *One marries to have children because there's no point in not having children to eat the produce of your fields. Moreover, children are important – they take care of you.*
- *We young people need a healthy woman who can have children. All I want is such a woman.*
- *The family is very important in order to ensure descendants and to ensure burial.*

Women said:

- *According to the values of this area, it is better to be poor than to have no children. Children are the source and the wealth of the family. I had two miscarriages before I gave birth to my two boys. They are my delight.*
- *[You need to have] a girl to cry when you are dead.*
- *[You need to have] a son to carry your coffin, to work the land, and to look for wood.*

The Gender Division of Labour

An examination of the gender-disaggregated seasonal calendar, shown in Figure 6.1 overleaf, shows that responsibility for many crops is highly gendered[73]. A good number of crops are planted, tended and harvested by one gender. Almost without exception, girls work alongside women and boys alongside men. Both boys and girls work primarily on cultivation-related tasks but they are also responsible for harvesting certain fruits on their own. The calendar also makes it clear that when labour on certain crops is sex-sequential, men and boys tend to be responsible for cultivating the crop but women help with the harvest. However, the inverse does not apply.

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72 Caplan (1995) reports similar findings from Tanzania. By means of an anthropological study she investigates

tensions between the desire of both women and men to have large families, and the crucial role women play in

subsistence production. She also examines the attitudes of women and men to their sons and daughters. They appreciate

the companionship of a child of the same sex (women talk to women, men to men) and also the help that a child of a

different sex can offer.

73 The research team, to avoid demanding too much time of the busy respondents, did not inquire into tasks related to

land preparation, nor into livestock. Small livestock, particularly chicken, are also raised and sometimes sold.

Figure 6.1: Gender Disaggregated Seasonal Calendar, Sombina

Crop	July	Aug	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June
Rice 1 [74]	⌘C ⌘H	⌘C ⌘H	⌘C	⌘C							○□H	○□H
Rice 2 [75]												
Cassava		□⊠C	□⊠C	○◎H				□⊠H	□⊠H	□⊠H	□⊠H	□⊠H
Maize			□⊠C	□⊠C	□⊠C	□⊠C ⌘H	□⊠C ⌘H	□⊠C ⌘H	⌘H	⌘H	⌘H	
Banana			□⊠C	□⊠C	□⊠C					⌘H	⌘H	⌘H
Coffee	□⊠C ○□H	○□H	○□H							□⊠C	□⊠C ○□H	□⊠C ○□H
Saonjo [76]	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------
Pine-apple	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------
Ovy Ala[77]	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------
Sweet Potato	□⊠C ○◎C			⌘H								
Lychee	□⊠C				⌘H	⌘H						□⊠C
Cloves	□⊠C			□⊠H	□⊠H							□⊠C
Cocoa	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------	---------
Pepper	⌘C	⌘H	⌘H									
Avocado	⌘C									□⊠H	□⊠H	

Key
○ female adult task   C = cultivation
□ male adult task   H = harvest
⌘ task shared by all   --- = cultivation and harvest all year round
◎ girl's task ⊠ boy's task

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74 Rice after burning : the soil is prepared, weeds removed, area burned, rice sown.

75 Riz hosy (paddy) : full details of the tasks involved are not available.

76 Type of potato

77 Type of sweet potato

148

Crop	July	Aug	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June
Vanilla	□⊠C									□⊠C	□⊠C	□⊠C
Poca-nelle	⌘C									⌘H		
Ampa-libe	⌘C ◎⊠H											
Cœur de bœuf	□⊠C			⊠H								
Euca-lyptus	□⊠C											
Bibasse[78]	□C		⊠◯ ◎H	⊠◯ ◎H								
Carro-sol	□⊠C								⊠◎H	⊠◎H		
Mavon-dro[79]	---------	--------	--------	------	------	--------	--------	--------	--------	-----------	--------	--------
Sugar Cane	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘
Bread-fruit	□ C									⊠H		
Papaya	◯◎ C											◯◎C
Apem-ba	◯◎ C										◯◎H	
Cucum-ber		◯◎C	◯◎C		◯◎ H							
Pista-chio	◯H	◯H	◯C	◯C	◯C							
Anama laho[80]	◯◎ C		◯◎H									

Key
◯ female adult task   C = cultivation
□ male adult task   H = harvest
⌘ task shared by all   --- = cultivation and harvest all year round
◎ girl's task ⊠ boy's task

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78 Fruit

79 Type of sweet potato

80 Hot relish (leaves)

Crop	July	Aug	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June
Voa-hazo[81]	○◉C					○◉H						
Pongy[82]				○◉C							○◉H	
Mahale[83]		○◉C						○◉H				
Ginger[84]		○◉H	○◉C	○◉C								
Tsi-dimy[85]		○◉C									○◉H	
Hari-cots	○◉C			○◉H								

Source: Farnworth *et al.* (2002)   N = 25 male & female respondents.

The management at PMD maintained a careful gender division of labour. One woman, who had worked at PMD since its foundation, told us that she had originally worked alongside men on all agricultural tasks. However the European owner of the plantation phased this out as soon as he could, arguing that it was inappropriate for a woman to engage in heavy labour. Today the women work mostly in the plant nursery and they also plant and harvest rice. The men carry out some very heavy clearance tasks, as well as other work such as pest control (see the transect in Appendix B for more details). The management at PMD therefore did not challenge, but indeed entrenched, a locally prevalent gender division of labour, as well as adding some categories of its own. This is arguably dis-empowering in the sense that both genders only experienced part of each plant's full production cycle under organic management conditions. It might therefore be difficult for them to set up their own organic farms at some stage. However, PMD did offer some training to all workers in organic farming techniques, particularly of cinnamon.

The Relationship to the Local Environment
The relationship of the smallholders and plantation workers to their local environment is complex. Only a glimpse of this rich relationship can be provided here. The environment is at one and the same time a vital source of food and cash crops to meet basic needs; a place of dialogue between generations (and hence a place in flux - owned and simultaneously not owned), and a place of contest between the state and other actors seeking to determine its use. It is a place of fear and of pleasure.

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81 Fruit

82 Type of melon

83 Type of lentil

84 Ginger 'tamotamo'

85 Type of lentil

Three aspects of the respondents' relationship to the world immediately surrounding them is discussed here: (i) the respondents' multi-faceted perceptions of their immediate environment is considered. This is followed by (ii) an exploration of the way that their construction of the environment is gendered, resulting in quite different 'felt and experienced' worlds. Finally, in (iii) the respondents' perceptions what may be termed the natural world - the primary forest - is discussed.

Multi-faced Perceptions of the Environment
The immediate environment around the smallholders can be construed as a dynamic expression of human-nature relations, each shaping the other in a continual process. Well-being transects carried out with smallholders in Sahalakana and Sombina revealed a richly-textured world hidden within seemingly haphazard features like stands of trees or semi-wild spaces. Box 6.3 presents some of the key points arising from the transect created by male villagers in Sombina. The transect itself is depicted in Appendix C.

Box 6.3: Well-being Transect in Sombina: Selected Findings

As in the whole region, families preferred to live alone rather than among neighbours – indeed there are two villages locally called Sombina (shown on Map 6.1), due to an old dispute between two families. Respondents asserted that they liked to be surrounded by their fields. They added that one avoids problems of theft if one lives far from neighbours.

The villagers set aside land for future use, planting it with eucalyptus and ravenala in the meantime. The latter tree is the national symbol of Madagascar. The wood is used in house construction. The leaves are shaped into plates and cutlery, and are also used as umbrellas.

A substantial proportion of the land has been sold[86] to strangers since people in this area 'cannot say no' when someone asks for a parcel. Such external landholders employ people to clear the land of primary forest and to cultivate cash crops upon it. A substantial land parcel adjacent to the transect had been bought *'by people who live very far from here',* but was not yet under cultivation. This state of affairs was viewed with great regret by the respondents: *'Perhaps we can ask them if we can use the land. If so, we would plant rice on the valley bottom and cassava on the slopes. But right now we don't have enough labour available.'*

In contrast, the villagers were permitted to use land held privately by a local villager as a kind of commons. They harvested a great number of wild fruits (apart from two kinds which were reserved for the land owner) and medicinal plants from this area.

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86 Land here sells for around 250 000 FMG for two hectares (£25 sterling).

The river was used by all for bathing, food preparation and drinking. Children and women fish, though eels were not caught since they were considered fady (taboo)[87]. Wild pigs inhabit this area but their consumption is taboo for some individuals. Other people simply dislike the taste of pork.

Beyond this lay an area of sacred land. A sacrifice pole stood by the path. Hidden in the forest were tombs: *'One feels a link with the ancestors here, that pleases us'*. The respondents expressed great pleasure in the wildlife living in this undisturbed area.

Source: Research Team, Brickaville, July 2001.	N = 4

Some important points may be drawn from the well-being transect. It is clear that the respondents viewed the land as a spatial resource that should be shared, even if this sharing might ultimately hinder their own livelihoods or those of their children (as with the sale of land to outsiders – who also do not contribute to community life). It would likewise appear that the respondents believe that there is an obligation to share the produce of land, as shown by their disapproval of the fallow land held by an outsider, and their approval of the generosity of a local villager in turning over his private holding for general use.

Land also has a temporal character, with substantial sections being set aside for future generations or for the past users. It is necessary to appreciate that in Madagascar each person is considered *'a link in the chain of life … Everyone has a place in the family, the village, the nation, and also in the universe and the infinity of time … [they are] situated very concretely with respect to their ancestors and descendents'* (Mauro & Raholiarisoa, 2000: 81).

The use, or non-use, of certain wild products like fish and pigs is regulated by its taboo or non-taboo status, not only for whole groups of people but also on an individual basis. That is, individual people have their own personal relationship to particular creatures.

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87 The concept of fady (taboo) exists right across Madagascar and it is essential to understand how important a role it plays in the life of most people. Mauro & Raholiarisoa (2000: 115) explain, *'There are fadys linked to the person, which are determined by an astrological analysis at the time of their birth, and fadys linked to a place or situation … The origin of most fadys is lost in the collective memory. New fady are determined by astrologians, geomancers, likewise by the masters of the invisible, the priest of tromba, the ombiasy and mpisikidy…. The transgression of a fady can have severe consequences.'* Hotham & Razafindrahova (2002: 15) note that *'fady is flexible to some extent, and reactive to the current environment it is functioning within.'* They add that fadys exist at a number of levels. At one level they are similar to the parables and stories taught in Europe to young children to teach them manners and skills. At another level they maintain central patterns enabling the spiritual sphere to maintain its equilibrium (ibid. 42).

Gendered Constructions of the Environment

Male and female workers at Plantation MonDésir were asked to construct maps of their local environment. They worked in parallel, but in gender-disaggregated groups. Upon completing this task, they were then asked to construct 'dream maps', to demonstrate what they would like to change in their world. The outcome of the latter exercise is discussed below under *'Aspirations'*; here we contemplate how men and women perceived their currently-existing world.

Men and women produced very different maps. The women's map (Map 6.4) is depicted here. It shows the central importance of paths and roads. It is interesting to note that no attempt was made to distinguish between the two - perhaps because women almost always go somewhere on foot. Walking along such paths and roads provided women with an enjoyable way to meet people, by chance rather than arrangement, *'When I go along the road to Antsikafoka, I go up to people, sit down with them and chat.'* The women welcomed repairs to the main road (which were on-going at the time of interview), since this would expedite the transport of products to market. However, they were deeply concerned about their children's safety due to increased vehicle speeds.
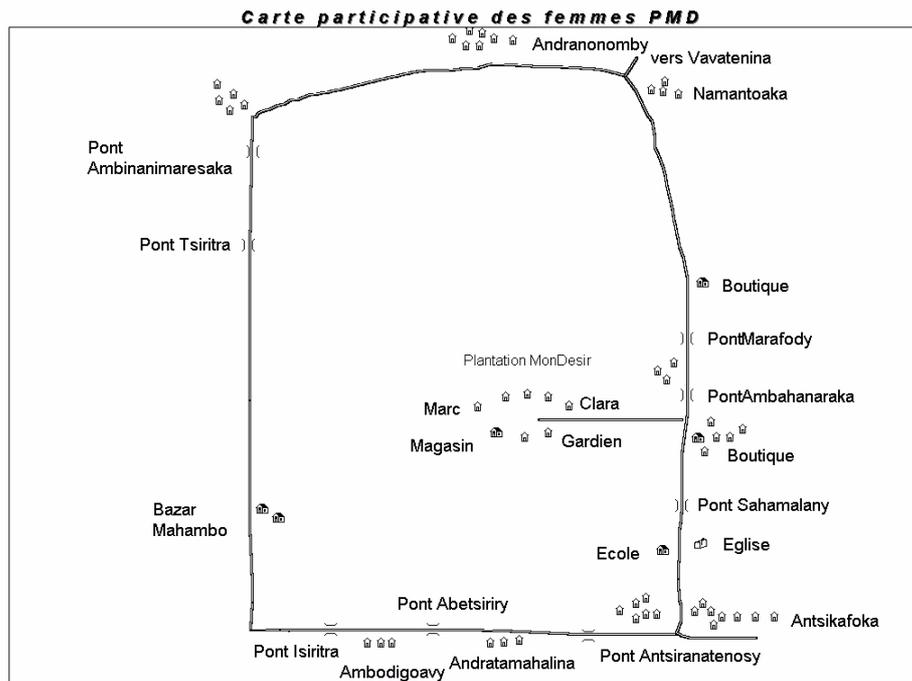
Map 6.4: Participatory Map Created by Women Workers at Plantation MonDésir
  Language key: Pont = bridge, Eglise = church, Ecole = school, Magasin = shop; Gardien = guard, Bazar = Market
Source: Farnworth & Razanabahoaka (2002)

All locations shown on their map were within walking distance. Bridges formed important landmarks. Local shops, *'one earns in order to spend there'*, villages, the church and the school come together on the women's map in a tight circle around PMD. Indeed the plantation forms the heart of the map and the homes of the two managers, Clara and Marc, are clearly marked. A woman explained, *'We almost never go out, our life revolves around the plantation, the shop and above all our home.'* Thus the women's map was powerfully bounded, a mind map of felt and known territory, a map of the familiar.

The men's map was completely different. Too vast to be adequately captured in a photograph or drawing, it noted the same villages as the women's map, but also distant places. For the men, as with the women, the bridges and shops were important. However their map was not bounded – indeed during its creation the men wanted to move a car to enable it to continue! The plantation appeared as a small speck on the map. A worker commented, *'When we take a work break at PMD, we discuss our leisure programme for the weekend.'* His wife added, *'Whereas we women think only about our home, about our household tasks.'* The men's map was not only much more proportional and geographical, in the conventional sense, than the women's. It was also aspirational. It delved into what, even to them, was scarcely known territory (such as the distant town of Tamatave).

Respondents' Perceptions of the Natural World
Fieldwork also focused on perceptions of the natural world. By the natural world the author is referring to what McKibben (2003), in chapter four, termed *'the separate and wild province.'* The primary forest close to the smallholders' homes represents such a separate place since it has not yet been greatly affected by human activity, that is, it is not yet an artefact in the way a sustainable forest is (see Katz, 1993). Of course the forest is mediated through people's consciousness. It is the outcome of this process that is of interest here. The ways in which the smallholders in the three villages under study perceived and weighted particular characteristics of the forest sometimes differed.

People in all three villages searched for quite different wild foods in the forest. This is interesting given their geographical proximity to one another. Whilst the inhabitants of Sombina were only interested in honey, people in Sahalakana sought honey, crabs, fish and tenrecs (like a hedgehog). These products were eaten locally and also sold in local towns. The forest was also seen as a source of building materials, but respondents stressed that such exploitation was very limited. Yet men in Sombina at least were willing to guide outsiders seeking rare varieties of wood. *'Money speaks louder'* than the protection of the forest, they said, even though, they concurred, it is *'sad'* to admit this. Inhabitants of all three villages emphasized the importance of the forest as a source of streams, without which one cannot live.

Boys and men wander in the forest to relax: *'The forest is a source of joy, of pleasure: going there makes one happy, one doesn't feel tired because the air is fresh.'* However women were not allowed to enter the forest unaccompanied in case they *'got lost.'* This feeling, that the forest was a source of delight but also of

154

danger, was widespread. The villagers told many stories of people vanishing – indeed during one of our visits to Sahalakana almost all the men were searching for a missing villager.

Villagers left creatures like snakes and chameleons alone because *'they are useless'*, having neither an aesthetic nor economic use value. There was thus no wanton harming of such animals. The smallholders expressed sentiments of great fondness towards other forest creatures, particularly two sorts of lemur. The *indri indri*, a large lemur – in local parlance *babakoto* - was described as the *'jewel of the forest'*. Babakoto are considered almost human since they breastfeed their babies. People in Sombina stressed that they never stopped the babakoto from eating their crops, and people in Sandranola told us how a stranger to the area – even though he knew the babakoto was treasured locally – shot one. They sought, unsuccessfully, to heal it. When it died a special coffin was made and funeral rites were held.

Nourishment
The study by Saith & Harriss-White (1998), which was discussed in chapter four, refers to three basic functionings: to be nourished, to be healthy and to be educated. The assumption is that these three functionings are so elementary as to be necessary for well-being. A gendered differential in any one of these functionings is assumed to result in a gendered differential in well-being. This part looks first at how smallholders and plantation workers provision themselves with food. Then the nutritional adequacy of the local diet as assessed by two key informants (a doctor, and the president of the local womens' organisation, FAFED, in Fénerive) is discussed.

Provisioning
With respect to provisioning, self-sufficiency in foodstuffs and other 'products of primary necessity' (*produits de première nécessité: PPNs*) as they are termed in Madagascar, was of paramount concern. The importance of food self-sufficiency to both groups of respondents cannot be over-emphasised. As one smallholder woman farmer said, *'Even though our work is very tiring, we enjoy it because we are proud of producing all that we need ... and all that we eat is fresh. To be shielded from a lack of food gives us personal satisfaction. And a further point – when we produce enough we are not obliged to work for others.'* For these reasons, and because the smallholders have very low incomes, they are reluctant to purchase basic foods from local markets (which do not offer a steady supply of staples in any case). They grew a vast variety of plants – in addition to harvesting wild foods. The gender-disaggregated seasonal calendar created by respondents in Sombina, which was discussed above, shows that 36 different crops were grown[88].

In order to likewise assure self-sufficiency the plantation workers rent small plots under various kinds of *métayage* - tenant farming – systems. In the Fénerive area

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88 Another seasonal calendar was prepared with the villagers in Sahalakana. The results were similar, though not entirely the same.

three types of *métayage* are practised: (i) The landowner provides the land and the tenant provides all the materials and labour. The harvest is divided between both parties equally (ii) The tenant pays a certain sum for use of the land over the course of a year. In 2001 he or she might have paid around 500 000 FMG per paddy field. In that year the tenant might have earned between 150 000 and 200 000 FMG once the cost of the land rental had been deducted (iii) Tenants who farm hill slopes must give the landowner a large percentage of the harvest. Frequently the tenant is not able to farm the same parcel year on year since the landowner requests it for his or her own use. The author asked respondents if this decreased their enthusiasm for carrying out land improvements. They replied that this was not the case since they want, and need, good harvests.

The plantation workers require land in order to grow basic foodstuffs and some crops for sale, particularly rice. In all they grow less than ten types of crop. A male worker explained, *'One has to have certain things but if you don't have money it is hard to have them, therefore it is better to stay in the countryside since you don't need to buy products like coffee, cocoa [because you can grow them] - whereas in the town one must buy them.'*

Nutritional Adequacy

We now turn to the nutritional adequacy of the food. Malnutrition is widespread. A local doctor, Tsivolana Armel[89], drew a direct link between malnutrition and the poor state of health among women and children. He explained that infant mortality in the area was extremely high, both among newborns and in children up to the age of five, one of the reasons being poor nourishment. He stated further that malnutrition was a reason for the high rate of miscarriages in the area. Indeed, the research team spoke to four female plantation workers on this subject – three of them had already experienced two still-borns each, and they all had had numerous miscarriages.[90]

The reasons for malnutrition are complex. One key informant, the president of a local women's organisation Marie-Claude (Président de la FAFED[91], Fénerive-Est), asserted that the local population lacked nutritional understanding. They weighted their diet with carbohydrates like rice and cassava but failed to consume vitamin-rich products, even though they actually grow a wide range of fruit and vegetables. They also fail to eat enough calorie-laden products. Protein-rich products like eggs and meat, along with fruit and vegetables, are sold rather than eaten. There is also a gender aspect, *'Since one says that men work a lot, one gives them all the beans with the result that women and children suffer from protein deficiency.'* Calcium deficiency is also widespread. In order to alleviate tiredness many men, but also some women, drink quite heavily. The male plantation workers

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89 Infirmier principal du Centre de Base à Mahambo, Key Informant Interview (06/08/01)

90 Miscarriages are not compiled statistically, but it was clear during the discussion that they were a source of great trauma and sadness to the women.

91 Fédération des Associations Femme et Développement, Key Informant Interview (06/08/01).

added that they chew the leaves of a certain plant (*tsimanotro*), particularly in the afternoon, for the same reason.

In summary it can be said that malnutrition exists among apparent plenty. Gender bias means that women and children do not eat enough protein. Both men and women consider it better to sell particular products rather than consume them themselves. An absolute lack of cash lies behind much decision-making, not only a lack of nutritional understanding.

Health
Both groups of respondents independently defined health as having two components: mental and physical. The findings from each group are presented separately here.

Health in the Smallholder Respondent Group
The smallholders treasured the quiet, calm nature of their lives. They enjoyed the lack of stress and haste. Since they lived distant from neighbours arguments were few and evening disturbances unknown. One man explained, *'Here, there aren't many social rules, one feels free.'*

They also thought, from a physical point of view, that they were greatly healthier than people in towns, ascribing this to a lack of pollution, pure drinking water and fresh air. They asserted that their home-grown food was healthy, fresh, natural and lacked chemicals (like baking powder in bread). Some maintained that for this reason hospitals were only necessary in towns – though other respondents pleaded for a local health centre.

External observers from the *Centre de Santé de Base* (CSB), *Action-Santé-Organisation-Secours* (ASOS)[92] and *Nutrition Assise Communautaire* (NAC) - the former two located in Brickaville and the third in Marozavavy, painted quite a different picture. They maintained that children were subject to diarrhoea, coughs and malaria. Adults suffered, they said, likewise from malaria and bronchial infections, as well as sexually transmitted diseases. Malnutrition was widespread in all age groups.

The external commentators suggested that the smallholders only used local medicines as a last resort, preferring to use local health centres when they had enough money. This was somewhat different to the view of the smallholder respondents themselves, who said that they only went to a health centre when local remedies had failed. They complained about the costs of transport and medicinal fees.

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92 Key Informant Interviews with Marie-Claire, Président de NAC at Marozavavy (09/07/01) ; Razanamirary Marthe,

infirmiere au CSB 2 à Brickaville (13/07/01), M. Claude, Superviseur de l'ASOS à Brickaville (13/07/01).

Health in the Plantation Worker Respondent Group

The plantation workers viewed their health considerably more pessimistically than did the smallholders. They linked their state of mental and physical health to economic factors (their purchasing power, the price their crops could command at market), government health policies and climatic conditions. Respondents explained that in the 1970s the price of cloves was high, providing them with enough purchasing power to eat well and to purchase all daily necessities. A trend of long decline began in the 1990s. Cyclones repeatedly caused havoc among their food and commercial crops, thus engendering considerable worry as well as bringing them to the brink of famine. The Red Cross, which had run a malaria prevention programme in the region for many years, vanished from the area. At the same time the government insisted that medicines be paid for. The situation remains similar today, with the world collapse in coffee prices causing additional hardship.

Key informants from the local CSB asserted, as in Brickaville, that malaria, diarrhoea and bronchial infections were prevalent though highly seasonal. Parasitic infections were common, as were ailments related in their view to a lack of personal hygiene. Soap is not generally considered a PPN, even though people wash themselves daily. The key informants added that women suffered more illnesses than men, but that men were involved in more accidents. In their opinion the root cause of ill-health was malnutrition: *'They are vulnerable because just one quarter of their nutritional needs are met. Malnutrition prevents the people here from becoming developed.'*

The plantation workers all complained that the costs of health care were too high. A hospital delivery in the local village of Mahambo costs 50 000 FMG since one has to pay the midwife, a fee for the use of the bed, for the sheets and for all medicines required. Should an evacuation to the hospital in Fénerive-Est be necessary additional costs are incurred.

For financial reasons alone therefore the plantation workers diagnosed their own illnesses and then treated themselves with traditional medicines. Should this fail they then purchased small quantities of aspirin or anti-malarials like nivaquine and chloroquine. Some turned to traditional healers. Only if one had enough money and if one's health did not improve was hospital considered an option.

It is clear that mis-diagnosis is a risk and a factor in the health status of the respondents, as recognised by the staff at the local CSB. The development of resistance to drugs due to misuse is likewise a concern. To date, HIV-AIDs is not widespread in Madagascar.

Education

This part is discusses findings from the smallholder and plantation worker groups respectively.

Education in the Smallholder Respondent Group

Scarcely a child in the three smallholder villages went to school. The very few that did entered primary school late – beyond the age of 10 years – and found learning very difficult among the younger children. The nearest primary school was 6 km distant, meaning a round trip of 12 km a day. The parents thought that children under 10 could not manage such a distance. They were also worried about the children crossing the Tamatave-Antananarivo highway on their own in order to reach the school. In the village of Sandranola around 70 children were of school-going age but there were no plans for them to attend school.

Some parents, though, dreamed of their children going to university to escape farming life, whilst for others basic literacy was a must. The fear was widespread that the smallholders, being illiterate, could lose their land to unscrupulous literate people – a fact that actually hindered the research team's efforts in some cases to carry out participatory exercises involving pen and paper (like drawing a ranking on paper upon which tokens could be laid). Other respondents wanted only that their children learn to sign their name, *'when they don't even know how to write their names, all they do is drink and sleep.'*

Whereas some smallholders desperately wanted a local primary school to be set up, others argued that their children already received an education in the fields. One of the Tangalemena, who had spent many years working away, said that he felt much happier living in the heart of his family and working the land with his children. It has been noted elsewhere that a lack of labour already hinders exploitation of the land in this area – children are important agricultural workers.

Cyclone Geralda in 1994 devastated school buildings in the region and to date 35 remain closed. Key respondents responsible for schooling in the area (employees of the *Circonscription Scolaire* - CISCO) said it was hard enough to find teachers for the few primary schools remaining, let alone thinking about building new schools. Furthermore, the government – or even the World Bank in their view – had to give their go-ahead (which never came) before a school could be built. Therefore the CISCO was not prepared to build a primary school for the respondents' children.

Education in the Plantation Worker Respondent Group
The plantation workers, in the main illiterate like the smallholders, wanted an education not only for their children, but for themselves. At the very least they aspired to basic literacy. They said:

- *For a long time I have wanted to give my children a school education since I want to see them succeed, so that they do not know our misery, so that they have a better life.*
- *Education enables better business management.*
- *[Education helps] to ensure that one's business succeeds and to know what the foreigners are saying among themselves.*
- *It would be better if the children could go to school in order to succeed in their lives. That way they can find a well-paid job. Then other people will envy them.*

- *When one is illiterate, one has a hard life.*

Statistics provided by the local education centre at Mahambo, a village close to PMD, demonstrated that despite these wishes, school enrolment falls implacably between the sixth class (entry class) and the third class. Whereas 91 children were to be found in the entry classes at the time of research, only 8 children were to be found in the third class, just three years later. Equal numbers of boys and girls were enrolled, and dropout was evenly distributed between the sexes. Key informants[93] explained the high dropout rate as follows:

- *Poverty.*
- *Children have become more individualistic over the past few years.*
- *Young people prefer to go dancing than to study.*
- *Young girls frequently become pregnant.*
- *Jealousy plays a role. When someone succeeds, they are criticised by others. Schoolmates use black magic to slow them down.*
- *The young people of today are closed. They can't confide their problems to their teachers or parents.*
- *There is a lack of role models … Those who succeed leave the area.*

Our key informants also complained that teachers no longer commanded respect and thus found controlling the class problematic. They also suggested that even if parents wanted children to succeed, they failed to force them to study hard. Parents as well as key respondents also noted the lack of professional openings for children who graduate from secondary school. This is discouraging to both parents and children. For this reason, the parents expressed similar views to the smallholders in Brickaville with respect to agriculture as an alternative kind of education:

- *I want to educate my children in this area in case they fail in their studies. Agriculture is our inheritance.*
- *[It is necessary to farm] so that your children can have what they want and not go stealing from others.*

Time Management

The analysis of social relations indicated that the smallholders considered one reason for poverty to be poor time management skills. The research team engaged in an in-depth study of time management with the plantation workers since this was clearly a major issue for them also. Time was analysed along three axes – daily, weekly and across the agricultural year. The methods used included daily, weekly and seasonal calendars. Some of the results are presented here.

Daily Time Schedules

The plantation management found it essential that the workers learnt to respect 'clock time'. According to them it took workers around six months before

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93 Key Informant Interviews with Rakotojaona Noeline et Mariame Jeannot, enseignants au Collège d'Enseignement Général à Mahambo (06/08/01).

punctuality became a habit (thus ensuring that they could be considered for permanent status). The research team learnt however that for the majority of workers it was virtually impossible to combine the demands of the plantation with other demands on their time.

Several daily activity schedules were prepared. One (depicted in Appendix D) shows that a typical day for one couple with two young sons began at 5 am with the preparation of a fire to cook breakfast and the collection of water. The family was able to eat only at 6.30 am. Ten minutes later the adults starting walking to work in order to be on time. At lunch time they returned home, preparing two fires in order to cook rice and a relish. An hour or so later they returned to work. At 16.30 they started preparations for the evening meal (including collecting wood and water, and going shopping if necessary). Supper was at 20.00. Almost all these tasks were carried out by the woman. The man was responsible for finding wood and tending the fire.[94]

At the weekend both the man and woman worked on their rented land. The woman also went shopping, washed the clothes, husked the rice and did the housework. Once a month the man went out strolling with his friends. Although the woman remained mainly at home, she enjoyed the weekend because '*you think about yourself and you control your work*' and (when chatting to other woman) '*you discuss the problems of life – though you don't discuss all your personal problems*'.

A core difference between women and men at PMD was the amount of time devoted explicitly to 'leisure'. It would seem that the men held a concept of leisure similar to that held by most people living in Britain. They frequently joined commercialised and/or organised group activities such as playing football, going to a video salon, or dancing. When the women spoke of leisure they referred to chatting with neighbours or a pleasurable stroll to market. Their leisure time was built into their everyday workload, and no less enjoyable for that, it seemed.

Weekly Schedules
In the Fénerive area weekdays are regulated by specific taboos (*fady*). It is fady to work on the paddy fields on Tuesdays and Fridays. Some Christian sects active in the area are trying to force people to work their paddy on these two days, a situation causing great distress to some of the respondents: '*When the Christians cultivate rice on fady days, the earth loses its sacred character.*'[95] According to

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94 The women plantation workers in general found their workloads strenuous. One commented: '*During the week you run against the clock.*'

95 Hotham & Razafindrahova (2002: 16-17) note in an anthropological study carried out among the Tandroy people in the south of Madagascar that Christianity is a '*fluid concept*'. In many ways it has been appropriated and incorporated into pre-existing understandings and aspirations. However, since animals like zebu lose their sacred character for Christians, the composition of livestock holdings change. Christians tend to be interested in keeping goats, since these are easier to manage than zebu and are easily sold. The impact of goats on the forest is much more pronounced than zebu.

tradition, these two days are allocated to working on other crops and also to attending local markets. The men prepared a weekly calendar (disregarding the additional work at PMD) to demonstrate their workloads on different days. This is shown in Figure 6.2. The shorter lines indicate lower workloads.

Figure 6.2: Weekly Calendar Prepared by Men at PMD
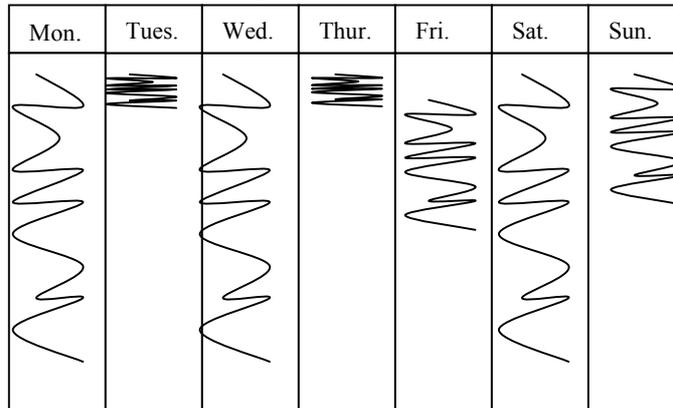
Source: Research Team, PMD (30/07/01)   N = 6

   Although the rationale for dividing the week in this way is now no longer clear to the respondents, it would seem mistaken to condemn fady as ‚backward', as many ‚enlightened' Malagasy and external development organisations do. Rather, the author suggests that a parallel can be drawn with the weekend much loved in the North – and still largely protected from incursion by the demands of employers. In the plantation workers' case, this division of days enabled them to place clear boundaries around their arduous work on the paddy fields, to attend to lighter agricultural tasks two days a week, and also to have an enjoyable social time at the market.

Annual Schedules
The men and women were asked, separately, to prepare seasonal calendars showing their workload across the agricultural year for the land they rented. The calendars showed that particular months, particularly between October and January, were very busy. A woman commented: *'It is hard to work the paddy, to plant, to weed … all the work is difficult.'* Work decreases slowly through the agricultural year with May and June being enjoyed by everyone, particularly because National Day occurs on June 26th (and there is little work to do in the fields since the rice has been harvested). However, both men and women were anxious to point out that *'intelligent people don't fold their arms in June'*; rather they busy themselves with other tasks like tending cloves, coffee and maize. The workload then increases slowly between July and September, with women having somewhat more work than men. The greatest problem faced by the workers is that the rice harvests, in June and December, coincide with the two most significant festivals of the year (National Day and Christmas). They are obliged to sell rice at a low price, and yet they spend heavily at this time, either for investments like purchasing a zebu or a cassette recorder, or in order to demonstrate their wealth to

162

others in the form of jewellery and beautiful clothes. To show that one is successful in life is important.

Money and Markets

The analysis on social relations above shows that the smallholder farmers resist selling their labour as far as possible, as working for others is seen as a key indicator of poverty. The plantation workers, a landless stratum, rent land in order to provide themselves with food and some cash crops. They work at PMD in order to support themselves. The two groups thus demonstrate different degrees of integration into wage relations and the cash economy. This part examines (i) the price of essential goods at both research sites (ii) the advantages of plantation employment according to the workers, and (iii) the attractiveness, to the producers, of cash cropping. A case study (iv) on the benefits of certified organic cinnamon production for export is provided.

The Price of Essential Goods

It is instructive to examine the local 'box of essentials' (PPNs) identified by respondents at each research site since this is where the need for cash becomes urgent. Figure 6.3 shows the PPNs for each group of respondents.

Figure 6.3: 'Products of Primary Necessity' for smallholders and plantation workers
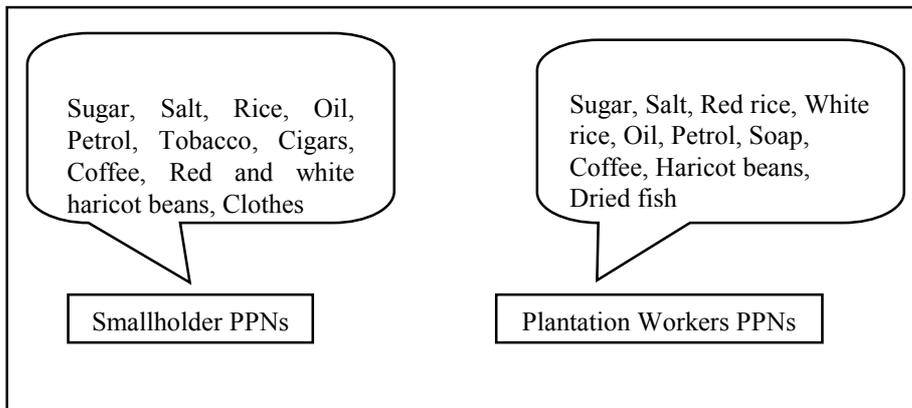
Source: Research Team, July and August 2001, Brickaville and PMD.

The smallholders argued that fine clothes were essential for going to Brickaville since they wanted to mask their poverty and disguise the fact that they were country dwellers. Young people in particular wanted beautiful clothes for Madagascar's national festival on June 26th. A general lack of finery was a reason for not going into town frequently. The smallholders stated, *'In town clothes last six months, here in the countryside three years. Men only need a pair of shorts since they can have a naked torso.'* Commenting on the cost of pesticides, which ideally should have been on the PPN list, they argued that it was just too expensive (4 000 FMG worth of pesticide is needed to treat 20 kg rice seed). This meant that they had great difficulty containing pest infestation (training in organic control

163

methods had not yet been provided by agricultural extension workers – with whom they had poor relationships in any case). Chemical fertilisers were, they argued, not necessary since the soil was so good.

The plantation workers, reflecting the fact that they lived near the sea, considered fish a PPN. The fact that tobacco and cigars appear on the smallholder list, but not on the plantation workers' list, is probably due to the fact that the group preparing the former was gender-mixed, but only the women plantation workers prepared the latter list. The plantation workers frequently emphasised the pleasure of shopping: *'It is very lovely inside a shop; it makes one happy to look, to buy something.'* They enjoyed purchasing clothes and kitchen utensils.

The cost of PPNs is similar across the region, though not identical. Prices are also subject to seasonal variation. Some indicative prices in the Fénerive area in August 2001 were: a kilo of sugar cost around 5 000 FMG (6 000 FMG on credit), a piece of soap cost 500 FMG (the same on credit), and a kapoka (approx. 300 grams) of red rice could be purchased for 550 FMG (600 FMG on credit).

The plantation workers were forced to buy everything on credit and thus had large debts. A woman explained, *'I need lots of things, but my salary isn't high enough, that's why I have to buy on credit.'* After paying all her debts each month only 10 000 FMG remained for the coming month. She added, *'Rice is the reason why I am enchained to the shop. I want to eat rice every day and I am not prepared to change this habit – even though some people are prepared to eat cassava sometimes.'* More expensive items, like earrings, vary in price from 25 000 – 75 000 FMG. A gold necklace costs around 225 000 FMG. As mentioned earlier, men feel obliged to buy their wives jewellery, which the latter wear with great pride.

The Advantages of Plantation Employment According to the Workers
The workers at Plantation MonDésir were asked to outline the advantages of their employment. This question was posed deliberately in order to amass information about benefits of plantation employment in their view, given that plantations tend to have a negative image in the North. Some respondents said that they had searched desperately for work in the region before finding work at PMD. For this reason a good number emphasised that they hoped to be employed by the plantation all their lives. They added that:

- *We use our salary to buy food, to pay workers [on our rented land] and to buy seed.*
- *Even though our salary is not high, it assures the well-being of the household.*
- *We work at PMD to earn money to spend in town.*

The fact that the plantation management was willing to pay hospitalisation costs and school fees was greatly appreciated by the permanent plantation workers. However they found themselves in a bind: the cost of employing someone to work their rice fields on their behalf was 7 000 FMG/day whereas at PMD permanent

workers earned 7 500 FMG. Therefore some workers reasoned that it was better to work on the paddy themselves when necessary and remain day workers at PMD – thus earning 5 000 FMG on an irregular basis and losing the added benefits provided to permanent employees. Discussion showed that this was a fraught situation for them.

The Attractiveness, to the Producers, of Cash Cropping
The smallholders also spoke about the advantages, or otherwise, of the market. Smallholder farmers grow a range of crops destined for the market. Almost all are dual purpose, since as one male farmer laconically remarked with respect to the harvesting of cinnamon (which could be sold to Phaelflor and thence to Europe as an organic product), *'We work twelve hours a day. We devote ten hours to those fields that produce things to eat like cassava or rice. Just two hours remain for harvesting cinnamon – less if one has a big family.'* At the same time the smallholders were keen to emphasise that they were always ready to try out new cash crops. At the time of research the villagers in Sahalakana were experimenting with vanilla. They were also enthusiastic about new hybrids, for example they wanted to acquire dwarf lychee trees that they had seen being grown along the main road towards Tamatave. Great impediments to the development of true cash cropping included a lack of knowledge about how to grow new plants, numerous pests and diseases which they did not know how to control, an inability to fully manage water flows to their paddy fields, the lack of good exit routes to the main market outlets in the area, a lack of labour (human or animal) and high veterinary fees, particularly for zebu cattle (which are used for ploughing and also qualify as status symbols). This situation was compounded in the three villages studied by poor relations with external agricultural advisors.

With respect to the gender division of labour, men and boys are solely responsible for the cultivation and harvest of the few exclusively cash crops grown, including cloves and vanilla[96]. They are also responsible for the sale of wild/plantation cinnamon, peppercorns and lychees. These crops are high value. Lychees sell for 2 500 FMG/kg. Women and girls sell cassava - which men carry to market on their behalf - *'though the price is very low'* (1 000 FMG/kg).

The smallholders were not aware of world prices for particular goods, although they generally agreed that they were exploited. For example they thought that Phaelflor was probably not paying a fair price for cinnamon, but they had no way of verifying this. In the face of such powerlessness they seemed to have a strategy of remaining as detached as possible from the wider world and, as has been made clear elsewhere, of living as independent a life as possible.

Certified Organic Cinnamon - A Case Study
Cinnamon was introduced by the French colonialists before 1944, but first attempts to exploit it date from 1947. Self-sown cinnamon spread quickly through the region as it easily gained a foothold in the buffer zones between the primary forest and cultivated land. In the mid-1980s a large market developed, leading to uncontrolled

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96 Refer to the gender-disaggregated seasonal calendar presented earlier for details.

exploitation. All the large trees were felled rather than harvested and bark from the roots (to produce camphor) was also taken. Whereas at that time it was possible to gain 20-30 kilos of good quality dried bark from a tree, the tiny shrubs of today provide only 1–2 kilos.

In 1992 the price of cinnamon was such that villagers started to purchase cars and motorbikes, but in 1994 Cyclone Geralda destroyed most of the remaining plants. It was just at the turn of the millennium that the small private organic company Phaelflor in association with Landscape Development Interventions (LDI, the local representatives of USAID) stepped in. Phaelflor wanted to export cinnamon products – bark and essential oils – to Europe, South Africa and the USA. LDI wanted to make exploitation of the buffer zone adjacent to the primary forest profitable enough to hinder further human intrusion into the forest itself. Given that wild cinnamon has re-established itself in the buffer zone, though on a small scale, the aims of the two organisations coincided effectively. ECOCERT, an organic certifier with its headquarters in Germany but with local representation in Antananarivo, has certified the cinnamon - both from the plantations and wild-sown - as organic.

The smallholders point out that cinnamon provides money all year round. They call it the *'bank in the countryside',* from which it is possible to draw money *'at any time'.* Whenever they need some cash, above all when they have to pay others to assist with the rice harvest in August, the men search for and harvest the leaves of wild cinnamon. Very few people – but these include the local village heads - have established small plantations. It is fair to say (the author considers) that involvement in growing and harvesting organic cinnamon does not arise from a conviction among the local population that 'organic is better', but rather represents a method to exploit an existing state of affairs (low input agriculture and the prevalence of wild-sown plants) for cash.

Harvesting 15-20 kilos of cinnamon leaves takes a man around 2-3 hours. He then has to carry the product a further hour or so on his head or back to the point of sale. Were a man to work full-time on harvesting cinnamon leaves he would receive between 4 000 and 12 000 FMG[97] a day (112 000 FMG a month minimum) which in this impoverished area would constitute a reasonable financial return. In comparison to other crops like cassava the amount of labour required for a given financial return for cinnamon also compares well. However a crop like cassava can clearly feed people, as well as provide a source of income. This is one reason why the smallholders prefer to invest time and labour away from cinnamon. The men also complain that harvesting wild cinnamon is exhausting since they also have to clear the vegetation around the shrubs, particularly bracken. Indeed it is above all the almost insurmountable difficulty of controlling bracken that has prevented the majority of local people from establishing cinnamon plantations. The practice of tavy, which involves burning off unwanted vegetation, is forbidden under organic certification regulations. Ironically, however, earlier use of tavy facilitated the spread of bracken since it thrives on regular burning.

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97 Between 40 pence and £1.20 a day (66 cents/ 1.56 Euro) in 2001.

The local representative of Phaelflor, Mr. Tandrimo, has opened a small shop next to the weighing station. Here Mr. Tandrimo and his wife Juliette sell staple products like beans. Men frequently buy themselves cigarettes with the proceeds from the cinnamon. Photograph 6.3 shows Mr. Tandrimo weighing some cinnamon leaves that have just come in.

Photograph 6.3 Mr. Tandrimo Weighs Cinnamon

The men are under no obligation to provide cinnamon to Phaelflor and thus Phaelflor has to live with irregular supplies of the product. Mr. Tandrimo distils the cinnamon leaves[98] in a simple distillery close to his home with the assistance of his two sons, whilst his daughters and Juliette roll cinnamon bark 'cigarettes'. These end up being sold as cinnamon sticks in California by a company called Morton and Bassett (www.mortonbasset.com).[99]

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98 Further refinement takes place in the capital Antananarivo before export.

99 The author was given a jar of Morton and Bassett's cinnamon sticks by Mr. Ramboatiana, the manager and owner of Phaelflor. It is interesting to note that the main reason, according to Mr. Ramboatiana, why the sticks are packaged in California rather than in Madagascar is because Madagascar has no glass-making facilities. The blurb on the jar says, *'Makes a great swizzle stick for coffee, mulled wine, hot tea, chocolate drinks and a variety of other warm beverages. Use one or two sticks in poaching liquid for fruits. Makes a flavourful addition to homemade chutneys, pickles and relishes. Adds a sweet, woody aroma to potpourri'.* Although the cinnamon sticks are designated as kosher (authorisation was given to Phaelflor by a South African rabbi), no mention is made of their country of origin, or the producers in Brickaville.

Plantation Workers: Aspirations

The aspirations of the workers at PMD can be visualised as glinting beads threaded along two of the core strands contributing to a good quality of life in this area. One strand relates to ameliorating one's material standard of living. Success here weaves into complex, more nebulous patternings of social standing, earning the respect of others and taking one's place in society. The second strand, related to the first, is expressly directed at reducing everyday uncertainty and risk.

All the workers, male and female, yearned for the same two key symbols of well-being: zebu cattle and paddy. However, no-one possessed these. With respect to zebu, workers pointed out they were important for agricultural tasks and could be sold when necessary in order to buy land. Zebu are also sometimes demanded by a woman as her bride price. A worker commented: *'To have zebu is an honour'*. Yet the cost of a single animal, around one million FMG (£100 at the time of study), was well beyond the financial reach of the workers. As mentioned elsewhere, even permanent workers at PMD only earn around 7 500 FMG (75 pence/ 1 Euro approx) a day. This sum is chiefly devoted to acquiring everyday necessities and to paying off debts. Profits from the rice harvest likewise help to pay off debts, pay for the cost of land tenure, and pay for festival-related expenses (amongst other things).

Paddy was seen as a long-term investment, '*a heritage to leave our children and our grandchildren.*' Workers pointed out the centrality of rice in the Malagasy diet and commented that paddy also provided fish and building materials. The ability to transform this form of wealth into others, both material and social, was mentioned, *'If your paddy is productive, you can have money with which you can buy other things like a zebu, a cassette recorder, a car. Others will envy you.'*

Both women and men workers were asked to produce a dream map, based upon the current maps they had just created. The aim here was to discover some of the chief aspirations of each gender in terms of concrete change in their immediate environments. The women settled on three components that would add to their well-being: a shop, a school and a health centre – all to be located on the plantation. They stressed that a local shop selling basic necessities like salt, oil, rice, soap and sugar (but no alcohol – they were very clear on this point) would save them a considerable amount of time. A school was seen as important not only for the safety of their children (who currently have to walk along a main road) but also for themselves. All the women wanted to attend literacy classes, if only to learn how to sign their name. Some also wanted to learn French. Finally, they argued that a medical centre was needed to manage everyday ailments like malaria, parasites, fits[100] and diarrhoea that afflict above all their children.

It is interesting to note that the women did not seek to change elements lying outside PMD. One might see the limits to their agency here. Perhaps they hoped that the research team would convey their dreams to the plantation management. If

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100 Newton (2003) reports on on-going research that suggests there may be a link between epilepsy and malaria.

so, this could demonstrate that their decision-making power in their own social networks was weak - or powerful only within strict boundaries. They might have conceptualised the plantation as a place where they would be able to make change happen by proxy. Their interest in literacy supports this argument – illiteracy and *'not understanding'* (in this case not understanding French) marginalised the women along a number of significant axes.

The men wanted to locate the following features at PMD: a medical post, a processing plant for agricultural products like lychees, a football field and a wood lot with a workers' association to manage the sale of wood. They also considered ways of improving the local environment close to their homes in Sahamalany. The men thought that they could attain a better quality of life if there was a school and a dance hall in their village. They also wanted an improved road for exiting their agricultural products.

In the course of other discussions the women workers also suggested that the management of PMD set up a rice bank and offer training in poultry management. They analysed the problem carefully, arguing that the difficulty lay in the fact that key festivals coincide with the rice harvests. Significant purchases of clothes and gifts are made at this time. Rice is therefore sold when prices are low and re-purchased when prices are high. The women wanted the plantation management to purchase their rice at harvest, thus providing them with ready and necessary cash, and then to resell them the rice at the same price later on in the year. Women are also largely responsible for raising and selling poultry. Yet around 85% of chicks do not survive to maturity. Since it is possible to sell an adult bird for around 17 500 – 22 500 FMG they dreamed that successful poultry keeping would enable them to purchase a zebu in due course.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the fieldwork findings in the context of Madagascar's weak organic sector. It has sought to provide a rich picture of the respondents' lives through letting them speak at much as possible in their own words. Methods to elicit the data, such as transects and gender disaggregated seasonal calendars, have served to structure the chapter for the purposes of presentation and to enable the reader to scrutinise the original data set.

The significance of the findings for social certification in organic agriculture is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven: The Quality of Life Toolkit and Social Certification in Organic Agriculture

Without my journey
And without the spring
I would have missed this dawn[101]

The chapter weaves the Malagasy fieldwork findings and the conceptual and theoretical threads guiding this thesis together in order to tackle some of the leading questions in this thesis:

- *Do smallholders and plantation workers benefit from being involved in certified organic agriculture? How can we know this?*
- *Can, and should, social certification standards be shaped in part by producer values? That is, can the development of standards play a role in enabling producers to create the world they seek?*
- *Should social certification have a remit to contribute to 'development', in the sense of leading to growth (however defined) in the community? Or should it be simply about measuring adherence to particular standards?*

In the course of the analysis conducted in this chapter the author puts forward a new concept of social certification in organic agriculture. She suggests some practical ways in which this concept might be implemented.

Part 7.1 places the findings in the context of the risk-laden environment surrounding and immersing the respondents. The strategies the respondents have developed to deal with this *'noisy situation[102]'* are discussed in Part 7.2. The interpretation is angled in order to explore the ways in which the respondents try to create and maintain their 'maximum selves' (the kind of person one wants to be). In so doing a deeper understanding of this term is sought. An integral part of these strategies involves considering the nature of one's relationship to the wider environment. Links may be welcomed, or denied. The interpretation thus proceeds to consider these relationships.

Having established this, the next step is to engage with the wider purpose of this thesis: *Creating quality relationships between producers and consumers in the organic food chain.* A quality relationship is understood to rest upon the ability of people to achieve their maximum selves. This is a precondition for a successful, transformative relationship to flourish across the producer to consumer food chain. The term 'entanglement' describes such relationships. People might enter into encounters with one another on the basis that their integrity or coherence

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101 Masaoka Shiki (1856-1902).

102 The author took the idea of difficult to manage background 'noise' from a novel about an austistic child, 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time', by Mark Haddon.

(maximum self) is not threatened. Yet in the process of encountering one another, they themselves are changed. The structures of the relationship also change.

Part 7.3 draws out those elements of the interpretation that bear upon social certification initiatives in organic agriculture. It argues that social certification needs to have a two fold agenda (i) to support local understandings of how to achieve maximum selves, and (ii) to promote entanglement.

Part 7.4 takes as a reference point chapters four and two. It assesses the effectiveness of the author's quality of life toolkit against the nine principles established in chapter five. Ways in which the toolkit needs to be strengthened, and any complementary analyses required, are outlined here.

7.1 A Risk-Laden Environment

The fieldwork findings were presented in chapter six under the following headings: (1) social relations (2) the immediate environment (3) nourishment (4) health (5) education (6) time management (7) money and markets, and (8) aspirations. The analysis in this part recombines these themes. It discusses the findings in terms of the risk-laden environment within which the respondents live.

Evidence provided throughout chapter six, drawn from both the respondents' own analyses and from other sources, indicates that the smallholders and the plantation workers live in what they consider to be a highly risk-laden environment. If we understand hazard to mean 'probability of harm', and risk to mean 'probability that harm will occur', questions that arise include: *Who defines these terms? What threshold is acceptable?* (Jiggins, pers. comm. 06/04).

Given that the aim of this thesis is to find ways to develop and fix quality relationships between producers and consumers in the organic commodity chain, the author suggests that we understand 'risk' as a subjectively perceived threat to the coherence of people's lives. Defined thus, risk has the potential to undermine people's current achievements. It threatens their chances of acquiring the good 'qualities of life' they want in the future. The constant 'background noise' of a risk-laden environment, by which is meant an environment in which risks are perceived to be highly evident, arguably heightens feelings of insecurity and concern, and might lead to corresponding feelings of powerlessness. To take an example: respondents who worked on the historical health calendar maintained that their mental well-being had deteriorated over the past thirty years. They ascribed this to an increase in uncertainty in the wider environment and a corresponding decrease in felt power over it. Beyene (pers. comm. 08/04) stresses, however, that it is important to note that people actively manage risk. They are doers, and are not only done to.

We briefly reappraise the evidence presented in chapter six in this light. We begin with the macro-environment, discuss the agricultural sector in general and then examine particular features associated with the organic sector. The purpose is

to provide a contextual framework in order to 'make sense' of the strategies respondents have developed in order to maintain 'coherence' (their maximum selves) and to enable, or restrict, 'entanglement'.

With respect to the macro-environment, the general weakness of the Malagasy economy vis-à-vis Northern economies (Europe, USA and South Africa) is important. These define the terms of trade. Organic products have to meet the conditions of EU Regulation 2092/91. Asian countries provide stiff competition with respect to agricultural products, including spices – Madagascar's speciality. Government policy since Independence, which has recently involved the application of structural adjustment programmes, has had mixed effects on the agricultural sector. It has certainly not succeeded in rendering it profitable. The formal sector is also weak, with a general lack of job openings for qualified young people.

A number of risks, problems and 'unknowns' afflict the agricultural sector. Discussions with the respondents revealed the following:

- Smallholders do not actually hold land title, though they win usufruct rights through cultivation. This makes for an insecure situation and causes smallholders deep concern, though they manage and allocate land as if it were their own. The plantation workers have no claim to land at all. Given that they want to be self-sufficient in food, and grow some crops for sale, plantation workers are compelled to enter various exploitative, and illegal, systems of land tenure.
- Smallholders lack certain types of knowledge. Animal and crop production is beset by pest and disease, but farmers are not well informed as to how to control outbreaks. They also lack the necessary cash to deal with major problems.
- Knowledge is also gendered. With respect to some crops, men and women smallholders have responsibilities for particular elements of the production cycle. Sometimes crops are entirely the responsibility of one gender and thus men, or women, can be considered knowledgeable about all aspects of the production cycle. Men are responsible for the few exclusively cash crops grown, such as vanilla.
- The plantation management has enforced a gender division of labour of its own creation. Women undertake light tasks, and work mostly in the nursery. Some male workers have expertise in pest management. Thus workers are drawn into different parts of a crop's production cycle. This will affect the type of knowledge they can expect to acquire, and will delimit the possibilities for both men and women plantation workers to strike out on their own with unfamiliar commercial crops.
- There are serious labour bottlenecks. This is partly due to the very low level of mechanisation in the agricultural sector. Labour bottlenecks affect both smallholders and plantation workers who have rented land. As a consequence, smallholders leave much land to lie fallow or unexploited, though they would like to bring it into production. Furthermore, smallholder and plantation worker children are heavily involved in

agricultural labour. This affects the children's prospects of attending formal sector schooling. The plantation workers use their wages to pay labourers to help with paddy at certain times of the year. Respondents also complain about a range of work-related ailments, such as back problems and general exhaustion.

- Agricultural work is stratified by gender. Labour is sex-sequential, meaning that women and men undertake different agricultural tasks in succession (such as land preparation and planting). Smallholder women without male partners can be significantly disadvantaged.

- Climatic conditions on Madagascar's east coast can be very violent. In recent years it has been difficult to repair the damage to infrastructure (like school buildings) and tree crops caused by a cyclone before the next one arrives. Government will to repair infrastructure seems to be lacking.

Adding to this landscape of agricultural risk is the uncertainty of the market. Firstly, as discussed in chapter three, buyers dominate the horticultural commodity chain internationally. Experience in Madagascar shows that buyers do not necessarily purchase the goods that they ordered prior to the growing season. Second, smallholders and plantation workers have very little information about market prices, particularly those of international commodities like coffee. For these reasons, an atmosphere of distrust from farmers towards other stakeholders prevails. Third, the weakness and uncertainty of local markets means that food self-sufficiency is an absolute priority for both smallholders and plantation workers. The labour of both men and women is consecrated in the first instance to this, and then to the production of crops for sale. Again, this ties in with observations made in chapter three about the needs of smallholders, particularly women, to assure food self-sufficiency. For the Malagasy respondents however, food self-sufficiency is more than a livelihood strategy. Self-sufficiency is culturally weighted with emotions of pride and independence. Fourth, there is a national lack of processing facilities for primary products, meaning that returns for farmers are low. Fifth, infrastructure, particularly with respect to roads, is of a very low standard. Many products rot before reaching the market, or immense efforts, including carrying products on one's back over many kilometres, are required to bring them to local markets.

Though self-sufficiency is a powerful normative goal, clearly recourse to the market is necessary in order to acquire a range of everyday items. All respondents identified a basic basket of necessities (PPNs) that had to be purchased from a local market or shop. Despite their locally intrinsic importance to people's well-being, the plantation workers acquire PPNs on credit at unfavourable rates. This is due to generally high rates of inflation, uneven income flows and an unfortunate coincidence of major festivals (requiring considerable expenditure) with the biennial rice harvest. The demand for ready cash at these times means that the market is flooded with rice and thus provides a poor return.

Organic agriculture would seem to be a way of adding value to primary agricultural products and thus increasing incomes for smallholders. However the Malagasy government has not shown any interest in promoting or supporting

organic agriculture, despite prolonged lobbying by PROMABIO, Madagascar's organic producer umbrella body. Certification costs are high, though they are often paid for by entrepreneurs such as Phaelflor. Nevertheless the demands of organic certification remain onerous for farmers for several reasons. One is the relatively high level of literacy required in a foreign language – French - in order to properly meet the demands of certification, such as keeping a diary and reading forms[103]. Most farmers are however illiterate in Malagasy and have no understanding of French. Second, although - due to poverty - smallholders do not (or rarely) apply chemical fertilisers or pest control mechanisms, this does not mean that they practice organic agriculture according to international understandings of the term (a point addressed at length in chapter three). As a rule, farmers remain poorly educated in organic techniques. Given that *tavy* – burning off of vegetation - is forbidden, organic agriculture appears to be even more labour-intensive than the agriculture normally practised. Third, organic farmers face the challenge of creating a space for trading within the standardized marketing system of conventional agriculture (Beyene, pers. comm. 08/04).

In sum, the background noise of risk shapes and impregnates the lives of the respondents. It threatens the coherence of their lives. The strategies developed by the smallholders and plantation workers need to be placed in the context of the web of interconnected risk described here.

7.2   Responses to the Risk-laden Environment: Maximum Selves and Entanglement

We now explore the strategies the respondents have developed, or are in the process of developing, in order to manage life in this environment. One way of interpreting the strategies is to consider them a method of developing and stabilising 'maximum selves'. The impact these strategies have upon the respondents' willingness to engage in relationships – 'entanglement' - with actors in the wider environment is then examined.

Three points need to be made with respect to the interpretation of the findings. Firstly, efforts have been made to remain true to the data set in order not to draw unwarranted conclusions. Nonetheless it would be necessary, in order to verify and build upon the interpretation, to return to the field and discuss it with the respondents and other stakeholders. Second, the interpretation is deliberately open-ended. Behind some strategies lie contradictory respondent impulses and aims. The strategies are not cohesive. Clearly, too, an interpretation has to be selective. It is not possible to explain or understand everything. The author's aim is to present a knowledge-building, action-orientated approach to understanding the information in the data set. Third, to enable interpretation of the respondents' strategies, the terms 'norms' and 'normative values' are used. The author understands the term

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103 As discussed in chapter three, ECOCERT tacitly overlooks some of these requirements. However, farmers still have to sign or fingerprint forms they cannot read. This causes them anxiety since they cannot check what they are signing.

174

'norms' to mean the collective ideas and values in a society that bring about the 'normal person' in that society. Norms constitute an active force in that they ensure the regeneration of society in the same form. They exercise a controlling function in order to bring about the kind of society 'people' want. Norms do not necessarily inhibit change. Entrepreneurial norms, for instance, actively incite change.

The interpretation is premised upon a dichotomy. The discussion above drew a broad-brush picture of the types of risk faced by both the smallholders and plantation workers. However, there is an important difference. The smallholders did have land they could consider their own. Land ownership (*i.e.* usufruct rights) provided them with a 'frontline of defence' in an uncertain world. Behind their frontline they were able to construct and maintain their 'maximum selves' according to a set of normative values that they protected vigorously. The plantation workers' 'frontline of defence' was much weaker, given that they had to enter complex and exploitative land tenure arrangements to secure their food supply and to engage in a degree of cash cropping. They also had to engage in the wage economy. The interpretation therefore constructs a landed/ landless dichotomy. The author acknowledges that other factors may account for differences between the respondents. Ethnicity would not be one of these, given that both groups had the same ethnic identity. However even factors as simple as the composition of respondent groups on particular days will have influenced the tenor of the findings. Likewise, similarities between the groups may be unintentionally submerged. Notwithstanding these points, the author maintains on the basis of the fieldwork findings that the respondents' relationship to land accounts for significant differences in the ways each group tried to construct and maintain their 'maximum selves', and the willingness with which they entered into relationships with others. The respondents' strategies are presented under the following headings:

- Normative approaches to creating maximum selves.
- Dissonance in respondent strategies to create maximum selves, and
- The effect of the respondents' strategies to create maximum selves upon relationships.

Normative Approaches to Creating Maximum Selves
The smallholders
The smallholders employed two major strategies to counter risk and, by implication, to maintain their 'maximum selves'. First, they sought to draw a tight boundary around their world through restricting contact on a number of levels. This was possible for them because they could retreat to their own geographical space. Second, they worked to maintain equilibrium in the bounded society they had created. Gender-disaggregated data for the smallholders is lacking and therefore the discussion is elaborated in general terms.

The first strategy is essentially about ensuring and maintaining independence and was achieved in a number of ways. For example, smallholders repudiated frequent contact with townsfolk. This was partly due to their poverty; they lacked sufficient finery for town. Although they might have felt insecure and perhaps inferior in an

175

urban environment, they were able to reject 'town behaviour' such as excessive drinking, processed foods and unruly behaviour when in their own place. This wish for self-definition, rather than to see themselves cast in the eyes of others, went further. The smallholders chose to live in fairly isolated homesteads, in small family groupings, in order to avoid conflict with rural neighbours. *'Here there aren't many social rules. One feels free'*. Working for others, whether as part of a wage labour force or for richer members of the same family, was an indication of poverty. The evidence presented in chapter six further implies that externally-ascribed markers of identity were rejected. For example, respondents did not want to become 'model farmers' at the behest of Landscape Development Interventions (LDI/ USAID). One method of constructing maximum selves relies on the ability to determine the course of one's life untrammelled by others.

The second strategy appears to run counter to the first. The one just described involves ensuring independence and personal freedom. The second involves emphasising interdependence between community members. The two strategies can be reconciled when it is appreciated that attention to independence took place within the boundaries the smallholders had already set. Explicit recognition of interdependence, and developing strategies to ensure equilibrium, is a means of ensuring a functioning and stable community in an unstable, risk-laden environment. The model farmer example just mentioned cuts both ways. Rejection of model farmer status is also about avoiding favourable attention - and thus envy from community members (an interpretation verified by respondents). To some external observers 'levelling' behaviour like this hampers innovation and puts a hold on the development of entrepreneurial values[104]. The promotion of entrepreneurship demands not only community acceptance of social differentiation, but also that those who succeed are rewarded through social recognition and respect - a flipside of envy. In the smallholder communities under study however, normative values like hard work, caring and sharing counterbalanced each other. The well-being transect in Sombina, for instance, revealed that a wealthier farmer granted the rest of the community fruit and plant harvesting rights on a substantial section of his land. The villagers guiding the transect viewed this very positively. 'Laziness' was despised, as was the sight of richer people exploiting poorer people. Whilst abject poverty was often attributed to an individual's laziness or inability to understand agriculture properly (rather than to outside forces), a positive change in circumstances was attributed to the 'Grace of God'. Two intertwined ways of achieving one's maximum self emerge here. Firstly, people earned respect through actively promoting equilibrium in the community, rather than through individual betterment. This enabled them to 'belong'. Secondly, an intrinsic part of belonging, in this case, involved being part of a community whose rules were familiar and stable.

The author contends that the possession of geographical space was key to the smallholders' ability to create and maintain a bubble of normative values within

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104 This point was discussed in chapter six. The author was frequently told by Malagasy and foreigners working in the development sector that the Malagasy peasantry lacked an entrepreneurial spirit.

which they could reside. It can further be argued, on the basis of the fieldwork findings, that the respondents drew boundaries around other entities in their neighbourhood. The primary forest, for example, was clearly bounded in terms of physical incursion. Limited harvesting of small creatures took place, and men sometimes strolled in the forest. Women were not allowed in without male accompaniment. Generally the forest represented an unknown, a source of beauty and of fear. It was not managed but left '*to pursue (its) independent and unplanned course of development, growth and change*' (Katz, 1993: 230). This is not to say that the forest was not threatened by the logging of rare trees or by wholesale felling. It was more likely to be erased, as an entity, than worked with. Another bounded entity was the world of town, the government - and indeed the 'rest of the world'. The market, located in this other world, both required and enabled entry. However the fieldwork findings demonstrate a general lack of willingness by the smallholders to interact with elements in other circles.

Thus the smallholder world seems to be one constructed of adjacent circles. Pathways to these other circles existed, but were tentative, few and sometimes gendered. Importantly, it seems that in the smallholders' eyes that activities in another circle did not appear to significantly influence, or interact with, elements in their own circle. Clearly, the construction of boundaries was not one-sided. For one reason or another, the smallholders may have felt unwelcome and ill-at-ease in the other worlds. This is implied by their comment on dress, for example[105]. Excluded, they too excluded.

The plantation workers
The plantation workers were not able to place boundaries around their world in the same way. They had less power over the nature of their interactions with others. The author considers that this is primarily due to their landless status. The strategies they adopted were therefore different in several respects to those of the smallholders, though there are some common elements. Three strategies designed to manage risk and construct maximum selves are examined here.

The first strategy involves constructing relationships to land. Men and women workers acquired a quasi-landed status through renting land. Furthermore, the women in particular lived in, and tried to create, a geographically bounded world. That is, they owned land 'in the mind'. Their participatory map, depicted in chapter six, shows circles within circles. The outer rim is constituted of roads and pathways

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105 Sen ([1994] 1998: 292] argues that it is necessary to assess the value of commodity possession in terms of its contribution to capabilities and freedoms. He follows Adam Smith, who argued that possession of a linen shirt was not, strictly speaking, a necessity of life. Yet a labourer without a linen shirt would be ashamed to appear in public without one since it would denote that *'disgraceful degree of poverty which, it is presumed, nobody can fall into without extreme bad conduct'* ([1776], cited in 1998: 292]. From this, Sen argues that absolute deprivation in the space of capabilities may follow from relative deprivation in the space of commodities like these. The author did not explore this line of reasoning with the smallholder respondents in Madagascar. They emphasised though their contentment with their rural lives. Great expenditure on dress was associated, however, with national day, when people wanted to go to town to celebrate.

along which are scattered bridges and points of social contact like churches and shops. The inner circle is the plantation itself. The dream map, which was developed on the basis of the participatory map, indicates that the women wanted to reduce their world still further through locating key services (shop, school and health centre) on the plantation itself. Photograph 7.1 shows Maru, one of the plantation workers, explaining the women's map. The women's interest in bounding their world can be interpreted as both an attempt to depict a lifescape, and as an attempt to structure their lives more effectively. We examine the latter point first.

Photograph 7.1 Maru Explains The Women's Map

The fact that the women tried to bind and delimit their geographical space is clearly associated with the local gender division of labour. Women were trying to reduce the complexity of their lives by confining their multiple tasks to a small geographical area. They were not challenging their ascribed roles (which could be construed as excessive in number and oppressive in character), but rather attempting to do what they were required to do more effectively. It can be argued, on the basis of the evidence, that the women workers strove to create a 'bubble of being' within which they could meet their ascribed roles effectively and efficiently and – the author contends on the basis of discussions held with the Malagasy team – *perhaps* very happily. Nussbaum (2001: 2) acknowledges that lives devoted to the service of others – that is, lives that are means to other ends - can be laden with positive value. However, she generally regrets their instrumental nature. In the Malagasy case under review it would seem important to adopt a 'two-tier' approach. We discuss one tier below. Here we recognise that for the plantation workers one way of achieving one's maximum self may indeed involve meeting the

178

challenges of ascribed gender roles, of being fully 'woman' (or man – evidence is lacking on this). One requisite ingredient of this effort is the ability to structure space effectively.

The second strategy involves 'living within the familiar'. It can be argued that the women, as a consequence of the gender division of labour, were profoundly rooted in a 'felt and experienced world'. Their map depicted a known world. All points were accessible on foot. Bridges formed key reference points. Places where the women could meet and chat with others, like shops, roads and the market, were highlighted. In other words, the map depicts a social network aligned with geographical space: the women produced a *lifescape*. As discussed in chapter three, people do not only create deeply local landscapes, they link themselves to their landscape in various ways. The women's map is a visual realisation of Cooper's (1992: 167) proposition that people do not live *in* an environment, they *have* an environment. As a reminder, he argues that it is the active engagement with, and knowing of, the environment that it is important. Items within the environment *'signify or point to one another, thereby forming a network of meanings.'* The men's map was quite different in tenor and is discussed below. Here it is recalled that the findings show that some (older) men consciously tried to achieve fit with the local landscape. They used trees as a means of locating themselves, both temporally and spatially. For women and for some men, therefore, to be embedded in a familiar world represented a second method of constructing and realising one's maximum self. Photograph 7.2 shows some of the men at Plantation MonDésir taking a rest from work before engaging in a conversation with the research team about what they consider quality of life and happiness to be.

Photograph 7.2 Men at Plantation MonDésir Prepare to Talk About Quality of Life

A third strategy involves locating oneself securely within a particular cultural tradition. Like the smallholders, men and women workers centred, to greater or less degrees, aspects of 'their selves' upon key normative markers of well-being that were prevalent across the region, and indeed throughout Madagascar. For all plantation workers, regardless of their attitude to agricultural life, ownership of land and of zebu cattle were fundamental aspirations. Quite apart from their economic use, they lent the holder of these assets considerable status. As such they constituted central quality of life markers. The consumption of rice was likewise seen as key to a good 'Malagasy' quality of life. Children, both boys and girls, were seen as sources of labour and as important to the performance of rituals. Above all, children were seen as the reason as to why one lived and worked at all. Disagreement existed as to the value of agricultural life *per se*. Some workers viewed it as a hindrance to survival since it did not engender appropriate ways of thinking in a changing world. Others saw farming as a source of security. These people associated farming, as did the smallholders, with positive normative values like hard work and *'heritage'*.

Concluding Comments
The plantation workers and the smallholders employed several normative strategies aimed at constructing and maintaining their maximum selves. These were:

- To be integrated and embedded in a community whose rules are familiar, and stable. This necessitates drawing clear boundaries to enclose one's world. If a world is to be known it needs manageable dimensions.
- To consciously *live* a particular cultural tradition, for example through the acquisition of key normative markers of well-being like zebu.
- To be embedded in a known and familiar environment. This involves 'unknowing knowing'.
- To successfully meet the challenges of ascribed gender roles, of being fully 'woman', or 'man'.
- To avoid posing challenges to the interdependence of the community, through individual enrichment for example. This is required for systemic equilibrium.
- Within the safety net of the interdependent community, to be able to determine the course of one's life free from the judgements and the obstacles littering the wider world.

In the analytic language developed in this thesis, we can consider these strategies as protective of normative definitions of self. They require the creation of a system. The emergent properties of the system are interdependence, belonging and a sense of living within the geographically and culturally familiar. It seems that many respondents did not really see themselves as being a subsystem of a wider system (apart from – significantly - the strong sense of being Malagasy). Rather, the rest of the world was also perceived as being composed of systems oscillating alongside one another. That is to say, there was a lack of felt connection. Relationships across boundaries were few and tentative. Nor were relationships seen as enhancing, enriching or empowering (our definition of entanglement) but rather as potentially threatening. This is probably because the smallholders and plantation

workers were not able to exercise power effectively beyond their mini-worlds. To be empowered one needs effective decision-making capacity.

Dissonance in Respondent Strategies to Create Maximum Selves
The fieldwork findings suggest that there is dissonance in the normative strategies utilised by the smallholders and the plantation workers to manage their noisy risk-laden world. This is important because the dissonance impinges directly upon their ability to achieve both their maximum selves, and their ability to engage in constructive relationships beyond their self-constructed worlds. The author has identified five types of dissonance, which are discussed here: (1) discrepancies between psychological well-being and the achievement of basic functionings, (2) inability to achieve entitlements, (3) conflicts between strategies to manage change, and those designed to maintain one's maximum self, (4) difficulties in maintaining normative values, and (5) discordant ways of conceptualising time.

Firstly, we consider discrepancies between psychological well-being and the achievement of basic functionings. The fieldwork findings show that the wish of the *smallholders* to maintain the integrity of their lives came at a serious cost. Saith's & Harris-White's (1998) work on functionings was discussed in chapter four. As a reminder, they considered three basic functionings - being healthy, being nourished and being educated - in order to arrive at a gendered understanding of well-being. In their view, gender differentials may exist even at the level of such basic functionings. Their assumptions are firstly, that these three functionings are so elementary as to be necessary for well-being. Second, a differential in any one of these functionings is assumed to result in a differential in well-being.

On the basis of the Malagasy fieldwork findings, achievement of psychological well-being by the smallholders would appear to be at the expense of achieving these three basic functionings. The data set shows that the smallholders' poverty was abject in the extreme, with even 'middle-class' people shaping leaves into crockery and cutlery (seen as a sign of poverty by the respondents, rather than being just related to cleanliness *etc*). This level of poverty had a bearing upon the functionings outlined. With respect to health, weaker members of the community, particularly children (both male and female), were profoundly affected. Mortality and morbidity rates were high. Their very claim to life itself was tenuous. Yet appeal to the formal health sector was almost impossible, due to three factors: the smallholders' lack of money, their geographical distance from health posts, and their conviction that their health was good. Furthermore, a lack of nutritional knowledge, poverty and gendered biases in food distribution combined to ensure that men, women and children were often malnourished and tired. High stress levels, rather than conventional biomedical explanations, can also explain symptoms like fatigue and muscle pain (van Haaften, 2003: 9). Finally, the fact that no smallholder children attended school renders redundant the concept of a meaningful choice (Kabeer, 2000; Nussbaum, 2001) as to which kind of life the children might wish to pursue as adults. They were not being equipped with the skills that make choice possible. In sum, the smallholders' definition of quality of life was not fully in their own interests. They had difficulties in forming

relationships beyond their immediate community. This hampered their ability to see that things, like improvements in basic health, were actually possible.

In some respects the findings from the second research site are similar. Rates of morbidity and mortality were high. Stillbirth and dental problems were common. The use of narcotic leaves and the high rates of alcohol consumption to counter weariness were prevalent. Food was allocated in a gendered fashion. Yet men saved to purchase gold for women, people in general were greatly concerned about funerary arrangements, and both men and women wanted to attend festivals in fine style. In other words, the aspirations of the *plantation workers*, like those of the smallholders, did not tally automatically against a will to achieve basic functionings. Well-being in the eyes of the community was more complex than that. It would seem important to *demonstrate* that one has 'arrived', that well-being has been achieved on the basis of normative markers.

The second type of dissonance concerns the inability of respondents to obtain certain 'entitlements'. In contrast to the smallholders, the plantation workers had a feeling that they were entitled to services in the wider world. For example, they considered they had a right to adequate formal sector health care (in addition to recourse to traditional medicines and healers) and to formal education. There were problems, however, in realising these 'entitlements'.

- The sense of entitlement held by the plantation workers was at odds with their actual lack of choice. Lack of choice was related to the workers' weak purchasing power. They generally could not afford treatment in the formal sector. It was financially difficult for them to send their children to school, particularly secondary school.
- Not all services requested by respondents were actually available to them. Women and men workers had an interest in changing their lives, for instance through establishing businesses that required training. However, it was hard for them to realise their plans, even though the choice to do one thing and not another was – apparently - open to them. They lacked meaningful choice due to a lack of time, or a lack of organisational support (such as training provision).

The concept of entitlement, meaning here the right to something, can form part of a rights and responsibilities approach to the construction of relationships. The plantation management had developed such a model. Plantation workers who adhered to 'clock time' were rewarded with a package of permanent contracts, higher wages and health and educational benefits. However, for the smallholders, entitlement to services in the wider world scarcely seemed to exist as a concept. A corresponding sense of responsibility to the wider world did not appear to exist either[106]. The implication of this is that it could be difficult to encourage effective

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106 In the bounded and controlled world of the smallholders, community members were entitled to the benefits of interdependence, for instance support in times of hardship. These rights entailed responsibilities, for instance communal work on family tombs.

relationships across the food chain if a rights and responsibilities framework vis-à-vis other stakeholders is not adhered to by the smallholders.

The third area of dissonance was the conflict between strategies to manage change, and those designed to maintain one's maximum self. Whilst the smallholders were still able to 'create their world' to a degree, the plantation workers were thrust into the midst of a world of flux. They encountered non-natives – the Belgian plantation management and tourists - on a daily basis. Living along or close to the national highway, 'elsewhere' featured more strongly in their consciousness. Large local towns like Fénerive were easy to reach and some of their children attended (or theoretically could attend) secondary school there. Urgent medical cases were treated in Fénerive's hospital. The plantation workers were therefore in the process of developing strategies to meet, and work with, the difficulties posed by living in an environment over which they had little control, and in which their normative values were under constant challenge.

Some respondents seemed to be content with merely managing life in this situation, for example through paid employment on the plantation. Other respondents actively sought to acquire skills in order to enable them to shape their lives, or at least those of their children, in new ways. They believed that formal education enabled people to think in a more business-orientated way, *'to think better'*. Some workers wanted to diversify their livelihood strategies through developing businesses like woodlots, processing units in order to add value to their primary agricultural products, and chicken farms. These aspirational pathways were sought by men and women. As such they represent conscious attempts by the respondents to fissure the boundaries of the world they had been dealt on their own terms. Entanglement was sought, but they wanted to determine the how and when.

Women workers were not fully content with the boundedness of their lifescape. Some women were interested in road improvement programmes in order to evacuate their crops. They also found themselves torn between wanting services on the plantation and the pleasure found in walking to market and meeting people. Women were particularly interested in literacy programmes and learning French. The author's research project itself provided the women with an opportunity to exercise their agency. They used the participatory activities, the video and the discussions to reach out beyond their bounded world. They made a great number of suggestions clearly directed less to the research team than to the plantation management. It is important not to overstate the case here. However, it could be argued that the women felt that the research project provided them with a 'one-off' chance to set the agenda and to change particular things about their lives. The author argued above that the women were probably happy when they were able to meet their challenges of their ascribed gender roles. This does not preclude them however from wanting to expand their realm of meaningful choice, to exploit new opportunities, and to have a stronger say in determining the course of their lives. In other words, women were not content with being 'just' means to the ends of other people. They also saw themselves as ends in themselves.

Men, too, used the opportunity provided by the research team to outline a number of projects they wanted to realise. Significantly though, many of these were located off the plantation. In other words, the scope (and potential scope) of men's agency was wider. This was visually demonstrated in their participatory map. It included distant places and roads that trailed off. Rather than being a representation of geographical space overlain with social networks (as with the women's map), the men's map was overlain with aspiration. This suggests that the male plantation workers might be better able than women to adapt to, and indeed exploit, the macro-environment. Economic poverty, rather than a lack of decision-making capability, would be the main hurdle to overcome.

We now address the fourth type of dissonance. The trend towards *'self-creation'* and the shaping of new identities among the plantation workers was counterbalanced by the prevalence of powerful normative values similar to those extant in Brickaville. Norms designed to ensure interdependence through levelling community members in terms of income and aspiration were clearly active among the plantation workers. Rich people were expected to share their wealth. Academically promising pupils often failed to complete their studies because of *gris-gris* (black magic) being enacted against them. Cash was important, but not overwhelmingly so. The contradictory character of money was very evident. Whilst money can enable individuals to thrive, particularly by enabling a 'good' standard of living, the respondents recognised that financial wealth can arouse jealousy and divide communities. Furthermore, money in itself is a flat and uninformative medium (Jiggins, pers. comm. 10/03). Assets like land and zebu represented not only a financial coming of age; more importantly they expressed for the respondents what it *meant* to be Malagasy.

The final point of dissonance in the strategies developed by the respondents to deal with their risk-laden world concerns the conceptualisation of time[107]. We

107 Much of the discussion here draws upon Farnworth, R. (pers. comm. 01/02), who enabled the author to structure the interpretation along task-centred and clock-time axes. Wallman, S. (1965) and Jiggins (1998) have undertaken empirical studies of time, and temporal variability, in how people behave. Wallman provides an anthropological study of Sesotho measurement concepts. Here is a sample extract: *'One woman, preparing bread, was asked how she would cook it: Until it is ready (bo butson). Pressed for precision, she thought carefully and then said: Five or six hours (li-hora, the English word). In fact, she cooked the bread for an hour and a quarter and saw that it was perfect when she took it from the steam oven. It was ready both in English terms and her own. At no time did she refer to any kind of time, not even the sun. It was not the time that made it ready, it was the cooking'* (Wallman 1965: 240). Jiggins (1998) discusses the problems that farming systems researchers face when trying to understand the conceptual framework and perspectives of farmers, and in conveying their own 'mental furniture' so that farmers understand scientists' concerns. It is not just a matter of extracting 'factual' information, or counting things. In addition to taking the Wallman example, Jiggins cites the work of Huss-Ashmore, who also worked in Lesotho. Huss-Ashmore showed how the seasonality of foods in the diet is tied to the availability of different types of fuel (dung, crop residues, etc. - each gives a different type of heat); it is the seasonality of fuel availability that drives the cropping and food systems. Finally, Jiggins discusses her own work in Zambia. She studied the importance of local fruits and vegetables in women's household dietary management, especially where markets are not reliable and seasons are very marked. Even though fruits and vegetables

discuss here two different methods of working with time that became visible in the course of fieldwork at Plantation MonDésir. They were so different that conflict was certain. One way of managing time was task-centred. That is, the task itself determined how much time was required to fulfil it. This seems to be a flexible, seasonal, child-centred way to structure time. It is determined subjectively and thus has the status of 'personal time'. This type of time enables co-existing rhythms to be managed (for example, irregular labour demands in agriculture[108] across the year pregnancy, childbirth, changes attributable to the life-cycle of a family, festivals, and the daily timetable). These overlapping rhythms are not rigid or fully predictable. Interest, leisure and preferences are some of the means of deciding how time should be allocated[109]. Given this, it should be recognised that the gender division of labour structures task-centred time profoundly, meaning in many cases that women in particular need to perform many tasks more-or-less simultaneously (multi-tasking) in order to achieve them all. The daily activity calendar showed that women workers performed a much greater range of tasks than men. Toddlers accompanied their mothers during plantation working hours, and for the women 'leisure' meant chatting during housework, walking to market, or whilst working on the plantation.

The second type of time, 'clock time' is impersonal. The time available determines the task to be done. Multi-tasking is rare to impossible[110]. The fieldwork findings suggest that for both women and men workers the imposition of clock time by the plantation management hampered their ability to manage the complexity of their lives. As discussed above the woman wanted to locate key services, such as a shop, clinic and primary school, on the plantation itself. This was evidently an endeavour to integrate their tasks and manage their personal time more effectively. Although men, like the women, found it difficult to meet the stringent time-keeping requirements of the plantation management, they seemed to simplify and segregate their time in quite a different way. For instance men engaged in a range of leisure activities like sport, dancing, strolling and watching videos. These activities fully occupied particular time slots like the weekend or evening, and thus did not involve multi-tasking.

It is important to appreciate the importance of leisure activities to both men and women. Segal, commenting that *'our lives are often sadly overburdened'* (1998:

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are not officially regarded as 'crops', Jiggins shows that they are carefully managed. She concludes that it is vital to maintain flexibility and resilience in the face of temporal variability under any 'farm system improvement'.

108 Folke *et al.* (1998) observe that the *'lifespans and life histories of economically important plants and animals set the rhythms for many institutions designed to regulate [their] harvest.'*

109 Crocker (1998: 374) adds that *'we do well to balance the times of our lives'* from childhood to old age. Different stages of life require different kinds of balancing acts because of typical changes in the potential, strengths and limits to one's power. Crocker also argues that one should neither sacrifice capabilities that we currently value for our future good, nor seek to obtain aspects of well-being now that could harm our capabilities in the long term.

110 As just noted toddlers could accompany their mothers on the plantation. This is an example of the two types of time converging. However, the management paid for schooling largely to keep children off the plantation during working hours.

352), argues that the good life has much to do with our relationship to time. In particular he suggests that time for leisure is essential to any concept of the good life (ibid.). Clark's (2002:10) study of poor black workers in two townships in South Africa showed that his respondents did not have sufficient access to leisure facilities, but that they placed great value upon singing, dancing, drinking coke, sport and church activities[111]. The Malagasy fieldwork findings demonstrate that leisure was accorded a similar importance. However the results are not conclusive as to whether embedding leisure into everyday activities – as the women did – constitutes a poor relation to engaging in separate leisure activities.

Effect of Respondent Strategies to Create Maximum Selves Upon Entanglement

Thus far, the interpretation suggests that the respondents' attempts to create and maintain their maximum selves either encouraged the formation of relationships, as in the case of many plantation workers, or denied it, as with the smallholders. We can make the following observations and comments:

- It seems that the smallholders sought to ensconce themselves in a bubble. It is within this bubble that they were able to <u>be</u> themselves, that is, to be their maximum selves. Elsewhere they were powerless. In order to protect their space, the smallholders sought to minimise links with the wider world, and to maintain as much control as possible over the links they had. Relationships with others were restricted in the interests of maintaining personal coherence and managing risk.
- The map created by the women plantation workers was rich and colourful. It was full of social meaning. Yet it also represents closure and defence against the wider world. Women were restricted in their ability to manoeuvre and find pathways out of their bounded world. The smallholders also found it difficult to manage challenges to their normative values, even when these came in the form of organic farming initiatives, or in attempts to recruit model farmers.
- The smallholders' current ability to develop their normative value set on their own terms in order to maintain correspondence with the environment is questionable. It is, however, problematic when a subset of society moves 'out of synch' with the wider world, given that the macro-economic framework does indeed profoundly structure the environment within which people live and take decisions. It is fallacious to consider that one can fully enclose one's small, bounded world in a systemic world over the long-term.
- A further consequence of this lack of synchronisation is that the women workers, and the smallholders might become less able to construct their maximum selves on their own terms. Their models of maximum selves

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111 Møller adds (pers. comm. 11/03) that a lot of community leisure in South Africa is 'edutainment' - a mix of training and recreation. Young people have such a deficit on education that they are keen to learn new skills and to go to workshops in their spare time.

186

might come to lack legitimacy in all but a small circle, and to lack sources of invigoration.

- The smallholders, and the women workers, seem to have a defensive concept of maximum self (one based on retreat). This could cause problems for the building of relationships across the food chain to organic consumers.
- The smallholders' definition of quality of life was not fully in their own interests. New ways of thinking seem necessary, given that deprivation in basic functionings is so marked, and where inequality on the basis of gender and age in the achievement of those functionings occurs.
- The respondents' strategies were not coherent. The risk-laden environment posed serious management challenges. The plantation workers in particular were in the process of identifying new ways of thinking about themselves. It is useful to think of their identities as being in flux. Both men and women were actively considering the acquisition of new skills and diversifying their livelihood strategies in order to interact more effectively with the macro-environment. Relationships with a range of actors were perforce a necessity, but the plantation workers wanted the means to negotiate these relationships on their own terms.

In conclusion, the author argues that it is quite possible for contradictory strategies to be employed at the same time. One aims to achieve stability and equilibrium, the other aims to work with change.

So far, we have been interpreting a basic data set derived from a baseline study. The purpose has been to draw out the implications for constructing maximum selves, and to explore the potential for entanglement between producers and consumers. Part 7.3 examines the implications of the interpretation for social certification in organic agriculture. To provide guidelines for how to work with the interpretation, it is worth stepping back a moment to consider a quote by the poet T.S. Eliot. This is discussed in Box 7.1.

Box 7.1: Guidelines for Working with the Interpretation

Where is the life we have lost in living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information? (T.S. Eliot [1934] 1969).

A baseline study, such as one enabled by the Malagasy quality of life toolkit, is principally about producing information (contextualised data). Of itself, information has no value. One becomes knowledgeable through the process of selectively converting information to knowledge (information + attributed value = knowledge). This is where a range of stakeholders, including the original respondents, agents of social certification initiatives and consumers, step into the process.

Knowledge is not the same as wisdom. Nor is it a lesser form. An older understanding of wisdom was that 'wisdom = knowledge + authority'.

However, a newer understanding is that the lived life is a source of wisdom, that is, wisdom is a practice (Farnworth, R, pers. comm. 04/04). The *gacaca* courts in Rwanda, which are a revival of an ancient legal system for the new purpose of trying genocide suspects, are an example of communities trying to apply wisdom, rather than legal knowledge, to terribly fraught cases[112]. Wisdom draws upon lived experience to enable wise decision-making not only about past events, but also about events that have not yet arisen (a task ascribed to politicians in a democracy, for example).

'Wisdom is part of the flux and narrative of the world. If we seek to master events with an objective wisdom we cut ourselves off from the generative quality on which the world rests. When we become engaged and compassionate we experience the generative gift from which wisdom emerges.' (Rev. Said's address at Canon John Aves' funeral in Jerusalem, January 2004, Farnworth, R. pers. comm. 04/04).

7.3. Social Certification in Organic Agriculture

In chapter three it was argued that social certification is not about 'making explicit' a range of social goods in organic agriculture, it is about creating these goods and then fixing them into a set of codified practices. Social certification has received impetus from IFOAM's recent commitment to social justice. According to the *'Principal Aims of Organic Production and Processing'* in the IFOAM Basic Standards 2002, IFOAM aims (1) to recognise the wider social and ecological impact of and within the organic production and processing system, (2) to provide everyone involved in organic farming and processing with a quality of life that satisfies their basic needs, within a safe, secure and healthy working environment, and (3) to support the establishment of an entire production, processing and distribution chain which is both socially just and ecologically responsible. We can interpret these aims for the purposes of our discussion as follows: The first aim sets organic farming within a systemic context. The second aim can be reframed as a commitment of sorts to enable people to achieve their maximum selves. The third aim can be understood as a commitment to constructive relationships.

In this thesis, social certification is understood to be an ethical process. It has a dynamic real world character of its own. It counts and measures, it shapes and creates. Social certification helps to construct quality relationships to the world because it involves the forging, freezing and implementation of ethical values. According to Hubert (pers. comm. 04/04), certification is about the production and construction of norms. It enables people to agree on something when something is uncertain. New issues open up new uncertainties. Agreeing allows space for action.

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112 *'Prior knowledge of the law, or even a basic formal education, weren't prerequisites. Candidate judges needed only broad community recognition to be considered' for the role of a 'person of integrity'* i.e. a judge in a gacaca court (Kanuma, 2003: 15).

On the basis of the interpretation in Part 7.2 above, and with the freedom permitted by the perception that social certification is an artefact, the author argues that social certification in organic agriculture could be composed of two threads:

- The first thread involves working supportively with the 'felt and experienced world' of the producer. The central purpose of this would be to enable producers to achieve their maximum selves on their own terms.
- The second thread demands that social certification take on a development agenda. The purpose here is to enable positive and transformative relationships (entanglement) across the food chain. To do this social certification initiatives need to work with producers to build constructs of the maximum self that enable entanglement. It also needs to attend to the structural character of the producer to consumer chain in order to enable 'empowerment spaces' to arise.

The two threads are elaborated upon in this part. Although the discussion would seem to challenge the idea that standards should be simple to apply, cross-culturally relevant and performance-orientated, the author maintains that there is in fact no choice. People are not products, and thus standards which have been developed to monitor product quality across the food chain are not easy to transfer. Meaningful standards acknowledge that the world, and the people in it, change constantly and unpredictably. Aspiration and the search for the good life cannot be bounded. However, it is right to search for simplicity. The quality of life toolkit, which was devised to produce baseline data, is simple to apply. Below, simple methods to elaborate principles, standards and criteria *in situ* for each strand are presented.

Thread One: Social Certification and the Felt and Experienced World
In chapter one this question was posed:

- *Can, and should, social certification standards be shaped in part by producer values? That is, can the development of standards play a role in enabling producers to create the world they want?*

In chapter three it was argued that the answer to this question theoretically has to be 'yes'. Standards for the purposes of social certification need to connect with the felt and experienced world of the producer if they are to mean something to producers. That is, standards need to connect with, and be woven into, prior networks of meaning. The rules and regulations that producers will need to follow have to derive from values they recognise and feel, as well as understand, to be right. However, it is not easy for stakeholders, such as certification bodies, to create connections with the felt world of the producer. The fieldwork findings demonstrate that for all respondents adherence to certain normative values was essential in defining what it *meant* to be Malagasy. To be Malagasy is a unique property and one resistant to capture by outsiders. This is for two reasons. Firstly, the property of being Malagasy cannot be properly understood because outsiders do not *live* this experience. We are not talking about some kind of special essence here, rather the situatedness of the Malagasy farmer or plantation worker in a

particular time and space[113]. Second, with the assistance of the questions posed by T.S. Eliot, we should be able to agree that Malagasy perceptions of the world, in their own context, can constitute wisdom. If this is so, then there are limits to verification procedures. Wisdom is not the same as accumulated information. It is not fully explicable because it encompasses intuition.

Nevertheless, it is important to attempt this task. The property of 'being Malagasy' (and all the local variations upon this theme) can be eroded through engagement in relationships with external partners either hostile to, or indifferent to, this property. Involvement in the international producer to consumer chain bears certain additional risks to the integrity of the producer, risks of which the producers seem well aware according to the fieldwork findings. The interpretation in this chapter shows that the smallholders restricted entanglement in the interests of being able to construct and maintain their maximum selves in a protected space. In contrast many, though not all, plantation workers were trying to acquire the skills set and the economic independence necessary for them to build their maximum selves in new ways. These strategies represent divergent responses to the common factor of risk-laden environment. The sense that 'being Malagasy' needs to be actively maintained was common to both respondent strategies. It was suggested above that to be empowered one needs a degree of effective power. The normative values so jealously protected by the respondents provide such a platform. Whilst social certification cannot delve into the deep sense of what being Malagasy means to holders of that property (the signified), it *can* acknowledge and support a range of visible markers of the property. These markers, or signifiers, constitute expressions of well-being *in practice*.

Box 7.2 provides a worked example of how standards and indicators that support well-being in practice (according to local normative values) might appear. These have a tentative character and are given for the purposes of illustration only. Representatives of social certification bodies and producers need to work together to produce valid standards and indicators. A central aim of the process should be to measure how the ability of smallholders and plantation workers to live according to local normative values is damaged, or enhanced, by their engagement in the export market for organic produce.

Box 7.2: Indicative Standards and Indicators: social certification and the felt and experienced world - thread one

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113 Ravelonohina (LDI, pers.comm. 03/01) told the author of this thesis the following story *'One day a European asked me why the Malagasy peasantry did not seem overly occupied with their miserable fate, to which I replied, 'Our Malagasy peasants are poor but not unhappy. The quality of life of a Malagasy peasant varies greatly according to location, at least I think so. There isn't just one category or one variety of Malagasy peasant, because a great variety of values or traditional cultural identities can be found among us.'*

At the research sites signifiers of well-being in practice included the possession of land and zebu cattle. Other normative values in the two respondent groups included self-sufficiency in food, a desire for independence, and acknowledgement of interdependence in a community. Respect for taboos (fady) is also important. An example is the requirement that paddy can only be cultivated on particular days. Time for leisure, whether chatting or dancing, is necessary. A process could be elaborated as follows:

1. Verify the results of the baseline study with the respondents. Verification is a normative practice, that is, it confirms rather than challenges.
2. Unpack the core principles that the producers want to support. On the basis of the principles, develop standards.
3. In order to track progress towards meeting these standards, devise indicators.
4. Agree upon the means of monitoring and evaluating progress.

All sample principles, standards and indicators given below are designed to apply to women and men plantation workers equally. Further principles, standards and indicators should be designed to accommodate the needs of disempowered groups, including children (both girls and boys).

Sample Principles

1. The plantation workers' concept of time should be respected.
2. The attainment of key quality of life markers is an essential component of worker well-being.
3. Self-sufficiency in food products is to be enabled.

Sample Standards

1. Workers can request flexitime (within an agreed framework).
2. Plantation workers wishing to purchase a zebu cow will be enabled to do so through the plantation matching credit scheme within three years.
3. Workers are to receive individual usufruct rights to food plots on plantation land.

Sample Indicators

1. Workers opting for flexitime self-report better overall time management.
2. 100% of workers opting into the plantation matching credit scheme have been enabled to purchase a zebu cow after three years.
3. Food self-sufficiency has been achieved.

A critical point needs to be made here. This is that the first thread repudiates value judgements by social certification initiatives (or social labelling initiatives) as to which qualities of life it should support. To engage in such judgements would be at odds with Kant's injunction to see people as ends in themselves. This is because, according to Kant, people are free and rational agents. On this basis, he argues, people have intrinsic value. This is a value people have *'in themselves and equally'* (Wye College/Open University, 1997b Part B, Section 2: 7). It is on the basis of intrinsic value that Kant considers that rights can be accorded. The categorical imperative thus forbids using people as a means to ends that they might

not share, since this represents an infringement upon their capacity for rational choice[114]. According to Des Jardins (2001: 30) this means that *'We should never treat a person as a mere thing to be used for our own purposes ... People are subjects who have their own purposes and intentions, and we have a moral obligation to respect them as capable of making their own decisions.'* Nussbaum (1998: 324) sees the idea that the citizen is a '*free and dignified human being, a maker of choices'*, as absolutely central to the capabilities project. Value judgements made by social certification (or social labelling) initiatives therefore run the risk of seeming arbitrary, in that they might fail to connect with people's lived worlds. They also run the risk of failing to respect the decision-making abilities of the producer. Finally, Kavka's (1978) injunction, that membership of the human moral community cannot be dependent upon possessing any particular substantive concept of the good life, is relevant here.

Adopting the first thread, working supportively with the felt and experienced world of the producer, thus permits the question posed at the outset of this discussion to be answered positively, in practice as well as in theory: *Can, and should, social certification standards be shaped in part by producer values? That is, can the development of standards play a role in enabling producers to create the world they want?* The first thread also provides a method of dealing with some of the questions raised in chapter three: *Are standards primarily about gaining and maintaining access to overseas markets? Or are they annoying and unfortunate hurdles which must be overcome? Could standards be about improving quality of life? Or could they actually hinder the endeavours of farmers and workers to create a world they want? How can global standards be made to work better for Southern firms and workers?* Embedding standards in people's lived lives, it has been argued, makes standards relevant as opposed to being a hurdle to be overcome. They 'work better' because they mean something.

In sum, we have argued that social certification initiatives in organic agriculture must be emboldened to support the efforts of producers to construct and maintain their maximum selves. To do this, the decision-making space of producers needs to be respected. Value judgements by third parties need to be suspended. Indicators which track the progress of producers towards attaining key locally-valid quality of life markers need to be developed.

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114 Discussed in chapter four. It is possible to take issue with Kant's choice of rationality as the basis upon which intrinsic value be accorded. This has implications for moral patients – any being that lacks the capacity to understand or act upon moral considerations and therefore cannot be held morally accountable for their actions (such as children, some intellectually challenged people, or those harmed in accidents, or non-human animals). Regan (1984) argues it is not necessary to be a moral agent to have intrinsic (or inherent) value. Rather it is preferable to work with the concept of subjects of a life (since, among other things, animals and other moral patients have desires, perceptions, memory and sense of future). On this basis Regan maintains that animals have intrinsic value (i.e. a value independent of interests, uses and needs of anyone else) - they are ends in themselves. Both moral agents and moral patients have moral standing. For the purposes of our discussion though, we find rationality to be a sufficient (though not exclusive) basis for the attribution of intrinsic value. This is because we are working with adult farmers.

Nonetheless, the interpretation in Part 7.2 made it clear that there were tensions between the methods the respondents chose to create their maximum selves, and their willingness to entangle with the wider environment. The tensions have bubbled throughout the discussion just undertaken with respect to the first thread of social certification. Social certification initiatives need to confront and work with these tensions if successful entanglement is to take place. That is, if social certification aims to support the construction of successful and transformative relationships across the food chain. We now turn to the second thread.

Thread Two: Social Certification and Entanglement
In chapter one this question was posed:

- *Should social certification have a remit to contribute to 'development', in the sense of leading to growth (however defined) in the community? Or should it be simply about measuring adherence to particular standards?*

The previous part argued that one thread of social certification should be about measuring adherence to particular standards. These standards are designed to ensure the survival of a community in its normative, self-chosen form. However, by engaging in the international trade for organic horticultural products, smallholders and plantation workers are committed to a relationship. This is so even if the terms of that relationship are prejudicial to some of the partners in it, as was discussed in chapter three and in the first part of this chapter. The purpose of the discussion conducted below is to identify specific obstacles to the building of quality relationships across the food chain. The discussion is pursued under the following headings:

- The lack of a basis for substantive value judgements.
- Real world power relations across the producer to consumer chain.

In each part practical ways in which social certification could enable the construction of quality relationships are discussed.

The lack of a basis for substantive value judgements
The discussion above highlighted the importance of local norms. It suggested that the first thread of social certification must acknowledge, and actively work, to support and enable realisation of these norms. Despite the clear advantages of this approach, there are some problems.

First, other stakeholders in the producer to consumer chain could have problems with the priorities of the producers. Those things that are important to these stakeholders, like organic consumers, might not be seen as good, valuable, or worthy by the producers. For example, the biodiversity of the primary forest is plausibly important *as an idea* to many people who have not even been to Brickaville, and who might only have a very fuzzy idea of what kind of biodiversity is extant there. That is, people located in a different geographical and ethical space are vulnerable to a kind of ethical light switch. This can be flipped

on, turning them into 'stakeholders'. They identify particular issues as their concern, weight them with ethical values and then seek to intervene (to translate their values into real world action) in order to maintain the stability and continuance of that value. For instance, despite their lack of *information* some German organic consumers could conceivably argue that the Brickaville forest range constitutes part of the global commons in which they also have a stake. From here, they might argue that *wise action* involves the preservation of the forest.

Landscape Development Interventions (LDI) has in fact implemented the idea that the primary forest in Brickaville is worthy of protection over and beyond its actual, and potential, use value for the local population. LDI supports the organic initiatives in the buffer zone - which the author studied - as a means to prevent incursion into the primary forest. The support of organic agriculture by LDI is clearly an attempt to combine apparently incommensurable values. The actions of the farmers in Brickaville (felling the forest) might seem to represent 'ethics in action' which are not commensurable with those of other stakeholders like the consumers.

However, one can explore whether there is discordance between the ethical values of the farmers, and their real world actions. Anthropological studies help to provide rich understandings of Malagasy values. Bloch, M. (1995) puzzles over the relationship of the Zafiminiry people (ethnically close to the *Betsimisaraka*) to the forest. His understanding is that people's concern with the environment is *'not with how not to damage it, but with how to succeed in making a mark on it.'* This does not mean that they view the forest in an utilitarian manner, but rather that they are deeply concerned with the *'fragility and impermanence of human life in a world which is not concerned with their problems and which therefore affects them randomly'*. People can, however, try to transcend nature by inscribing themselves upon it. This, coupled with the fear the forest engenders, leads them to approve of whole-scale felling (ibid: 67). On the other hand, an anthropological study by Hotham & Razafindrahova (2002) with a different ethnic group, demonstrates that areas of forest are strictly protected, either in order to maintain stocks of valued woods, or as burial grounds (this finding chimes in the findings generated by the author's transects). The author's own findings also show that the smallholders expressed great liking towards the forest.

Second, the author has argued that the smallholders have proposed a definition of quality of life that is not entirely in their own interests. If other stakeholders such as social certification bodies and consumers are (a) repositories of ethical value, and (b) if they view the respondents as part of their 'moral community', that is, as members of their circle of concern, and (c) if they are actors (as they are), then it seems unreasonable to expect them to stand aside when people do not appear to be fully living lives *'worthy of the dignity of a human being'* (Nussbaum, 2001: 6).

Third, the respondent communities, like all communities, were not homogeneous. The data set, which is richest for the smallholders, showed that women and children were disproportionately affected by poor health. Women were minors until marriage, and depended upon relationships with male kin to engage in

agriculture and to maintain social standing[115]. In other words, women and children (male and female) *appear* less able to achieve their maximum selves because they face a greater range of constraints. Their realm of meaningful choice seems particularly narrow. It follows that it is not only necessary to explicitly recognise inequalities in power relationships within a given community, it is incumbent upon concerned stakeholders to do something about it (even if this is as little as striving not to deepen inequalities through development interventions). The idea that people have different bundles of entitlements needs to be pursued, as the following authors make clear:

- *'We should and can weave into our analysis of indicators of sustainability and quality of life issues of internal differentiation in local knowledge i.e. asymmetric relations with reference to class, gender, and ethnicity – differences all too readily swept under the gender and scale neutrality assumptions that continue to stymie development projects to this day'* (Nazarea *et al.* 1998: 166-7).

- *'There is a need to recognise that any community is heterogeneous and dynamic, with different social actors having different sets of environmental entitlements and endowments ... An analysis of social differences existing behind any image of community may allow projects to take seriously the claims of the socially excluded and actively negotiate outcomes and alternative livelihood sources for certain social groups'* (Ahluwahlia, 1997: 34).

Kavka (1978) proposed that there cannot be degrees of membership in the human moral community. In chapter four, however, evidence was provided that concepts of *'life unworthy of life'* and of *'lives less worthy of care'* remain pervasive in most societies. That is, these concepts have real world outcomes. Nevertheless, it would be extremely hard to argue, on the basis of the fieldwork findings, that the plantation workers or the smallholders consciously espouse and apply these concepts. Female infanticide for example does not happen (as far as we could ascertain, nor has the author discovered cases in the literature on Madagascar). Rather, structures that promote inequality have emerged over time that appear intrinsically logical. An example is the priority given to providing men, rather than women or children, with protein foods like haricot beans since men 'work harder'. Ahluwahlia (1997: 31) comments, with respect to Rajasthan, *'The institutions which subordinate women, and repress their desires, speech, ideas and even emotions, remain very strong'*. Ahluwahlia draws this conclusion on the basis of a very different case study, but her assertion that ideas actually fail to come into being is useful. In our case it can be posited, subject to verification, that the respondents were simply unaware of the way structural inequalities work to create people who, *in practice rather than theory*, live 'lives less worthy of care'. Their

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[115] Wüstefeld, 1998, and Freudenberger (1998, 1999a, b) have commented extensively on the dependence of Malagasy women upon their male kin. Failure in these relationships has been shown to result in exclusion and deep poverty, with such women disproportionately dependent on the collection of wild foods from the forest for their survival.

'embedded-ness' in the felt and experienced world might blind them to reconsidering and reinvigorating what they expect from life. Sen argues that people *'make a deal with reality'* (Crocker, 1998: 372) and seek to come to terms with their predicament. They *'learn to take pleasure in small mercies'* (Sen, cited in ibid). However, this approach can camouflage significant ill-being.

In sum, there is a mismatch at certain points between the normative values espoused by the smallholders (and plantation workers) and those of the wider international community. Nussbaum (2001) accepts the need for diversity to some degree, but warns against relativism on several grounds. In particular, she stresses that we should reject tradition when it harms the capability of people to be and to do. In such cases, she asks, *'Why should we follow the local ideas, and not the best we can find?'* (ibid: 49). She adds that it is important to evaluate people's choices; not to do so means opting for the (unequal) *status quo* rather than in favour of change (Nussbaum, 1998: 316).

The author does not reject Nussbaum's thesis that universal values can be proper and right. However, the author considers that imposing universal values will have limited success (though they can certainly form a different part of the social certification agenda). Rather, the emphasis should be upon enabling people to build new values. It is not simple, though, to identify a starting point from which to build new values. An implication of the Kantian approach which privileges people's capacity for rational thought and action is that local normative values should not be used as a platform by external agents to build further, 'good' values. We need to trust in *'a vision of the citizen as an active searcher for what has worth, whose sincere engagement in that search needs to unfold in freedom, even if it should lead to what seems to be error – unless it inflicts manifest harms on others'* (Nussbaum, 1998: 336). Rather than guide the respondents towards the acquisition of 'good values', one approach could be to encourage creative lateral thinking by the producers in order to build upon their own desire for change. Lateral thinking offers a way to reveal, or create, 'surprise' since it provides a method of alienating information. In so doing it could re-new thoughts people have regarding their well-being. The seeds for this approach already exist in the respondent groups. One respondent said that the mere fact of discussing health with the research team made him learn new things. He wanted more frequent discussions of this nature. The women workers, as mentioned above, seized the chance to argue for an adult literacy programme, clinic and shop on the plantation.

It might not be possible, using the lateral thinking approach, to arrive at values preferred by other stakeholders in the producer to consumer chain. However, the aim would be to enable the producers to enter into relationships beyond their self-defined world through (1) helping them strengthen their capability sets and (2) supporting their attempts to find new ways to define their maximum selves. *'The best change is what people yearn for'* (Peter Kisopia, cited in Farnworth, 1996b: 122). In other words, social certification initiatives would have an explicit empowerment agenda. As part of this, the process would have to pay careful attention to existing local inequalities (which would have been revealed by the quality of life toolkit). This is in line with Chambers (1994: 10) urging of reversals:

196

'It is right to put the last first, to give priority to those who are more deprived – the poor, physically weak, vulnerable, isolated and powerless, and to help them change those conditions. It is also right to enable them to identify and demand what they want and need.' Some of the concerns expressed in chapter three need to be explicitly addressed in the process:

- *How can the institutionalisation of values that standard-setting demands avoid excluding or ignoring the values of weaker stakeholders, such unorganised women workers in horticulture or on plantations?*
- *What constitutes adequate stakeholder consultation?*
- *Which workers benefit, in what ways, and with what costs?*

How might social certification initiatives employ these principles in practice? At the outset, it has to be accepted that it is not possible to force change upon people. *'You must be able to identify at least the smidgeon of a desire for change'* says Adrian Jackson (Farnworth, 1996b: 60). Assuming that this desire is there, one way to develop ideas for change (and perhaps build new values) would be start with the process outlined for strand one. As a reminder, this requires the verification of the fieldwork findings and the development of indicators to support key normative values. This would provide a solid platform for the second stage of creative lateral thinking. The aim of the second stage would be to provoke the producers to apply their wisdom (rather than knowledge) to a process of planned change. Box 7.3 provides examples of activities that have provided, or could provide, novel ways of enabling known information to be defamiliarised and re-presented. Following these - or other locally more appropriate - activities, it should be possible to develop principles, standards and indicators.

Box 7.3: Ideas for Activities to Support Social Certification and Entanglement - Strand Two

Forum theatre was developed by Augusto Boal, a Brazilian. Forum theatre aims to transform the traditional hierarchy of theatre, where actors are active and audiences passive, to a democratic arena where the spectator becomes a spect-actor and all participants contribute to a debate. It is a means of creating theatre with which people can identify because it deals with the challenges people face in their daily lives. It works by first presenting a play that people have come up with about their own situation. The play is then repeated, but this time members of the audience can step in to take the protagonist's part to try and change the outcome. There is plenty of scope for experimentation, different words and courses of action. Adrian Jackson of the London Bubble explains. *'You will not need to persuade people to intervene ... When people intervene they are thinking: there is a person like me. I have been there. People who intervene may be trying out a solution to a situation they are in at that very moment'.* Jackson continues, '*Forum theatre is about looking at the problem. It is about sharing ideas and solutions. It is complex but not complicated ... there is no predetermined goal, nothing is censored, everything is possible.'* (Source: Farnworth, 1996b: 54-57)

The Belgian company *Groupov* has developed a show called Rwanda 94. It is based on survivors' eyewitness accounts of the genocide and retells the events through music, dance, words, television archive pictures, filmed fictional episodes, masks and puppets. It has now been taken to Rwanda. Although spectators *'sobbed and howled with grief'* and Red Cross psychologists attended each performance to help the most traumatised, audience response has been tremendous. A Rwandan member of the cast, who lost his parents and six other members of his family, explained that *'The Rwandan tradition is that you remain silent and dignified, whatever happens ...But when you're faced with a quite exceptional event like genocide, it's no longer enough to keep silent. Suffering must express itself'* (Source: Bédarida, 2004). In other words, the normative values of Rwandan society failed (unsurprisingly) to enable people to properly cope. A new mechanism, catharsis, had to be sought to 're-present' what happened.

Novel theatrical forms are one way of challenging norms and of provoking new ways to think about entrenched problems. Another approach would be to use the vehicle of local theatrical forms to provide a forum for the discussion of new material. In Madagascar there are 74 troupes of people's opera, *hira gasy*. Each troupe performs to thousands of people annually. In their texts and songs, the *hira gasy* reflect everyday preoccupations. They *'carry the soul and transmit an ethic'* (Mauro & Raholiarisoa, 2000: 140).

Appreciative inquiry *'refers to both a search for knowledge and a theory of intentional collective action which are designed to help evolve the normative vision and will of a group, organisation or society as a whole'* (Cooperrider *et al.* 1987). The New Economic Foundation's version of appreciative inquiry, Imagine, is being used in the UK with a number of community groups (Walker 2000, 2001). In a context similar to the one encountered in Madagascar, a workshop might be constructed as follows (following Walker's 3 stage outline, and adding a fourth).

1. Understand: choose 'appreciative questions' designed to draw out the best from the past (based on the results of quality of life toolkit).
2. Imagine/ Dream: use the best of the past to imagine the future. Provocative propositions (sometimes called possibility statements) are developed by the research team on the basis of the fieldwork findings. These are then presented to the respondents, who discuss and select the propositions they like best.
3. Co-create/ Design: form partnerships between organisations and individuals to take projects forward.
4. Delivery: undertaking practical steps would help complete the learning circle by moving the participants through the stages of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984, in King, 2000).

198

In many locations local poetry and story telling traditions could be drawn upon to rephrase and distill the fieldwork findings. Performance poetry has a social as well as artistic role. In the West African tradition of the *griot/griotte*, poetry is history, philosophy, social and political comment, as well as music, performance, entertainment and literature. In Madagascar *Kabary* are poetic discourses held at every important occasion, whether funerary rites, a wedding, or the inauguration of a school[116]. Sometimes poetic duels take place (Mauro & Raholiarisoa 2000: 140). *Hainteny*, a form of *Kabary*, are the traditional poems of the Merina people.[117] Ben Raikes, a British poet, comments, *'You cannot teach change but you can learn it ... Poetry is like dynamite, allowing you to see below the surface, to look at ... things with fresh eyes'* (cited in Farnworth, 1996b: 42). Stories and poems frequently weave back into time. This could be important in enabling a sense of continuity to flourish, given that the aim of the second strand of social certification is develop new ideas on the basis of the old. Alex Pascall comments that slightly changing familiar poems or stories can bring new nuances to a situation. He explains that in the Caribbean, *'Our storytelling is a communicative non-ending medium. It came from my background, it came from my mother'* (cited in ibid: 48). This is reminiscent of a remark that Tangisy (one of the plantation workers) made - cited in chapter three - that discussion continues from generation to generation. Among the Sakalava people in Madagascar, grandmothers are the main sources of fables and stories (Jaovelo-Dzao, 1996: 16). This point reminds us that it is necessary to consider how to work with all the members of the community effectively.

Of course, the process is continual. Literacy, for example, cannot be unlearned (Nussbaum, 1998: 328). Standards will therefore need to be revised regularly. Well-being is a process of becoming. Photograph 7.3 shows Marcie Maman i'Kala, one of the smallholders in Sahalakana. Her image embodies this idea for the author.

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116 Suzanne Razanabahoaka, one of the author's French teachers in Madagascar, recounted how her would-be husband recited a kabary to her parents for three hours in order to acquire permission for her hand in marriage. The kabary extolled her many virtues etc.

117 Fox, L. (1990) *'Hainteny: the traditional poetry of Madagascar'*, offers a translation from the Malagasy.

Photograph 7.3 Well-being is a Process of Becoming: Marcie Maman i'Kala

Real world power relations across the producer to consumer chain
The second major constraint to constructive relationships is the economic macro-environment within which smallholders and plantation workers are immersed. The potential of social certification in organic agriculture to challenge real world power relations is explored here.

Part 7.1 outlined ways in which the macro-environment presents a series of interconnected risks to the integrity of the smallholders and the plantation workers. These risks include the top-down nature of the global producer to consumer commodity chain in horticulture and the character of North-South relations, which have been bent through history to disadvantage the South. Dependence on the vagaries of the international market, lack of knowledge regarding world commodity prices, reliance on just a few trading partners, and the threat posed by producers in other countries constitute further risks. The way in which the international commodity chain can exploit, and create, local gender inequalities was discussed in chapter three. Consumers, with their interest in homogeneous products, also pose a threat. Buyers not only reject 'unsuitable' products on the consumers' behalf, they also purchase a limited range of varieties, thus endangering the survival of locally-preferred landraces.

Engagement in organic farming does not necessarily promote a more equitable trading structure. Farmers are vulnerable to the risks just mentioned. In addition, organic certification is costly. In Madagascar, proper participation in certification procedures demands literacy and a command of French. Government support for

organic agriculture is non-existent. Although agricultural techniques appear *de facto* to be organic, certain techniques need to be learnt in order to qualify internationally for organic status. Hubert (pers. comm 10/00) comments that certification standards are sets of rules made in one place which are then transferred to another place with other sets of rules. This means that they can be hard for farmers to interpret and decode. Currently, the main reason for engaging in organic farming is the seductive nature of higher premiums on organic products.

Social certification in organic agriculture has huge potential. It offers the prospect of 'shutting out' the noise of the risk-laden environment through carving a space in which equitable relationships could flourish. Rather than being forced into retreat into micro-worlds, the farmers and workers might be able to consider engagement in the wider system. This is only possible if stakeholders right across the chain are committed to building a constructive relationship - to entanglement. If they are not, then these stakeholders will continue to represent serious sources of risk to the producers. Social certification thus provides the one of a series of 'entanglement spaces' in which new relationships can be forged across the producer to consumer chain in organic agriculture.

The author has argued that privileging local norms is essential if standards for the purpose of social certification are to be woven into prior webs of meaning. This in itself demands that social certification initiatives run counter to, challenge and transform prevailing power relations. Support for local norms by external stakeholders has to be unquestioning. If this is so, it is not possible to answer several of the questions posed in chapter three on their own terms: *How can standards be developed which are credible to players at the international level (EU or USA) as well as to people on the ground? How can objectivity in standards be obtained so as have consistent assessment? What constitutes acceptable local variations in standards?* Buried in all these questions is the language of 'elsewhere' – the North, the more powerful stakeholders, the real decision-makers. It has been argued in this chapter that the content of standards has to be (largely) left up to the producers themselves.

Font & Harris (2004: 19-20) considers that one of the main challenges is how to turn social issues into meaningful and measurable metrics. They argue that the assessment of social issues is currently more subjective and less robust than its environmental equivalents. In response to this remark the author of this thesis contends that credibility for all stakeholders can be built into the process of developing those standards, starting with the production of the data set and continuing with the translation of the data into principles, standards and indicators.

It has also been suggested in this chapter that unquestioning adherence to local normative values is problematic in a world of rapid change. Producers are inescapably bound into wider systemic relationships. These relationships form part of the landscape of risk. Creative lateral thinking was suggested, as one approach among many, to enable people to build upon their normative values. The purpose is to enable producers to engage in planned change: *To help create the world they seek.* Although planned change is a necessary activity, it is susceptible to being

thrown off course due to real world complexity (Wilson, 1993; Stacey, 1994; Thuan, 2001). Within a subsystem, resilience is key. People in that subsystem need methods to deal with rapid change, and with the unexpected. The development of quality relationships across an international system like the producer to consumer chain likewise demands that people in that relationship are able to manage change. Resilience is not only an ingredient of a quality relationship, it is also an emergent property of that system.

We end this part with a proposition: an implication of being involved in a global producer to consumer chain is that producers have to accept that they are also means to other people's ends. They literally 'produce' so that others may consume. Thus producers cannot only be ends in themselves. They are ineluctably involved in relationships. If we agree with this, then there are several consequences for the producers, including the following:

- Involvement in relationships will prevent the producers from being able to totally 'centre' their being upon themselves. They will need to accept that the priorities of other stakeholders place certain constraints on their own priorities.
- If producers are able to accept entanglement with other stakeholders in the realm of ideas and in practice, then they will need to recognise that they will be *changed* by their participation.
- The willingness of producers to contemplate entanglement with others in the organic producer to consumer chain is important to the success of that chain, whether this be measured in terms of reliable product delivery or in the sense of enhanced lives.
- Producers will need to accept that *expansions in power* among certain subgroups in their own communities will occur. Weaker members, like women and children, may experience an expansion in their realm of meaningful choice. This would not necessarily need to correlate with a diminishment in power among more powerful men. This is because an expansion in 'power to', *i.e.* in people's capacity to define their own life choices and to pursue their own goals (Kabeer 1997, 2000) can set in motion a range of synergetic effects. One of these might be new ways to exercise choice, or new domains in which choice might be exercised (Jiggins, pers. comm. 12/03). Disempowerment for some people is not a necessary feature of this. An emergent property of 'power to' may also be empowerment at the group level. The group may be better able to represent itself in other fora, including as a stakeholder in the producer to consumer chain.

7.4   The Quality of Life Toolkit

The final part of this chapter examines the efficacy of the quality of life toolkit. Did it meet the challenges posed in chapter five? Following a short discussion, we then move to the conclusion.

1. Quality of life research means thinking about real lives

The toolkit was quite effective in finding out about people's real, meaningful lives. This was for two reasons:
1. The toolkit comprised a number of methods. The locus of enquiry was not pre-set. The respondent-focused nature of the process enabled issues significant to them to emerge and be discussed.
2. Some methods were particularly conducive, in particular the thematic apperception tests, in provoking people into revealing some of their personal preoccupations.

2. Assessing quality of life as an ethical issue

The toolkit was able:
- to clarify a range of locally important normative values.
- to demonstrate some ethical gaps in the producer community. Different degrees of membership in the human moral community in practice, though not in intent, were revealed.
- to reveal that the producers sometimes seemed to have different substantive concepts of the good life to those that might be held by other stakeholders in the food chain.
- The interpretation enabled the ethical duties of social certification initiatives to become clearer.

However:
- More work on ethical values needs to be carried out, particularly those which 'matter' to other stakeholders in the producer to consumer chain. An example is the value attributed to 'nature' and 'wilderness'. It is important to see if people at different locations in the food chain do in fact have incommensurable values vis-à-vis a particular construct like a 'wilderness'. If values turn out to be incommensurable on 'things that matter', trade-offs might not be possible because they diminish the thing that matters to a particular stakeholder.

3. People's subjective understanding of their life-worlds is important

The toolkit, with the associated discussion on the economic macro-environment, helped to isolate and provide an understanding of, the strategies the respondents were using to deal with risk:
- Using the data provided through application of the toolkit, and the analytic constructs of 'maximum selves' and 'entanglements', it was possible to devise a novel two-strand path for social certification initiatives.
- Although the data produced through the application of the data was gender-disaggregated, it was not possible to arrive at a deep understanding of what it 'means to be a man or woman', though glimpses were won. More work is required on quantity and quality as follows: (i) More gender-disaggregated activities need to be carried out, for example

on expenditure patterns (ii) Different kinds of questions need to be posed, for example, much more attention must also be paid to the experience of men, as a gender, and (iii) The dynamic interrelation between men and women requires deeper inquiry.

- Other areas of disadvantage were either not explored at all (for example, disability) or scarcely understood. This applies particularly to children. Gender-sensitive activities designed for use with children, and for disabled people (and other categories), need to form part of the toolkit.
- The units of analysis also need to be properly defined: individual, household, community (whilst being fully aware of the complexity and difficulty in defining each unit, a topic discussed in chapter two). Analysis and interpretation should follow the same categorisation.
- More work must be done with institutions and in particular, in examining the way in which they can legitimately contribute to people's well-being. In the Malagasy study, many institutions were visited, but they were used solely as sources of secondary and primary data on the respondents. No institutional analysis was carried out.

The toolkit was able to reveal areas of 'puzzle and strangeness' that were not related to a failure to triangulate appropriately. It is important not to lose puzzle (i.e. puzzle for the researcher or for social certification initiatives) in the interpretation, but rather to accept and work with it in the process of moving through the development of principles, standards and indicators. It is possible for external agents to engage in real world action without understanding everything.

4. All indicators are proxies

The aim of the research was to provide baseline data from which indicators could be produced in a collaborative process between social certification initiatives and the producer community. The analysis showed that such indicators will be either norm-referenced (to the norms of the producer community) or refer to a building process in which new norms might emerge.

5. The naturalistic fallacy must be avoided

In chapter five it was argued that although quality of life is fundamentally concerned with ethics, we have to be particularly concerned about committing the naturalistic fallacy, that is reasoning from facts (what is) to values (what ought to be). Descriptions of the world do not commit one to particular conclusions about how the world should be.

With respect to the toolkit, effort was made not to aim, in advance, for particular types of information, or facts. The emphasis was upon allowing information to emerge during the process. The experience of the toolkit in action validated this approach. It should be strengthened through the wider application of thematic apperception tests and similar discovery methods.

The way in which the raw data produced by a toolkit is interpreted is key to avoiding the naturalistic fallacy. The idea that data is produced, as opposed to found, is the starting point for recognising the artifice of interpretation. At the same time patterns in the data set should be allowed to suggest themselves, and then be followed up. This was important in the present case for developing the concepts of maximum self and entanglement. External agents, like researchers and agents for social certification initiatives, might only be able to observe people's choices. They might not be able to penetrate and evaluate the value base from which these choices are derived.

6. The concepts of agency and meaningful choice are critical

Applying the toolkit to a real world situation in itself highlighted the ways in which data is produced through researcher-respondent interaction rather than found. The respondents actively worked with the methods to create data that they thought might change their lives. It can be posited that the toolkit in action actually brought new ideas into being, though this claim requires verification.

It became clear that the real issue under study was not whether people are happy, but whether they have meaningful choice. How much scope do they have for determining the course of their lives?

The analytic constructs of maximum self and entanglement enabled the beginnings of an 'outsider understanding' of agency and meaningful choice among the respondents to be achieved. From here it was possible to start elaborating upon real world activities (strand one and strand two of social certification) to expand the reach of agency and meaningful choice. This was construed as an ethical necessity for quality relationships between consumers and producers to flourish.

7. Quality of life is not only a state of persons, it is a process

The methods were able to capture temporal disjuncture in local concepts of quality of life, particularly in the realm of values. Normative values that initially appeared to be enduring and permanent were shown to be under threat as the respondents were drawn into processes they could not control. For some respondents, felt quality of life seemed to be deteriorating over time. In order to explore this further, it would be useful to expand the repertoire of process methods in the toolkit.

It would also be useful to gain more insights into historical changes in people's material well-being, in health and in education. This would help deepen understandings as to why people feel their quality of life is improving or deteriorating. It would be a way of helping to identify the constituents that make up quality of life.

8. The material conditions of existence form an important platform for a good quality of life

The toolkit was able to show that the material conditions of existence were in many cases inadequate for a 'good quality of life' according to emic, outsider perspectives. Some respondents, locked into their felt and experienced world, privileged values and control over their world, and thus did not recognise material well-being as an issue. More data is needed on all the functionings (education, nourishment and health) discussed in the toolkit, and perhaps on others that might be identified as important. More thinking about the relationship of basic needs satisfaction to the privileging of other dimensions of quality of life by the respondents needs to be undertaken. An analysis of power dynamics in the respondent community is central to this endeavour.

9. Bounded thinking is of limited value

It has been emphasised here and elsewhere in this thesis that themes were allowed to 'emerge' in the course of the fieldwork. Despite the wish to allow space for surprise and novelty to emerge (thus breaking the researcher's own bounded thinking) in practice several conventional themes came to the fore, like education and health. Some more unusual ones also arose, like the importance of taboo. In the main, though, local variations upon a familiar theme formed the focus of interest. We can conclude that:

- It is difficult to engender new lines of enquiry. However, the boundedness of most methods should continue to be challenged. The toolkit should comprise a wide range of methods capable of being applied by the research team. Discussions with the respondents, anthropological research and the use of tools like thematic apperception tests can suggest new areas for exploration.
- Themes which are surprising for the researcher are not necessarily surprising for the researched.

In the process of interpretation, the author categorised the data sets along several axes (maximum selves/ entanglement) and (land/landless). She also suggested ways in which the interpretation could be applied to the practice of social certification in organic agriculture (strand one/ stand two). Dichotomies thus emerged that were not planned at the outset of the process.

It can be argued that the author placed particular restraints on the data and thus also engaged in bounded thinking. It seems impossible to escape from a desire to pattern data in order to make sense of it. However, it was suggested above that allowing the interpretation to emerge from the patterns seen in the data is a useful way to proceed. It is useful to think of new ways to categorise and analyse data, as the author has sought to do.

Although the artificiality of analytic constructs needs to be recognised, the analytic constructs chosen must be able to relate to the data set. That is, they need to be evidence-based. It would be possible to improve ownership over the process by involving respondents during the interpretation stage.

Concluding Comments

206

The quality of life toolkit was expressly not designed to be an index. Its aim was to provide baseline data for the purposes of social certification. A two-strand approach was suggested as a means to work with the data and to turn it into real world outcomes. It was argued that this approach, though of itself a construct, draws legitimacy from the data set. It also provides a comprehensive way of answering the many challenges facing social certification. The Malagasy toolkit would need to be revised and tested in different producer communities since it is still at a pilot stage. However, the author considers that it is able to provide sufficient quality baseline data for the development of principles, standards and indicators for social certification.

Although the quality of life toolkit can function well as a stand-alone item, complementary analyses would create a richer picture. These could include work on coping strategies, risk management and a deeper survey of the anthropological literature. Van Haaften (2003, 2004) has examined ecological and psychological resilience in farming communities under stress in Holland and in the Sahel. Her work suggests that highly stressed and marginalized groups may become inert and may cease to display active coping behavior – *'which in many cases has been fruitlessly applied in the past'* (2003: 31). Van Haaften comments that this inertia renders communication with such groups almost impossible. If organic producer communities display similar symptoms then there are obvious implications for our work on entanglement.

The author put forward a particular understanding of risk: a threat to the coherence of people and their society. It is possible to consider risk an objective property of an event or activity, or to see it as a cultural and social construction – or to try and combine these extreme positions (Legesse, 2003: 24). Perspectives like these have been widely explored analytically and in practice. References include, *'Social Theories of Risk'* (Krimsky & Golding, 1992), *'Risk versus Risk: Trade-offs in protecting health and the environment'* (Graham & Wiener, 1995) and *'Understanding Risk Informing Decisions in a Democratic* Society' (Stern & Finesburg, 1996). Bringing a risk analysis to bear upon the problem domain could be very fruitful.

Anthropological literature can be drawn upon to deepen the understanding of people preparing and applying the quality of life toolkit. Such literature could alert them to questions that might be asked, and act as an aid to interpretation. In Madagascar for example the role of *fady* – taboo – plays an important role in many people's lives. Fady has been well-researched. Sample texts include *'L'île essentialle'* (Mauro & Raholiarisoa, 2000), *'Mythes, rites et transes à Madagascar'* (Jaovelo-Dzao, 1996), *'Madagascar: Island of the Ancestors' (Mack, 1996)* and *'Taboo: A study of Malagasy Customs and Beliefs'* (Ruud, 1960). *'Purity and Danger'* (Douglas, 1966) offers an explanation for beliefs in ritual pollution. Other anthropological texts, for example Bloch (1995), discuss different features of people's lives in Madagascar.

Finally, it would be possible to align the quality of life toolkit more firmly within the functionings and capabilities approach. The work of Sen and Nussbaum was

used to provide insights, rather than to actually structure the work undertaken. If such structuring were desired, it would be possible to draw upon an increasingly large literature which examines how to operationalise these approaches. Clark (2002) reports on a study he carried out in two South African townships in his paper *'Development Ethics: a research agenda'*. The results of this study leads him to query some elements of the functionings and capabilities approach, in particular the attention it pays to 'lofty' capabilities like reason (especially in Nussbaum's work), and less to practical skills development that poor people – in his opinion - actually need. Alkire (2003) in her book *'Valuing Freedoms'*, examines an Oxfam rose-growing project in Pakistan. This highlights the extraordinarily multi-faceted nature of what can constitute well-being, and which capabilities are important. Whilst the very poor participants did not experience a great increase in income as a result of their participation in the project, they did experience a great increase in confidence and began to treasure things like the scent of roses in their clothes. Chopra & Duraiappah (2004) in *'Operationalising Capabilities in a Segmented Society: the role of institutions'*, examine the effectiveness and potential of institutions as vehicles for the creation of various capabilities. They draw on two Indian case studies. Ballet *et al.* (2003), in the work they describe in *'Le développement socialement durable: un moyen d'intégrer capacités et durabilité'* relate the capabilities framework to the sustainability agenda. All of these theoretical contributions relate their empirical findings back to the functionings and capabilities literature. In the process they tease out some of the implications for theory development. Finally, a good contribution to the functionings and capabilities research agenda would be a deeper and more effective exploration than the author was able to undertake with respect to the compatibility of this approach with those branches of environmental ethics that stress the intrinsic value of nature. Given that some ethical consumers hold biocentric views, for example (see chapters eight and ten in this thesis), a quality of life toolkit that explored ethical consistency between producers and consumers along these lines could provide a valuable input into a social labelling initiative.

7.5   Conclusion

The aim of the thesis is to find ways to forge and fix quality relationships in the organic producer to consumer chain. As discussed in chapter one, the author claims that this relationship is impoverished. She ascribes this to unequal trading relations across the global commodity chain, the historical texture of the North-South relationship and the mere fact of geographical distance. People in the chain lack physical presence for one another: they exist in the realm of ideas. A lack of connection is not just a theoretical problem: it has a bearing upon how people are able to live their lives in the real world. In particular, it bears upon their ability to translate their ethics into action. Social certification in organic agriculture represents a potential 'empowerment space' in the global commodity chain. This is because social certification is an ethical initiative and a real world actor: Social certification involves shaping ideas, freezing them and translating them into real world outcomes. However, social certification initiatives need to be wary of unwittingly closing down this empowerment space for producers. This could

happen if values from elsewhere are transported into different normative domains across the world. The language of social certification in its very impartiality reveals a Northern bias when it speaks of, for example, local variations. Its language implies that local variations constitute a deviation from an – unspoken - norm. The aim of the toolkit was to produce baseline data for the purposes of social certification in organic farming. This data can be used to generate a subset of principles, standards and indicators. With respect to the content of the standards, it was argued that social certification can *only* have meaning if it is norm-referenced back to the producer population. On the basis of this, it was suggested that one strand of social certification needs to support producers' efforts to maintain their chosen way of being (their maximum selves).

The producers are not only surrounded by a risk-laden environment, they are being sucked into trading relationships spanning the globe. These constitute further forms of risk. The author argued that a second strand could be developed by social certification initiatives to help enable the producers to develop their capacity to engage in such relationships. One effect would be to turn such relationships into opportunities for change largely on the producers' own terms. The idea that such relationships could be transformative in character was also put forward. On one level, entanglement could enable the producers to find new ways of developing their maximum selves. On another level, entanglement might enable other stakeholders in the food chain – consumers (and perhaps others) to likewise find ways to realise their maximum selves more fully. This would be through the certainty that they are engaging in effective real world action. A third level is conceivable. It can be posited that the creation of entanglement spaces across the food chain might lead to actual structural change in the system through the weighting effect of particular ethical real world actions. The author discusses the potential of social labels for organic produce (backed by the kind of social certification initiative proposed in this chapter) to do just this. This proposition is discussed in chapter eleven.

The question of verification of standards is important. The author argued that the *process* of generating producer standards, rather than their content, needs to be the locus of verification. The process needs to be rigorous and open to third party inspection. This chapter has not discussed how other standards governing the behaviour of stakeholders elsewhere in the chain, buyers and plantation owners for example, could be generated. Clearly the concept of entanglement means that producers cannot be restricted to 'their' space. We would expect them to be involved in shaping standards across the chain. This assumption does not apply *equally* to buyers; given their inherent power, their presence in the producers' empowerment space could distort this space. More appropriate spaces for producer-buyer learning can be created, for example when developing standards to govern buyer-producer interaction.

The next four chapters explore the consumers' side of the relationship. The thesis shifts from South to North, from production to consumption, and from certification processes to labelling processes.

Chapter Eight: Ethical Consumption

Take me with you
Fly free from servitude
My kite[118]

This chapter begins our discussion and analysis, which spans four chapters, of the 'other end' of the food chain. Our lead question in this chapter is: *How can consumers help to create quality relationships across the producer to consumer chain?* It must be reiterated here that the author is working on the basis of the understanding, underpinned by the studies referred to throughout this chapter, that significant groups of consumers wish to purchase ethically. The interest, then, lies in understanding how consumers can be enabled to translate their ethics into real world action effectively.

Goodman & DuPuis (2002: 9) say that *'consumption has been neglected, under-theorised, treated as an exogenous, structural category, and granted agency only in the economistic, abstract terms of demand'*. The idea that the agency of the consumer has a much wider reach, and that consumers are significant actors in defining the meaning of food is, however, gathering momentum. Hitherto, consumption has been neglected partly because, say Goodman & DuPuis (2002: 6-8), commodity chain analysis has principally been about 'uncovering' the social relationships behind the production of a commodity. In the Marxian sociology of agriculture, they continue, production is the privileged terrain of social action. As a consequence, commodity chain literature generally 'uses' consumption to talk about production. Consumers are conceptualised as passive, as interacting only in the non-political sphere of the market/ circulation, and as unaware of unequal power relationships. The task is therefore to awaken consumers to a proper political consciousness, albeit one in which consumer politics are relegated to the realm of production (ibid; see also Goodman, 2002). Lockie (2002: 278) notes that the complexity of the social relations in bringing food to the table mitigates against 'holistic analyses' of commodity systems, thus leading to focused analyses of particular aspects. He says, *'consumption involves a diverse array of social, cultural and economic practices … many production-consumption networks may be implicated in a single meal'* (ibid: 290).

This chapter contributes to the foregrounding of the consumer as an analytic category. In so doing the concept of ethical consumption is teased apart. The aim is to demonstrate the richness and complexity of this analytical field. This is important preparatory work for the development of a new kind of social label, our task in chapter eleven.

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118 Tama (dates unknown) was a courtesan, kept imprisoned in a red light district. Here she asks to be set free. It is

only in the last line that we discover that she is talking to a kite that can neither hear nor help her.

The chapter is divided into five parts. Part 8.1 opens the debate by pointing out some of the difficulties involved in conceptualising and measuring ethical consumption. Different nuances of this thread are explored later in this chapter, and in the next three chapters. Here, problematising the domain of ethical consumption serves both to introduce some key thoughts, and also to enable a critical reading of the following part.

Part 8.2 presents data on current ethical consumption trends, with a particular focus on organic consumption. There has been considerable research in this area and so, in order to avoid information overload, studies have been selected on the basis of their ability to deliver representative, and thought-provoking, data[119]. This part also considers whether the rationale of ethical consumers is properly understood, and interpreted, in market research.

Part 8.3 continues the knotty debate on ethical consumption by showing that there are no easy answers for people interested in pursuing more sustainable and ethical consumption patterns. The question: *How much is enough?* is posed as a *'leitmotif'* around which differing views – rather than answers - can be drawn together. Although producers and consumers in the international commodity chain are functionally connected with one another, the discussion suggests that this relationship is fundamentally involuntary, and frequently harmful. Felt disconnection rises due to the complex, systemic nature of the relationship. That is, real world connection is at odds with perceived disconnection. Parts 8.2 and 8.3 conclude with learning points drawn from the discussion. The learning points help structure and inform later parts of this chapter, and are carried forward to chapters nine, ten and eleven.

Part 8.4 discusses social labels. It suggests that they have the potential to enable ethical consumers to 'reconnect'. Labels span the messy divide between producers and consumers. They generally rely upon agents, like certification agencies, to verify their claims. Sometimes the quantity and quality of information that social labels provide fails to properly enable consumers to take real world ethical action.

8.1   Thinking About Ethical Consumption: What does it mean?

'Ethical' consumption implies that a choice can be made between two clearly demarcated alternatives. This is misleading. Ethical products cannot be totally free from ambiguity. In a very real sense, one cannot choose between ethical and non-ethical products since there are so many cross-cutting issues to be addressed:

- Definition: what does the term 'ethical consumption' mean?
- Measurement; given that we might not agree on what we are talking about, how can ethical consumption be measured?

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119 Grankvist (2002) provides an interesting and brief overview of western European and Scandinavian studies on

organic consumption. See Zadek (1998, 1999, 2004), Blowfield (1999), Burns & Blowfield (1999), Sterns (2000),

Raynalds (2002), Ronchi (2002a) and Allan (2004) for an overview of fair trade consumption trends.

- Complexity: how does ethical consumption relate to, and deal with, real world complexity? This is particularly relevant with respect to feedback to consumers with respect to the effects of their ethical purchase.
- Ethics in action: to what extent can ethical consumption challenge real world imbalances in power between North and South? Is ethical consumption, to a degree, complicit in enabling patterns of consumption harmful to the environment, and to people in the South, to continue?

We examine below how one might define, and measure, ethical consumption. Complexity and ethics in action are issues addressed in Part 8.3.

Defining Ethical Consumption
Ethical values are integral to the concept of ethical consumption. Chapter eleven explores the concept of ethical values in relation to social labelling in greater depth. Some initial remarks are made here, however, to alert one to the problematic nature of the concept in relation to organic products. Clearly an ethical value is not an intrinsic property of a product, like weight or size. Rather, an ethical value is ascribed by someone. Ascription is a problematic activity for the following reasons:

1. First, we can ask: Who, among the stakeholders, is ascribing that value? This leads into questions of power and responsibility.

2. Second, we can ask: Which particular properties of the object are being construed as ethical? Ethical values, since they are not intrinsic to products associated with commodity chains, have to be linked to the processes involved in the production of a particular product. That is, ethical values are construed as outcomes of selected processes that have been given ethical weight[120]. We can make three remarks regarding the relativity, and universality, of ethical values.
   - The discussions conducted in chapters three and seven emphasised the necessity of acknowledging the felt and experienced world of the producers. It was argued that 'importing' values as part of social certification initiatives could close down empowerment spaces for producers. This is due to the potential 'lack of fit' between imported values and local structures of meaning. There could be significant repercussions given that unequal power relations are involved in international commodity chains.
   - The processes that produce ethical values constantly change because of the systemic nature of the world's working. In other words, ethical values are emergent properties of situated practices. The consideration of situated practices allows these values to be 'recognised' and captured. Such values can be associated with, though

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120 Nieberg (pers. comm. 09/04) remarks that these processes include not only farming, but also trade, packaging and all the other activities involved in bringing a product to the consumer (see also Lundqvist & Friedrich, 2002, for their work with actors across the Swedish food chain).

not collapsed into, an understanding of wisdom as a practice (the lived life as a source of wisdom).

- However, particular processes, like fair trade agreements, codes of conduct and many social certification initiatives, are deliberately set in motion in order to produce <u>pre-determined</u> ethical values like fairness. This seems valid, but it does mean that particular emergent values, which could be given ethical weighting, may be ignored or overlooked.

3. Third, the complexity of any production process, and the systemic nature of the world's working, mean that it is quite conceivable that values important to some stakeholders are being – if inadvertently - trampled on. This is because certain values may be incommensurable (or appear incommensurable) with values selected by another, *sometimes* more powerful stakeholder. When values are incommensurable, it means that their relative importance cannot be captured with a single measure of value, such as money (O'Neill & Splash, 2000: 10). For this reason a variety of 'potential' goods are blocked from exchange in markets, or from being treated as if they were market commodities. Votes, people, bodily parts, love and friendship are examples of such values (ibid; Jackson & Marks, 1999, and Jackson, 2002c, also discuss this point[121]). Organic farming is sometimes considered a prime means of achieving goal integration, yet the discussion in chapters three, four and seven, makes it clear that different stakeholders in the consumer to producer chain hold, or potentially hold, incommensurable values. Sappho (600 BC) catches the sense of incompatibility between values in her poem *'Sleep, Love'* particularly well (in Mulford (ed.) 1992: 85):[122]

<div style="text-align:center">

I have a small
daughter called
Cleis, who is
like a golden flower

I wouldn't
take all Croesus'
kingdom with love
thrown in, for her.

</div>

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121 Jackson (2000a) is working on an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) research fellowship (January 2003-December 2005) to provide a comprehensive review of the many explanations as to why people consume and to identify key insights which relate to sustainability. The fellowship is part of a wider ESRC programme, the ESRC Sustainable Technologies Programme. www.sustainabletechnologies.ac.uk).

122 Particularly beautiful translations and informative discussions of the work of Sappho, including more poems about her daughter, and the work of other classical women poets can be found in Balmer, J. (1996) Classical Women Poets, Bloodaxe Books, Newcastle upon Tyne. Other classical poems can be found in Cosman *et al.* (eds.) (1979).

Many fair trade products are not produced in organic farming systems. Nikoleit (Gepa, pers. comm. 06/03) suggests that the organic and fair trade movements meet at the concept of sustainability. Nonetheless, the background, philosophies and approaches of the two movements are quite different, rendering cooperation difficult. The organic movement generally has problems applying fair trade concepts to Northern producers (in other words, to engage in a thorough critique of the global trading system). The fair trade movement does not want to impose certified organic production systems upon small-scale producers in the South. This can mean working with high-input agriculture. Nickoleit explains *'We are trying to support processes. Standards alone don't mean anything. We need a dialogue with the Southern producer. We ask: 'What would you like to achieve with us?'* (ibid). Although there are discrepancies between organic and fair trade values-in-action, work is being done to overcome these. Fair trade organisations like GEPA, IFAT and Equal Exchange are increasing their fair trade + organic range. The Soil Association is working on a fair trade pilot, applicable to farmers in the UK, and IFOAM has begun work on social justice issues. [123]

The Future Foundation (Howard & Nelson, 2000) suggests that the term 'ethical consumption' implies a fixed moral standard by which individuals can judge the ethical provenance of a product or service. It also imposes an externally derived value judgement on individual behaviour. This runs counter, they argue, to trends in society that value subjective perceptions and decision-making. The lack of a clear definition means that a wide range of activities can be termed ethical, ranging from charitable giving to participation in local business initiatives (ibid.). Understanding ethical decision-making in the marketplace in terms of rewarding 'more than purely price' also seems misleading, since consumers reward a whole host of intrinsic and non-intrinsic values which can be associated with food products, like colour, taste and provenance. These are not – necessarily – ethical values, but they are clearly more than purely price in character.

Measuring Ethical Consumption
Intertwined with the problem of defining what 'ethical consumption' means is the problem of measurement. Measurement as a research topic is explored more comprehensively in chapters two, five and nine. Here, comments made by practitioners trying to ascertain the reach of ethical consumption are cited, since it is instructive to hear about their experiences for the purposes of the discussion conducted in this chapter:
- Doane (2001: 5-6) of the New Economics Foundation (the nef), recalls the difficulties she, and her colleagues at the Cooperative Bank, faced when trying to develop the first Ethical Purchasing Index in the UK: *'Someone might choose to use public transport ... as they believe it to be more environmentally friendly – others might choose it simply because it's the easiest way to get to work. And when someone chooses a product that they feel is more ethical, is it <u>really</u> an ethical choice? Quorn*

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123 See www.equalexchange.com, www.gepa3.com and www.ifat.org for more details of organic and fair initiatives.

See www.soilassociation.com for more on the UK fair trade and organic pilot.

products ... which many people consume as an ethical alternative to meat, are often made using eggs from battery-farmed chickens.' The latter point makes clear reference to the complex nature of modern food products. It is hard to achieve ethical consistency right the way through the product cycle due to the number ingredients involved.

- Reisch (2003: 22) argues that <u>some</u> of the discrepancy between consumer attitudes and their actual purchasing behaviour may be due to misleading information in the marketplace. People might think they are making an ethical purchase but in fact they are not. Conventional companies frequently attempt to use the positive image of organic farming by co-opting its language, like natural and healthy (Darnhofer & Vogl, 2003; Rippin, 2004).

- Bougherara & Grolleau (2003: 112) suggest however that consumers are often aware of the attempts by fraudulent sellers to capture the ecological premium. This reduces their willingness to purchase organic products, thus harming the organic market.

- Grankvist (2002: 32) cites studies that demonstrate that simply trying to measure people's intention to do something actually increases their intention to do it (for example, to purchase organic).

- Giraud (2003: 42) reports that 18.4% of respondents in a French survey said they recognised the *'Tradition Terroir'* label. However, this label does not exist. It was designed specifically by Giraud and his colleagues in order to control for the tendency of respondents to answer positively in face-to-face interviews.

- The Co-operative Bank and the nef have been collaborating since 1999 on an Ethical Purchasing Index. The purpose is to record and report on UK sales of goods and services marketed as 'ethical'. They define 'ethical' as personal consumption where a choice of product or service exists which supports a particular ethical issue, like human rights or animal welfare (Clavin *et al.* 2003: 7). New to the Ethical Purchasing Index in 2003 was the concept of 'ethical invisibles'. The concept was developed since it was felt that large areas of consumption behaviour, where the prime motivation was ethical, were being missed since hitherto only positive spending on clearly marked ethical products and services had been counted (ibid. 8). Ethical invisibles are specified by the nef and the Co-operative Bank as:
    1. Spend on public transport for environmental reasons.[124]
    2. Shopping to support the local community.
    3. Avoidance of 'unethical' brands.
    4. Buying for re-use, for example through frequenting charity shops and deliberately purchasing second hand goods for environmental reasons (17% of consumers gave this as the reason for such purchases).

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124 This is the solution to the comments made by Doane (2001) above with respect to developing the first Ethical Consumption Index. Clearly it took time to resolve the problem. Reworking the parameters also makes year on year comparisons difficult.

8.2 Foregrounding the Consumer: Understanding Consumer Motivation

This part presents a range of studies on ethical consumption, with a particular - though not exclusive - focus on organic purchasing. Narrowing the focus to certified organic production provides one way of bounding the domain of what constitutes ethical purchasing. It does not simplify it, however, as chapter three on the debate around what the term 'organic' means makes clear.

A substantial, and growing, body of British consumers take into account ethical values when shopping. The *'Ethical Consumerism Report 2003'* noted a 13% increase of sales on the previous year of ethically marketed goods and services in 2002. Some sectors, like organic food, green mortgages, and wood products carrying the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) logo showed particularly dramatic growth. However, the total market share of ethical goods and services remains at under 2% (Clavin *et al*. 2003: 5). Browne *et al*. (2000), in a UK study, distinguish between different tiers of ethical (fair trade and organic) consumers. 'True' ethical consumers make up just 2% of the population. A further 20-30% are 'semi-ethical'; they are willing to pay a modest premium, but do not go out of their way to purchase ethically. However, Browne *et al*. estimate that 80% of the population is willing to make ethical purchases if no price premium is involved, and if no special effort is required to shop ethically. The concerns identified by respondents in this study include:

- Their own and family's health.
- The environment – how food is produced.
- Animal welfare – humane treatment of animals.
- Helping people in developing countries – not exploiting the people who produce the food.

Another UK study focusing specifically on organic consumption found that better health, taste and environmental concerns are the key reasons for purchase. Just 7% of all buyers represent 58% of the money spent on organic produce. These people tend to be older and more upmarket than average (Skeldon, 2001: 13). The same reasons for organic purchasing are given in a review of several Northern Irish studies, though age does not emerge as a significant socio-economic variable (Davies *et al*, 1995, in Grankvist, 2002: 7).

Hartman & Wright (1999, discussed in Lockie *et al*. 2002, and Gast, 2000) distinguish between 'classic' and 'new' organic consumers in their American study. The authors consider that the motivation for the trial purchase of organic produce by classic organic consumers is a wish to change the world. Their motivation for continued purchase is a sense that they have a moral duty to protect the environment. New organic consumers, however, make their first-time purchase in order to protect their families and themselves, with repeat purchases dependent on life-style concerns and wellness. Stieß (2004: 25) reports that the new generation of organic consumers in the USA are termed LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and

Sustainability). These are highly qualified and professionally successful consumers aged 25-45 years.

Market research studies like these are useful for retailers. Such studies are also used by governments to develop policies sympathetic to organic farming, and in particular to ease supply-demand bottlenecks along the organic producer to consumer chain. German studies, many commissioned by the Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture for this purpose, are presented in chapter ten in order to enable the reader to situate the author's fieldwork findings. Nonetheless the explanatory power of such studies is limited. They focus on stated preferences and ask consumers to choose between clearly differentiated categories. As noted in chapter four, there are difficulties with this kind of approach. Cobb (2000: 5-6), for instance, argues that researchers frequently presuppose that *'people are conscious of and able to articulate nuances of feeling, that transitory feelings represent durable conditions, that feelings are equivalent to values, that happiness or other reported feelings fully account for valued conditions, and that feelings can be quantified.'* Cobb adds that the process by which individuals infer their feelings is hidden from the researcher[125]. It is thus problematic to claim that one, as a researcher, has gained a clear insight into what respondents really think and feel. It is perhaps even more difficult to establish cause-effect linkages between something that happens in the world, and the ways in which people process and apply what they understand from this 'happening'. Lockie (2002: 282) comments that whilst the patterns market researchers identify are not figments of the imagination, such patterns are the generative outcomes of network interactions, rather than causes.

Indeed, Lockie *et al*. (2002: 25) assert that categories speak little of the competing desires, concerns and possibilities in relation to food consumption that people invariably face. The range of discourses, like parenting and gender, acting on consumption patterns is far broader than those addressed specifically to the representation of 'consumer demands' (Lockie, 2002: 290). It is important, Lockie *et al* (2002) argue, to avoid polarising the motivations behind food choice, and to explore the *relationships* between the environmental and other concerns people may have. Their analysis of study data arising from a national study of Australian consumers (focus groups and randomised telephone interviews) revealed the following:

- There was no reason to assume a direct relationship between the levels of environmental, health and other concerns people profess, and the consumption of organic foods. This is not because consumers profess values they fail to act upon. Rather, *'in making choices about food consumers must manage an array of conflicting imperatives, needs and desires, whilst confronting a range of competing and contradictory discourses about organics, health, environment, and so on'* (Lockie *et al*. 2002: 27).

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125 See chapter four for a brief discussion on the difficulties in establishing preferences.

- There were no significant differences between organic and non-organic consumers in relation to price, sensory appeal, convenience, or familiarity with the product. Organic consumers are just as risk-averse, price sensitive and busy as non-organic consumers (ibid).
- However, organic consumers have higher scores on all motivating factors relating to health, ethical attributes (animal welfare, environment and political values). Although the analysis shows that the relative importance of these factors in relationship to other factors is the same for both organic and non-organic consumers, the crucial finding was that organic consumers are slightly more motivated than others by values that are widely shared (Lockie *et al*. 2002: 33; see also Lockie, 2002). This stronger motivation appears to make a significant difference to the willingness of consumers to act on these values (Lockie *et al*. 2002: 35).

Lockie *et al*. (2002: 37) conclude that *'consumers are faced with a dazzling array of competing discourses on food, nutrition, environment etc, together with an equally dazzling array of competing desires, preferences, anxieties and beliefs, as well as the rather practical issues of availability, convenience and cost.'* In other words, complicated people are taking complicated decisions in a complicated market. The tendency of market researchers to categorise consumers into particular, sometimes rather humorous (it seems) categories serves, however, to reduce this complexity. Goodman (2002: 272) comments on how abstractly figuring consumers as *'discerning, affluent and so on'* renders them devoid of analytical meaning. Furthermore, the systemic nature of the way consumers take decisions is not properly grasped. Goodman & DuPuis (2002: 7-8) comment that viewing consumers in market research terms strips them of agency and meaningful everyday practices. Consumers remain shadowy and elusive. *'Knowing the consumer'* remains a disjointed, incomplete and contested process (Lockie, 2002: 287).

Although understanding consumer motivation is a highly complex affair, it is possible to draw links of varying strength between socio-economic variables like gender, income, and education, and organic purchasing patterns. The Lockie *et al*. study (2002) found that:

- More women than men have consumed certified organic food. However, women and men who have tried organic foods have similar levels of consumption. In order to aid interpretation of the first finding the researchers discuss surveys that suggest women tend to take more responsibility for feeding children and other family members, and that people are often more concerned with what their children eat than with what they themselves eat. They conclude however that the tentative link being made in these studies between women as carers, and their interest in organic produce, requires more investigation in order for it to be substantiated.
- The number of people consuming organic food increases with income up to a certain level. However, levels of consumption are quite high in the poorer groups. This suggests that organic food is less affordable for low-

income earners, but that these people are just as interested as people in wealthier income categories in consuming organic produce. Lockie *et al.* (ibid, and Lockie, 2002: 285) therefore disagree with other analysts who suggest that organic foods cater to elite consumers.

- There is a clear link between education (especially science) and consumption. Better-educated people consume more organic produce. Lockie *et al.* (2002: 37, and especially Lockie, 2002: 285) note that there is a proliferation of discourses and meanings around food. People who are trained in the critical evaluation of knowledge claims appear to be more able to mediate these conflicting discourses. They are, speculate the study's authors, better able to translate widespread public concern about the industrialisation of food production into individual purchasing decisions.

A study carried out in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Nikolic & Habul, 2003: 29) found that the typical organic consumer is female and is aged between 25 and 55. She has a secondary school education and children. Sergienko & Nemudrova (2003) generated similar findings in their St. Petersburg study. An important finding in the latter study was that Russian women, key purchasers of food products, are very price-conscious, regardless of their income, and they are for this reason hostile to high premiums on organic (ibid). This finding suggests, though does not confirm, that women are responsible for carefully balancing household expenditures.

The authors of a Swiss study (Tanner & Kast, 2003) define green products as being organic, locally grown, fairly traded, seasonal, fresh, and not wrapped (ibid: 3). They found that women are the 'gatekeepers' and key decision-makers with respect to food purchases. Levels of income are not significant predictors of willingness and interest in purchasing organic. Nor are other socio-economic variables like educational level, occupational level, and employment status. However, they found that people who purchase green products have positive attitudes towards the environment, fair trade and local products. Consumers who are able to distinguish properly between environmentally harmful products, and other products, purchased more green products. An interesting finding emerged with respect to supermarket shopping: the respondents to this survey indicated that when they need to save time they shop in supermarkets. Yet they rarely purchase green products in supermarkets, despite the great range of such products now on offer. This is so even when the respondents possess the positive attitudes just outlined. Tanner & Kast consider that the reluctance of respondents to purchase green products in supermarkets is related to the narrow focus by supermarkets on the *conditions of production*. Supermarkets, they argue, have tended to neglect other factors affecting the 'green credentials'[126] of products (origin, packaging and conservation), which are equally important to consumers (ibid; see Grolleau & Caswell, 2003 for a discussion on how signals that a product is eco-friendly can be damaged by a failure to provide other verifiable attributes). In this context it is interesting to note that Lockie (2002: 286) reports that though Australians in his

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126 Term and emphasis by the author of this thesis.

focus group study frequently shop in supermarkets for convenience reasons, many are hostile to the values and practices supermarkets seem to embody, such as dominance of the retailer sector, a lack of seasonal products, and a lack of 'thoughtfulness'. Blythman (2003) reports similar consumer views vis-à-vis supermarkets in the UK. Despite this ambivalence, supermarkets are responsible for the majority of organic sales in the UK (Allan, 2004: 13).

Learning Points

1. The analyses presented above suggest that market research has a reductionist understanding of consumer agency. It conceptualises consumer motivation as being largely divorced from the complex real world in which people take decisions. The range of discourses operating upon consumption patterns is rendered invisible. The way consumers are categorised into 'types' is reminiscent of the way products themselves are packaged.

2. Ethical values are generally widely shared by a population. However, people vary in their willingness, and ability, to translate these values into ethical purchasing decisions. It is therefore not possible to establish direct correspondence between the values people hold, and their purchasing behaviour. It is preferable to explore the <u>relationships</u> between the values people have, and how some of these values may be – imperfectly – expressed in consumption behaviour. One of the aims of the author's fieldwork with German consumers was to explore the effectiveness, from their point of view, of ethical purchasing as a means of establishing a relationship that translates ethical values into desired real world change.

3. The ability to 'make sense' of, and evaluate, complex and competing information claims seems to play an important role in people's willingness to make organic purchases.

4. Many consumers are interested in ethical coherence, or ethical consistency, across a range of domains. They actively seek ethical synergies. Supermarkets in particular arouse hostility in some consumers because they appear to lack ethical consistency. This sentiment appears justified in many cases. Some retailers seem to be creating, and marketing to, contradictory organic consumer profiles, like 'classic', 'new' and 'LOHAS'. Also, retailers appear to be neglecting to apply the principles of ethical consistency right across the product cycle. Systemic inconsistencies provoke consumer unease and discomfort.

5. Gender emerges as a significant socio-economic variable. Women are identified in several studies as 'gatekeepers', in that they (appear to) take key purchasing decisions. On the basis of such findings, women can be identified as being receptive, or not, to organic messages. However, it seems that more understanding is needed of (i) gender bias by researchers in the assembly and interpretation of data, (ii) a deeper understanding of

gender relations in the household – in particular of how women and men negotiate the relative importance of the 'more than purely price' values of commodities purchased and (iii) how discourses around what it 'means' to be a man or a woman interact with other value-laden discourses, like those surrounding organic production and consumption.

So far, we have examined the concept of ethical consumption and discussed how it might be measured. We now return to the two other questions posed at the outset:

1. Complexity: how does ethical consumption relate to, and deal with, real world complexity? This is particularly relevant with respect to feedback to consumers with respect to the effects of their ethical purchase. Dixon (2000, in Lockie, 2002: 290) notes that charting the complete network of social relations implicated in a single commodity *'could consume a life-time's research'*.

2. Ethics in action: to what extent can ethical consumption challenge real world imbalances in power between North and South? Is ethical consumption, to a degree, complicit in enabling patterns of consumption harmful to the environment, and to people in the South, to continue?

The purpose of Part 8.3 is to provide a response to these questions. To do so it asks a further question: *How much is enough?'* This question acts as a leitmotif around which responses can be gathered. The complexity of the real world in which consumers move and act intermeshes with different ways of constructing the 'problems' that can potentially be addressed through ethical consumption.

8.3 Problematising Ethical Consumption: How much is enough?

In the North, appeals are made to consumers to limit their consumption. Jacobs (1997, in Jackson 2002a: 111) notes that radical Greens stress each person's responsibility for their own contribution to globally unsustainable consumption, resulting in a moral injunction to individuals to consume less. Chambers & Conway (1991: 22) assert that a priority is for rich people to change their lifestyles to make lower demands on the environment, in the interests of the poor and for future generations. In addition to policy measures, they advocate the use of personal environmental balance sheets in the context of a world initiative for awareness and abstinence: *'These would show the scale of personal debt to the environment and to future generations'*. The concept of the global footprint is promoted by, for example, the Dutch organization *'De kleine Aarde: centrum voor een duurzame leefstijl* (The Small Earth: centre for a sustainable lifestyle). It produces a range of publications that enable people to calculate their 'individual ecological footprint' and to compare it with averages from poor countries and the United States (www.voetenbank.nl on footprints, and www.dekleineaarde.nl on the organization. The Global Footprint Network provides a closely reasoned account of the footprint concept, and explains how it is calculated www.ecofoot.net).

Wasserman (1998: 538) says that the real issue is not that some consumers consume 'more' than others, but rather that *'consumption by some causes harm to others.'* This harm is not only to do with the removal of resources, he says, it is about causing cumulative harm through say, the exhaust of a large number of vehicles exceeding levels of toxic air pollution (see Monbiot, 2004, on the *'environmental nightmare threatened by 4x4s'*; see Pirog & Schuh, 2003, for a method of calculating the fuel use and CO_2 emissions involved in transporting food produce in order to arrive at a satisfactory concept of food miles). Furthermore, says Wasserman, the consumption patterns of rich people cause serious harm to poor people by contributing to coercive, demeaning and exploitative *relationships* between groups and individuals (1998: 538).

Several academics, whose arguments are summarised in Box 8.1, suggest that a structural imbalance in power relations between North and South is a key dimension of the problem that ethical consumption is seeking to address.

Box 8.1: How Much is Enough? Linking the consumption of natural resources to poverty in the South

It is frequently stated that people in the North consume 'too much' in the way of the planet's natural capital (Keyfitz, 1998; Hammond, 1998; Wasserman, 1998; Andersson & Lindroth, 2001; Dasgupta, 2001; Des Jardins, 2001; Ikerd, 2003, for sample readings). One way of establishing this is to study the relative amounts of natural capital people in the North and in the South consume. Hammond (1998) examines the use of fossil fuels, water, forestry products, metals and minerals and so on, finding that a great disparity does indeed exist. The British Government's White Paper on International Development *'Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor'* (DFID, 2000) concurs, though it also presents data indicating that energy efficiency improves in line with increased income, thus leading to decreased consumption of energy resources in wealthier countries (2000: 78). More complexity is produced by the observation that major developing countries like India and China are increasingly contributing to environmental degradation (ibid; Hammond, 1998; Keyfitz, 1998). None-the-less, the basic North-South disparity remains. Des Jardins (2001: 69) cites estimates from various sources that suggest that the United States, with less than 5% of the world's population, consumes 30% of the world's resources used annually. The wealthiest one billion people consume 80% of the world resources, leaving 20% to be shared by the remaining five billion. The figures seem relatively unambiguous and clear. However the problem does not simply reside in an unequal distribution of natural resource use (which can be roughly correlated to unequal power relations). It has something to do with how natural resources are conceptualised, and valued.

Dasgupta (2001: 7) argues that, owing to ineffectual systems of property rights, natural capital is very frequently under-priced in the market, or even free (for instance fishing on the high seas, or the atmosphere). People who

cause collateral damage, for example through logging in the uplands of watersheds, are not required to compensate those who suffer damage to their livelihoods, like farmers and fishermen in the downlands of the watershed. In this way, countries that export resource-based products, often the poorest, may be subsidising the consumption of those countries doing the importing - often the richest. These subsidies are hidden and are, he says, a reflection of weak governance rather than of predatory behaviour by government or industry. Such subsidies are, however, effectively paid by the some of the poorest people in the poor countries. Dasgupta concludes, *'The cruel paradox we face may well be that contemporary economic development is unsustainable in poor countries because it is sustainable in rich countries'* (ibid). Folke *et al.* (1998) urge a somewhat different reading of the problem. The critical issue, they maintain, is an increasing lack of fit between ecological and institutional processes. It is important to consider not only the proximate causes of environmental change, like those discussed by Dasgupta, but also the complex, indirect, and underlying social and economic driving forces behind such proximate causes. Ecological externalities are accumulating and changing critical properties of ecosystems, thus altering their capacity to provide support (ibid, see Turner *et al.* 1990, and Sage, 1996, for a discussion of complex and proximate causes; see Pearce *et al.* 1989; Norton, 1992, and Doherty & Rydberg, 2002, for a discussion on how to conceptualise and manage natural capital; see Johannson *et al.* 2000, for their analysis of the resource base of Swedish food system, and the measures that should be taken in order to reduce environmental load and increase sustainability).

Arguing on the basis of analyses like these, Pogge (1998: 502) maintains that the lives, and indeed the survival, of poor people in the South often depend decisively on the demand behaviour of consumers in the North. A consequence of dependency can be that poor people cannot give their children a better start than they themselves had (ibid: 505-6). Camacho (1998: 556) asserts that for poor people, the distinction between 'good' and 'bad' consumption is irrelevant. Rather, the Southern perspective typically distinguishes between consumption as an option for some, and an unfulfilled desire for others.

Given urgings, like those cited above, by a range of academics and organisations to 'consume less', and given the evidence cited in Box 8.1, it is helpful to deepen our discussion on the problematic nature of ethical consumption before moving on to discuss ways in which to make ethical consumption more effective. This is because it needs to be made clear that there are no simple answers for Northern consumers willing to reduce their levels of consumption. Foregrounding the consumer involves more than recognising that they have agency. It is necessary to attempt to situate consumers in the complex real world within which they try to establish successful correspondence between their values, and their ethics in action.

Outlining, in a sense, the hopelessness of the task makes it possible to bring realism and modesty to the effort, to target initiatives effectively, and to enable

triumphs to be celebrated properly. An observation made by Tany Alexander (One World Week, cited in Farnworth & Magombe, 1997: 39) encapsulates the problematic nature of the terrain in which all attempts to 'do good' need to be situated: *'There is this notion of good and bad people ... You must be a good person. What about the fact that your life is bound up with millions of structural injustices all the time?'* The aim of the analysis conducted here is to provide an indicative overview, rather than an exhaustive account, of the difficulties facing consumers trying to take ethical decisions about their consumption patterns. Learning points are drawn out that feed into, the work the author carried out with German consumers.

Establishing Harm
The discussion presented in Box 8.1 provides the starting point for unravelling the next thread in our analysis. The evidence cited appears to indicate that Northern consumers are causing harm to some of the poorest people in the South, as well as to the global environment. If this is so, then we can ask this question: *Knowing that the way of life they adopt will be widely, and that their consumption damages the environment, what moral obligations rest on the better off of the rich countries?* (Keyfitz, 1998: 494; see also Crocker, 1998: 366, who makes similar points).

However, Keyfitz's question can be contested, making it hard to conceptualise of solutions in terms of 'ethical consumption'. For example, if we follow the capabilities approach it would seem that Keyfitz is posing the wrong kind of question since it infringes rather deeply upon the moral integrity of people's right to choose how to live (Nussbaum, 1998: 313). According to the capabilities approach, the chief moral obligation of the 'better off' would seem to be to encourage and support the cross-cultural capabilities that make choice for everyone possible, rather than to try and direct that choice in any way. Although Nussbaum (1998: 335) does not totally dismiss some kind of state intervention, she considers that compulsory recycling schemes and other policies aimed at protecting the environment for the long-term future requires that a convincing showing of harm to others be made.

Nussbaum sets quite a challenge here. It can be inordinately difficult to prove harm because of the systemic nature of the way the world works. Feedback loops are highly complex, making it hard to prove definitive cause-effect linkages. Engels, F. (cited in Attfield, 1991: 80) commented over a century ago with respect to the quest to control nature that *'each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite unforeseen effects'* (see Wilson, 1993; Stacey, 1994; Folke *et al*. 1998; Flood 1999; Thuan, 2001; Doherty & Rydberg, 2002 for sample readings on feedback). Jiggins & Röling (2000: 30) contend that in open, non-linear systems it is impossible to build a body of scientific knowledge capable of full prediction and control. Whilst one can map and model single - or even multiple – relationships, one cannot to do so with evolving interactions (ibid). The debate on whether, or not, climate change is occurring is a particularly pertinent example here since it is hypothesised that climate change is inextricably linked to consumption patterns, particularly by people in the North. Box 8.2 provides an indicative overview of the

debate. The point being made is that Nussbaum's condition that convincing (and, elsewhere *'manifest'*) harm be demonstrated in order to justify any action (1998: 335 - 336) is particularly, and perhaps unreasonably, tough.

Box 8.2: Climate Change as an Effect of Consumption

Global warming is associated with an increase in atmospheric greenhouse gasses mostly due to the burning of fossil fuels (www.ghgonline.org; 06-July-2004). It can thus be construed as an externality of current consumption patterns[127] (Des Jardins, 2001: 87). Mann & Jones' (2004) study of tree trunks and ice cores provides evidence that the Earth is warmer now than at any point in the last 2 000 years. Mueller (2003) links the break-up of the largest Artic shelf to climate change. However, evidence like this is not accepted by everyone. Schneider (1990), Allison (1991) and Pearce (1991) discuss the ways in which the controversy around climate change is fuelled by the difficulty in fully establishing cause-effect relationships. From this follows this observation: *If we do not know what the consequences of our actions or policies will be, it affects our ability to evaluate them* (Wye College/Open University, Block C Part 3, 1997c: 8). However, an international consensus seems to be emerging that climate change is indeed occurring. On this basis, decisions are being made as to what to do about it. The Kyoto Protocol, which seeks to limit greenhouse emissions by setting national targets, has been signed by many, though not all, governments (DFID, 2000: 82-3). Action is being taken on the basis of substantive, though not conclusive, scientific evidence. That is, the precautionary principle[128] is being applied in order to try and prevent harm (von Weizsäcker, 1993; Meyer, 1999; Alrøe & Kristensen, 2000. See also Joly, 2001, and Marris *et al*. 2001, on how to manage risk in the face of uncertainty, and on how to enable the public to participate in decision-making on risk).

Some effects of climate change may be construed as positive by some stakeholders, through extending the growing belts of some crops for example (Engels, R., 2002; Cannon, 2002). However, these and other researchers contend that many impacts are already, and will be, harmful. Poor people are more seriously affected than rich people by disasters which are being attributed to climate change, like cyclones and floods, as well as by less initially dramatic developments like changes in sea-levels and rainfall (ibid;

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127 See chapter three for other examples of externalities.

128 Ho (pers. comm. 01/01) puts it simply by saying that in a normal court of law, X is considered innocent until proved guilty beyond all reasonable doubt. The precautionary principle reverses the burden of proof. Alrøe and Kristensen (2000: 63) explain that *'precautionary acting involves reflections on the limits of knowledge and control and development of strategies for handling ignorance and uncertainty ... Historically, the precautionary principle stems from the German "Vorsorgeprinzip" and the literal meaning of Vorsorge combines concern about and caring for the future. According to this principle the responsibility towards future as well as present generations obliges us to preserve the natural basis of life and avoid irreversible changes with unforeseeable consequences.'*

DFID, 2000: 82; Masika, 2002; Ikerd, 2003). A special issue of the journal *'Gender and Development'* explores the connections between climate change, gender, and poverty. The evidence suggests, for example, that the gender division of labour means that women and men will be (and are being) affected differently by climate change. Masika (2002) argues that women's lives in areas affected by drought and desertification may become increasingly difficult as they trek further for water and firewood. As a consequence girls may be kept at home to assist with the additional workload, rather than enter formal schooling.[129] Cannon (2002) found that existing nutritional inequalities biased against women worsened during the 1998 flood in Bangladesh (see Reyes, 2002, for similar evidence on the effect of El Niňo in Peru on already malnourished women). Cultural norms about the preservation of female honour meant that many more women than men died (71 women/15 men per thousand) during the 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh. Women left their homes too late, and were less likely than men to know how to swim (Nelson *et al*, 2002: 54)[130]. Men, however, are less likely than women to seek counselling after a disaster. Sometimes this leads to mental health problems (Masika, 2002). Men may also engage in risky heroic behaviour in a disaster, thus endangering their lives. More men than women died during Hurricane Mitch in Honduras and Nicaragua, for example (Nelson *et al*, 2002: 55).

Yet, even if we are increasingly able to agree that climate change caused by human action is harming – and will harm - human lives (as well as the environment), it is nevertheless problematic to ascribe the causing of harm to anyone in particular. Wye College & the Open University (Block C Part 3, 1997c: 5-6) discuss the conundrum by way of the following example[131]: The clearing of a piece of woodland can be construed as a purely local affair. Although some people might be deeply saddened, the loss of the woodland may be seen as less important than the benefits gained by the local community in general (which might gain a bypass and a peaceful village in exchange). However, the felling of the woodland can be argued to fall under a class of actions that are having a cumulative, systemic effect upon the world's climate. The action can thus be classified as *'contributing to a decline in the world's carbon-fixing capability and so 'contributing to global warming'.'* The conundrum is that although a trade-off at a local level seems possible, we are not free to trade off the life-supporting function of the atmosphere at the global level. The atmosphere is fundamentally unsubstitutable (ibid).

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129 Hotham & Razafindrahova (2002) cite evidence from their anthropological study conducted among the Tandroy people in Le Grand Sud, Madagascar, that boys are responsible for animal herding. Many more girls than boys attend school in the area under study.

130 There are many websites on climate change. The Guardian newspaper provides regular news items (and a back list) on www.guardian.co.uk/climatechange; Greenhouse Gasses Online provides a simple overview of climate change, greenhouse gasses and political responses like the Kyoto Protocol: www.ghgonline.org. Germanwatch, a German NGO, provides a wealth of information on climate change in English and German, and also provides numerous links to other sites: www.germanwatch.de

131 Slightly adapted by the author for the purposes of this thesis.

It is thus highly problematic to establish a connection between individual acts of consumption and harm. We can see that however wanton their consumption of gas guzzling cars, say, it is hard to attribute responsibility for global harm to individual consumers. They do not seem, by themselves, to be causing decisive harm. And yet, decisive harm can be said to have been done. It can be equally difficult to establish that the effects of one's action as an ethical consumer have caused 'good' effects. Bougherara & Grolleau (2003: 111-3) make the following three remarks. First, the purchase of environmentally friendly goods does not guarantee to the purchasers an exclusive utility from the environmental improvements generated by their purchases. It is not feasible to exclude those who do not consume environmentally goods, such as those produced without degrading air quality, from the benefits generated by environmentally conscious purchasers. Since the good is available to everyone, free riders can consume it without providing a contribution equal to their consumption. Second, consumer verification of the impact of their positive choice is impossible. They cannot check on the state of the ozone layer for example. Third, other environmental impacts often only become tangible a long time beyond the consumer's life expectancy, for example the effect of one's purchasing upon the use of natural resources.

Technology and Sustainable Energy
Technological advance offers the tantalising promise of enabling almost unlimited consumption by consumers in the North and South. The work of a number of economists suggests that *'the limits to knowledge are the only limits to growth'* (Sagoff, 1998). First, advanced technology makes it easier to locate and recover new reserves. Second, substitutes for scarce resources are being developed. Third, increasing knowledge means that far fewer resources are required to produce the same quantity of consumer goods. Energy requirements continually decrease per unit of economic output. One can therefore contest the 'fact' that shortages of natural resources will constrain growth (ibid. 30-31).

New technologies also mean that externalities of economic growth may be ameliorated. For example, two American companies are currently collaborating on a pilot 'emissions scrubber'. This would remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and thus help to reduce global warming. Unlike current systems to capture plant flue gas from power stations - which remove CO_2 at high concentrations - the wind scrubbers would not need to be located near the source of the emissions (Rincon, www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3612739.stm; 06-July-04).

Technological advance in the field of sustainable technologies offer promise in improving environmental and economic performance at the micro-economic level (von Weizsäcker *et al.* 1993; Jackson, 2000b; see also Sagoff, 1998). Renewable energies are becoming increasingly marketable as prices fall and technology improves, both in the North and in the South[132]. They are also receiving increasing

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132 See www.energy-university.net for a master's course in renewable energies which is directed particularly at the needs of small-scale users in Southern countries. It offers theoretical and practical knowledge in a range of locally

levels of mainstream political support. In June 2004 a major conference, *Renewables 2004*, was held in Bonn, Germany. It resulted in the adoption of a Political Declaration by government delegates from 154 countries. The declaration contains definitions of common political objectives for promoting the role of renewable energies. An international action programme and policy recommendations were adopted (see www.renewables2004.de).

It can be argued, though, that an underlying problem with technological improvements, whether 'mainstream' or 'sustainable', is that they tend to address the (potential) symptoms of economic and environmental malaise, rather than the causes. Technological improvements represent targeted 'fixes' for specific problems and do not, generally, address the underlying complexity of the ecological system they are working with. Folke *et al.* (1998, no page) maintain that conventional methods of resource development and management treat *'the environment as discrete boxes of resources, the yields of which [can] be individually maximised.'* However, they continue, *'one of the central features of non-linear systems, and one that confounds management, is that small disturbances can become magnified and lead to qualitatively unexpected behaviours at more macroscopic levels; this becomes increasingly true as system complexity increases. Understanding patterns and interactions across spatial and temporal scales is critical for reducing the misfit between ecosystems and institutions.'* Jackson (2000b) notes that the natural feedback mechanisms of ecosystems contrast with the lack of regulation in the economic system, in which patterns of material use are predominately linear (ibid.204). Daly (1998: 22-3) adds that the economic system is an open system that has to receive energy and matter from the 'outside' to keep going. It also dissipates energy and matter in a qualitatively different form to the 'outside'. However, says Daly, the 'outside' is nothing more than the finite, materially closed and non-growing ecosystem. People irrevocably use up not only the value added to material products by human activity, but also the value added by nature before it was imported into the economic sub-system (ibid). On the basis of these and other arguments, Folke *et al* (1998) can argue that technological improvements mask significant environmental feedbacks. Box 8.3 provides an example.

Box 8.3: Masking Environmental Feedbacks: the case of fisheries

Masking occurs when environmental signals can be ignored due to technological advance, subsidies, or the workings of the global market. In the case of fisheries, technology such as engines and sonar allow fishing fleets to travel ever further from the coasts and exploit deeper and increasingly dispersed stocks. One would expect uncontrolled fishing to lead to reduced catches, but new technologies permit previously inaccessible catch to become accessible. This can lead to a 'boom' in catches. Such booms can attract new entrants to the fisheries sector, who invest in new

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affordable technologies like photovoltaic, hydraulic widders, windmills and biogas plants. The author taught project management skills on this course for two years.

vessels and equipment. This is where subsidies come in. They artificially lower the real costs and risks of fishing. Subsidies are used to increase income, particularly in Southern countries, which want the foreign exchange provided by export fisheries. The global market also masks feedbacks for both fishers and consumers. High market prices can mask reduced yields by fishers by maintaining their income. Moreover, if a fishery collapses in one country, or its prices are too high, an importer can simply import from a different country. Consumers are rarely aware of this switch.

Source: adapted from Hutric, M. (2004) summary of the Folke *et al*. (1998) paper, in Sustainable Development Update, Issue 3, Volume 4, 2004, at: http://www.albaeco.com/sdu

These arguments suggest that the invention and use of improved technologies offers a complex response to the question, *'How much is enough?'* The boundaries of 'How much is enough' can be pushed – perhaps - ever outward. Sustainable technologies seem particularly suited to enabling ethical consumption due to their reduced demand on the world's resources. However, such technologies do not in themselves imply that material through-put will remain sustainable (Daly, 1996, in Jackson, 2000b: 1). To ensure ecological and economic fit, it is necessary to align economic systems with the laws of ecosystems (see Ikerd, 2003, and especially Jackson, 2000b, for an extended discussion on the second law of thermodynamics to understand why this is so). Furthermore, it is essential to shift focus away from technological advance to the human dimension. Rayner & Malone (1998, in ibid) contend people need to actively choose to implement sustainable technologies and change unsustainable consumption patterns. Boulding (1971) sets out a view of the 'spaceman economy', in which he states that *'man must find his place in a cyclical ecological system'* (ibid: 389). In sum, active, and wise, decision-making is required if such technologies are to form part of a new approach to consumption.

The Exponential Character of Consumption and its Link to Norm-Referencing
The standard of living is often equated with per capita levels of national income. This is conventionally measured through GDP[133]. Increases in GDP are thought to correlate positively with an increase in well-being (Jackson, 2002a: 98). From this point of view it would therefore appear ethically correct, and the right task of government, to increase the well-being of its people through ensuring an increase in GDP. Dasgupta (2001: 1) notes how some people believe that *'high per-capita consumption is essential if prosperity … is to be maintained and if poor countries are to prosper.'* He then examines the productive bases (natural, physical, human, and social capital) of a range of Northern and Southern countries and correlates them with levels of GNP and well-being as represented in the Human Development Index (HDI). Dasgupta concludes that despite economic growth as measured by

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133 GDP can be seen as (1) the total of all incomes (wages and profits) earned from the production of domestically owned goods and services, or (2) it may be regarded as the total of all expenditures made in consuming the finished goods and services, or (3) it can be viewed as the sum of the value added by all the activities which produce economic goods and services (Jackson, 2002a: 99).

gross national product (GNP) per head, and improvements in well-being as measured in the HDI, most countries in the South have seen a substantial erosion of their productive base over the last few years. Once this is brought into the equation, he says, positive 'growth' statistics are rendered negative, or ambivalent, in many countries (ibid). Hamilton (1999: 13) argues that GDP fails to account for the ways in which any increase in output is distributed in the community, that it fails to account for household work, that it counts defensive expenditures (like spending on crime prevention or dealing with the health impacts of pollution) incorrectly, and that GDP fails to account for changes in the value of stock of built and natural capital. In other words, GDP can be critiqued on its assumption that more output = good. It is subject to methodological errors that lead it to count 'bads' as 'goods'[134].

A concept like GDP, and the way it supports exponential consumption behaviour, is arguably embedded in a more general, and culturally relative, understanding of what constitutes 'progress' and 'development'. Attfield (1991) provides a historical overview of the term 'development' in support of the theory that *exponential economic growth* accounts for environmental ills. Thinkers in the German tradition, in particular Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, he says, succeeded in making temporal development appear inevitable. French thinkers linked this concept of development to a belief in intellectual and moral progress, so much so that Guizot could elide the words 'progress' and 'development' to form a potent definition of civilisation as being in a state of continual advance (in ibid: 75). Attfield's account of the *theory of capitalism* (in ibid) supports this definition of development. Capitalism is driven to survive, he argues, by growing through transformation i.e. the continual creation and marketing of consumer products (whether homes or smaller items) in a seemingly unstoppable dynamic. W.E. Du Bois (cited in Bhabha, 1994, no page) comments, '*So woefully unorganised is sociological knowledge that the meaning of progress, the meaning of swift and slow in human doing, and the limits of human perfectibility, are veiled, unanswered sphinxes on the shores of science.*'

Although the current character of consumption can be partly explicated by reference to historical models, it is important to appreciate that lavish consumption is not only a feature of modern capitalist societies. Consider the ostentatious consumption of the elite in ancient Empires like Egypt. Watterson (1998: 99) comments that in the reign of Pharaoh Tuthmosis 111 (1490-1436 BC) Egyptians developed a taste for *'luxury foreign items'*. Their homes (not only their tombs) were richly decorated. Correspondence between Pharaoh Amenopsis III[135] (1403-

134 Hamilton (1999) champions the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW)134, aka the Genuine Progress Indicator, as an alternative way to capture macro-economic welfare. The emphasis of the ISEW is on accounting for environmental costs. Jackson & Marks (1999) also discuss the ISEW and provide case studies. Read Neumayer, 2000, for arguments regarding, as he sees it, the methodological shortcomings of the ISEW.

135 Amenopsis III was the father of Akhenaton and the grandfather of Tutankhamun. He is the Ozmandias – an earlier rendering of the word Amenopsis - of Shelley's (1792 – 1822) poem of the same title. The poem is a reflection on the arrogance and transience of power. It describes how a traveller comes across the remnants of a statue in the desert:

1354 BC) and his fellow rulers is replete with the kinds of consumption goods they expected – but did not always get - as presents (Fletcher, 2000). These observations militate against an understanding of high levels of consumption as being the product, and the motor, only of capitalist development.

It is productive to associate lavish, and exponential, consumption with the concept of norm-referencing. We consume (the way we do) because others consume (the way they do), says Lichtenberg (in Crocker, 1998: 380). Keyfitz quotes Veblen, who says that *'with the exception of the instinct for self-preservation, the propensity for emulation is probably the strongest and most alert and persistent of the economic motives'* ([1899], cited in 1998: 494). Individuals do not make independent consumption choices. Rather, their choices are networked to the choices of others; they are highly contextual in character. This is necessary if choice is to have meaning. Crocker believes that, *'Wise consumption requires knowledge of ourselves and our society as well as choice in the light of that knowledge' (*Crocker, 1998: 377). Norm-referencing is clearly a potential obstacle to wise consumption and therefore warrants closer examination.

Easterlin (2003a: 14) maintains that as far as *'material things are concerned one's satisfaction with life depends not simply on one's own <u>objective</u> condition, but on a comparison of one's objective situation with a <u>subjective</u> (or internalized) living level norm, and this internal norm is significantly affected by the average level of living of people generally.'* Easterlin puts forward the argument that happiness is produced, in part, by the differential in one's own income and those of others. Over an individual's lifecycle income tends to rise, but so does the income of one's associates, leading to no net increase in subjective well-being (ibid, see also Veenhoven, 2000, who distinguishes between cognitively guided evaluations of tangible things like income, and intuitively affective appraisal).

Sen ([1987] in 1998) concedes that modern consumption patterns tend to have an exponential character, though he does not conclude that this is a 'bad thing'. The level of capabilities that are accepted as minimum may be upwardly revised, he says, as a society becomes richer and richer, and as more and more people achieve levels of capabilities not previously reached by the majority. In an argument of particular interest to this thesis, Sen contends that some of the capabilities he outlines require more real income and opulence in the form of commodity possession in richer countries than in poor countries in order to reach the same absolute level of capabilities. He says: *'To lead a life without shame, to be able to visit and entertain one's friends, to keep track of what is going on and what others are talking about, and so on, requires a more expensive bundle of goods in a society that is generally richer, and in which most people have, say, means of transport, affluent clothing, radios or television sets, and so on'* (Sen [1987] 1998: 298-9). This kind of norm-referencing conceivably demands consumption without

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…On the pedestal these words appear: 'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings / Look upon my works, ye mighty, and despair.' / Nothing beside remains. Round the decay / Of colossal wreck, boundless and bare / The lone and level sands stretch far away.'

limit, as is revealed by the datedness of Sen's (1987) remarks – today, a computer and access to the Internet would be seen as the norm, rather than a radio – in richer societies. Keyfitz (1998: 498) argues that high consumption along North American lines has become the standard to which the majority of the world's population aspire. If this is so, then norm-referencing with respect to consumption is not a process restricted to one society or another; it is unbounded in character. The consumption choices poor people make are not only networked to one another, some of their choices are networked to the choices of rich people in the North (and the rich in the South).

For this reason one can take issue with Sen's remarks about the relative nature of the expense involved in acquiring key commodities in order to reach the same absolute level of capabilities. It is necessary to consider the purchasing power parity exchange rate[136] carefully. The cost involved in achieving the same absolute level of capability depends on the capability being discussed. For example, the commodity bundle required to achieve the same absolute level of capability in terms of knowledge, *'to keep track of what is going on',* is often relatively – and absolutely - more expensive for people in poor countries than in rich countries (see Boulton *et al.* 2001: 25 for a discussion of what constitutes absolute and relative poverty; see Attfield, 1991, for a discussion of the 'affluence theory'; see chapter four in this thesis for further discussion of the links between the living standard and quality of life). Information technologies are arguably crucial to knowing *'what others are talking about'* for a great many poor people, as well as to improving educational levels through providing access to up-to-date literature and so on. However, logging on to the Internet is more expensive in many developing countries, particularly in Africa, than it is in developed countries (DFID*,* 2000: 40). Most Southern countries lack the legal and regulatory frameworks necessary to encourage investment in infrastructure or to help bring down costs through encouraging competition (ibid 39-40; see Farnworth & Magombe, 1997, for examples of how the digital divide impacts negatively on North-South partnerships in development education).

Segal (1998) is impatient with the vagueness of the functionings and capabilities approach of Sen and Nussbaum. He complains that we get *'little or no guidance about how to think about how much is enough'* (ibid 353) from Nussbaum in areas of major consumer expenditure like food, housing, education, and transport. What does Nussbaum mean by *'adequate shelter'* or *'adequate education'* in her thick vague list of capabilities, Segal asks?[137] In his own work he limits the discussion to

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136The purchasing power parity exchange rate helps one to draw poverty lines. A dollar might buy one loaf of bread in London but several loaves in Dar Es Salaam. Therefore the exchange rate is adjusted for price differences so that the dollar commands the same quantity of goods and services in each country (Boulton et al. 2001: 29).

137 Nussbaum agrees that the capabilities view has yet to respond to legitimate concerns about the claims of the environment and other species. She criticises the *'unlimited greedy accumulation of mere stuff, which frequently does violence to human functioning'* (1998: 330). For this reason she says that the capabilities framework needs supplementation from other views of our moral obligation (1998: 331). Crocker (1998) concurs, arguing that the capabilities framework can identify under-consumption but not over-consumption. This is not a deficiency in the

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what actually constitutes a high economic standard of living, in other words he tackles the question of minimum thresholds (where bodily survival is not at stake) head on. To do this he devises a list of ten functionings that focus on the individual as an agent in the marketplace making consumption expenditures (ibid 356-7). Regarding food, he isolates the core functioning as *'eats meals that are healthful, appetising and leisured'*. Regarding work (non-pecuniary element) the core functioning is *'derives social esteem and personal self-expression through employment.'* On the basis of his list Segal then examines the complex empirical questions that arise in actually trying to establish that these functionings have been achieved. The intuitive link between income growth and improved functionings is weak, he says, since the standards that are deemed acceptable in a particular society (for example, *'clothing which avoids shame'*) tend to rise with increases in income, leading to a *'squirrel wheel'* effect. Although Easterlin (2003a, 2003b) broadly concurs with this analysis, he notes that life circumstances which influence happiness, such as marital status, employment status and health, vary by income at different points in time (see Crocker, 1998, for a discussion of the need to appraise the human life cycle when considering consumption needs).

This short examination of norm-referencing with respect to consumer goods has shown that consumption is highly contextual in character. Consumption choices are networked with one another. The commodity bundles required to reach particular levels of capability are increasingly international in character. The answer to 'How much is enough?' is inextricably tied up with the type of commodity in question. Complex value judgements are involved.

Relating Consumption to Basic Needs
Another approach to the question *'How much is enough'* is to examine the ways in which consumption relates to the satisfaction of basic needs. In-depth discussion of quality of life and its relation to the living standard is pursued in chapter four. Here we make brief reference to some of the consumption and well-being literature. Roberts (1973: 15) for example, asks why millions of people spend *'vital energies at tasks one would never dream of freely choosing'* in order to be *'rewarded by commodities whose use-value is essential psychological?'* - their basic needs having already been satisfied. In essence he answers that alternative means of achieving well-being are successfully repressed by the capitalist superstructure in the interests of the consumerist economy. Daly (1998: 25) says that*, 'Great sums of money have to spent on advertising to cajole people to consume more.'* Bunting, M. (2004) suggests that employee loyalty to their company 'brand', consumer desire and government policies promoting the work ethic all play a role in getting people to spend their 'vital energies' at tasks they would never freely choose.

It is, however, far from easy to draw a distinction between 'basic needs' and other needs, though Roberts seems to take the existence of the former for granted.

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capability norm of well-being itself, however. The point is that it is an incomplete norm; it cannot supply a complete ethic of responsible consumption. A complete ethic needs to interpret and justify our moral obligations to other people, social institutions and the environment.

It can certainly be argued that, below a certain level, the basic needs of human beings are not properly satisfied. Nussbaum (1998: 315) notes that pregnant women need more nutrients than non-pregnant women, children need more protein than adults, and that physically disabled people need more resources than able-bodied people to be mobile (see also Jackson, C. 1997 on male/female differentials in energy requirements). Chapters four, and particularly seven, take up the basic needs debate with some vigour. Here it is noted that, despite the clarity of Nussbaum's remarks, basic (or material) needs are subject to competing and complex discourses. These make them difficult to conceptualize as well as to meet. The discussion highlighted in Box 8.4 shows that dominant discourses in a given society render vague the contours of what might be considered basic needs.

Box 8.4:   Defining and Meeting Basic Needs

According to an extensive study by McCabe *et al.* (1997) osteoporosis – brittle bones - affects as many as 200 million people worldwide. This number could double by the year 2020. Eighty per cent of the diagnosed cases of osteoporosis are in women. Women have a 54 percent chance of suffering an osteoporosis-related fracture in their lifetimes. Experts agree that an exercise program designed to help prevent osteoporosis, or to maintain bone density for women with osteoporosis, requires both upper and lower body weight-bearing and impact-loading exercises. However, McCabe *et al*. cite many studies showing that women are frequently averse to weightlifting. This is because they think that weightlifting is unfeminine and they are worried about becoming muscular. These findings hold for women respondents who know that they can reduce the risk of osteoporosis by weightlifting.

James (2003) explores the role developmental psychology can make to understanding links between affluence and personal ill-being. On the basis that increased affluence has not been to shown to lead to improved mental health, he concentrates on the quality of early parental care on adult psychopathology. He quotes a range of studies that indicate that anxieties and depression have increased as affluence has increased. James concludes that government policies should be directed at improving the quality of early care, rather than promoting economic growth.

Bloch (2003) argues that there are dominant discourses about 'feelings' in all cultures. One can challenge these, she says, by establishing a critical relationship to dominant feelings and creating spaces for marginalized moods. The dominant discourse of stress, for example, constructs stress as an individual, rather than structural, problem. Stress management courses, rather than structural measures targeting the cause of stress, are typically offered.

Jackson & Marks (1999) and Jackson (2002b) discuss the emergence of humanistic psychology and the development of a needs-theoretic basis for human well-being. In contrast to the economic characterisation of infinite

wants, he says, the needs-theoretic perspective, as exemplified by Max-Neef (1991, in ibid) and Maslow (1954, in ibid), posits a finite set of human needs that are universal across humanity. Needs theorists generally differentiate between two kinds of need. 'Material' needs like food and shelter require material throughput. 'Non-material' needs like participation, affection, and creativity are more about processes than objects (Jackson & Marks, 1999: 436). Three key points are argued. First, despite the universal character of needs, the means chosen to satisfy them, 'satisfiers', vary widely across time and between different cultures. Second, material commodities are not very good satisfiers of non-material needs. Third, there are complex, non-linear relationships between the consumption of an underlying good and the satisfaction of an underlying need (ibid. 429). Using the needs-satisfiers interpretative framework, Jackson & Marks provide a study of expenditure trends in the UK between 1954-1994. They find that the 'lion's share' of the massive increase in consumer spending since 1954 has actually been devoted to either increases in the structural costs of meeting needs in the industrial society (+ 50%), or the attempted satisfaction of non-material needs (+ 160%) (ibid: 438). They conclude that *'modern society is seriously adrift in its pursuit of well-being'*, but argue that *'revisioning the way we satisfy our non-material needs ... is the most obvious avenue for renewing human development'* (ibid. 439-40).

Marketing companies are also adept at 're-visioning', and this teaches us something new about consumption. Miller & Rose (1997, in Lockie, 2002: 283) argue that the practice of psychological market research *'does not merely uncover pre-existing desires or anxieties: it forces them into existence by new experimental situations ... that enable them to be observed, it renders them thinkable by new techniques of calculation, classification and inscription ... and hence makes them amenable to action and instrumentalisation in the service of sales of goods.'* Abercrombie (1994, in Lockie, 2002: 285) notes the increasing aetheticization of everyday life. This increases, he says, the range of meanings that may potentially be attached to commodities or practices (see Jenkins & Parrott, 2003, for an extended discussion on this point).

Crocker (1998) approaches the question of how to define some kind of limit for consumption in a different way to Jackson & Marks (1999) in Box 8.4. He argues that our consumption choices have beneficial, and detrimental, effects on different aspects of our personal well-being. If our goal is to protect and promote our personal well-being, we should be asking questions like: *What and how much should we consume? What role should goods and services play if our lives are to go well? What kinds of consumption are, or would be good for us?* (1998: 367). He dismisses the materialism / anti-materialism dichotomy as false, arguing that commodities are important to helping us realise our well-being, and that we should accept this. *'We need to satisfy certain worldly desires and utilise certain material means'* (ibid 370). The goal should be a wise consumption norm that balances the social, physical and mental dimensions of human well-being (ibid. 373-4).

Crocker's questions provide consumers with a method of interrogating their consumption choices in a positive and empowering fashion. Achieving a personal balance is key to limiting consumption. The dichotomy between material and non-material needs seems hard to justify and maintain, except at a very basic level (as discussed in chapters four to seven, particularly with respect to functionings). It is preferable to think in terms of a restless, iterative, dynamic looping between the two, which calls them forth in ever-different language. The answer to the question: *How much is enough?* is inadequately related to a concept of basic needs. It is embedded in the understanding of consumers as to what constitutes 'wise action'. This can be investigated along the interrogative lines suggested by Crocker (1998) above.

Future People

The focus so far has been on how consumption affects the lives of currently living people. However, the concept of ethical consumption is frequently laced with a temporal dimension. The slogan, *'we have borrowed the world from our children'*, is used to justify the need to consume with an eye to the future. It was popularised by the Brundtland Commission Report (WCED, 1987). The Brundtland Report is an expression of the 'Futurity Problem' (Kavka, 1978) on the political stage. It stresses the importance of meeting human needs today and in the future. Unlike Kavka who suggests that meeting the needs of future generations might well conflict with assisting the currently poor and starving (ibid: 199), the Brundtland view does not see a contradiction. This is for two reasons. First, one might discern a difference between <u>meeting needs</u>, with thresholds below which truly human functioning is not possible, and <u>quality of life</u>, which might be seen to be the ability of people to live really humanely. The Brundtland Report considers the more limited agenda of meeting present and future needs as not only as possible, but also as morally imperative. Second, the Brundtland Report conceptualises the environment as a resource that not only should, but indeed can, be managed sustainably into the indefinite future (see Pearce *et al*., 1989; Shiva, 1992; Norton, 1992, for different views on, and critiques of, the Brundtland perception of the environment as a resource which is relatively simple to manage). Despite the needs focus of the Brundtland agenda, its redistributive agenda - from rich to poor and from North to South - involves working against powerful economic interests and the 'octopus economy' of which Dauncey (1986) speaks.

It is also more problematic to establish the responsibilities of the present generation to future generations - which conceivably will be living many thousands of years from now – than the Brundtland Report appears to suggest. Chambers & Conway (1991: 12) maintain that we generally fail to understand how many future people we are actually talking about. If the world's population, say, were to stabilise at 15 billion, with a life expectancy of 75 years of age, future people would number 20 billion per century, and 200 billion people over a millennium (ibid). Kavka (1978) explains that responsibilities are difficult to establish given the temporal location of future people, our ignorance of how to meet their needs, and because of the contingency of their existence upon our actions. These difficulties are far from easy to resolve. Kavka puts forward the argument that all we can know is that future generations will have basic needs similar to ours. On

this basis they will share elements of our concept of a 'good life'. Furthermore, he argues that it is wrong to discriminate against future people because there should be not degrees of membership in the human moral community. This proviso should not be restricted to the currently living. Kavka concludes that we have to leave future people with resources, rather than specific things that we value, to enable them to create the world they want.

Howarth (1992) tries to establish our duties to future people by arguing that their welfare can be catered for if each generation fulfils its responsibilities to their successor generation. He terms this the *'chain of obligation'*. If we fail our children, he says, then they will be unable to fulfil their obligations to their successors. Pearce *et al.* (1989: 38) contend that each generation should inherit a similar natural environment, with no diminution of natural capital. They argue for equity between the generations, and between the rich and the poor. Wasserman (1998: 548), developing the idea of trusteeship of natural resources, contends that the relationship of the present generation to future generations is 'asymmetrical', in that the actions of the latter cannot affect our material well-being. Moreover, the interest of the present generation in the welfare of future generations is very limited. He thus dismisses the well-being of future generations as a central plank upon which to rest a policy of resource conservation[138].

On the basis of the arguments presented here, we can draw the conclusion that 'ethical consumption' does not offer a response, as such, to the dilemma of how to construct and understand our obligations to future people. These 'obligations' are themselves contested on the basis of (for example) our lack of knowledge, and interest in, future generations, and in the fact that future people cannot engage in a reciprocal relationship with us. In itself, the latter argument can be countered by others centring perhaps on evidence that current people are capable of acting altruistically, and that altruism is an important motivation behind ethical consumption. None-the-less, Wasserman highlights again the 'lack of feedback' problem that was isolated above with respect to establishing that consumption causes harm, or does good, to public goods like the atmosphere.

Learning Points

1. People in the North are consuming 'more than their fair share' of the world's finite resources. One repercussion of this is that development in the South is being distorted and hampered. Real world power structures contribute to this distortion of producer-consumer relationships. Part of

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138 Many academics are tussling with the concept of the present generation's rights and duties vis-à-vis future generations. For an overview see Des Jardins (2001). Des Jardins also recommends the following core readings: Sikora, R.I. & Barry, B. (eds.) (1978) 'Obligations to Future Generations', focuses primarily on population policy issues (population size, growth and control). Partridge, E. (ed.) (1980) 'Responsibilities to Future Generations', and MacLean, D. & Brown, P. (eds.) (1983) 'Energy and the Future,' focus primarily on duties to posterity (the content and type of world people will inherit from us). See also Regan, T. & VanDeVeer, D. (eds.) (1980) 'And Justice for All'; see in particular the essay by Warren, M.A. 'Future Generations' in this volume.

the difficulty also lies in ways in which natural resources, economic systems, ecosystems, and technological change are conceptualised and related to one another.

2. Our consumption choices do not only have a spatial dimension. It is important to consider the temporal dimension also. Duties to others do not only extend to the currently living. It is possible to argue that they extend to people who will live many thousands of years from now.

3. It might be possible to agree that the actions of each consumer, however tiny, are contributing to global harm. However, the attribution of responsibility for harm is problematic due to complex feedback loops. The workings of ecosystems defy boundaries. Actions may seem rational at a local level, leading to discernable quality of life improvements. However, the same actions may be causing harm at a global level.

4. Consumers are engaged in functional relationships over which they have little control or feedback. Individuals cannot properly trace the 'real world' effects of their ethical consumption choices, let alone map evolving interactions. This is because time lags, sometimes considerable, are involved, or because clear cause-effect linkages are impossible to establish. Ethical consumers cannot, therefore, expect feedback as to the consequences of their actions in many cases. They therefore require considerable 'ethical strength' to continue.

5. The public nature of environmental goods means that ethical consumers have to expect, and accept, that other, 'non-ethical' consumers will free ride on the positive effects of ethical consumption choices. It is understandable that ethical consumers (fair trade, organic and so forth), who generally pay a premium to support environmentally friendly and socially just production systems, might find this problematic. They may prefer to lift the realm of ethical decision-making out of the domain of personal choice and into the regulatory or retail sector – thus transferring the 'costs' to society at large.

6. The systemic nature of the world's operation means that one's choices impinge upon, and shape, other people's choices. Choices are not set loose in a neutral domain. Rather, they become bound up in a restless, iterative process. Endless feedback spirals make the mapping and understanding of how choices are made, and the effects of those choices, difficult.

7. Modern patterns of consumption appear to have an exponential character. One aspect of this, norm-referencing, can be challenged as part of an ethics of wise consumption. The internationalisation of norm-referencing is part of globalisation. The effect upon local value systems (whose values count?) is a major research topic in itself. Nevertheless some aspects of norm-referencing are hard to criticise. The acquisition of durables can

238

provide a mechanism, for example, an enhancement in knowledge to occur (and the contribution to human capabilities that implies).

8. We can conclude that ethical consumption, of itself, does not in any way resolve the question: *How much is enough?* The evidence presented above suggests that ethical consumption is thoroughly embedded in social norms that reward exponential consumption. Needs, even 'basic needs', are subject to conflicting discourses. The involuntary situatedness of human life on earth militates against an understanding of ethical consumption as truly transformative. Nonetheless, ethical consumption is an application of sorts of the 'precautionary principle'. Aspects of this principle embody concern and caring. Action can be taken to try and avoid harm even if scientific certainty has not been attained. Furthermore, since feedback on ethical consumption generally does not 'boomerang' back to the ethical consumer in terms of real world effects, feedback has to be 'constructed' in the knowledge domain.

The learning points inform the fieldwork with the German consumers. In particular, they structure the questions posed in the focus groups. The responses of the focus group respondents are presented in chapter ten. The learning points given here, and above, are also used to inform the interpretation of the fieldwork findings in chapter eleven. The final part of this chapter turns to social labels. Labels span the messy divide between producers and consumers. Since these stakeholders need to connect in the 'realm of ideas', it is important to examine the effectiveness of labels in enabling 'entanglement' and, as part of this, in enabling real world ethical action.

8.4   An Overview of Labels

Labels can help to bridge, or partially bridge, elements of the ethical consumption impasse discussed above. So-called credence labels, like organic, fair trade and ecolabels[139], focus on maintaining, or enhancing production-related processes at various points in the production to consumer chain. In this way they 'iron out' selected complexities. Labels are backed by specified production processes, and they signal this to the consumer in various ways. Although social labels in one form or another can be traced back to the nineteenth century (Zadek *et al*. 1998; Dillier, 1999) credence labels have proliferated over the last decade or so.

Part 8.4 discusses the concept and practice of labelling in some depth. The remaining chapters in this thesis bring the discussion provided here to bear upon the author's concept of a new kind of social label, one which enables the 'maximum selves' of both producer and consumer to flourish, whilst enabling

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139 The references used refer either to organic labelling, ecolabelling (generally, a broader definition which does not just include goods produced in organic farming systems) or social labelling. The author has followed the typology of each author. Although the focus of these labels differs, they share the characteristic that they are credence labels. The valuable properties that they convey arise from the processes of production.

entanglement to occur in the form of mutual learning. We commence with an overview of social labels. Box 8.5 provides some definitions of social labels, briefly discusses their purpose, and introduces some of the main actors involved in formulating social labels.

Box 8.5:   Social Labels

No one definition or understanding of social labels exists in the literature. A selection is provided here:

- Labels show symbols such as logos, trade marks and, sometimes, text, which seeks to differentiate the product or enterprise. Like codes of conduct, social labels are voluntary responses to market demands. They can be affixed to products or their packaging, displayed at the retail site, or assigned to enterprises – usually producers or manufacturers (Dillier, 1999: 103).
- Social labels are words and symbols associated with products or organisations which seek to influence the economic decisions of one set of stakeholders by describing the impact of a business process on another group of stakeholders (Zadek *et al*. 1998: 1).
- The term 'social' describes impacts on stakeholders (producers) who are not the audience of the labels (consumers) (Zadek *et al*. 1998: 20). They maintain a clear distinction between the producer - in the South, and the consumer - in the North (Allan, 2004: 14; Zadek *et al*. 1998).
- Social labelling programmes operate as verification systems for enterprises. They use a highly visible means of communication – a physical label about the social conditions surrounding the production of a product or the rendering of a service (Dillier, 1999: 103).
- Labelling initiatives are independently managed standards that companies may seek to comply with, and as a consequence earn the right to use the label, or mark, as a proof of compliance (Blowfield, 1999: 1).
- Independent labels, ethical brands and self-declared claims by companies can act as social labels (Zadek *et al*. 1998: 19).

Social labels can be a stepping stone, argues Allan (2004) to a new consumer community. They need to be placed in an ecosystem of consumers, producers and social labels developing new forms of co-operation and interaction. Zadek *et al.* (1998) likewise argue that labels need to be seen as part of a wider process of civil and public sector action.

Labels are primarily targeted at export markets involving retail trade, 'niche' product markets, and affluent consumers (Dillier, 1999: 113) and are more readily developed for products associated with social identity (like clothing and food), or for discrete production processes like tea (ibid; see also Zadek *et al.* 1998, Zadek, 1999, Blowfield, 1999, and Sterns, 2000). Labels help set common standards for

certain sectors or commodities. They can reduce the costs of ethical trade by creating greater economies of scale, and they can access a greater body of expertise than could be afforded by most individual companies. Also, they can help to ensure greater representation in the development and implementation of standards than is normal in codes of conduct (Blowfield, 1999: 15).

Labelling initiatives can be categorised according to various criteria, but one way is by identifying the chief actors behind the label:

- Retailer and brand initiatives. These represent industry taking a proactive role in determining standards and compliance systems. They are in the driving seat because they are in the market (Vallejo *et al*. 2004: 25).
- Membership (partnership) initiatives. These engage a wide range of stakeholders in developing the label. Membership initiatives help enterprises in businesses with little brand loyalty, or small and medium-sized enterprises, to share the costs and enjoy the higher visibility of an independent label such as Rugmark (Dillier, 1999: 104). Civil partnerships promote independent social labels backed by agreed labour standards and approaches to monitoring and verification (Zadek *et al*. 1998: 8).
- Several membership organisations like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), IFOAM and ISEAL operate as a custodian bodies. They set basic standards that can then be developed by accreditation agencies. The accreditation agencies then approve auditing or certification bodies (Blowfield, 1999: 14).

Within the European Union food labelling is strictly regulated. Labels must provide the consumer with useful and correct descriptions of the product and its production process (Reisch, 2003: 21). There are four kinds of food label:

1. Self-declaration labels by individual companies.
2. Labels established by industry associations for their members' products.
3. Labels established by private initiators independent of market agents (private or state run certification bodies)
4. State controlled labels issued by a governmental agency.

Labels serve a variety of purposes. Some analysts see them as emancipatory in character. Labels facilitate the consumer's *'right to know'* (Pot, 2000: 18). They enable consumers to *'vote with their pocketbooks'* for *'ecologically intelligent products'* (Reisch, 2003: 21). Nikolic & Habul (2003: 32) comment though that this understanding of the purpose of labelling has yet to take root in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an area rich in organic production and local marketing potential. That is to say, the concept of ecological choice, and its attendant criteria, remains to be constructed.

Bosshart (2000: 8-9) notes that the trend of *'personalising'* the product and the shopping experience is gaining rapidly in importance as a marketing strategy. Food is no longer just about calories but has become a *'complex value proposition'*.

Stories and myths form the basis of retailer communication with customers, and customers themselves define their wants. Labels are part of this strategy. Zadek *et al.* (1998) suggest that social labels have window and mirror effects. They inform the consumer about how the product was produced – the 'window effect'. They also act as a 'mirror' for the consumer in that they help secure the benefits of self-expression and positive self-identity.

Other analysts contend that consumers, by selecting environmentally and socially friendly products, provide the producers of these products with a competitive advantage. Less friendly products will, in time, be pushed out of the market. A mutually reinforcing feedback loop is set up between consumers and retailers (Thøgersen, 2000, in Grankvist, 2002: 3; see also Zadek *et al.* 1998; Darnhofer & Vogl, 2003; Zadek, 2004). Thøgersen (2000, in Grankvist, 2002: 3) suggests that successful labelling schemes – associated with appropriate production systems - will enable pro-active companies to avoid regulation of their practices by government.

Reisch (2003: 21) considers the wider impacts of choosing organically certified products. In her view the conservation of natural resources will be generally promoted. Organic agriculture, note Darnhofer & Vogl (2003: 11), is the only kind of farming supported by an explicit legal definition. Organic standards articulated on labels are important in promoting consumer confidence, and in preventing an undermining of the market through fraudulent trading (ibid). Thøgersen (2000, in Grankvist, 2002: 3) also makes the important point, given our discussion in Part 8.3, on the feasibility of establishing limits to consumption, that labels encouraging environmentally friendly purchasing do not challenge consumerism *per se*. Over the long term consumption-related damage to the environment may well (continue to) occur. Bougherara & Grolleau (2003: 111-3), whose work is likewise discussed in Part 8.3, maintain that ecologically conscious consumers are largely excluded from positive feedback from their behaviour due to the public nature of environmental goods. This can be discouraging. Blowfield (1999: 11) points out that labelling initiatives, even if they reach the factory gates, generally do not address impacts beyond the locus of production, though these can be considerable.

Social labels may impact directly on participating producers by providing market leverage to improve standards in the supply chain. They may have an indirect impact through influencing the behaviour of non-participating companies and shifting, or reinforcing, public policy (Zadek *et al*. 1998: 2-3, 28). These comments suggest that ecological, organic and social labels can actually change the way the market functions. Social labels in particular can be construed as (potential) empowerment devices.

Labels have thus become an arena for struggle. Lockie (2002: 287) notes that the minimalist approach to the regulation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the food chain by governments and conventional food industry has met with much public opposition and forced tighter regulation. Benbrook (2003) discusses the difficulties inherent in making credible pesticide ecolabel claims on organic produce, such as quantifying risk and establishing credible indicators. Reisch

(2003) points out that there are anxieties about the potential impact of labelling schemes on international trade, particularly with respect to discrimination within the WTO. This anxiety is hindering moves to introduce legislation on social and environmental standards (Blowfield, 1999: 17; see Zadek *et al*. 1998, and particularly Vallejo *et al*. 2004, for more remarks). Dillier (1999: 100-1) notes that representatives of Southern enterprises or governments are concerned that market pressure is making 'voluntary' schemes effectively compulsory on terms that can be unfair (see Earley & Anderson, 2003, for a comprehensive discussion on advantages and problems labelling schemes pose for Southern countries and enterprises trying to access Northern markets, and also Vallejo *et al*. 2004). Zadek *et al*. (1998: 39-40) observe that child workers are concerned at being dismissed from the labour market by well-meaning labelling initiatives.

Furthermore, labels compete with one another (Earley & Anderson, 2003: 10). This includes competition among programmes that make the same claim. There is also competition among programmes making different claims for the same product. A farm-raised fish may qualify for an organic label, a fair trade label, a country of origin label, a label indicating freshness, or a label emphasizing health benefits (ibid). Vallejo *et al.* (2004: 4-5) suggest that the proliferation of labels means diminished credibility for all labels. Probably, they argue, there is place for just one label by sector and theme.

Other analysts raise doubts focusing on the quality and content of labels. Vallejo *et al*. (2004: 4) argue that the evident success of ethical certification and labelling systems is drawing previous opponents into the market. The entry of new players from the private sector and government is lowering standards by making them less demanding, and compatible with existing practices. Dillier (1999), in a survey of twelve high profile labelling programmes including FLO, Rugmark and Reebok, notes that they are very selective in the labour issues they address. Labelling programmes tend to reflect, she says, the drafters' own definitions of what the labour practices should look like. Most of these self-definitions differ from, or contradict, international labour principles – for example the principle, and the right, to collective bargaining. Some issues like child labour are addressed almost across the board (11 out of 12 programmes). Half of the programmes she examined address wage levels. One-third address freedom of association, collective bargaining and / or occupational safety and health. Other concerns, like discrimination and forced labour, are less frequently addressed. She remarks that only one third of the labels reviewed referred to international standards, whether with respect to general human rights (United Nations Universal Declaration for Human Rights) or labour-specific standards (International Labour Organisation). National law is cited as a source for code standards in several labelling programmes.

This selectivity is partly due to the fact that social labelling programmes reflect the concerns of the consumers, civil society campaigns and the media from which they arise. Some of the most effective labels, say Zadek *et al*. (1998: 6) are linked to civil mobilisation. The Max Havelaar labelling initiative invested heavily in promotion of the label using the classic channels of civil society like media

exposure, mobilisation of support groups, and commercials (ibid). The rooted-ness of labels in civil society movements encourages 'buy in' from key stakeholders like consumers, producers and retailers (ibid: 11).

Consumer support for labelling programmes is critical to their success. Reisch (2003) explains that the German Ökoprüfzeichen, an national organic label, failed due to its compromise on standards, thus losing well-informed consumers, and its failure to address different domains of consumer concern. Sergienko & Nemudrova (2003) report similar findings from Russia. A national ecolabel, introduced in 2000, failed due to a lack of interest and support from consumers and industry. Thøgersen (2000, in Grankvist, 2002: 3) makes the pragmatic yet necessary observation that a pre-requisite for the use of a label is that consumers must know that it exists. The above-mentioned Ökoprüfzeichen had a very small publicity budget, another reason for its failure (Reisch, 2003).

Attributes of Labels
Grolleau & Caswell (2003: 121, and Bougherara & Grolleau, 2003, 2003: 111) explain that consumer perception of quality is influenced by a product's intrinsic features (like food safety, nutrition, convenience, and process features like eco-friendliness), as well as by extrinsic indicators and cues provided by the seller. Consumers acquire information through drawing upon search, experience and credence attributes:

1. Search attributes: consumers learn about the level of quality prior to purchase. Extrinsic indicators assisting the consumer include information on certification. Cues include brand names, packaging and price.
2. Experience attributes: consumers learn about the quality of the good following purchase and use.
3. Credence attributes, however, cannot be measured by the consumer at any point. They derive from processes, for example that a food has been grown in an organic production system.

Credence attributes have become increasingly important in modern food retailing because the spatial extension of producer to consumer chains has rendered the point of food production invisible to most consumers (Lockie, 2002: 287; see also Pott, 2000; Koerber & Kretschmer, 2001; Kuhnert *et al.* 2002; Brand, 2002; Milestad, 2003; Reisch, 2003). However, information about credence attributes is asymmetrical. Consumers lack grounded information, whereas the producer and seller are generally well-informed (Bougherara & Grolleau, 2003; Grolleau & Caswell, 2003). The problem of asymmetrical information with respect to credence attributes is particularly acute in emerging organic markets like Bosnia and Herzegovina (Nikolic & Habul, 2003) and Russia (Sergienko & Nemudrova, 2003).

The spatial extension of the producer to consumer chain has undermined one of the chief 'outputs' of consumer verification, or assessment, of production processes – trust based on shared geographical space. *'Co-present relationships between farmers, butchers and consumers and so on [have been] replaced with*

244

bureaucratised and scientized processes of <u>quality assurance</u>' (Lockie, 2002: 287). Given that consumers cannot easily contact producers in long production chains, it is more cost-effective for them to request third party guarantees of traceability and assessment of credence attributes - for example through organic or fair trade certification (Bougherara & Grolleau, 2003: 111; see also Reisch, 2003; Connor, 2003, Giraud, 2003; Burns & Blowfield, 1999; Blowfield, 1999 and Zadek *et al.* 1998). However, consumers do not necessarily consider third party assessment, and the seals derived from these, as trustworthy, or sufficient, methods of verification. Trust is a fragile commodity, as the findings and discussion presented in Box 8.6 show.

Box 8.6:   Trust and Credence Labels

Lockie *et al.* (2002: 93) report in their Australian study that consumers approved of organic labelling in principle. However, they frequently did not trust organic labels since they seem to be 'applied to everything'. Many respondents were also hostile to the values and practices supermarkets seem to embody, such as a lack of 'thoughtfulness', and the dominance of the retail sector (Lockie, 2002: 286; see also Tanner & Kast, 2003). These findings suggest that credence labels are not necessarily taken seriously in situations where consumers consider that the food retailers themselves lack ethical credibility. In other words, the effectiveness of credence labels seems to depend, in part, upon the context of their deployment.

There is evidence that consumers trust labels issued by an independent or public authority more than they trust the private claims of producers (Thøgerson, 2001, in Reisch, 2003: 22). A nationwide study of 2000 consumers responsible for household food purchases by the University of Hamburg in Germany (Kuhnert *et al.* 2002: 15) found that 56 per cent of respondents trusted producer claims, as against 74 per cent who trusted government-sponsored labels. Brand labels were trusted by 28 per cent, and 7 per cent said they did not trust any labels.

Thøgersen (2000, in Grankvist, 2002: 4) cites evidence that *pre-existing* consumer attitudes affect their level of trust in ecolabels. In other words, trust is to some extent dispositional and therefore resistant to manipulation by labels.[140]

The credibility of organic labels is crucial, say Darnhofer & Vogl (2003: 16), given that so many consumers purchase organic produce due to their worries about food produced in conventional farming systems. Franz *et al.* (2003) are carrying out research on whether the greater use of manure in

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140 This is an important statement. Readers are referred to Delhey & Newton (2003) who explore the explanatory

power of different theories of the determinants of trust. They do so by testing the theories against survey data from

seven societies. They discover that the explanatory power of individual or social theories depends on the kind of society

to which they are applied. One of the countries they studied was Germany.

organic production systems to maintain soil fertility increases the risk of human pathogens, like *Listeria* and *E.coli*, surviving in organic vegetables . The trust consumers place in organic foods could be shattered easily if these pathogens are not effectively suppressed by the food industry. Zadek *et al.* (1998: 21) note that consumers sometimes infer more than a label actually promises. Organic labels certify that a food is produced to organic production standards, but do not guarantee anything about the residue level of permitted pesticides.

McCain & Chandler (2003) argue against the *'tyranny of distance'* in organic production chains, by which they refer to geographical distance. They plead for local food with a local label. Trust, based on peer review, the signing of a pledge and an open gate policy to consumers, would underpin the commodity's credence attributes. In this scenario, certification and third party inspection would not be necessary. However, given that the focus of this thesis is upon international commodity chains in organic produce, it is not our purpose to struggle against the tyranny of (geographical) distance. It is useful, though, to take up McCain & Chandler's metaphor as a basis for action aiming to reduce 'felt distance'. One can conceptualise trust as a cornerstone of 'shortened value spaces' between producers and consumers in lengthy commodity chains.

Information Overload and Information Asymmetry

It is not simple to address information asymmetry with respect to credence attributes in the marketplace. Providing informative labels does not necessarily resolve the problem. The wide variety of labelling programmes extant in Northern economies can lead to consumer confusion (Lockie, 2002; Lockie *et al.* 2002; Giraud, 2003; Earley & Anderson, 2003; Reisch, 2003; Darnhofer & Vogl, 2003; Gordy, 2003; Sergienko & Nemudrova, 2003; Schafer, 2003; Connor, 2003; Teisl, 2003; Bougherara & Grolleau, 2003; Grolleau & Caswell, 2003). Thøgersen (2000, in Grankvist, 2002: 3-4) argues that consumer 'recognition' of labels does not mean that they have understood even its approximate meaning, a view supported by Connor (2003: 37) and Durham *et al.* (2003).

Grankvist (2002; 12) asks: *In how far is behaviour guided by reasoned considerations?* He contends that everyday purchases tend not to be about making an optimal choice, but a satisfactory one. People want to avoid too much cognitive effort, they take shortcuts, they use tricks and they simplify complex problems. He cites a study that indicates that shoppers take only 7 seconds, on average, to select a product (ibid). Competition for consumers' attention arises in a rich informational context (Bougherara & Grolleau, 2003: 112). The Internet is providing large flows of information that are difficult to evaluate (Blowfield, 2004: 21). Lockie (2002: 286) cites a focus group respondent who argues that '*being conscious of what we eat is an act that presumes time'.*

These observations suggest that even if informational symmetry is achieved, consumers can be overwhelmed (Bougherara & Grolleau, 2003: 112). Wynne (1994, in ibid: 115) asserts that '*simply making information available to*

consumers in no way assures that they will process it. One must distinguish between <u>information provision</u> and <u>information impact</u>, because there is [not a] one to one relationship between information provided and the impact, if any, of this information upon the recipient.' Sometimes consumers are technically unable to process the information on labels, for example on environmental report cards (Wynne, 1994, in Bougherara & Grolleau, 2003). There thus needs to be a switch from an 'economy of information' to an 'economy of attention', says Varian (1995, in Bougherara & Grolleau, 2003: 112). Varian adds, *'what information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention, and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the over-abundance of information sources that might consume it'* (ibid).

Jiggins' (pers. comm. 06/04) observation on the need to distinguish carefully between data, information and knowledge enriches and deepens Varian's insight for our present purposes. She explains that *'Data are <u>chunks of fact</u>. These are things that have been observed and in some way measured. Information is made up of facts that have been contextualised. Knowledge is information that is given (or 'has') meaning. In this categorisation, only the knower is able to know what meaning the information has for him or her because he or she is interpreting information through the sum of their being and life experience (the perceiver's perspective). It follows that you cannot transfer this knowledge. However you can communicate information about the interpretation and meaning you give to data to another person.'* Applying this reading to the case in question, it would seem that there is frequently not only too much information on labels, but that some labels provide inadequately contextualised data. The sense-making apparatus on the label itself is either insufficient, or inappropriate. The consumer is left with chunks of data that they cannot properly process into meaningful knowledge, by which is meant knowledge that enables action to be taken. The author argued in chapter seven of this thesis that one becomes knowledgeable through the process of selectively converting information to knowledge (information + attributed value = knowledge).

Labels in general are explicitly action-orientated. They appeal to the consumer's ability to establish a connection between themselves and the act promoted by the label, whether on the level of 'buy this' (because this is a healthy, safe or fashionable product), or on the level of indicating solidarity with the producer through the purchase. However, the observations made so far suggest that credence labels sometimes fail to promote, and enable, the decision-making capabilities of the consumer. They are not always capable of meeting their objective: to encourage and enable consumers to translate their ethics into real world action in a satisfactory manner. This remark helps to explain findings like those of Lockie *et al.* (2002) and Lockie (2002) in their wide-ranging Australian study. Despite the problems associated with information overload, and despite an abundance of labels, the Australian respondents did not, generally speaking, feel *appropriately informed*. According to Lockie (ibid: 286) many respondents argued that they need to be better informed in order to properly consider all the ethical and other issues implicated in the consumption of a single foodstuff. They generally

understood that food-related issues are more complex than a simple dichotomy between organic and conventional foods. However, they felt powerless because they lacked information, and control, over what they were *'able to know'*.

The Australian respondents were also aware of the way retailers tried to enrol consumers on their own projects, through advertising and product placement for example. Some argued that information regarding organic alternatives was deliberately withheld because retailers and their associated suppliers, like packaging and chemical companies, did not want a switch from conventional to organic production methods since this would be less profitable (ibid: 286-287). Whether or not this is true is beside the point of the present discussion. The author suggests in chapter nine that retailers can help to provide consumers with 'empowerment spaces' that enable them to make meaningful ethical choices. It would seem that the respondents in the Australian study, though, are convinced that retailers are making negative ethical choices that have repercussions right through the producer to consumer chain. One consequence is an erosion of the consumer's ability to make an ethical choice.

At the same time, the respondents in the Australian study were aware of their own complicity in processes they did not agree with. Some of them knowingly traded off environmental values and animal welfare against cost and convenience (ibid: 286-7). Giraud (2003: 44) maintains on the basis of his French study that most consumers understand that an organic product cannot be everything they want it to be at once, namely (1) nutritious, safe and ecological (2) an organic food with a perfect appearance (3) tasty (4) available everywhere, ready to use and fresh, and (5) all this at a low price.

Learning Points

The literature review and discussion provided above, and in the following chapters, suggest that the provision of information about credence attributes on labels constitutes an insufficient (though obviously not totally ineffective) appeal to consumers. The analysis so far can be summarised as follows:

1. Ethical values can be conceptualised as emergent qualities of particular productive processes. They are identified as such, selected and promoted by a range of stakeholders. These values are 'marketed' in the form of credence labels.

2. Credence labels are context dependent. The effectiveness of their ethical claims depends partly upon the 'ethical consistency' of the environment in which they are perceived to be embedded. Consumer perceptions of ethical consistency (a) across the product lifecycle, including packaging and processing, and (b) residing in the stakeholders involved in that chain, play an important role in determining consumer receptiveness to credence claims made on labels. It seems that a fair number of consumers think that supermarkets are ethically inconsistent, for example, and this impacts negatively on their willingness to purchase ethically in such stores, even if they purchase ethically elsewhere.

3. On the basis of these observations it can be hypothesised that consumers recognise, in one way or another, that ethical inconsistency acts to 'muffle' the impact of their ethical choice. The clear trajectory between their ethics, their ability to translate their ethics into wise consumption decisions, and their sense that they are engendering real world change in the way they envisage, is fractured.

4. It is also difficult to establish satisfactory feedback on ethical purchasing due to the public nature of environmental goods, and to the lack of contact between producer and consumer in lengthy commodity chains. The role of myth and story – which is a part of labelling - is key to establishing feedback and satisfactory connection. Artifice is part of truth-telling.

5. In lengthy commodity chains, trust in the product is the one of the commodified values constructed by intermediaries, like certification bodies. However, although third party assurance schemes are designed to be robust, they do not seem capable of engendering the <u>quality</u> of the trust that emerges almost accidentally in 'co-present' relationships between producers and consumers. Shortening 'value spaces', through achieving agreement on values between producers and consumers, may be a mechanism for generating trust in the product, and also between consumers and producers.

6. Credence labels are designed to tackle the challenges posed to the recognition, and capture, of ethical values in lengthy commodity chains. However, they seem to fail – not entirely, but to a degree – due to the enormity of this challenge. Conversely, it can be argued that short commodity chains tend to be robust, and credible. This is because they are constituted in a geographically bounded and largely shared 'felt and experienced' world. The implications of this are:
   - Co-present participants can call upon several senses, like sight, hearing, touch and smell, to construct the fabric of local worlds. This assists the process of 'languaging', which permits people to call forth worlds together in terms of consistent descriptions. The employment of these varied senses also assists in achieving a practical, unreflecting familiarity with an environment (Cooper, 1992), that is to say, non-linguistic familiarity.
   - As a consequence, it can hypothesised that it is easier to identify, and capture, ethical values arising from these situated practices.
   - In contrast, in lengthy commodity chains producers and consumers exist primarily in the <u>realm of ideas</u>. The product itself is the only tangible element of their real world connection. The producer-consumer relationship does not benefit from being constructed in the immediacy of physically shared spaces. Credence labels are, in a way, too slender a signifier of the different values they are meant to convey.

7. A number of stakeholders, like the state, producer, and retailer, have interests in credence labels. The multi-purpose character of credence labels inevitably makes them complex, and a site of struggle. For example:

    - Retailers identify / construct particular kinds of consumer. They then market products to them selectively using labels that send signals to, say, 'health conscious' or 'traditional' organic consumers (see Ilsøe, 2003, for a Danish study of retailer marketing to ethical consumers along these lines). Consumers, recognising the appeal, may co-construct themselves in an alliance with the retailer as being, for example, 'health-conscious'.

    - The state, or supra-state bodies, may try to regulate the claims of credence labels in the interests of preventing fraudulent trading and to ensure – using the language of this thesis – ethical consistency across a product range. EU Council Regulation 2092/91, which governs production conditions in the organic sector, is one example. The German Biosiegel, based upon this regulation, is a statutory seal. It attempts to ensure 'ethical clarity' with the objective of enabling consumer decision-making based on a limited set of ethical claims. More complex ethical claims (ethical layers of meaning), which are denoted by additional seals, can be provided by selected producer bodies like Demeter. This enables consumers to 'select their level of ethical complexity'.

    - Consumers, and their representatives, struggle to make certain types of information mandatory. Information on the presence of genetically modified organisms in foodstuffs is an example.

8. Consumers trade off values, all of which may be important to them, when making purchasing decisions. Although Giraud (2003) notes that when it comes down to real world decision-making, organic consumers realise that they cannot have everything, the relational nature of values (Lockie 2002, Lockie *et al.* 2003) suggests that the process of trading off is a fraught one. It would be problematic to argue that the 'least' important values get traded off first because it is difficult to abstractly weight values. Conversely, it may be possible to argue that less complex, non-credence values like price may be prioritised when trade-offs appear necessary. It may be so that the degree to which consumers are willing to trade off credence attributes against search and experience attributes stands in relation to the ethical consistency they perceive in the product life-cycle, and the seller.

9. We need to distinguish between data, information and knowledge in order to understand how labels can contribute to enabling the consumer to engage in 'wise action'.

    - Quite often, labels provide only 'data' to a majority of consumers. Consumers lack the pre-existing knowledge that would assist them to 'situate' and 'make sense' of the data, thus turning it into information useful for decision-making.

250

- Consumers require goods in limited supply, like time, in order to study credence labels. They may (though this is a contention) require capabilities that are unequally distributed, for example a particular level or type of education. Lockie (2002) argues that an ability to critically evaluate competing claims on credence labels helps consumers translate their ethical concerns - which tend to be widely shared in a population - into individual purchasing decisions.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of current ethical consumption trends. It has also problematised the concept of ethical consumption and pointed out that a great many difficulties face consumers who want to consume wisely. Credence labels can smooth over and bridge some of these difficulties. However, because they monitor and report on processes a new batch of difficulties arises. Nonetheless, they have a lot of potential for working real world change in international commodity systems.

Chapter Nine: German Fieldwork Methodology and Tools

My hunter of dragon-flies
How far would he have strayed today?[141]

This chapter aims to regain purchase on the ethical agenda following the sharp dose of 'realism' just presented in chapter eight. It posits that felt connection between producers and consumers can be established in the world of ideas provided that an appropriate methodological framework with corresponding tools is established to enable this. As such, this chapter provides the third contribution to the methodological aims of this thesis.

Part 9.1 discusses the roles of the state, and of retailers, in providing ethical framework conditions in order to enable consumers to take meaningful ethical purchase decisions. It is recognised that consumers and other stakeholders are not passive in relation to these actors. For this reason the author suggests that the term 'entanglement spaces' provides a fairer indication of what can occur when these two institutions interact with reflexive consumers. The respondents to the author's focus groups were asked to discuss the ethical responsibilities, in their view, of the state and of retailers vis-à-vis their own.

Part 9.2 discusses how to operationalise understandings of ethical consumers for the purposes of developing a new social label. It is divided into two parts. The first part explores the concept of the reflexive consumer (defined narrowly in this thesis as ethical consumers). It is suggested that we gain considerably in our understanding of the potential of the consumer to change the market if we focus not on organised consumer groups, but on the consumer's *'decentred ability to act'* (Goodman & DuPuis, 2002).

The second part introduces the concept of moral considerability. This provides a means of analysing how consumers delimit their 'circle of concern', or moral community: what and who 'counts'. The concept provided a key means of structuring the German fieldwork activities. In particular it helped to inform the interview guide designed for use with the focus groups. In chapter ten the results are analysed, and in chapter eleven ways in which the data produced by a quality of life toolkit can help to 'stretch' the circles of concern that Northern organic consumers may hold is explored. This stretching, it will be argued, is a pre-requisite for establishing a social label that can speak to consumers as well as to producers.

Part 9.3 provides an overview of the methodology and methods used to elicit data and information from the German respondents.

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141 Fukuda Chiyo-Ni (1701-75) was widowed at twenty-seven and lost her only child when she was twenty-eight. She speaks of this loss here. She is regarded as one of Japan's greatest Haiko poets.

9.1 Enabling Entanglement Across the Producer to Consumer Chain: Providing Ethical Framework Conditions

Despite the systemic complexity of the way the world works – and the blocks to effective ethical action this implies – it is argued here that ethical consumers can reasonably work towards creating quality relationships between themselves and producers. Crocker (1998) maintains that it is necessary to examine the ways in which socio-economic systems close, and open, choice. He continues, *'if we are to have a consumption norm at all, it should be a <u>social </u>norm that enables us to assess the totality and deficiency of our present consumption-production system'* (ibid: 383). He claims that a social structure would be morally defective to the extent that it yielded options conducive to ill-being, or not productive of well-being. It is therefore necessary to evaluate the effects that social institutions have on human options and well-being (ibid). Sen emphasises one aspect of the interactive nature of this exchange when he asserts that *'Political rights are important not only for the fulfilment of needs, they are crucial also for the formation of needs'* ([1994] cited in Nussbaum, 1998: 323). Nussbaum (1998) provides a hint of how to proceed in practice. She pays great attention to the ethical need to enable individuals to make meaningful choices, arguing that this goal demands the promotion of capabilities - to be and to do. An item on her list of capabilities is *'Practical Reason: being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life'* (1998: 317, see Appendix A in this thesis for a full list). Part of this involves *'preparing the environment so that it is favourable to the exercise of practical reason'* (Nussbaum, 1998: 322).

One method of 'preparing the environment' is to work with a concept of 'entanglement spaces'. The author of this thesis defines entanglement spaces as arenas within which citizens, in their role as consumers, can co-create aspects of the world they seek, and direct their agency effectively. Some (potential) entanglement spaces already exist, for example those provided by the state and by the corporate sector. These are of particular interest to us for two reasons. Firstly, the state and the corporate sector are significant (potential) actors in buyer led chains. Second, both of these actors are in the business of developing social labels. A short overview of their significance to this thesis is provided here:

- The reach of retailers is immense. As discussed in chapter three, their activities transect, and influence, the whole organic producer to consumer chain. This cross-cutting dimension means that their activities in the ethical domain can enable, or disable, the ability of consumers to translate their own ethics into real world action. Blowfield (1999: 4) points out that a company's economic activities are frequently beyond the reach of any one national regulatory system. The power of both governments, and workers' organisations, over companies is waning. Retailers are increasingly important mediators of basic values. Allan (2004: 2) notes that *'This is a time of new business models, where*

values create competitive advantage.' Yet, the author of this thesis asks, is it right that ethical values have become a business proposition? The values being promoted through corporate social responsibility initiatives and fair trade, for example, form the very bedrock of human lives. Should the quality of producer lives be dependent on 'selling ethics' in the marketplace?

- One of the learning points in chapter eight suggested that it might be preferable to transfer the transaction costs for ethical consumption to society at large. This can be achieved by means of regulatory mechanisms instituted by the state in order to spread such costs. This would help to prevent free-riding, and to ensure that ethical consumers do not bear an undue proportion of the costs involved in producing and maintaining public goods. Furthermore, it can be argued that one of the responsibilities of the state is to provide a 'framework of decency' with respect to social justice, upon which other initiatives may be built.

The author recognises that the state, and the retail sector, can be considered 'flows of (contested) meaning' as much as 'coherently bounded institutions'. However, to enable us to develop the concept of entanglement spaces we define the state and the retail sector as coherently bounded institutions[142]. On this basis, we can examine the proposition that it is an <u>ethical duty</u> of these institutions to create entanglement spaces that enable consumers to effectively translate their ethics into real world action. Examining the proposition involves studying:

- The ways in which the state (or the retail sector, or the individual consumer) defines the reach of its ethical responsibilities. We can ask: *In how far does the state, say, act <u>on behalf of</u> other stakeholders with respect to ethical issues in the commodity chain?*
- The responsibilities each actor accords other actors for ethical decision-making. We can ask: *How, when and where do 'other actors' become stakeholders in ethical decision-making processes? That is, when do these actors start seeing themselves, and others, as stakeholders ready to link up for the purposes of creating ethical consistency in the commodity chain?*

It is self-evident that entanglement spaces provided by the state, or the corporate/retail sector, cannot be distinctly bounded entities. The reach of each actor's responsibility for ethical decision-making is contested. There is struggle over the boundaries of the entanglement spaces each provides. In this respect it is

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142 The literature on institutions is huge. Folke et al. (1998) provide a definition which is much broader than the one the author is applying in this thesis: 'By institutions we mean the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction and the way societies evolve through time … Institutions are made up of formal constraints (rules, laws, constitutions), informal constraints (norms of behavior, conventions and self-imposed codes of conduct), and their enforcement characteristics; thus they shape incentives in human exchange, whether political, social, or economic. Institutions, such as property rights (the structure of rights to resources and the rules under which those rights are exercised) are mechanisms people use to control their use of the environment and their behavior toward each other.'

interesting to note the findings of a Swedish study (Sjören, 2001, in Otto, 2002: 5). According to the study, 77% of consumers felt they should consume responsibly, and 71% believed that their choice of product was a more effective way of getting companies to adopt ethical policies than regulatory frameworks. Sjören's findings suggest that Swedish consumers have a strong sense of the effectiveness of their agency, coupled with a degree of cynicism about the effectiveness of regulations in enforcing ethical corporate behaviour in Sweden.[143] Taking a lead from Sjören's work, it is reasonable to hypothesise that entanglement spaces (like those provided by the state or corporate sector) within which consumers can enact ethical purchasing behaviour might be 'differently sized' in relation to one another, within and between societies. We can hypothesise further that ethical consumers might not necessarily view entanglement spaces created by the state or the corporate sector as adequate, or mutually supportive, or co-constitutive. This could make it difficult, at least initially, to 'elongate' entanglement spaces across international producer to consumer chains through involving these actors as 'stakeholders' in the project of developing a social label.

We now examine how the roles and responsibilities of the retailer and the state in creating ethical framework conditions are established. This is a very tentative and sketchy examination in view of the complexity of the domain.

Enabling Ethical Consumption: the state
Crocker (1998) contends that it is important to consider the legitimate, and illegitimate, roles of the state in promoting responsible consumption. He identifies three legitimate approaches:

1. The state can <u>discipline</u> consumption behaviour through regulatory frameworks, for instance by regulating tobacco and proscribing certain drugs. It can also prescribe safety standards with respect to food, housing etc (ibid.384). Nussbaum (1998) argues that the *'good as discipline'* approach means that the state is entitled to regulate consumption. The purpose, in her view, should not be to prevent risky personal <u>choices</u>, but rather to prevent any <u>harm</u> that would be caused by the absence of such regulation. Product safety codes would therefore be acceptable. However, given that we must *'show respect for the powers of individuals to fashion a life'* (ibid: 332), she considers that <u>*good as discipline*</u> *must yield to, and be illuminated by, the <u>good as freedom</u>'* (ibid: 337).

2. The state can <u>enable</u> responsible consumption, for instance by educating children about wise consumption (Crocker, 1998: 384, see Keyfitz, 1998: 498, for similar arguments). Adults can be informed about product qualities through state-promoted product labelling, as with the German organic seal, the Biosiegel.

3. The state can non-coercively <u>promote</u> and direct consumer choice through selective subsidies and taxation (Crocker 1998: 384; see also Grankvist, 2002). Segal (1998: 362) says that, given that broad agreement on the

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143 Goodman, M. (pers. comm. 09/04) reminds one that there is often a difference between what consumers say and what they actually do.

meaning of economic well-being and its general relationship to the good life can be achieved, it is possible to have the state more forcefully involved in bringing about those functionings that constitute living at a high (or decent) standard of living. He terms this approach *'functionings-promoting'* - as opposed to the *'functionings-enabling'* approach he ascribes to Nussbaum. Segal takes the example of legally specified maximum working hours per week, arguing that this actually forces people toward good functioning. Whereas this is not generally controversial, he argues, other areas, like prodding people to save, might be. However, Segal suggests that policy action in the realm of consumption expenditures should be contemplated, for example through applying progressive property taxes on houses to prevent rapid escalation in what constitutes a proper standard of living (ibid: 363-4; see Keyfitz, 1998, for similar points).

The points just made make it clear that the capabilities approach in the form propounded by Nussbaum does not tolerate any form of 'positive' guidance by the state in the realm of personal choice. This includes enabling or promoting ethical consumption. Segal's proposal of 'functionings-promoting' therefore actually runs counter to the freedom which both Nussbaum and Sen appear to consider integral to the functionings and capabilities approach. Although the discussion on quality of life conducted in chapter four places great value on the contribution of this approach to the quality of life toolkit in Madagascar, the author agrees with Crocker that the state can legitimately engage in promoting or enabling particular kinds of choice. It is important to note here that this causes something of a disjuncture in the conceptual underpinnings of the toolkit, and the social label the author is proposing. If either of these initiatives were ever to be realised it would be necessary to explore the implications of this disjuncture further, and to see if ways of overcoming it can be effected.

We return, then, to our discussion on the state as an actor in the realm of ethical consumption. Clearly the state does not act in limbo. Rose & Miller (1992, in Lockie, 2002: 283) consider government as an activity, or social practice, rather than an institution, which is concerned with the *'conduct of conduct'*. Policies are developed with the help of think-tanks, results from consumer research, consumer pressure (see Keyfitz, 1998; Nussbaum, 1998; Otto, 2002, 2003), trades unions activities, and as a consequence of all manner of events and activities in the world at large. Increasingly, regulations are international in scope. Regulations are co-created by a wide range of stakeholders. The two examples provided in Box 9.1 below illustrate this.

Box 9.1: Co-creating Regulations

The Dutch government noted in the late 1990s that it had largely failed to encourage reduced pesticide use among farmers (van der Grijp & Hond, 1999). This was disappointing given that recent reforms of the Common Agricultural Policy System (CAP) sought to reduce the environmental impact of agriculture. In order to prepare a new and more effective policy

plan on pesticides the Dutch ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment commissioned a study, *'Green Supply Chain Initiatives in the European Food and Retailing Industry'* in order to learn from companies in the food industry. The objective was to identify corporate initiatives across Europe that support sustainable agricultural practices – with a particular focus on the reduction of pesticide use. The study examined the promotion of organic products since these are, due to certification, easier for consumers to recognise and understand than, say, products grown under integrated crop management systems (ibid: 5-7).

The Water Framework Directive provides another illustration of the complex workings of the regulatory environment. Public participation in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive, which is now being introduced into national law across the European Union, is a requirement (Jiggins, 2003; SLIM Policy Briefing No. 2, 2004). In order to enable and ensure effective public participation, the EU is funding a multi-country study, *'Social Learning for the Integrated Management and Sustainable Use of Water at a Catchment Scale (SLIM)'* (www.slim.ac.uk for more information). Its chief theme is the investigation of the socio-economic aspects of the sustainable use of water. The main focus lies *'in understanding the application of social learning as a conceptual framework, as an operational principle, as a policy instrument, and as a process of systemic change'* (SLIM Policy Briefing No. 2, 2004). Jiggins (2003: 2) adds that social learning is attracting *'interest as <u>another way of conducting public business</u> (i) as a policy steering mechanism, alongside regulation, compensation, stimulation, and the operations of the (free) market, (ii) as essential for the management of complex natural resource dilemmas; ... and (iii) as a key process in adaptive management.*

Regulatory initiatives like these, and others such as EU Regulation 2092/91 – discussed at length in chapter three, draw upon the experiences and activities of stakeholders in the wider environment. The final forms of the regulations are, to a greater or lesser extent (depending on the degree of planned change which might hamper synergic processes) emergent properties of specially created systems. They also set benchmarks which might well be weaker than those promoted by some of the initiatives they draw upon. Many organic farming bodies, for example, have developed standards which are more stringent than EU Regulation 2092/91 on organic farming, though they all have to accept the EU regulation as a baseline (see chapter three, and chapter ten on standards promoted by various German producer groups). However, the benchmarks set by regulatory initiatives can have the effect of raising, or changing, standards across the board. Conventional farmers, for example, are being forced to adopt practices closer to those prevalent in the organic sector – and it is arguable that organic farming practice is becoming more similar to conventional farming (Brand, 2002; Lockie *et al.* 2002; Milestad, 2003; Darnhofer & Vogl, 2003 for sample reading). The effect is to 'blur the boundaries', as noted by Dunne & O'Connell (2003) regarding the effect of the CAP reforms on European farming. The activities of the German government are pertinent. Its commitment to organic agriculture is part of a wider programme aimed at

improving food quality, increasing the profitability of the agricultural sector in general, strengthening animal welfare and protecting natural resources (Nieberg, 2003; Künast, 2003: 15; www.verbraucherministerium.de; see also Zadek *et al.* 1998, on the fillip given to integrated crop management systems by the success of organic management systems).

Although the <u>process</u> of developing regulations is complex, chancy and exciting, the <u>effect</u> of the standardised procedures thus derived can be quite deadening. Jenkins & Parrott (2003) note, for instance, that the emphasis on 'risk-free' food production can hamper local innovation and specialisation. Local food producers, like artisanal cheese makers, need to negotiate sufficient space within the regulatory framework to ensure their survival. Yet such frameworks often evolve rapidly and can present almost insurmountable obstacles to the survival and development of enterprises like artisanal cheese production (ibid: 59; McCain & Chandler, 2003, for further discussion). Furthermore, the practice of implementing regulations is problematic. Regulators often lack local knowledge. Their activities can displace traditional trust making mechanisms (see McCain & Chandler, 2003 for examples from southwest England, and Sergienko & Nemudrova, 2003, on the effect regulation on the organic/ ecological sector can have in St. Petersburg, Russia).

The following five points can now be made:

1. Firstly, regulations enable ethical behaviour by ethical consumers in that they set framework conditions that must be adhered to by key stakeholders. Regulations create – or have the potential of creating - spaces that enable people to make meaningful choices. A regulatory 'platform of decency' provides a base upon which more demanding and stringent initiatives may be built. Such initiatives, though benefiting from the groundwork laid by regulations, do not have the force of law and thus require consumer support in order to survive.
2. Second, regulations can conceivably 'dis-empower' such initiatives by sucking out their distinctiveness and re-introducing them in watered-down regulatory form. Goodman (pers. comm. 09/04) adds that such initiatives can also be captured by large companies, and other institutions.
3. Third, an obvious point to make is the fact regulations also remove significant aspects of choice from consumers and other stakeholders.
4. Fourth, consumers may not be fully aware of the reach, and the content, of regulations that affect their day-to-day decision-making.
5. Fifth, and most importantly for the task the author has set for this thesis, the crucial point needs to be made that high quality regulations that force ethical behaviour upon all actors in a commodity chain could render redundant the need for labels altogether. Alternatively, if labels are to be in any way meaningful, they need to 'top up' the ethical value component in a persuasive fashion.

Enabling Ethical Consumption: the retail sector

As suggested above, it is difficult to bound and differentiate the state and civil domains. They can be conceptualised as processes as much as institutions. These 'institutions in movement' are continually negotiating the reach, and the limits, of their respective domains. 'What counts' as legitimate activity by actors in each domain is subject to critique and contest. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an example of this. CSR involves businesses looking at how to improve their social and environmental impact, and their influence on social cohesion, human rights and fair trade (Allan, 2004: 8). Although CSR is controversial, it is not necessary for our purposes to fully unpack the richness and complexity of the debate. This part highlights some facets of CSR relevant to our work on social labels and entanglement spaces. Readers interested in pursuing the literature on CSR further are referred to the excellent theoretical and case study work provided by UNRISD (see in particular the papers by Jenkins, 2001; Utting, 2002, and a wide range of papers presented at a UNRISD conference in 2003, *Corporate Social Responsibility and Development: Towards a New Agenda?*). Tools for social and ethical accounting, auditing and reporting, along with case studies, are provided in '*Building Corporate AccountAbility*' (Zadek *et al.* 1997; also see Zadek, 2004, 1999).

An article in the Economist (January 24th, 2004: 57-8) says that CSR is '*philanthropy at other people's expense*'. Managers of public companies do not own those companies, continues the unnamed author of the article, they are entrusted with caring for the assets belonging to their shareholders. It is therefore not proper to support good causes with money that would otherwise be paid to shareholders. Furthermore, asks the author rhetorically, '*is it really for managers and NGOs to decide social priorities among themselves? In a democracy, that is a job for voters and elected politicians*' (ibid: 57). Given these comments, it is interesting to note that the severing of ownership and management in companies was considered by many economic liberals - including Adam Smith - to be a recipe for removing both moral responsibility, and economic efficiency, from economic activity (Gamble, 2004: 10). Nonetheless, the points made by the Economist are not foolish. Debate still rages on whether companies as public institutions have a responsibility to promote the public good, or whether they should be regarded as a device to organise production more effectively, and to enrich those who own it (ibid; Blowfield, 1999).[144]

Unilever has developed a particular reading of CSR. According to a presentation made by Chris Dutilh (Coordinator Veiligheid en Milieu, UNILEVER Nederland b.v) at the 75th International Conference on Agriculture and Development ICAD, *Open Markets: Neo-colonialism or Development*, Larenstein University of Professional Development, Deventer, 20th November 2003[145], Unilever sees itself as needing to develop its relationships with three stakeholders: consumers, citizens,

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144 These comments were made by Andrew Gamble in the course of his book review of 'The Company: a short history of a revolutionary idea', by Micklethwaite, J. & Wooldridge, A. (Weidenfeld & Nicholson).

145 This paragraph is based on notes taken by Dr. Janice Jiggins, who attended the presentation (Jiggins, notes, pers.comm. 11/03).

and the authorities. Each one is in a position to threaten the company's business because each of them extends a 'licence' to Unilever. The authorities provide Unilever with a licence to trade, consumers provide a licence to sell, and citizens provide the company with a licence to operate. Hence it has developed a 'triple bottom line' strategy, which it is introducing into all its operations and product lines worldwide. Unilever's relationship with each stakeholder can be characterised thus:

- Unilever's relationship with the authorities is based on *law*. It is predictable (we know what the rules are), and reversible (if we fail to meet the provisions of the law, the licence is withdrawn). The relationship to the authorities can be influenced through the democratic process, research data and so on.
- Unilever's relationship with consumers is based on *branding*. This relationship is also predictable since consumer values worldwide are remarkably constant over time. Their key values are (1) taste, price, safety, health, and (2) novelty - consumers like new brands and new products. Consumer values can be influenced through advertising.
- Unilever's relationship with citizens is based on *corporate image*. The relationship is not predictable, it is hard to influence, and it is not reversible. Unilever tracks the issues that citizens raise. These issues come and go in waves, they are value-based and they differ from market to market. The company has to keep abreast of these issues and be seen to be making an appropriate response.

These contrasting interpretations of the responsibilities of companies rest on differing views of how companies relate to their environment. The Economist piece represents a static view. It argues that clear marking of boundaries is important. The volatile nature of citizens' values provides a shaky basis upon which to plan. They should be left 'out there' in the environment. 'Ethical by-products', such as fairness (or its converse), of a company's functioning are seen as externalities with which it is not proper for businesses to concern themselves.

Unilever, however, sees itself as systemically interrelated to, and as co-constructed by, actors it has identified in the environment. It recognises that these actors, in particular 'citizens', can become stakeholders at the drop of a hat. They are not necessarily integral to Unilever's business, but they could be 'ethically enrolled' by friendly or adversarial forces. In other words, the company is conceptualised as fluid around the edges. Zadek (2004) argues that reputation, brand, and knowledge networks constitute *'intangible assets'* for companies. They represent a source of market value and competitive advantage. Businesses can be *'vitalised and strengthened'* by building nuanced and refined understandings of societal demands into their working.

Zadek (1999: 3-4) puts forward a *'rationale triangle'* to explain what is happening in cases like this. One corner is the *'managerialist rationale'*. This highlights the need for managers to have a good understanding of stakeholder needs and views and the likely pattern of demands on the business in the future.

The second corner of his triangle, the *'public interest rationale'*, concerns the ability of society to force businesses to undertake ethical behaviour. The third corner, the *'value shift'* is, Zadek contends, a business response. It has arisen as the roles taken by the state have weakened. Company leaders are beginning to question the raison d'être of their own and their company's activities (ibid). The final point is interesting in that it suggests that many conventional businesses actually 'want to be good' – an important suggestion given the rather fevered discussion around corporate social responsibility. Box 9.2 provides a case study detailing how the ethical decision-making parameters of the retail sector are being challenged by actors in the retailers' environment – the 'public interest rationale' in Zadek's language.

Box 9.2: Challenging the Ethical Decision-making Parameters of the Retail Sector

The degree to which ethical values are deliberately produced by a company's functioning constitutes one of the battlefields between companies seeking social responsibility credentials and other stakeholders. The *'Race to the Top: tracking supermarket progress towards a fairer and greener food system'* (RTTT) initiative[146] in the UK, for example*,* was set up to track the social, environmental and ethical performance of UK supermarkets over a five year period (start date 2002). Its purpose is to identify and promote best practices by supermarkets, and to offer them independent and credible benchmarking. RTTT argues that the supermarkets benefit since their good corporate practice on social and environmental responsibility is made public by an independent body. They can also learn about the key issues they should be addressing from the perspectives of a range of civil society organisations. Civil society partners are provided with appropriate data on company performance, and they have a mechanism through which they can inform companies about their concerns. Government can better define where government policy can support corporate good practice, and appreciate the limits to industrial self-regulation. It would seem, however, that this initiative is failing. Only three supermarkets participated in 2003 - the Co-operative Group, Safeway and Somerfield, but other key players like Sainsburys, Asda and Tesco did not (see www.racetothetop.org and www.racetothetop.org/results for more information).

The experience of RTTP suggests that a tense stand-off seems to have occurred, with large retailers defining and maintaining their boundaries against 'too much' civil society intrusion. Too much fluidity and responsiveness is seen as threatening their integrity. The evidence in Box 9.2 suggests that the balance of power lies in the retailers' favour. It also suggests that these retailers do not construct ethical behaviour as an <u>intrinsic</u> part of their functioning. From here, it can be argued, if

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146 The Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative is managed by the International Institute for the Environment and Development (IIED) in the UK. Twenty-four partner organisations, environmental and wildlife groups, trades unions, farming organizations, consumer representatives, fair trade, public health and animal welfare groups are involved.

controversially, that supermarkets wield considerable and disproportionate power as mediators of ethical values. They can block the effective exercise by consumers of their own ethical values – thus narrowing and limiting the effectiveness of this entanglement space. These remarks may help us to build upon Dixon's (2002) analysis of the behaviour of Australian consumers vis-à-vis the Australian chicken meat industry. She suggests (in Lockie, 2002: 280) that consumers are faced with contradictions between a range of values, namely:

- Caring (demonstrated through cooking) and convenience (ready to eat meals).
- Healthiness and consumption of high fat chicken meat products.
- Naturalness and the industrialisation of chicken meat production (including animal welfare implications).

The important point is, says Dixon (in ibid), that consumers seem willing to cede authority to retailers to mediate these contradictions for them. In so doing they avoid the ambivalences surrounding chicken meat production. Her remarks are interesting for two reasons. First, they provide additional insight into Unilever's contention that particular consumer values, like health, safety and novelty, remain constant over time. Second, if Dixon interpretation of her data is valid, it seems plausible to argue that some consumers 'voluntarily' abstain from exercising their agency in entanglement spaces like the one offered by the Australian retail sector. This is in the interests of not challenging their personal ethical consistency. Lockie (2002: 280), though, finds it hard to agree with Dixon. He asks: *Do retailers really control consumer consumption behaviours?* He continues (ibid) that there is *'no doubt that retailers have become extremely influential within food production-consumption networks, but there is an enormous difference between influence and control'* (Lockie, 2002: 280). This comment usefully highlights the interactive nature of the relationship between retailers and consumers and points to the need for a good understanding of consumer agency. Goodman & DuPuis (2002: 15) argue that *'How the consumer goes about knowing food is just as important as farmer's knowledge networks in the creation of an alternative food system.'*

In sum, the analysis made here suggests the following:

- Ethical consumers have to negotiate their passage in entanglement spaces. They have to struggle over the ethical meanings they vest in food. There is a conscious duplicity in delegating responsibility for trade-offs between competing values to retailers.
- Entanglement spaces need not be, and cannot be, restricted. Their depth and range is continually contested by a range of actors.
- It is possible to 'elongate' entanglement spaces. Stakeholders can carve out entanglement spaces that transect a number of domains. It is in these spaces that quality relationships between consumers and producers can be created. In chapter ten it is argued that the social labelling of food products offers a specific mechanism for 'elongating' these entanglement spaces.

9.2　The Reflexive Consumer

'Mixing is the way of the world. The world passes through us – food, books, pictures, other people' (Hustved, 2003: 89). This insight on the systemic relationship each of us has to all that is in the world is complemented by van Mansvelt's (2000) assertion that *'eating is meeting'*. He continues, *'Although it is hard to imagine how that interactive complex of features: region, season and persons, influences the products we eat, it seems hard [...] to explain to ourselves that they do not make any difference at all* (ibid: 38). Van Mansvelt is particularly interested in grappling with the question of how the way in which food is produced affects our bodies, and how (if) this can be scientifically captured. However, the ideas that *'eating is meeting'*, and that *'mixing is the way of the world'*, can be usefully extended to the purpose of this thesis: *Creating quality relationships between producers and consumers in the organic food chain*. These ideas do not only convey the <u>inevitability</u> of our interrelation with another, they also capture the positive potential of 'entanglement'. Deepening our understanding of the characteristics of the 'reflexive consumer' is an important aspect of enabling entanglement between producers and consumers to occur.

The reflexive consumer: an agent moving in entanglement spaces
Goodman & DuPuis (2002: 7) argue that new understandings are being brought to bear upon commodity chain analyses, which, as noted in the introduction to chapter eight, have typically been production-orientated. Although their work, and that of her colleagues like Lockie *et al.* (2002), is starting to 'centre' the consumer, DuPuis (2000, in Guthman, 2002: 299) cautions that *'a reflexive consumer is not a social activist, nor is he or she necessarily committed to a particular political point of view'*. She argues that it is necessary to distinguish reflexivity from the realm of deliberate struggle, with the latter's implication of structural reaction to an imposed food system. Instead, DuPuis seeks to rekindle a broader sense of agency in the realm of consumption choices. This is reflected, she says, in knowledge seeking, evaluation and discernment.

Goodman & DuPuis (2002: 13) assert that consumers can aspire to power *'if power is defined as the ability to set parameters, such as rights, obligations and rules governing processes'*. They continue their analysis of the reflexive consumer by arguing that consumers exercise their agency in organised and diffuse[147] forms. With respect to deliberate struggle, studies of organic food social movements in USA show that an organised, activist politics surrounds the organic industry. Activist organisations include the Organic Consumers Association (Allen & Kovach, 2000, in Goodman & DuPuis, 2002: 15). Consumers are also organising to contest any weakening of the organic production process, for example to the US Organic Standards (ibid; see discussion in chapter three, and Connor, 2003).

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147 The author of this thesis has summarised Goodman & DuPuis's arguments by using the terms 'organised' and 'diffuse' – these terms are not used by the authors themselves.

To develop an understanding of more diffuse forms of consumer agency, Goodman & DuPuis (2002: 7) examine actor network theory[148], feminist standpoint theory and Stuart Hall's 'New Times' analytical approach. These theories and approaches argue that new forms of agency and arenas for action are emerging: *'Another feature of New Times is the proliferation of the sites of antagonism and resistance, and the appearance of new subjects, new social movements, new collective identities – an enlarged sphere for the operation of politics, and the constituencies for change'* (Hall, 1989, cited in Goodman & DuPuis, 2002: 12). If one redefines the political as a de-centred *'capacity to act'*, say Goodman & DuPuis (ibid), then it is possible to encompass the diverse ways in which actors influence the construction of future society. They note the significance of feminist theory, in particular feminist standpoint theory, in contributing the private sphere of everyday life and reproduction to a widened concept of the political. Feminist standpoint theory argues that since women are frequently socially positioned as responsible for the reproduction of social worlds, they have a capacity to understand and know a different kind of reality (ibid). MacGuire adds that women and men, in multiple locations, experience their struggles, oppressions and strengths differently. They therefore come to name their world and their experiences of it in varied ways (2000: 5).

Deconstructing hierarchical and individualistic concepts of power, through, for example, actor-network theory, are enabling analyses to develop and take new directions. The notion of power must be understood as a property of relationships and not of individuals, says Lockie (2002: 280). Power is an outcome of a process. Therefore attempts to locate sources of power in food systems are flawed. Following Foucault, Lockie argues that *'we need to acknowledge that power is unstable, reversible, pervasive, and ... often accompanied by resistance and evasion'* (ibid). For this reason we need to pay close attention to recursive relationships in order to avoid linear characterisations of production-consumption networks.

To improve our understanding of reflexive consumers it is helpful to have an overview of the ethical frameworks consumers might be drawing upon as a basis for their action. Such frameworks are most likely *not* coherently bounded frameworks, nor are they necessarily explicit to the consumer. In reading through the theories below the reader is asked to consider the contention made by Lockie *et*

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148 According to Lockie (2002: 281), actor network theory attempts to dissolve dichotomies between macro and micro-levels of sociological analysis; the role of structure and agency in the construction of the social, and the idea of the social and natural as distinct and independent spheres of reality. The resolution of these dualisms through actor network theory is a 'semiotics of materiality', that conceptualises all objects in terms of their relationships to others. Concepts like structure and agency are treated as research questions. The social, as conceived in actor network theory, is radically relational, with action, intentionality, consciousness, subjectivity and morality all deriving from the relations between networks, as opposed to either the individual or the totality. Agency and power are conceptualised as emergent and variable outcomes of relationships within networks (Lockie, 2002: 281). He says, *'as a relational phenomena agency may take potentially infinite forms in the context of an equally diverse array of relations between beings and things in different times and spaces'* (ibid. 282).

al. (2002) in chapter eight, namely that ethical values are widely shared in a population. This implies that all consumers are (potentially) reflexive. The difference, according to Lockie *et al.*, lies in the finding that (organic) consumers are <u>slightly more motivated</u> to act upon these shared values.

- Utilitarianism considers that the right action in any one situation is the one that causes the most happiness, or at least minimal unhappiness, to those affected. Its proponents argue that utilitarianism enables individuals and their representatives to take moral decisions in a rational way (Wye College/ Open University, 1997b). In this scenario, the consumer may be hoping to increase the happiness of, say, children in other countries through *not* purchasing particular makes of trainers, or, more positively, through buying a special brand of chocolate.
- Rights theories view individuals as moral agents, with duties and obligations to others. By the same token, each person has expectations of what others may, and may not, do to them (or should/should not do for them). These constitute their rights. Thus one person's right is another person's duty (ibid). In this scenario, consumers may view themselves as moral agents with particular duties towards the rights bearers, i.e. the producers.
- The lives of other consumers may be infused, for example, with Biblical injunction (Farnworth, R. pers. comm. 02/02). Here each purchase symbolizes solidarity with other human beings seen to be of intrinsic worth. Farmers in Mali are conceptualized as equally the neighbour of a consumer in Germany as the person living next door.
- A further group may be seeking to counter global capitalism through selective purchasing from cooperatives, for example, and still another group may simply be interested in sharing the goodness of the world equally, not only among members of the present generation, but also those yet to come (ibid).
- Ethical purchasing also very much demonstrates the point that the 'local is created'. That is, the local can mean more than geographical proximity to someone, or something. It can imply a closeness in the world of ideas. Fair trade is one realization of this proposition.

In the real world the patterning of these theories will be highly complex, and they are unlikely to be present in pure form. Rather, an intermingling is likely to inform behavior. Furthermore, consumers working on the basis of somewhat different, even apparently incompatible ethical frameworks in terms of their basic propositions, may be able to work together effectively to promote a common interest. A useful image is that of various spotlights converging upon a dancer on the stage in order to focus attention and eliminate clutter. The starting points may be quite different, but the target of attention is shared.

The German focus group work did not attempt to fully comprehend the ethical models of the respondents, but it did attempt to make 'preliminary' sense of these worlds through disentangling some of the ethical threads consumers might be drawing upon to reason about their consumption choices. The degree of sense that

265

one needs to achieve in order to act depends on the task in hand. The next part suggests a mechanism for enabling a useful level of sense-making to be achieved.

The Reflexive Consumer: moral considerability
A study of Swiss 'green' consumers by Tanner & Kast (2003) asserts that green purchases are not significantly related to moral thinking, thus, they say, contradicting other research. In order to explore the moral dimension to purchasing choices they asked consumers questions focusing on what the researchers termed personal norms like *'Everybody has a responsibility to contribute to environmental preservation by avoiding packaged food products'* (ibid: 900). This is a very direct approach to ascertaining the role of morality in consumer behaviour. Questions like these are simultaneously explicit and prescriptive. The author of this thesis suggests that a 'gentler', and more oblique, approach may reap a more profound understanding of how consumers take ethical decisions in the marketplace. This is for two reasons. First, the value-base underpinning stated norms might be quite diffuse and resistant to overt inquiry. One's personal value-base is not necessarily fully known to the holder because it is embedded. and is therefore hard to access by the researcher. Secondly, adults tend to have quite an organised and consistent 'self-concept'. This permits them *'to participate as a self, separate from others and capable of acting independently from others'* (Brundage & Mackeracher, 1980, summarised by King, 2000: 38). An implication of this self-concept is that adults can be opposed, and hostile, to those who enforce upon them their own ways or beliefs (Knowles, 1984, in ibid). It is plausible to argue that this might cause them to reject prescriptive approaches to questioning, making ascertaining their values particularly complex.

   In order to analyse and interpret the moral frameworks of consumers the author adopted the overarching concept of 'moral considerability'. According to Elliot (1991: 286) something is morally considerable if it enters into ethical evaluation in its own right, independent of its usefulness as a means to other ends. The aim of working with an overarching concept was threefold:

   1. To overcome objections related to prescriptive and explicit investigative questioning,
   2. To establish, at least roughly, an outline of the respondents' ethical world view, their *Weltanschauung*, and
   3. To enable exploration of the discrepancy between the ethics of the respondents in the world of ideas, and their ability to articulate them in the real world.

What Counts? Moral considerability and circles of concern
It was argued in chapter one that the understanding that the human observer is free to create meaning in their world rather than having to search for pre-given purpose is fundamental. We are now in the position to establish our own relationship to phenomena and, consequent upon this, to establish our ethical behaviour in the real world. This relationship is not restricted to the merely necessary, it goes much

further. Human beings can determine their personal responsibility for the quality of that relationship. Determining our responsibility for the quality of our relationship to the world involves two more, or less, conscious thought processes:

- Determining the reach of the relationships – the moral community – that we care about, and
- Deciding how to act in order to develop, and preserve, the quality of the relationships we have selected.

The concept of moral considerability provides the researcher with a mechanism for accessing the ideas and values of the respondents during fieldwork. This permits him or her to start developing an understanding of how the respondents are 'ethically reading' the world. In particular, the concept represents one way of disentangling the basis upon which consumers may be taking ethical purchasing decisions. It is also useful because it obviates the need to focus on cultural or other formative experiences (like eating patterns in childhood) that might have a bearing on adult consumer behaviour. Rather, the concept of moral considerability can be used to investigate people's values as they stand at the moment of investigation. It thus provides a means of structuring disparate experiences and ideas during the analysis of data. Once the reach of an individual's (or group's typical) moral community has been established, the action-orientated element of the investigation: *'Deciding how to act in order to develop, and preserve, the quality of the relationships we have selected'*, can be addressed. This step forms the focus of chapter eleven. Here we consider how people determine the reach of the relationships they care about.

Determining the reach of the relationships we care about
There are a number of interlinked ways of determining 'what matters'; that is, who, or what, belongs to a particular person's circle of concern (or moral community). One way is to try and decentre ourselves, our wants and our needs, by imagining why something or someone else might be important.

How might we decentre ourselves? Goodpaster (1978: 308) comments that Kantian approaches to ethics tend to consider an agent's natural self-interested concern. Yet there are issues that *'question the breadth of the moral enterprise more than its departure point'*. He argues that the conventional paradigms of individual persons, and their joys and sorrows, prevent us from seeing what other entities, and systems of entities, might be identified as having a claim upon our moral attention (to be taken into account in its own right). Goodpaster takes as the starting point of his discussion this formulation of the problem: *'Let us consider the question to whom principles of morality apply from, so to speak, the other end – from the standpoint not of the agent, but of the 'patient'[149]. What, we may ask here, is the condition of moral relevance? What is the condition of having a claim to be considered, by rational agents to whom moral principles apply?'* (Warnock,

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149 Patient = the object of our concern. Moral patients lack moral agency, perhaps because they are children, or because they are intellectually challenged, or in a coma following an accident. Animals etc. are also moral patients.

no date, cited in ibid). Goodpaster notes that at different points in the course of [Northern] history, black people, women, children and foetuses *etc.* have – conceptually - been considered by institutions dominant in society to lack moral standing. We have therefore to examine 'ethical facts' as to who, and what, is morally considerable very carefully. Goodpaster concludes that the *'life principle'* is central to moral considerability and, on this basis, argues for an extension of moral considerability beyond human beings. In order to have guidelines of how to apply the concept of moral considerability in the real world, Goodpaster argues that all living things have <u>interests</u> which can be represented, regardless of whether these interests are rational or sentient: *'There is no absurdity in imagining the representation of the needs of a tree for sun and water in the face of a proposal to cut it down … the interests at stake are clearly those of the living things themselves.'*[150] That is, these interests are not ascribed by people, but inhere in the object. Using the language of this thesis, Goodpaster is able to argue for the extension of moral considerability to all living things, because he is able to say in a very deep sense that the world is what we make of it.

Elliot (1991) provides another slant on the discussion about moral significance by exploring how real life environmental dilemmas activate different views of moral considerability. How are we to adjudicate between competing environmental ethics, he asks, when a development, say, of a wilderness area, is proposed? Settling the 'facts' on the levels of pollution which might be caused will not settle the issue since *'many people … want their own actions, and actions of others, including corporations and governments, to conform to moral principles'* (ibid: 284). It is important, Elliot argues, to make ethical commitments (which are based on principles) explicit in order to subject them to critical appraisal, or justification[151]. To help us unpack these commitments Elliot provides a taxonomy of environmental ethics. His taxonomy are summarised here:

1. <u>Human-centred ethics</u>: Humans have interests which can be harmed or advanced, for example the capacity to experience pain or pleasure, the capacity for rational choice and for free action. Humans also have intrinsic characteristics, such as being complex living things. Animals are only important insofar as their fate affects human well-being.
2. <u>Animal-centred ethics</u>: Animals share most of the characteristics applicable to humans. They may also have additional intrinsic characteristics such as beauty. Differentiation between various kinds of animals, and people, can be achieved by considering their interests. Equal

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150 Stone, C.D. (1974) in his paper 'Should Trees Have Standing: Towards Legal Rights for Natural Objects' argues that legal, if not moral, rights should be extended to the natural environment as a whole. He implicitly rejects the view that rights are somehow there in nature to be discovered, emphasising – like Goodpaster (1978) and Leopold (1949) - the evolutionary development of rights. He points out that legal standing now extends to women, black people, corporations, cities and nations. It is time for legal standing to be extended to natural objects (Des Jardins, 2001: 106-8 for a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of Stone's arguments).

151 The summary provided here is taken from Elliot (1991) and from Wye College/Open University, Block A, Part 1, 1997: 20)

interests must be given equal weight, but unshared interests leave room for ascribing degrees of moral significance.

3. <u>Life-centred ethics</u>: All living things possess intrinsic values, such as the capacity to flourish. The idea of a self-regulating system striving towards certain goals, even if unconsciously, is important since it is this goal-directed behaviour that confers moral considerability. Whereas for some people the degree of complexity of a living thing helps define the degree of its moral considerability, other people might argue that all living things are of equal moral significance, making it virtually impossible to justify human intervention in the natural environment.

4. <u>Everything ethics (or 'Rights for Rocks')</u>: The moral considerability of non-living things could be justified on the basis of their organisational complexity, or on the basis of being a natural object rather than an artefact.

5. <u>Ecological holism</u>: This view asserts that the biosphere as a whole, and the large ecosystems that constitute it, are morally considerable. Individual animals, including humans, as well as plants, rocks etc. are not morally considerable in themselves. They matter only insofar as they contribute to the maintenance of the significant whole to which they belong.

Elliot's taxonomy, in a more user-friendly form, was used by the author to structure the opening discussions of the German focus groups. The purpose was to try and unpack the ethical starting points of self-defined organic and fair trade consumers in order to start answering the question: *What is the reach of the relationships – the moral community – that the consumers care about?* The analysis of the data (see chapter ten) thus generated provides a starting point for the development of a social label.

Alrøe & Kristensen (2000) argue that the concept of moral considerability should be extended from personal responsibility to the responsibility of social organisations. The development of technology enables an extension of the scope of ethics from individual action to cumulative, collective technological actions. There is also scope for an extension of awareness from the known, to the unknown, consequences of human action. This, Alrøe & Kristensen assert, provides a theoretical basis for new normative concepts such as sustainability and precaution in agriculture (ibid). Their remarks provide an exciting starting point for an investigation into the 'responsibilities' of various institutional stakeholders in the producer to consumer chain, like the state and retailers, for maintaining the well-being of various 'circles of concern'. Institutional analysis as such does not provide a focal point in this thesis, but Alrøe & Kristensen's ideas could be usefully applied to the project of operationalising a new social label.

Sen ([1987] 1998: 301) provides a different take on the moral considerability question. He first distinguishes between personal well-being and agency achievement. People, he argues, have objectives other than personal well-being. If they fight successfully for a cause, for example, this may be a big agency achievement, but since they might suffer considerably in the process, possibly to

the extent of dying, there may not be a corresponding increase in personal well-being[152]. Sen then distinguishes between personal well-being and the living standard. He argues that it is necessary to analyse the motivation for action. In helping another person, the reduction of the other's misery may have the net effect of making one feel - and indeed be – better off. This is a case of sympathy, he argues, and thus falls within the general area of promotion of one's personal well-being. Zadek *et al.* (1998: 32-33) concur. They argue that ethical consumption is a mode of self-expression – a badge of identity, and that it can be associated with a feel-good factor. These points are important, and surface in the German fieldwork findings presented in the next chapter. However, altruistic motivation as expressed in the concept of moral considerability above forms the centrepiece of our analysis.

9.3   The German Fieldwork

Fieldwork was carried out in an iterative fashion, with initial fieldwork in Germany informing work in Madagascar and this likewise informing further fieldwork in Germany. The process is depicted in chapter two.

The German fieldwork consisted of a pilot questionnaire (N = 44), a final questionnaire survey (N =196), key informant interviews, a seminar (N = 8), and four focus groups (FGs, N = 32). The pilot questionnaire, devised by the author, was applied to visitors at the Biofach in Nuremberg in February 2001, the world's largest organic fair (www.biofach.de) under the direction of Dr. Hiltrud Nieberg (senior researcher at the Institute of Farm Economics and Rural Studies, Federal Agricultural Research Centre - FAL). Her comments enabled the pilot questionnaire to be revised and applied in August 2002 in a statistical survey of organic consumers visiting organic shops and markets in Berlin and Braunschweig. Lilja Otto, master's student at the Department of Rural Development Studies (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala), carried out the research under the guidance of the author. The author of this thesis conducted the key informant interviews in Essen, Wuppertal and Bonn. She also ran a seminar at an organic farm called Gut Wulksfelde near Hamburg, and the FGs in Hamburg itself. The author contributed to a further seminar at the Wageningen University in Holland in order to reflect upon the Malagasy and German findings with peers. All of these activities were conducted in 2003. Details of the research sites are provided in chapter ten. Here, the rationale behind choosing these research methods, and some procedural detail, is presented.

The Pilot and Final Questionnaire Surveys
The context of the two questionnaire surveys was that of northern European consumers purchasing organic products from the South. The main aim was generate qualitative data that could provide insights into how ethical consumers think about:

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152 *'I saw an Italian militiaman standing in front of the officers' table ... Something in his face deeply moved me. It was the face of a man who would commit murder and throw away his life for a friend.'* Orwell, G. 'Homage to Catalonia', Chapter One, downloaded from www.george-orwell.org: Accessed 16/07/04.

- Producer quality of life, and
- The importance of social labels in their purchasing decisions.

These insights were assessed on their own merits. They also informed the interview guide used in the focus groups, and the discussion format of the German seminar. At the same time, the insights fed into the author's reflections upon the quality of life toolkit.

The most important assumption was that respondents would already possess an ethical framework and that this framework – whether or not clearly articulated - would inform their purchasing decisions. The aim was therefore not to behave as though respondents were 'blank sheets of paper', but rather to present them with challenging data about which the author believed they would already have an opinion. It was also postulated that gender, age, profession and nationality might structure responses significantly. These assumptions were incorporated into the pilot questionnaire (Appendix F). The findings led to revisions of the schedule (Appendix G) that was used in the final survey. In line with these assumptions respondents to the survey questionnaires were led through a six-stage process:

1. The first section of the questionnaire elicited basic data.
2. The next section asked them about their *current* levels of interest in labelling initiatives.
3. The third section presented them with criteria relating to producer quality of life in the South. It requested that they assess each one according to the pre-given categories of 'very important', 'important' and 'not important'.
4. The fourth section then asked respondents to compare, and weight, criteria by choosing the three they personally found most significant. The assumption here was that they would by now have had some time to gather their thoughts and to think through their own positions.
5. The questionnaire then built upon the previous stages by asking if respondents would like more detailed and sophisticated information on producers.
6. The final section asked consumers if they would pay more for products that provided information on such quality of life values. The aim here was to see if respondents thought that paying a premium was a reasonable means of applying their ethics to a real world situation.

Seminars
Initially, several seminars were planned. For logistical reasons, only one was held in the summer of 2003. The author had engaged in correspondence with staff, particularly Nicole Knapstein, at the large organic farm of Gut Wulksfelde near Hamburg, for over two years. This preparatory work enabled the author to plan the seminar with a reasonable understanding of the respondents' backgrounds and motivations. The Gut Wulksfelde seminar had two aims (i) to make explicit some of the underlying tensions and similarities between ‚our' (consumers) and ‚their' (producers) concepts of quality of life, and (ii) to discuss ways of bringing the two sides together. This task required getting the participants to examine, and justify,

their ethical viewpoints carefully. They also needed to manage discordant information. Apart from using a discussion guide (Appendix H), the author showed the participants the German version of the author's video, *'Life on an Organic Plantation in Madagascar'* (Farnworth, 2003e).

The video was also shown in the context of a talk given by the author at a seminar, *'Beta-gamma Perspectives on Organic Agriculture'*, in September 2003 at Wageningen University in Holland. The discussion provoked by the video enabled interesting contrasts to be made with the discussion at Gut Wulksfelde.

Key Informant Interviews
The author held separate discussions with Detlef Kalus, IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) in Bonn, and with Gerd Nickoleit, Gepa (Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Partnerschaft mit der Dritten Welt mbH[153]), in Wuppertal in the summer of 2003. The author posed a broad range of pre-prepared questions aiming to elicit the respondents' views on soft standards, the differences and similarities of the organic and fair trade movements, and the motivations behind ethical consumerism. The discussions were loosely structured, enabling a number of new issues and ideas to emerge. The author also interviewed the manager, Frau Thomsen, of a Reformhaus (organic store) in Essen in order to gain a deepened understanding of consumer purchasing motivations.

Dr. Heike Kuhnert (The Research Centre for Biotechnology, Society and the Environment (FSP BIOGUM, University of Hamburg) provided invaluable information on the organic policies of the German government, and on the research run by the University of Hamburg on the organic producer to consumer chain in the course of an interview held early in 2003. She assisted the author with advice and literature on how to run focus groups. She also provided key logistical contacts in Hamburg. Dr. Hiltrud Nieberg (Senior researcher at the Institute of Farm Economics and Rural Studies, Federal Agricultural Research Centre, Braunschweig) provided the author with a constant stream of advice, literature, and contacts throughout the whole of the doctoral research.

Further sources of 'live' information included participants and presenters at two lectures attended by the author. One of these discussed the *'Agrarwende'* (the turn to quality in agriculture) in Germany, and the second explored 'organic labelling'. Both were held as part of the Environment Forum series at the Volkshochschule (adult education centre), Essen, in March 2003. In addition the author visited an touring organic fair (www.wanderaustellung.org), likewise in Essen. This enabled her to talk to a number of people running organic and fair trade stands, including those behind the *'Pott kocht Fair'* initiative which is discussed in chapter eleven. Participation at the Biofach in Nuremberg in February 2003, and at the IFOAM World Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in 2001 permitted the author to attend lectures and meet a range of significant actors in the international organic sector. Correspondence was maintained with several of these people.

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153 Gepa is Europe's largest fair trade organisation. It was founded over twenty-five years ago.

The author presented papers reporting on, and analysing, the German and Malagasy data in relation to one another at the following conferences:

1. The United Kingdom Systems Society Conference *Citizens and Governance in the Knowledge Age – the contribution of systems thinking and practice*, Oxford, UK, in 2004.
2. Sixth International Farming Systems Association European Symposium *European Farming and Society in Search of a New Social Contract – Learning to Manage Change*, Vila Real, Portugal, April 3-9, 2004 (see Farnworth, 2004a).
3. Fifth Conference of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies *Challenges for Quality of Life in Contemporary Societies*. in Frankfurt, July 20-24th, 2003 (see Farnworth, 2003a).
4. *Ecolabels and the Greening of the Food Market*. November 7-9, 2002. Tufts University, Boston, MA (see Farnworth, 2003c).
5. Fifth International Farming Systems Association European Symposium *Farming and Rural Systems Research and Extension*, April 8-11, 2002 (see Farnworth, 2002b).
6. 14th IFOAM Organic World Congress *Cultivating Communities*, August 2002 (see Farnworth, 2002a).

The author also presented her work in progress to colleagues at several seminars at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, Sweden. She thus made many contacts useful for her work in both Madagascar and Germany, and benefited greatly from people's questions and comments at the conferences and seminars. It is important to acknowledge the manifold ways in which these learning experiences flowed into the author's understanding of the organic and fair trade scene in Germany, and into more general understandings of the producer to consumer chain, producer quality of life, and ethical consumption.

The author interviews with key respondents in the UK during the summer of 2003 added to the insights provided by the German work on ethical consumption. Robert Duxbury (Organics Manager at Sainsbury's) and Liz Fullelove (Social Responsibility Manager at Sainsbury's) watched the Malagasy video and discussed a range of questions on 'marketing ethical consumption'. Mr. Duxbury has provided additional comments and ideas over the past four years.

The Focus Groups
The centrepiece of the author's fieldwork was the focus groups. The interview guides for the FGs brought together some of the key issues which have been generated in the course of three years of doctoral research in Madagascar and Germany. Since the focus groups proved to be so important to the author's work, this part provides a brief literature overview of the benefits and potential shortcomings of focus groups. It concludes with a presentation of the author's own approach. In chapter eleven the author provides reflections upon the experience of using focus groups in Germany.

Focus group research involves organized discussion with a selected group of individuals in order to obtain information about their views on, and experiences of, a particular topic (Gibbs, 1997: 1). A key characteristic of focus groups, which distinguishes them from other types of group interviewing, is the fact that insight and data is produced in an interactive process between the participants (Gibbs, 1997: 2). The moderator encourages interaction among the participants, promotes deeper exploration of the questions and issues raised, and ensures that the discussion remains focused on the research topic (Marris *et al.* 2001: 22; Lamnek, 1998). Participants need to have a specific experience of, or opinion about, the topic under investigation. An explicit interview guide should be used. The subjective experiences of the participants are explored in relation to pre-determined research questions (Merton & Kendall, 1946, in Gibbs, 1997: 2; Friedrichs, 1990; Dürrenberger and Behringer, 1999). In other words, focus groups produce data in the course of a – typically – rigorously guided interactive process. The main purpose of focus group research is to draw upon the feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and reactions of the respondents with respect to a particular topic. Although these feelings *etc.* may exist independently of the group, it is thought that they are more likely to be revealed through the interaction that being in a focus group entails. Focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes (Gibbs, 1997: 2).

Some authors distinguish between 'homogeneous' and 'heterogeneous' focus groups (Sacher, 1978, Friedrichs, 1990, Flick, 1995, Lamnek, 1998, Dürrenberger & Behringer, 1999[154]). Flick (1995) maintains that heterogeneous groups enable a range of perspectives to be expressed. The ensuring 'clash' of ideas can bring out more reserved participants. The danger is, though, that heterogeneous groups do not engage in proper discussion because they have so little in common. He adds that the terms 'homogenous' and 'heterogeneous' should be understood as relative, rather than absolute terms. Friedrichs (1990) says that homogenous groups are useful when one wants to study the reactions of particular people with clearly defined characteristics to a topic. Dürrenberger & Behringer (1999) maintain that practitioners – as opposed to theoreticians - favour homogenous groups (defined according to socio-demographic characteristics, opinions, or by virtue of being affected by the topic). This promotes constructive discussion. Lamnek (1998) presents a more nuanced view. He argues that focus group participants should be *'without doubt'* homogeneous in that they must all be affected in some way by the research topic. However, once this basic level of homogeneity has been established, Lamnek argues that it is greatly preferable to put together respondents with diverse characteristics. This enables a theoretically richer, livelier, and more provocative discussion to take place. Sacher (1978) argues that heterogeneous groups force participants to engage in a questioning of their own opinions. Quite

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154 All the observations attributed to the authors in the brackets, and Bohnsack (1991) later in this discussion, are taken from an overview of German focus group literature carried out by the Universität Hamburg FSP BIOGUM (Forschungsschwerpunkt Biotechnik, Gesellschaft und Umwelt) Fachgruppe Landwirtschaft und Pflanzenzüchtung. This overview was kindly made available to the author of this thesis by Dr. Heike Kuhnert. It is an unpublished working document. The source texts are therefore not given in the references.

274

often, the reasoning behind their attitudes and behaviour becomes clear to them for the first time. Kitzinger (1994, in Marris *et al.* 2001: 24) notes that *'differences between individuals within the group [...] rarely disappear from view. Regardless of how they are selected, the research participants in any one group are never entirely homogenous. Participants do not just agree with each other, they also misunderstand one another, question one another, try to persuade each other of the justice of their own point of view and sometimes they vehemently disagree.'*

The author followed the approach suggested by Lamnek. Respondents were selected on the basis of their proven willingness to purchase goods according to ethical criteria. However, in the hope of provoking lively discussion, equal numbers of fair trade and organic consumers were requested from the market research agency that recruited the focus group participants. Equal gender representation was also requested.

It can be argued that the 'data product' which results from focus group work is closer in quality to 'knowledge' than to 'information', according to the formula presented in chapter seven (information + attributed value = knowledge). Focus group data arise in the course of live debate and as a consequence are highly contextual. The dialogue is shaped by the desire of respondents to articulate and defend their opinions, as well as their willingness and ability to learn from other participants. Kitzinger (1994, cited in Marris *et al.* 2001: 24) observes that people are not *'self-contained, isolated, static entities; we are part of complex and overlapping social, familial and collegiate networks ... Our personal behaviour is not cut off from public discourses and our actions do not happen in a cultural vacuum [...]. We learn about 'meanings' [...] through talking with and observing other people, through conversation at home and at work; and we act (or fail to act) on that knowledge in a social context. When researchers want to explore people's understandings, or to influence them, it makes sense to employ methods which actively encourage examination of these social processes in action'*

Stewart & Shamdasani (1990, in Marris *et al.* 2001: 24) argue that focus groups, in contrast to survey data and experimentation, provide data which arise in a more natural or authentic, indigenous form, because *'they allow individuals to respond in their own words, using their own categorisations and perceived associations.'* Marris *et al.* (2001: 25) consider that whilst questionnaire surveys tend to impose researcher understandings of key terms upon respondents, focus groups allow respondents to use their own categories. Whilst individual interviews can provide similar benefits, the interactive nature of focus groups helps researchers to draw out tacit views. It is also possible to explore interconnections between an issue defined *a priori* by the researcher, and other issues raised by the respondents (Marris *et al.* 2001: 25).

Although respondents might have been invited on the basis that they are knowledgeable about a topic, this does not mean that they have thought in any deep sense about some of the issues the convenor has identified as part of the research agenda. Nor should it be assumed that individuals in a focus group are expressing their own definitive views, since they are speaking within a specific context

(Gibbs, 1997: 4). Bohnsack (1991) argues that one should avoid analysing individual responses, opinions and behaviour in focus groups, on the basis that people always speak within contexts rather than in isolation.

In the course of the process, respondents may be asked to make new connections, or to think in different ways. Kitzinger (1994, in Marris *et al.* 2001: 25) stresses that *'it would be naïve to assume that group data is by definition 'natural' in the sense that it would have occurred without the group having been convened for this purpose.'* We can argue that focus groups do not only 'disembed' the attitudes and feelings of respondents, they also create learning spaces. The artifice of the situation, the unique combination of participants, and the bringing of different analytical threads into the debate can actually force new ideas into being. Such interconnections and synergies may not achievable using other methods. The researcher is in the privileged position of being able to capture these ideas - the 'emergent properties' – of the focus group.

Further observations and arguments relevant to the author's work are listed here:

- The role of the moderator is central. Good levels of group leadership and interpersonal skills are required (Gibbs, 1997: 1).
- Using focus groups in potentially controversial situations brings specific difficulties. Bendell (2001: 21), in his work with women workers on banana plantations in Costa Rica, realised that it would be possible for participants to be 'planted'. In the Costa Rican case, single sex groups were important. It was essential, he says, to have all women groups and a local women moderator who could *'create a sense of solidarity'* (ibid).
- Bendell (ibid) also found that the process engendered by the focus groups (which were led by a local woman) enabled participants to remind one another of different events and opinions. Since participants were not requested to give an opinion, the atmosphere was comfortable. People did not have to speak until they were ready, and the feeling of interrogation was reduced. Participation was a learning process. In this particular case women came to realise in the course of discussion that they were experiencing sexual harassment, whereas before they had assumed that this behaviour was normal.
- Focus groups help researchers investigate why an issue is salient, as well as what is salient about it (Morgan, 1998, in Gibbs, 1997: 3). This enables the gap between what people say and what they do to be better understood (Lankshear, 1993, in ibid).
- Focus groups are limited in terms of their ability to generalize findings to a whole population, due to the small numbers of people participating and the likelihood that they will not be a representative sample. However Marris *et al.* (2001: 25) argue that focus groups are able to *'make perceptive and highly relevant contributions to our understanding of the social dynamics of a wide range of pressing social issues.'* Referring to previous literature on the subject, they contend that 10 to 20 focus groups, nationwide, are often sufficient to achieve information saturation (ibid).

276

- One of the findings from the sociology of science is that a researcher observes and measures precisely what his or her instrument is capable of observing and measuring The key point here is therefore the extent to which the researchers recognise this interpretative responsibility, make it explicit, and attempt to redress possible biases through independent validation (Marris *et al.* 2001: 26).

The Aim of the German Focus Groups

The author hoped that participants could contribute to the discussion on producer well-being and social labelling on two levels. First, by revealing widely-held views, and second, by providing new and perhaps provocative insights. Open-ended questions were thus posed within an otherwise tightly controlled format to enable surprising and novel insights to emerge. The interview guide (Appendix 1) was composed of 'live' issues that arise repeatedly in discussion fora around organic and sustainable agriculture, yet remain to be resolved. For example, given that consumer support of social certification initiatives in agriculture depends on their awareness of the producer, it is useful to know whether organic customers actually think about the farmer when making their purchase. It is also important to understand the 'switch' that turns the ethical citizen into an ethical consumer. Questions centring of the felt effectiveness of consumer agency were thus posed. Respondents were also asked to consider whether – in their view - their gender or their age had any bearing on their decision to purchase organic or fair trade. Behind this lay the perhaps naïve (in hindsight) query: *Is ethical decision-making always relative to socio-economic components of identity, or can it viewed as taking place within a solely rational sphere?*

In terms of structure the interview guide moved from considering consumer views to considering producer views. The mechanism selected for the transition was to firstly confront participants with data drawn the questionnaire surveys. They were then confronted with data selected from Malagasy fieldwork. The questions were structured around the following headings:

1. Do organic and fair trade consumers have different ethics in action? Questions attempting to probe and ascertain the ethical starting points of the consumers – their 'world views'- were posed here.
2. Is ethical consumption an effective way of bringing about the kind of change consumers want? Questions on where responsibility for ethical decision-making with regard to food products can, and should lie - the consumer, the retailer or the government - were asked.
3. What kind of relationship can be established between organic/fair trade consumers and farmers in the South?

Participant Selection Criteria and Logistics

The recommended number of participants is generally six to ten (Gibbs, 1997: 4), though opinions vary (see Sacher, 1978, Friedrichs, 1990, Flick, 1995, Lamnek, 1998, Dürrenberger & Behringer, 1999, for the rationale behind their suggestions of between 3-17 participants). Some focus groups are convened just the once, whereas others meet several times. Typically, a session lasts between one to two hours. Bearing these points in mind, the author held four focus groups, with eight

respondents in each (a total of 32 participants). Each session lasted two hours. All the sessions were held in a seminar room at the University of Hamburg, close to the city centre. An incentive of 20 Euros was offered to each participant.

The Hamburg-based market research company *MaFo Christiansen* selected the participants according to the criteria given by the author. These were: 1) equal gender representation and 2) equal numbers of fair trade and organic consumers. *MaFo Christiansen* operationalised the selection criteria provided by the author as follows:

- Organic participants spend over 20 Euros a week on organic produce (some respondents actually spent around 30-40 Euros weekly).
- Fair trade participants purchase at least 4 fairly traded products a month.

Despite having a file of several thousand potential respondents it proved almost impossible for *MaFo Christiansen* to recruit participants that were solely fair trade and not also organic purchasers. However, they found it simple to select organic consumers who did not purchase fair trade products. Half of each group could therefore be classified as organic, but not fair trade, consumers. The other half could be classified as fair trade consumers who also purchase organic products. There were some exceptions - a very few fair trade participants never purchased organic goods.

Following a pre-test on May 14th, 2003, three focus group discussions were held on May 19th, 20th and 21st. Doctoral candidate Mathias Boysen facilitated each session.[155] Key statements and fieldwork findings were written on flipcharts and revealed to the participants in the course of the session. The remaining questions were posed orally. Every participant was asked to comment upon each question. Wolfgang Raabe[156] tape-recorded and typed up each session. The author of this thesis made notes on group processes. The participants engaged in enthusiastic discussion upon the issues and over half wanted to receive a report on the project's findings. Well over half were eager to take part in further research without payment.

9.4 Conclusion

This chapter acts as a bridge between the wide-ranging discussion held on ethical consumerism and social labels in chapter eight, and the focused discussion conducted in chapter ten. In particular, it has provided conceptual underpinnings for the author's fieldwork in Germany and introduced the methods toolbox.

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Chapter Ten: Ethical Consumption - Findings from Germany

Oh butterfly
What are you dreaming of
When you move your wings? [157]

In this chapter selected findings from the fieldwork carried out in Germany in 2001 and 2003 are presented. Fuller accounts of the data and their analysis can be found in Farnworth (2003, 2003a, b, and Otto, 2002).[158] The author presented her interpretation of the German data to her peers for discussion at seminars at the University of Agricultural Sciences in Sweden, and at several international conferences.[159]

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an insight into how German respondents sought to translate some of their ethical values into real world action. Chapter eleven interprets these findings by returning to the theoretical framework provided in chapter nine. It suggests that an effective social label that addresses the question: *How can German organic consumers connect and engage with the lives*

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157 Fukuda Chiyo-Ni (1701-75).

158 Farnworth, CR. & Raabe, W. (2003a) *Presentation der Ergebnisse: Fokusgruppen bestehend aus Biokunden und Fair-Trade-Kunden, Hamburg, Deutschland, Mai 2003.* Working Paper, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Rural Development Studies, Uppsala (www.lbutv.slu.se/Publ./publication.htm).

Farnworth, CR. & Raabe, W. (2003b) *Presentation of Findings: Focus Groups with Organic and Fair Trade Consumers in Hamburg, Germany, during May 2003.* Working Paper, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Rural Development Studies, Uppsala (www.lbutv.slu.se/Publ./publication.htm).

Farnworth, C.R. (2003) *Biofach 2001: Pilot questionnaire on German organic consumer interest in producer well-being and their willingness to reward 'more than purely price' values* (unpublished paper, please contact author for a copy).

Otto, L.M. (2002) *Solidarity off the Shelf: German consumers' perceptions of the quality of life of producers in the South.* Course Paper, Department of Rural Development Studies, University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden. Findings from the seminar at Gut Wulksfelde 01.06.03 (unpublished protocol by Raabe, W.).

159 Farnworth, CR. (2003c) Competing Concepts of Quality of Life, Challenges for Quality of Life in Contemporary Societies, *Fifth Conference of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies in Frankfurt, July 20-24th, 2003*

Farnworth, CR. (2003e) Linking producer and consumer: rewarding more than purely price values in the marketplace. In Lockeretz, W. (ed) *Ecolabels and the Greening of the Food Market. Proceedings of a Conference, November 7-9, 2002, Tufts University, Boston, MA.*

Farnworth, CR. (2004a) Creating and Fixing Qualitative Relationships in the Organic Producer to Consumer Chain: From Madagascar to Germany, Pre-proceedings, Sixth International Farming Systems Association European Symposium 'Farming and Rural Systems Research and Extension', Vila Real, Portugal, April 3-9, 2004.

Farnworth, CR. (2004b) Competing Concepts of Quality of Life, www.biologischelandbouw.net/kennisbank

Farnworth, CR. (2004c) Quality Relationships in the Organic Food Chain: From Madagascar to Germany, *Forskningsnytt Nr. 1, 2004.* Swedish University of Agricultural Science, Uppsala.

of producers in meaningful ways? needs to build upon and work with the values that consumers hold.

It is helpful to locate the German fieldwork findings within the context of the organic sector in Germany. An overview is presented in Part 10.1. This is divided into three parts:

1. Organic farming in Germany.
2. The organic market, and
3. Consumer purchasing patterns.

Part 10.2 presents the research sites in Berlin, Braunschweig, Nuremberg and Hamburg. Parts 10.3 and 10.4 present and analyse the fieldwork findings.

10.1   Overview of the Organic Sector in Germany

Given that this overview rests on secondary data sources, it is worth noting several reservations with respect to data quantity, quality and type in Germany.

*   Data sets are not necessarily representative. Many companies are not willing to share sensitive commercial data with researchers. This hampers a full understanding of the present situation and of trends (Hamm *et al.* 2002; Wendt *et al.* 1999; Nieberg *et al.* 2004).
*   Researchers need to fill gaps in the data set by drawing on a wide range of sources. These include data from the Zentrale Markt-und Preisberichtstelle für Erzeugnisse der Land, Forst und Ernährungswirtschaft GmbH (ZMP), which reports on price and market trends; data from other statistical sources; studies carried out by individuals and organisations, and data from organisations working across the food chain, like the Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft (into which AGÖL[160], an umbrella body representing organic producers, has recently been absorbed). Further studies and interviews are sometimes necessary. However, given the varied sources and types of data, aggregation for the purposes of gaining a full picture is problematic (Wendt *et al.* 1999: 35-6, 96-7).
*   Different organisations categorise their data in different ways. For instance research into product groups is hampered by the way some organisations distinguish between millers, bakeries and malthouses, whereas others refer only to cereal processors (Wendt *et al.* 1999: 35-6).
*   Some data do not exist. Official statistics in the EU, as conveyed in agricultural yearbooks, usually include total agricultural production, without distinguishing between organic and conventional (Hamm *et al.* 2002: 1). Germany and Denmark are exceptions to this rule. However,

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160 Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ökologischer Landbau.

research in Germany and other European countries still focuses primarily on the conventional sector (Künast, 2003: 19).

- Parameters are sometimes changed by the data collection agency. The governmental publication, '*Der Agrar-und Ernahrungspolitische Bericht 2003'*, surveyed 242 organic farms in 2001/2002, as opposed to 229 farms the previous year. This makes year on year comparisons difficult.

- Data rapidly becomes outdated. The agricultural scene is undergoing great change in response to structural reforms at the EU level – for instance in the Common Agricultural Policy (Dunne *&* O'Connell, 2003 for a sample text) and the addition of new members. Moreover, consumer concerns are quite volatile and hard to predict.

- New kinds of data are needed. In Germany the BSE crisis resulted in the abolition of the Ministry of Agriculture. Its replacement, the Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture (BMVEL[161]) has sought to re-orientate agriculture from a 'strategy of quantity' to a 'strategy of quality'[162] – this is known as the *Agrarwende* (Reisch, 2003: 22). One policy assumption was that there has been a radical change in consumer consciousness following the BSE scandal – including favourable attitudes to organic agriculture and its products. Kuhnert *et al.* (2002), in a government sponsored research programme, are assessing consumer perceptions of organic agriculture/ food and the *Agrarwende* to see if this is so. Similar programmes are being run elsewhere in the country.

These reservations are important and should be borne in mind when reading this part. A new EU project, European Information Systems for Organic Markets, is working on ways to improve statistical data on a national and European-wide basis (www.eisform.org, see Willer & Lux, 2004, for discussion)[163]. However the aim here is not to provide a comprehensive picture, but rather to enable the reader to situate the fieldwork findings into a specific time and space slot. As far as possible, the data provided here cover the time period 2001-2003, the same time frame in which the author carried out her own research – and within which the respondents were framing their ethical choices. The remarks made in chapter eight with respect to the limited explanatory power of market research should be borne in mind whilst reading. We start with an historical overview of the organic sector in Germany.

Organic Farming in Germany
Organic agriculture in Germany traces its roots back to Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) who founded biodynamic agriculture. His research drew upon the humanities as

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161 Bundesministerium für Verbraucherschutz, Ernährung und Landwirtschaft (www.verbraucherministerium.de). The consumer protection minister is Renate Künast.

162 The slogan is literally *'class not mass'* (Klasse statt Masse).

163 See also http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/qual/organic/data/index_en.htm. This describes the work of the Organic Farming Information System, which seeks to ensure that organic data provided according to EU Regulation 2092/91is properly co-ordinated.

much as on natural sciences. Steiner conceptualised the farm as a living organism, one that was subject to non-material influences, particularly cosmic. In order to enhance the dynamic role of these influences, special preparations (for example herb and quartz mixtures) are applied to the soil, as fertilisers or to plants. The aim is to support the inner quality of the plant, and to improve soil life. Demeter (www.demeter.de) was established in 1924 and remains a significant player in the organic sector. In 2002, 1 336 farms – out of a total 9 387 farms organised into eight organic producer groups – were members of Demeter (www.soel.de/oekolandbau/deutschland[164]; Sturbeck, 2000: 53; see also www.biodynamic.com).

Organic-biological agriculture was developed and promoted in Switzerland, after two decades of work, in the 1950s by Hans and Maria Müller. Particularly important in this approach is the role of soil micro-organisms. Hans Müller also encouraged farmers to set up self-help groups. In 1971 a group of German farmers and gardeners came together to found Bioland (www.bioland.de). Today Bioland is the largest player in the German organised organic sector, with 4 363 farm members in 2002 (ibid).

The late 1970s saw greatly heightened interest in organic farming as disillusionment with the consequences of industrial agriculture grew. Further producer organisations were founded at this time, including Naturland and Biokreis, giving rise to a total of eight. Their main aim was to show that organic farming could be profitable. A new wave of expansion took place in the late 1980s, as EU Regulations supporting and guiding organic agriculture came into force, and as the German government engaged in various programmes of support to producers. After the reunification of the two Germanys, organic agriculture took off in East Germany with a massive expansion in the land area devoted to organic production. It was initially difficult, however, to develop a corresponding local market since the citizens of the former East Germany were unfamiliar with organic products (www.soel.de/oekolandbau/deutschland).

At the time of writing, the policy environment in Germany is favourable to organic agriculture. It aims to have 20% (3.7% in 2002) of agricultural land under organic production by 2010 (Künast, 2003; Reisch, 2003). The federal programme for organic agriculture, the Bundesprogramm Ökologischer Landbau (see www.bundesprogramm-oekolandbau.de) has been established to help meet this aim. The guiding principles are (1) *'invest in heads'*, rather than just provide financial assistance to producers[165], (2) strengthen the provision of factual information to all stakeholders, (3) work across the whole producer to consumer value chain, (4) use modern media, and (5) ensure that measures taken are sustainable and long-term (Künast, 2003: 19). To this end, thirty concrete measures

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164 The SÖL webpage accessed here and in the following paragraphs was last updated on 18/03/04.

165 This chimes in with Milestad's observation (2003: 34) that organic agriculture is knowledge rather than input-

intensive, and that conventional farmers undertaking conversion need to revise much of their understanding of

agricultural practice (ibid. 16).

have been put in place (see Appendix J for a summary in English). According to Isermeyer *et al.* (2001), state support of organic agriculture is necessary given its small size. The aim is to enable it to reach a distribution level above which it can benefit from economies of scale and develop of its own accord. Spending on the programme in 2002 and 2003 ran at 35 million Euros per annum (ibid). The government's commitment to organic agriculture is part of a wider programme aimed at improving food quality, increasing the profitability of the agricultural sector in general, strengthening animal welfare and, in particular, protecting and enhancing the environment (Isermeyer *et al.,* 2001; Künast, 2003: 15; www.verbraucherministerium.de; 10-June-2004). Goal integration, as discussed in chapter three, is the clear aim of government policy.[166]

It may be difficult for the government to reach its goal, despite positive growth trends across the organic sector. The Stiftung für Ökologie and Landbau (SÖL)[167] estimates that an annual increase of 22% between 2003 and 2010 in organically farmed land area is required in order for 20% of arable land to be farmed organically by 2010 (www.soel.de/oekolandbau/deutschland). Nieberg (2003) points out that despite the goal integrationist approach adopted by the government, serious problems remain regarding the coordination and cooperation of the national government with the state governments (the *Länder*), and regarding the integration of different policies. With respect to consumers, the discovery of Nitrofen in organic meat and animal foodstuffs in June 2002 strongly dented consumer confidence in organic produce, though this appears to have been short term in character (see www.soel.de/oekolandbau/deutschland for summaries of various contradictory reports). However the scandal demonstrates the vulnerability of the 'special' selling points of organic produce to scandals of one kind or another, in this case its supposed freedom from pesticide residues. Figure 10.1 shows the increase in land area (ha) devoted to organic production between 1993-2003 in Germany, and indicates the trend necessary in order for the government to reach its goal of having 20% of arable land under organic production by 2010. Given present growth, 10% is more likely.

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166 It was argued that it might not be possible to integrate goals representing incommensurable values in one programme, particularly simultaneously.

167 Foundation Ecology and Agriculture.
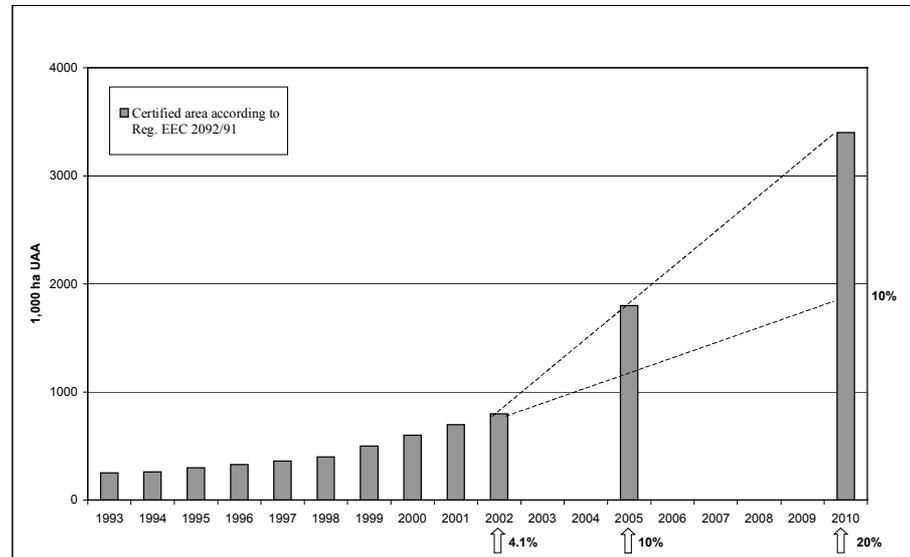
Figure 10.1: Certified Organic Production in Germany between 1993-2003, including potential trends
Source: Adapted by the author from Nieberg (2003)

With respect to financial profitability, organic arable farms performed better in 2001/2002 than comparable conventional farms[168]. However <u>mixed</u> organic units and those producing animal foodstuffs performed less well due to the extensive nature of animal holdings. Some features of mixed organic farms vis-à-vis conventional farms were[169]:

- Employed more paid labour. Labourers were, however, paid around 7% less than their equivalents on conventional farms.
- Held less than half the amount of cattle.
- Crop yields were considerably less.
- Product prices for potatoes and cereals were twice as high.
- Share of farm income derived from plant production, farm enterprises (like farm shops *etc*.) direct payments for environmentally and ecologically friendly farming practices, and services, was significantly higher.
- Profits were only slightly less than for conventional farms.

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168 A study of the reasons why conventional farmers do (or do not) convert to organic farming shows that conventional farmers were worried about weed management problems, poor prices for organic products and lack of marketing opportunities: Those interested in converting wanted to be sure that organic practices were compatible with their existing farming practice, and that organic was profitable (Schramek & Schnaut, 2004).

169 These observations are taken from www.soel.de/oekolandbau/deutschland, which offers a summary of the *Agrar- und Ernährungspolitischen Bericht, 2003*. The BMVEL (www.verbraucherministerium.de) provides excerpts of this report.

Across the European Union, there is a mismatch between the supply of, and demand for, organic products (Lampkin *et al*, 1999; Hamm *et al*. 2002; Reisch, 2003) and this is true of Germany too. Figure 1.4 *Conventional and Organic Marketing Pathways of Organic Produce* in chapter one shows that much organic produce is sold as conventional. A lack of market transparency, as noted above in the opening comments to this chapter, is one of the chief reasons for over- and under supply of particular products (see Richter *et al*, 2001: 23 for similar observations). Reisch (2003: 22) notes that there are limits on the production of high quality organic foods due to the lower productivity of organic farming. Its production philosophy accepts natural growth rates and ripening times (see also von Koerber & Kretschmer, 2001). Research is being directed to loosen these bottlenecks, particularly by surveying the entire producer to consumer chain. A project carried out by the BIOGUM Research Group[170] at the University of Hamburg has developed and piloted a range of strategies with organic farmers, processors, retailers and consumers. The purpose is to enable the government to develop effective organic policy on the basis of good empirical evidence as to 'which strategies work' (see www.biogum.uni-hamburg.de). A partner project, based largely in Munich, is assessing the extent to which agricultural reform in Germany (the Agrarwende, the strategy of quality) is being supported by changes in consumer consumption patterns (www.konsumwende.de; see Brand, 2002, for a discussion).

The Organic Market[171]
Germany, with a share of 26%, was the biggest market for organic produce in Europe in 2002. The organic market in Germany is distinguished by its multi-faceted nature. Supermarkets are much less important than in many other European countries (Hamm *et al*. 2002). Outlets for organic produce include specialist stores (natural produce retail trade, Reformhaus *etc*.), on-farm sales and farmers' markets, specialised organic traders (bakers, butchers, grocers), conventional supermarkets and drugstores (www.soel.de/oekolandbau/deutschland). Producer organisations like Demeter, Bioland and Naturland are pivotal wholesalers to both specialist outlets and conventional supermarkets (van der Grijp & Hond, 1999).

As mentioned above, the Nitrofen scandal dented the German market in late 2002, but generally growth in organic produce sales has been steady. Consumers generally lost trust in decision-makers rather than in the product itself - though data are variable on this score (see www.soel.de/oekolandbau/deutschland for a discussion of different studies). Drugstores selling organic baby foods and dry foods showed the highest rate of growth, with an increase in turnover of 16.7% in 2002 compared to the previous year. Direct sales by organic producers to

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170 BIOGUM – Biotechnik, Gesellschaft und Umwelt (Biotechnology, Society and Environment). The project ran from 01/12/00- 31/12/03. Their website provides some reports, but full analysis is forthcoming.

171 The Stiftung Ökologie und Landbau summarises reports and places them on its website www.soel.de. These were used as the main source for this part. Other useful sites about market trends in Germany include www.haendler.oekolandbau and www.synergie-online.com

consumers followed closely with an increase in turnover of 15.6%. The conventional supermarkets registered an increase of 10.5 %, small traders 10 %, Reformhaus 8.3% and specialised health food shops registered an increase in turnover of 5.4% (ZMP Ökomarktforum Nr. 5/2003, cited in ibid). Organic supermarkets are becoming ever more popular (Rippin, 2004: 14). Although the organic market as a percentage of the whole market remains small, organic produce is capturing ever more market share. German organic producers are, however, failing to benefit properly from consumer interest in organic food due to an increase in organic imports (ibid: 14-15). Figure 10.2 shows turnover for organic produce between 1997 and 2002. The stippled line shows the share of organic vis-à-vis conventional produce over the same time period.

Total Turnover of Organic Food and its Share of the Total Food Market
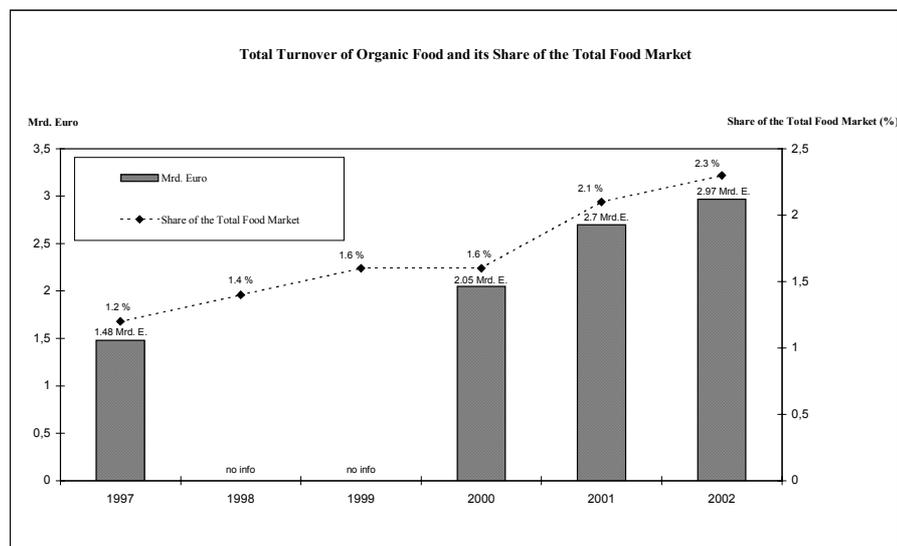
Figure 10.2: Turnover of Organic Produce in Germany, 1997-2002
Source: Adapted and translated by the author from Hamm, FH Neubrandenburg/ ZMP (2003), figure provided on www.soel.de/oekolandbau/deutschland

Consumer Purchasing Patterns
Compared to other European countries, German consumers spend the smallest proportion of their income on food (Rheinsichen Landwirtschafts-Verbands, 2003, cited in www.soel.de/oekolandbau/deutschland). This makes the marketing of organic produce problematic since organic products tend to be more expensive than conventional products. A study carried out in August 2003 showed that the main reason (60% of respondents) consumers rejected organic produce was that it is considered *'too expensive'* (August 2003, EMNID Institute, www.oekolandbau.de, 10-June-2004; see von Koerber & Kretschmer, 2001; Reisch, 2003, and Richter, 2004, for discussion of this phenomenon). It is certainly true that in Germany organic products can cost up to 50% more than their conventional equivalents, though the actual price difference varies widely from product to product. Consumer understanding of why organic produce tends to cost more is also poor (von Koerber & Kretschmer, 2001; Brand, 2000; Kohlschütter *et*

286

al. 2004). The makeup of the typical shopping basket plays a role too. If organic meat costs around 5 Euros more a kilo and organic pears 1 Euro more per kilo then this is a significant difference for people who consume a lot of meat (Sonderdruck zur Biofach 2004, www.zmp.de[172]; Connor (2003) remarks that if consumers pay organic premiums on all their purchases this makes for a pricey shopping basket. Reisch (2003: 22) qualifies this by noting that German consumers tend to accept higher price premiums for meat due to their worries about quality following the BSE crisis. Organic purchasing of selected products appears to be a risk-avoidance strategy for some consumers (see Grankvist, 2002; Connor, 2003; Giraud, 2003, and McCain & Chandler, 2003, on risk avoidance and consumer preference for organic products. See Darnhofer & Vogl, 2003, on the necessity, therefore, of preserving the integrity and safety of the organic food market. See Marris *et al*. 2002, for a thought-provoking account of why most stakeholders misunderstand public perceptions of risk in relation to biotechnologies).

Nickoleit (Gepa, pers. comm. 06/03) adds complexity to these findings by drawing a distinction between the immediate post-war generation and the newer ‚aware generation'. The latter eat much less meat than the former, but they purchase high quality meat. The 'aware generation', he says, makes links between high quality products, health and quality of life. Nickoleit adds that if organic is seen as 'too expensive', this is not a problem of cost *per se* since people generally have sufficient money. Kalus (IFOAM, pers. comm. 06/03) similarly refutes a simple income/willingness to purchase organic equation, arguing that students and recipients of social security often purchase organic, whereas people who have become rich sometimes seem to suffer a *'reduction in idealism'* and discontinue their consumption of such products. In this light we can consider the findings of a different study, which shows that consumers are willing to pay more for organic products, provided that the premium is not more than 20% (ZMP/CMA study, 2002, cited in www.soel.de/oekolandbau/deutschland)[173]. Lockie (2002: 289) notes that since large retailers are developing value-added organic products, which are more profitable, they are actually catering to, and creating, a wealthier class of organic consumer (see also Ilsøe, 2003, on retailer marketing strategies).

German consumers have, over the years, developed preferences for particular kinds of organic product. Currently milk and milk products constitute the most preferred organic product (16% of *all* households questioned have purchased such products), followed by vegetables (12%) and then bread and drinks, including coffee and juices (both at 10 %), according to the ZMP (Sonderdruck zur Biofach 2004, www.zmp.de; 10-June-2004). Meat products follow at 9%. Product preferences like these are not only the embodiment of particular food cultures. The

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172 Monthly price comparisons between organic and conventional products can be called up on

www.zmp.de/projekte/verbraucher/index.asp

173 'Willingness to pay' is of course not the same as actually paying more for a product. Giraud (2003) notes that

people have a tendency to respond positively in face-to-face interviews but do not necessarily behave accordingly.

Verbal responses are also linked to the brand image carried by brand status. He reports on a French study that assessed

stated willingness to purchase with actual purchasing patterns.

availability of particular products in organic quality is an important factor in the building of preferences. For example organic milk and milk products can now be purchased everywhere, but supplies of organic fresh fruit and vegetables are poor (ibid; van der Grijp & Hond, 1999. See Kuhnert *et al.* 2002, and Richter *et al.* 2001, for similar remarks). Babyfoods are a key market segment. Marketing studies reported by Halsbeck (2000: 41-48) of HIPP, one of the largest players with 36.5 % of the babyfood market in 1999, suggest that whilst 45% of mothers wanted organic babyfood in 1989, this figure had risen to 97% in 1996. Lockie (2002: 288) notes, in an Australian study that appears to have some bearing on the current discussion, that supermarkets are primarily interested in developing value-added products that attract higher premiums and profits than fresh fruit and vegetables. Furthermore, surveys show that the marketing of organic produce is frequently poor in Germany. This clearly has a bearing on consumption patterns (Wendt *et al.* 1999; Richter et al. 2001; Hempfling, 2004; Ludwig, 2004; Richter, 2004). As chapter eight indicated, consumers are not passive and one may suppose that some are frustrated at a lack of range. This may explain the current vogue for large organic supermarkets in Germany.

Photograph 10.1 The Babyfood Market in Germany

   Some studies have tried to ascribe characteristics to organic consumers in order to better understand the appeal of organic produce. One extensive study, covering the Upper Rhine area (neighbouring areas of France, Germany and Switzerland) distinguishes between the price-conscious shopper, the smart-shopper, premium-quality shopper, health-conscious shopper and comfortable-disinterested shopper. The health-conscious and quality shoppers purchase organic more frequently than the average consumer. Each geographical area under study showed substantial

percentage differences in the amount of shoppers in each category (Rennenkampff *et al.*, 1999). Stieß (2004) reports on an extensive German study carried out in 2002-2003. Occasional, as well as regular, organic consumers were included. 'Holistic convinced' consumers (around 25% of all organic consumers) are above all well-educated women with moderate to high incomes. Such women generally have - or have had - children, and tend to be young. They purchase organic for its ethical and sensory qualities, and are responsible for 40% of organic turnover. 'Made-it and demanding' organic consumers (13%) are responsible for 23% of organic turnover. Aged between 30-45, they generally have young children and have taken time off (or work part-time) to care for them. These women are well-educated and purchase organic in order to ensure the well-being of their children. Health and wellness are also important to them. The study classifies around 17% of organic consumers as 'health-orientated'. They are 50+ years old and have low to middle incomes. 'Distanced sceptics' (around 25%) are the only group in which men form the majority. They tend to live alone, or are living in childless relationships. As a rule they purchase organic spontaneously, or on occasion (13% of organic turnover). The final group, the 'young undecided' tend to be under 30, less well-educated and have low incomes. Men and women are represented equally. This group (5% of turnover) is attracted by unconventional organic products.

Kalus (pers. comm. 06/03) considers that some consumers buy organic in order to support regional identities. This behaviour, he argues, can reflect conservative, nationalistic traits since the aim of the purchase is to support a particular local structure. However, such consumers fail to realise that organic farming is a thoroughly modern approach to agriculture, he concludes (see Giraud, 2003, Barham, 2002, Jenkins & Parrott, 2003, McCain & Chandler, 2003, for their different understandings of *'terrior'* and *'heritage'*; see Kullmann, 2004, Nieberg *et al.*, 2004, and Gerber, 2004, for information and discussion of regional marketing initiatives in Germany). Schermer (2003) discusses initiatives in Austria that combine regional development initiatives with the concept of 'ecoregions' (Bioregions), particularly in mountain areas. The aim is to enable less-favoured mountain areas to compete successfully with low-lying organic production areas.

Duxbury (pers. comm. 06/03)[174] supports the view that, in general, organic consumption is a thoroughly modern phenomenon. Consumers have *'shortening memory spans'*, as the pace of change picks up. Young people, he adds, cannot remember, or cannot know, how things used to be. Consumers in general are also vulnerable to marketing strategies since *'market obsolescence is a marketing ploy'*. In this light we can consider data from the EMNID-Institut (www.oekolandbau.de; 10-June-2004), which provides regularly updated data on consumer motivation in Germany. Although 59% of organic consumers said in the August 2003 study said that there was no particular reason as to why they had started to consume organic

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174 Although Robert Duxbury was organics manager of Sainsbury's supermarket chain in the UK at the time of interview, his remarks bring insight to the discussion pursued in this chapter. All other key informants discuss the German market.

produce, 15% said that they began purchasing organic simply to feel physically in good form. Although people in the younger age groups mentioned health worries as a factor, this was particularly marked in the older age group (20% of 50-59 year olds). A further 7% of all respondents said that concerns about food scandals had made them start purchasing organic (August 2003, EMNID Institute, ibid). Kalus (pers. comm. 06/03) argues that it is difficult to understand consumer motivation; people have early life experiences that are very important to their purchasing choices.

With respect to <u>general</u> food purchasing criteria, the EMNID-Institut study shows that animal welfare scored highest – particularly for women (59%, men 49%). Other criteria scoring over 50% are (in order of importance) good price, health - particularly in the older group, non-use of pro-active antibiotics in animal husbandry, freshness and ripeness. Good taste followed at 49%. It is interesting to compare these results with the reasons people specifically choose to purchase <u>organic</u> produce. These are given in Figure 10.3. Health and safety (28 %) is the main reason, followed by the 'naturalness' of organic produce (24%). These are followed by good price (17%), animal welfare (16%), good taste (15%) and quality (4%). In the August 2003 study environmental protection (5%) was mentioned as a reason for the first time (ibid.). A clear discrepancy in the rationale behind purchasing choices emerges, with organic produce attracting a range of attributes that do not apply to the same degree, if at all, to general food purchases.
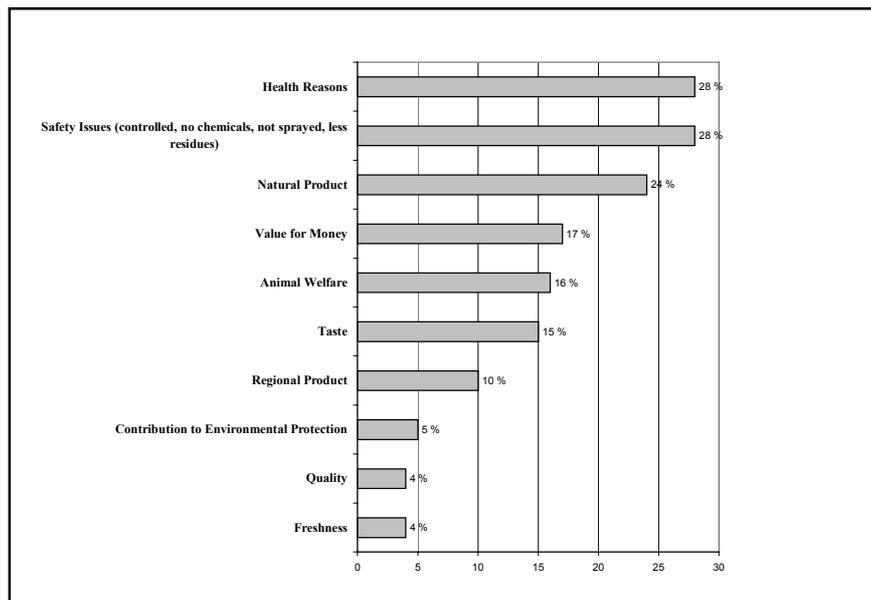
Figure 10.3: Important Sources of Motivation for Purchasing Organic Produce in August 2003
Source: Adapted by the author from EMNID-Institut (www.oekolandbau.de; 10-June-2004)

With respect to commitment to organic purchasing, the EMNID-Institut found that just 2% of consumers purchase only organic products, whereas 59% purchase

occasionally. There was a 12% increase in occasional purchasers in the 30-39 year old age group between November 2002 and August 2003. Among those who have never purchased organic, 25% of people under 30 register a strong interest (ibid). Market research institute Forsa reports that in 2003, 32% of consumers purchase organic products at least once a week. A further 28% of consumers purchase organic products at least once a month (Bio-Siegel Report, 04/2003, www.bio-siegel.de; 10-June-2004).

In order to promote consumer awareness of organic products, the government introduced the Bio-Siegel in September 2001. This is a government controlled, but voluntary, organic label. It can be used on all products that meet the standards laid down in EU 2092/91. This regulation governs organic production and processing standards across the European Union. It includes stipulations that no GMOs be used, and that 95% of the ingredients must stem from organic production systems[175]. The Bio-Siegel does not displace other organic seals, like Demeter and Bioland, which can be used alongside the Bio-Siegel. Take up of the Bio-Siegel by companies has been very high (17 000 products sported the Bio-Siegel in mid-2003, with 20 000 expected by early 2004). Consumer recognition is good, with 67% of consumers recognising the symbol in mid-2003 (ibid). Gerber (2004) argues though that the wide acceptance of the Bio-Siegel is erasing the *regional* identities of German products.

Part 10.1 has presented a portrait of the organic sector in Germany. Its purpose was to allow the reader to 'embed' the fieldwork findings, introduced below, into a particular *zeitgeist*.

10.2   The Research Sites

Germany is a federal state. The regional governments have considerable autonomy in particular areas of decision-making. Unification with the former East Germany occurred in 1990 and it now has more than 80 million inhabitants (van der Grijp & Hond, 1999). Map 10.1 shows the research sites: Berlin, Braunschweig, Nuremberg, Hamburg and Essen.

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175 See chapter three for a discussion of EU 2092/91.

Hamburg
Focus Groups
Gut Wulksfelde
Seminar

Berlin
Main
Questionnaire
Survey

Braunschweig
Main
Questionnaire
Survey

Essen
Interviews and
Discussions

Nuremberg
Pilot
Questionnaire
Survey
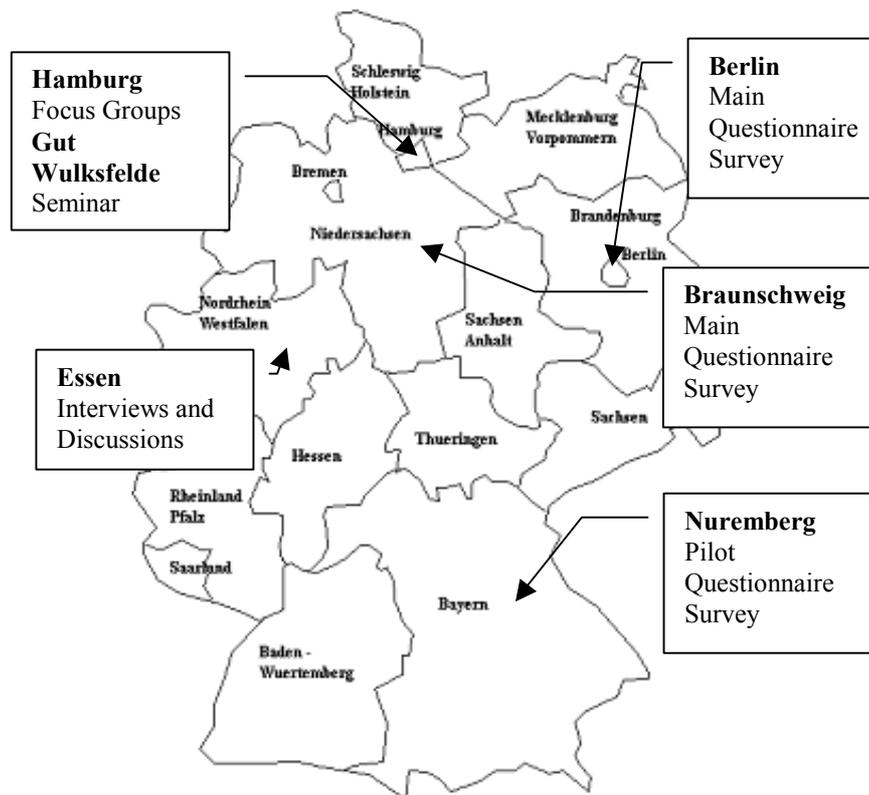
Map 10.1: Map of Germany Showing Research Sites
Source: Author of this thesis

A pilot questionnaire, developed by the author, was administered at the Biofach (www.biofach.de), the world's largest organic fair. In February 2001, when the survey was carried out, the Biofach attracted around 1 800 exhibitors from over 50 countries, with around 25 000 visitors. It acts as a showcase for organic products - from production and certification to processing and marketing - and there is also an accompanying congress with seminars, workshops and presentations on organic trends worldwide. Dr. Hiltrud Nieberg (senior researcher at the Institute of Farm Economics and Rural Studies, Federal Agricultural Research Centre - FAL[176]) carried out the survey on the author's behalf. Forty-four people filled out the questionnaire in their capacity as organic consumers. Of these 20 were men and 24 were women, and around two-thirds were between 31-50 years old.[177]Although the

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176 Bundesforschungsanstalt für Landwirtschaft.

177 A breakdown of the respondents by profession, gender and age is provided in Farnworth, C.R. (2003d) *Biofach*

2001: Pilot questionnaire on German organic consumer interest in producer well-being and their willingness to

292

questionnaire was in pilot form, it provided useful data in terms of results from both the questionnaire itself, and from the accompanying discussions.

Lilja Otto, masters student at the Department of Rural Development Studies, University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, Sweden, administered the revised questionnaire in Braunschweig and Berlin to consumers in organic stores and at organic markets in August 2001. The responses of 196 people were evaluated. Most were between 31-50 years old, as with the Biofach study. Of these, 60% were women and 40% were men.[178]

In Braunschweig 58 people were interviewed in two large organic stores in the centre of the city. Braunschweig is the second-largest city in Lower Saxony with a population of around 240 000. It is, according to a EU study, the most *'research-intensive area in the entire European Union'* with a large number of research institutes (www.braunschweig.de; 10-June-2004). FAL is based here.

Berlin, with around 4.5 million inhabitants, is the capital of Germany. It is the seat of parliament and government[179]. Like Hamburg and Bremen, Berlin is a city-state, meaning that it has the same independent decision-making capabilities as the other fifteen German regions (*Länder*) on important areas of social policy. The amalgamation of East and West Berlin following the fall of the wall left the city with 23 boroughs; in January 2001 these were combined to make 12. However, the former boroughs retain their particular characteristics and as such provided a reference point for the fieldwork.

Organic consumers were interviewed in the boroughs of Kreuzberg, Friedrichshain and Schöneberg. Kreuzberg in particular is ethnically diverse. It is characterised by a large immigrant population – former guestworkers - from Turkey and countries in the Arab world.[180] Germans seeking an 'alternative' lifestyle also moved into this area at the same time as the guest workers during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. They wanted to avoid military service[181], or were attracted by the lively subculture of these districts. Kreuzberg, at the time of study, was quite a low-income area with a high student population, though the district is becoming wealthier. It is known for its green/alternative political scene. Friedrichshain, formerly in East Berlin and now combined with Kreuzberg, is a low rent area with a high proportion of older people and some students. Schöneberg (now combined with Tempelhof) is quite diverse, attracting 'intellectuals' in

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reward 'more than purely price' values (unpublished paper, please contact author for a copy or download from www.pandiawarleggan.com).

178 Some consumers did not purchase any southern products. Their responses were not evaluated since they were not seen as potential consumers of 'socially-labelled products' from the South.

179 Otto (2002: 21-22) provided part of this characterisation of the people and districts in Berlin. Further information was taken from www.berlin.de; 10-June-2004.

180 The question of identity is vexed in Germany. Regulations been amended only recently to allow residency, as well as descent, to be a criteria for acquisition of German nationality.

181 Inhabitants of West Berlin were exempted from military service during the Cold War years.

particular. It is known for its social democrat leanings. Further interviews took place in Wilmersdorf (now combined with Charlottenburg), in a large organic supermarket, and in Dahlem (now Zehlendorf – Steglitz). Dahlem has an organic city farm and a popular weekly market. These are quiet, high-income areas.

The author led four focus groups in Hamburg in May 2003. A market research company was commissioned to select 32 organic and fair trade consumers according to the author's criteria (outlined in chapter nine). The same questions were posed in each focus group. The Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg is the second largest city in Germany with 1.7 million inhabitants. It is a sea-faring city and has an international flair. After the European discovery of America and the sea route to Asia, Hamburg became one of the most significant ports of entry in Europe. The establishment of the free port (1888) enabled Hamburg to become one of the largest storage locations for coffee, cocoa, spices and carpets in the world (www.hamburg.de; 10-June-2004). In colonial times Hamburg was a nexus of trade in raw commodities, particularly from Africa (Möhle, 1998, for a critical assessment of the effect of this trade on the German colonies[182]). Today Hamburg is the second largest container harbour in Europe. It is one Germany's wealthiest cities, though there are pockets of poverty.

Gut Wulksfelde GmbH[183] (www.gut-wulksfelde.de) lies on the outskirts of Hamburg. It was founded in 1989 in order to manage a formerly state-owned 260 ha estate according to the organic-biological techniques of Bioland. Cereals and vegetables are grown and animals, including cows, pigs, sheep, geese and chickens, are reared. They are fed with produce from the farm. Fourteen ha, mostly hedges, are 'natural areas'. Gut Wulksfelde also offers training to young people in organic agriculture. There is a farm shop on the premises offering around 2 000 products from the farm, its own bakery, partners, and from abroad. These can be purchased on-line and in person. A further 400 customers are members of a box scheme. Gut Wulkesfelde also organises a range of activities throughout the year, including farmers' markets and school visits. The author arranged a seminar at Gut Wulksfelde in June 2003. An open invitation was issued to members of Gut Wulksfelde's organic box scheme. Seven people responded and, with the head of the scheme also present, eight people participated.

10.3   Findings from the Questionnaire Surveys and the Seminar

The questionnaire findings can be assessed on their own merits. They also provide a lead into the focus group findings that are presented in Part 10.4. Data from the Biofach survey (pilot questionnaire) and the main questionnaire survey are presented as follows: (i) Labelling 1 - The *current* effect of producer-orientated information on purchasing decisions with respect to products from the South (ii) Labelling 2 - The *potential* effect of producer-orientated information on purchasing

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182 www.eine-welt.info, www.vernetzt.de, www.osnabrueck.de for more details of Möhle's book and city tours studying colonial history.

183 Gesellschaft mit beschänkter Haftung: limited company.

decisions with respect to organic products, (iii) Key producer quality of life criteria, and (iv) Discussion of criteria and new ideas. Data and information from the seminar (Raabe, 2003, unpublished protocol) at Gut Wulksfelde are incorporated into the main discussion, and is not handled separately. Fuller statistical treatment of the Biofach data, and main questionnaire survey data, are given in Farnworth (2003d) and in Otto (2002) respectively.

Labelling 1 – the <u>current</u> effect of producer-orientated information on products from the South on purchasing decisions

The first round of questions elicited information about the respondents' current purchasing behaviour with respect to ethical criteria applied to products from the South. The majority of the respondents in the main questionnaire survey (Otto, 2002) paid attention to the origin of the products they buy. Twenty-five percent only purchased products from the South if they are not grown locally or in another European country. Fifty percent chose fair trade products if they are available. However older consumers and those from former East Germany generally showed little understanding of the fair trade concept. The majority of all respondents were not aware of the full range of fair trade products that are now available, like rice, bananas and chocolate. Most considered only coffee and tea to be potential fair trade products. Many respondents assumed that their organic store pre-selected all products according to fair trade as well as organic criteria and therefore did not check the label before making their purchase (ibid: 23-24, 33).

Data produced by the Biofach survey (Farnworth, 2003d: 4) indicate that seventy-five percent of both women and men organic consumers consider fair trade labels. Respondents at Gut Wulksfelde felt that organic consumers are much more interested in the product than in the producer (Raabe, 2003).

Labelling 2 – the <u>potential</u> effect of producer-orientated information on purchasing decisions with respect to organic products

The second round of questions elicited information about the respondents' <u>potential</u> interest in producer-orientated information on organic products. Seventy-two percent of the respondents in the main questionnaire survey (Otto, 2002: 24) wanted more information about organic producers on the label, in brochures in the store, or over the Internet. With respect to the type of information sought, two thirds of these respondents would like a short portrait of the producer, the co-operative or the farm where the product is grown.

In the Biofach survey (Farnworth, 2003d: 4), slightly more women than men (75%: 65%) wanted more information about the producer on organic products. The majority of women and men (62.5%: 55%) also stated that information about the quality of life for producers would affect their purchasing decisions. Most, though not all, of the Biofach respondents agreed that they would pay a small premium on organic produce if they could be sure that the well-being of producers in the South would be thereby enhanced (ibid).

Participants in the Gut Wulksfelde seminar stressed the role of fair trade organisations as a link between producer and consumer. Such organisations need to ensure that producers have what they need. Consumers need only to know that they are helping people, and that their money actually arrives. They wondered whether fair trade organisations were trying to ensure that competition between fair producers in different countries was not harming their livelihoods (Raabe, 2003).

Key Producer Quality of Life Criteria
The respondents to the Biofach survey (Farnworth, 2003d) were asked to consider, and weight, the following eight criteria in two stages:

1. Securing Farmer Access to Land
2. Improving the Health of the Producers
3. Securing a Guaranteed Income over a Long Time to the Farmers
4. Maintaining / Improving Local Community Life
5. Improving the Social Status of Women Farmers
6. Improving the Local Environment
7. Increasing Incomes
8. Enabling the Farmers' Children to go to School

The criteria were selected by the author following her discussions with key players in the organic sector in Madagascar. She also read widely on issues facing organic and fair trade producers – some of these are presented in earlier chapters of this thesis. The criteria were also discussed with Ms Nieberg who applied the pilot questionnaire. The first stage involved weighting each criterion on its own merits, using the range of 'very important', 'important' and 'not important'. The second stage required that the respondents select the three most important criteria. Data from both stages was disaggregated according to age and gender. The age-disaggregated data from stage one were later presented to the focus groups for consideration. The results are thus presented in Part 10.4.

The aggregated data from the second stage are presented in Figure 10.4. It shows that the respondents, when asked to choose, clearly prioritised education, followed by improving the local environment and increasing incomes. Improving community life also makes the top four. In this scenario, improving the health of producers and securing access to land scored much lower than in the first stage (see Farnworth, ibid. for full details, more diagrams and more analysis).
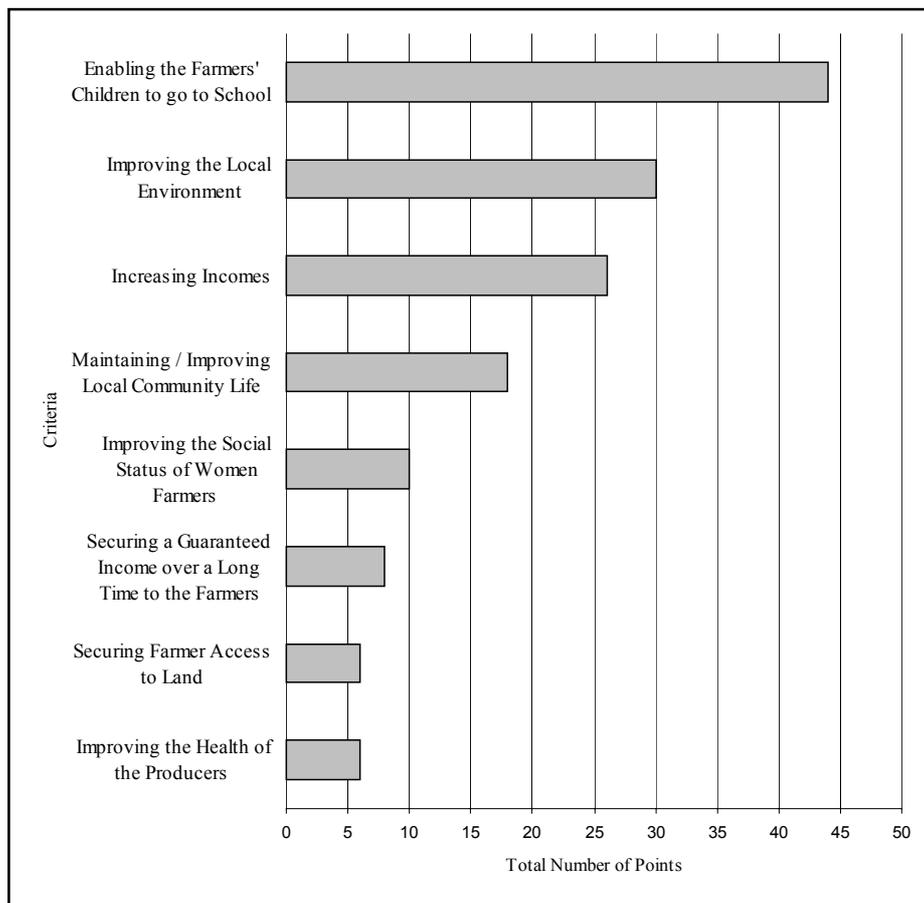
Figure 10.4: Most Important Quality of Life Criteria According to All Biofach Respondents
Source: Farnworth (2003d: 9)

When the data were gender disaggregated, the results showed that men and women agree on the top four criteria. However, women placed long-term security of income lowest, considering farmer health and access to land to be more important. Men, however, weighted education more strongly than the women. Long-term stability of income shot up their list, displacing 'improving the situation of women farmers'. Improving health tumbled to the bottom of the men's list.[184]

In the main questionnaire survey (Otto, 2002) three criteria were dropped on the advice of Ms Nieberg, following her experience in applying the Biofach survey. These were: (1) securing a guaranteed income over a long time to the farmers, (2) securing farmer access to land, and (3) maintaining / improving local community life. On Ms Nieberg's advice one criterion was adopted: purchase guarantees by buyers. Notwithstanding these changes, the main questionnaire survey provided a similar ranking to the Biofach survey. When the data were aggregated, education emerged again as the most important. However, the kind of education on offer was

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184 Figures for all these results, and a fuller account are in Farnworth (2003d).

debated hotly: *'Education and income go hand in hand'* expressed a generally held opinion, but someone else said: *'The Western educational system merely keeps people away from the job market. It is more important to spend a lot of time with the children.'* An improvement in the status of women, an improvement in the environment, and an improvement in health status followed (with equal weighting). When the data were disaggregated however, it emerged that men found education to be somewhat more important than did women. More women than men listed income and the status of women as very important. Purchase guarantees to producers followed closely, *'Everything depends on guaranteed purchase by the retailers'* said some. The idea of such guarantees was controversial though: *'Guaranteed purchase is not the right way to go; this gives too much power to large retailers'* (all citations in ibid).

Differences also emerged according to the respondents' organic shopping habits. Consumers whose shopping basket was between 33-66% organic felt health was very important, whereas people purchasing less, or more, organic products did not give health the same priority. People who bought more than 66% of their food on organic quality considered the status of women to be very important. Those people who had stated earlier that they cared about the origin of the product weighted the environment strongly at this point. Some said, *'People there (in the South) don't see improvement of the environment as important.'* Other respondents disagreed with this. Fair trade consumers in general weighted women's status highly, and cared less about the environment than did purely organic consumers (ibid: 26-31).

It became apparent, during the interviews following completion of the main questionnaire survey, that some organic consumers felt they lacked sufficient information about the situation of producers in the South. This made it difficult for them to do a proper ranking. These people wanted more and better information. Other respondents argued that the criteria were interlinked and that for this reason it was hard to do a ranking. One person said that the importance of each factor depended very much on the conditions prevailing in the specific place in the South under discussion. Most of the respondents agreed that all the criteria were very important (ibid.). Participants at Gut Wulksfelde commented on the role of aspiration in forming wants and needs; the more the producers achieved or gained, the more they would want to have (Raabe, 2003).

An aspect not covered by either questionnaire, but which emerged in the subsequent discussions as key to respondents, was the issue of trust. Though almost all the respondents wanted more information about the producers, they were worried that they could not trust the information when it was there. This was not just a question of distrusting labels as such. Part of the problem was their lack of understanding of the producer to consumer chain; it is too well veiled for the consumer to attempt to make responsible consumption decisions themselves (Otto, 2002: 34-6). Participants in the seminar at Gut Wulksfelde also discussed trust. They said they were able to trust institutions, like Bioland, since they were personally familiar with its decision-making mechanisms. They also argued that the majority of food processing should take place in the land of origin and that only

finished products should be exported. In other words, they thought that shortening the production chain could enhance trust (Raabe, 2003).

The age and gender of the respondents structured their responses in different ways. For example, only education emerged as a priority for <u>all</u> respondents in both the Biofach survey, and the main questionnaire survey. Otherwise, men and women emphasised different criteria. Interestingly, an analysis of the Biofach survey shows that women responded more consistently than men throughout the questionnaire. If they began with a positive response this generally prevailed to the end (and vice-versa). It could be argued that women either sought internal conformity of response, or that they had already considered these issues in some depth and therefore had strong opinions to express. Men, however, slightly more often gave no response, or did not provide the same type of answer throughout. Again, conclusions are hard to draw. It could be that men had more nuanced and complex views, or alternatively that they had not previously considered some of the issues in great depth and were therefore uncertain (Farnworth, 2003d: 11). Thomsen (manager of Reformhaus store in Essen, pers. comm. 07/03) notes from experience that women, in contrast to men, spend a long time considering their organic purchase, are better informed, and appreciate advice. Men are hasty shoppers, she says.

Discussion of Criteria and New Ideas
Respondents to the Biofach survey and main questionnaire survey were asked if they had any criteria to add to those presented in the questionnaires. Their suggestions provided some of the material for the subsequent focus group discussions. The criteria also provide pointers to potential barriers to entanglement across the producer to consumer chain, and as such feed into the next chapter on social labelling. They are presented in Table 10.1.

Table 10.1: Additional Quality of Life Criteria

Decision Making Processes	We should consider these criteria: state, democracy, corruption and human rights. Improve personal freedom (economic, education, in the workplace, in society as a whole). Improve autonomy in the South (cultural, political, economic, in decision-making processes). Democratic decision-making in organic and fair trade companies, not just in the countries themselves. Improve access to information (state, media, information technology).
Plantations	Have a change in ownership, so that it is not United Fruit which owns the plantations but cooperatives. Consider labour conditions and child labour. Supermarkets should show comparative pictures of workers on conventional and fair-trade plantations.
Improve Sustainability	In general / in development processes.
International	Shorten the producer to consumer chain.

Commodity Chain	Dismantle EU and other trade barriers against processed goods. No air transport.
Health	HIV/AIDS education and information. Information on reproductive health and family planning. Only regional approaches to health care (Western medical standards are not important)
Environment	Conservation of biodiversity in farming. No monocultures; no over-cropping. We need more information on environmental pollutants.
Status of women	Improving the status of men is important (not just women).
Fair Trade and Organic	A lot of marketing is needed to sell organic + fair products like bananas. Supermarkets are the wrong place, since cheap bananas lie alongside. Organic bananas mean a lot more work but not more money.

Sources: Compiled from Otto (2002), Raabe (2003) and Farnworth (2003d).

10.4   Analysis of the Focus Group Findings

The findings presented here are drawn from the focus group discussions. Many responses are given verbatim in order to convey the tenor and richness of the discussions. Some procedural notes: First, the questions posed are in bold type. The moderator collected opinions from all the participants in turn, but did not intervene in the discussion save for the purposes of clarity. The respondents were not made aware of the wider considerations that informed the formulation of the questions posed (such as the question of moral considerability or agency). Second, the verbatim quotations presented are taken from all of the four protocols transcribed by Mr. Raabe from cassette recordings of each focus group. They thus should be understood as responses to the questions, rather than as dynamically related to one another since they arose in different discussions. The responses were selected on the basis of either their representative, or their thought provoking, nature. Third, the analysis draws distinctions between the fair trade and organic respondents where this seems important. Given that their ethical starting points turned out to be so similar, however, this distinction is not pursued throughout.

   The reader is advised to think back to the presentation in Part 10.1 above in order to 'locate' the respondents in the organic scene in Germany. The purpose of Part 10.4 here is to enrich, and deepen, that preliminary understanding in view of the author's research questions: *How can German organic consumers connect and engage with the lives of producers in meaningful ways? Is it possible to create new relationships along the producer-consumer value chain? What are the pre-conditions for the forging of successful quality relationships along the producer-consumer chain in organic agriculture?* The interpretation in chapter eleven draws

more conclusive lessons from the findings of the German research. Here, the following thematic areas are addressed:

1. The respondents' ethical frameworks.
2. The respondents' sense of agency: from ethical citizen to ethical consumer.
3. Relativising ethical decision-making.

The central theme, producer–consumer relations, was addressed throughout the fieldwork in different ways as a cross-cutting issue. Through repeatedly tackling this question it was hoped that a richer, more nuanced, and considered understanding would emerge than one gained by only tackling it head on.

(1) The Respondents' Ethical Frameworks

Respondent responses are subdivided into the following two categories: (A) Setting the boundaries of the moral community, and (B) Practical limits to the moral community.

A. Setting the Boundaries of the Moral Community
The focus groups began by asking respondents to consider their ethical values in relation to five 'opinions'. These were taken from Elliot, R. (1991: 284-289 *A Companion to Ethics*). The concept of moral considerability, which lay behind these questions, is presented in chapter nine. To avoid influence with respect to the initial choice from other participants, each participant was given five different cards. Each card contained one of the potential choices. Participants were asked to make their choices in silence and to hold up their chosen card simultaneously. They were then asked to explain their decision.

Choices on the cards:
- **Human-centred: Humans are the most important. Animals are only important insofar as they affect human well-being.**
- **Animal-centred: Both humans and animals are equally important.**
- **Life-centred: All living things, including plants, are important.**
- **Everything: Living, as well as non-living things (landscape features like mountains, rivers etc) are all equally important.**
- **Ecological holism: The biosphere as a whole and ecosystems are the most important.**

You have chosen (-). Would you please tell us briefly why?

There were no substantive differences in the opinions selected by fair trade and organic consumers. Both groups tended to support holistic views (d) and (e), with the bulk of both supporting (e). However, only fair trade consumers supported (a) or (c). Typical reasons given for choosing (e) were:

> *For me, everything belongs together. The one cannot exist without the other – water, air, plants, animals, people. For me that means that the whole belongs together, and no one thing is more important than another.*

I picture a whole body with all its organs. And each completes the other. If one part is missing then the whole cannot function properly. That is why I chose 'e'.

I would see the global picture, see it comprehensively. I would think that the whole system, the whole cycle must work and when it is damaged somewhere then it is difficult for everyone.

The importance of holistic thinking to the participants came across clearly. They generally saw significant interdependencies between humans, animals and the environment. Humans were seen as dependent upon the successful functioning of the whole. Yet when pushed some people qualified their statements by saying that in concrete cases people were in fact more significant:

If I had to choose between the survival of a single human or animal, then I would sacrifice the animal, and keep the human. That is something quite different (this person chose 'e').

Everything that is being said here is right and yet people will always be more important for me than a coral reef. When I see starving children somewhere that affects me more than a ruined mountain slope (this person chose 'c').

However, only in one case did someone specifically stress that humans are more important than everything else:

For me it is important that the human beings currently living in the world are ensured a life worth living; that they survive. The protection of the environment, or this global business, that comes second. But for me the most important thing is that humans survive and have a life worth living on this planet (this person selected 'a').

The aim of the next question was to introduce the concept of international producer to consumer relationships in the broadest of terms. The question of future generations was posed in order to bring a temporal, as well as spatial, dynamic to the concept of moral community (or circle of concern). The author hypothesised that organic consumers might be particularly concerned about future generations.

Question: Looking beyond your family and friends, what kind of relationship do you feel you have to the following?
1. **Future generations.**
2. **People in other countries, for example Africa and Asia.**

With respect to future generations, the key words that emerged include: responsibility, duty, guilt, bad conscience, pity, fear, faith/confidence and hope. A great variety of statements were offered around the question. Some participants took the view that *'we have only borrowed the earth from our children'*, whereas

others were of the opinion that future generations would ameliorate the current situation:

> *Twenty years ago I used to think, like you, that it would be irresponsible to bring children into this world. But now I view things in a more relaxed fashion. When I look back over the last 100-150 years, I see that quality of life has much improved. Actually I am very optimistic that such developments will continue. At the same time I don't underestimate the dangers, which I clearly agree are there. There is a lot to do.*

> *Great responsibility: how I treat my resources, my environment. Might have something to do with the fact that I have two children.*

With respect to one's relationship to people in other countries, participants found social inequality between Germany and Southern countries a significant issue. They often expressed a feeling of guilt, or a sense of historic responsibility to the South. Many spoke of exploitation: *Yes, I always feel great anger when I see such imbalance.*

Apart from the wish to help financially, many wanted to pass on knowledge. Some views followed this general pattern: injustice between our western and their world exists, our world is however more advanced. It is therefore our duty not only to donate money but also to pass on aspects of our development. However, we should ensure that they do not make the same mistakes as we have made: *One should try, when they are over here, to give them a lot of knowledge, so that when they go back they can pass it on. That is our task actually, to transfer some of our knowledge.*

At the same time more negative feelings were sometimes apparent. A few people mentioned that they had ‚problems' with Islam, or they expressed a general sense of tension, even dislike, towards the South.

In sum, both fair trade and organic respondents demonstrated systemic thinking, seeing the world as interconnected and interdependent. In particular they saw a strong interrelationship between themselves (people in general) and the non-human environment. When the discussion shifted to people-people relationships - in essence, to membership of their particular moral community, opinions became more diverse and perhaps more confused, at times. Respondents were willing to include people in the South, and future generations, in their 'circle of concern', but the terms of that relationship were not clear. Behind the unease lay uncertainty, it seems, as to where responsibility for current inequalities lies, and as to who is responsible for trying to change the situation. The next question examined the question of bounded responsibilities explicitly.

Practical Limits to the Moral Community
Question (on flipchart): Some people say, *'I am very idealistic, but the world is too big and complicated these days. What I do, or do not do, makes no difference.'* Please explain why you agree, or do not agree, with this statement.

Almost all participants vehemently rejected this statement. Although most (but not all) tended to agree that the world is big and complicated, just about everyone thought that individual engagement with the world could make a difference, however small:

> *I think that if everyone saw things like that, 'if I do, or don't do, something, it makes no difference', it wouldn't be good. Each little thing that each individual does brings something. In my opinion one shouldn't think like that, that one should not or cannot try.*

The statement was seen as simply being an excuse to do nothing. Moreover some participants thought that the first and second parts contradicted each other: *No. I cannot say that I am idealistic and then do nothing.*

(2) The Respondents' Sense of Agency: from ethical citizen to ethical consumer

Having established some sense of an espoused ethical framework in the world of ideas, the respondents were taken through a series of questions aiming to establish the effectiveness - as they saw it - of their ethics in action in the real world. In particular the author wanted to know the answer to the following overall question: *Is ethical consumption an effective way of bringing about the kind of change consumers want?* This discussion was held in four stages: A. The use of labels as a signifier and as a means to set boundaries, B. Agency 1: Consumer understanding of real world effects of a choice based upon label as a signifier, C. Agency 2: Consumer in role of active citizen, and D. Agency 3: Location of agency. Agency was taken to mean the ability to define one's goals and act upon them. Agency can take the form of decision-making, of bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance - as well as the processes of reflection and analysis.

The discussion was staged so as to give the respondents sufficient time to think about the key questions in order to prevent them from uttering generalities or 'look good' views. A considered response was sought and care was taken to maintain interest through posing quite provocative questions. This approach was successful in that interaction and enthusiasm among the respondents remained high.

A. The Use of Labels as a Signifier / as a Means to Set Boundaries
Questions:
- **Imagine you are shopping and you find such an organic label on a product (show example): What does such an organic label mean to you?**

- **Now imagine that you find a 'fair trade' label on a product (show example): What does such a fair trade label mean to you?**
- **In what ways do you think these two labels are clearly different?**
- **Are there any areas of common ground?**

Participants tended to connect organic labels with production according to certain organic standards. In particular they named high animal welfare standards, as well as the avoidance of pesticides and other harmful chemicals. Many said they purchase organic principally in order to improve their health, or to do something for the environment: *That I do something for nature, that I do something for me, that I do something healthy.* Other qualities mentioned included better taste. There was however a good amount of scepticism and distrust of organic labels, coupled with annoyance that organic products cost more.

With respect to the question on fair trade labelling - although some participants said they had never seen a fair trade label, they all assumed that the term 'fair trade' meant that the producer was correctly, or at least better, paid than conventional farmers or plantation workers: *I would imagine that there must be an organisation that ensures that people in the Third World are paid fairly for their work, and that they are supported properly – naturally I find that just super.*

There was quite a lot of discussion as to whether a fair trade label also meant that the product was organically grown. Some thought it did, whereas others disagreed or felt that the labels overlapped. Several felt that fair trade products also tasted better. The questions that sought responses on whether the labels were clearly different, or had similar qualities, were posed together. Some people echoed this response: *One of them is about the organic aspect, the other the economic aspect.*

Yet other participants continued to link the two labels. It seems that some participants feel that the labels indicate such a high standard that it must simply be so that organic products have been fairly traded, and that fair trade products have been grown organically. They could not imagine that an organic farmer would exploit people, or that fair trade organisations would poison the environment: *I think so too, I would assume that bio means that it has been traded fairly – but this is just according to my feelings.*

Respondents who drew a difference frequently asserted that the aims of the labels were similar, namely fairness with respect to the environment and to people. However, they argued that combining both aims – to ensure maximum fairness – would make products very expensive.

We can conclude here that a fair amount of confusion remains about the purpose of labels. In particular fair trade labels were poorly understood, with people responding more to the word 'fair' than any grounded knowledge of the aims behind the label. The level of systemic thinking by respondents appears to determine the amount of 'ethical cross-over' they see between fair trade and organic labels. Even if they do not know 'the facts', they *assume* that ethical coherence must exist between organic and fairtrade products.

B. Agency 1: Consumer Understanding of the Real World Effects of Their Choice Based Upon the Label as Signifier

Having narrowed the discussion to organic and fair trade products and what they signify, the aim of the next round of questions was to ask the respondents to explore the effectiveness of their own 'ethics in action'. A question on the nature of the producer-consumer relationship, which had been alluded to above, was then posed in more concrete, personal form.

Question: I want to ask you more specifically about your own purchasing decisions now.
- **Why do you buy organic products?**
  (Optional question: What do you think the actual effect of your purchase is?)
- **Why do you buy fair trade products?**
  (Optional question: What do you think the actual effect of your purchase is?)
- **Do you think about the grower of your product when you buy fair trade or organic?**
- **Some people who buy organic or fair trade say (show flipchart)**
  I buy organic for myself and for the environment
  I do not profit personally from my fair trade purchase. My aim is to help farmers in the Third World.

The respondents were then asked to consider how the 'average' organic or fair trade consumer might respond to these questions.

In answering the questions on their reasons for organic purchasing participants emphasised health. They hoped that the renunciation of pesticides and other harmful chemicals meant that their food contained less 'poison'. One person spoke for many when he said: *I want to stay healthy*. At the same time organic products were associated with a better flavour: *They simply taste better. Organically-grown vegetables simply taste better than those grown conventionally.* In addition to health and taste, purchasers mentioned protection of the environment, animal welfare, an easy conscience and promotion of organic farming as being important factors in their decision-making.

In answering the questions on their reasons for purchasing fair trade products, participants responded that they wished to help people and to counter their exploitation. They wanted to help ensure that producers received a fair wage and better working conditions. In their opinion a fair trade purchase was a means of ensuring that financial assistance really arrived: *I would like producers in the Third World to receive a fair return to their work*. It was frequently argued that achieving a clear conscience was also a significant reason for purchase:

> *To fight against, or at least limit, the exploitation of people, and naturally – in second place – to rest easy.*

Every single time I buy fair trade I profit through gaining a clear conscience, or the feeling that spreads through me that I have perhaps done something good, however tiny.

Other consumers were considerably more sceptical:

In Germany many fine words are spoken about having a good conscience yet I know that the premium doesn't necessarily reach the farmer and also some of the farmers use pesticides just as in Germany. Labels like these gloss these things over.

Some people pointed out that the labels stand for different objectives and were bought precisely for these reasons. However other respondents believed that fair trade and organic consumers have much in common, arguing that both belonged to a thoughtful group of purchasers who share certain basic beliefs:

I certainly believe that purchasers in each group represent a reflective set of consumers and that their purchase behaviour is similar in most respects. The fair trade group is at the same time the group that purchases organic.

I believe that the purchasers of fair trade products belong to the group of people that try to view problems globally, that see that everything is entangled, that the one without the other isn't actually possible. Therefore there is certainly great overlap.

In answering the question on whether they <u>personally</u> thought about the farmer when purchasing organic products, participants expressed a great variety of views. Some thought that to think about farmers when buying a product was rather bizarre: *I have never, I believe, thought about the farmer,* and *I cannot imagine that someone thinks about the farmer.* In general, those participants who normally did their shopping in supermarkets stressed health and flavour. Other respondents, though, answered this question with a loud *'of course'.* In general a marked difference emerged between people who buy their products in supermarkets, and people that purchase from organic farms or farmers markets. In the latter case a very particular buying experience – personal contact with farmers, or a personal impression of farming conditions – leads to solidarity with farmers and a more rounded organic philosophy:

Yes, I think of the farmer because I always buy direct from an organic farm. I come into direct contact with the people working there. Those that sell the products are really incredibly nice, one has a very special relationship to them. But if I were to buy in a supermarket I am sure that would be much more anonymous, I would probably not think about the farmer.

Perhaps people think about the farmer if they drive over to the farm to make their purchases or if they get a box of organic food … only these people though. If they go to a big organic supermarket then they won't have a link to the producer either.

It is interesting to note that respondents, when in a supermarket, had no difficulty considering the producer when examining fair trade products. This is so despite the fact that a personal 'one-to-one' relationship clearly isn't possible. We can conclude that supermarkets have failed, or not tried, to make explicit the consumer-producer link in organic products.

C. Agency 2: Consumer in the Role of Active Citizen

Having enabled the respondents to establish 'who they were' in terms of ethical decision-making, the purpose of this section was to establish whether they thought that the market was an effective mechanism for translating their ethics into real world action. The final question aimed to situate the respondents' use of the market as a change mechanism: Was ethical consumption one of a range of strategies they employed to align the world more closely with their ideas of how the world should be?

Question: Some people say (show flipchart), *'These days, the marketplace is the only avenue open to the concerned citizen who wants to help create a different kind of world.'*

- **What do you think about this statement?**
  Optional question: How effective do you think the marketplace is as a means to bring about societal change?
- **What other avenues, if any, do you personally use to bring about the kinds of change you want? For example, are you a member of an NGO or pressure group?**

Some participants fully agreed with the statement, arguing that things were only produced if there was a demand for them. Those participants that disagreed asserted that though it might be true that consumers as a block could be powerful, they were not organised. Indeed, they continued, the majority of people shop in discount chains, and only a minority attempt to consciously use the power they have. In other words the statement was theoretically true but failed to become reality. Even if limited change is possible, so argued these people further, they could not agree with the terms *'a different kind of world'* and *'the only avenue'*. Rather, they considered that small steps were possible, and that purchasing power represented only one possibility for change among several:

> *It founders on the fact that consumers are not united. If they were united, then this would possible, but it isn't so.*

> *I believe that demand somehow regulates the market, and if things move slowly, well, consciousness is being built.*

> *I find that there is a lot to be said for this statement, but I don't believe it is the only possible way.*

308

I take exception somewhat to the term 'a different kind of world.' The first part of the statement is certainly true for me but 'a different kind of world' is a little exaggerated. Rather, I believe it is just a small part ...

In response to the question on whether they try to achieve change in other ways, participants showed themselves to be active in many fields: voting, demonstrating, donating, arguing their views with friends, influencing others through their own behaviour, their chosen studies and professions, voluntary work, environmentally-friendly behaviour, sponsoring a child in the South, financial support of campaigning organisations like Greenpeace, the way they brought up their own children, political activism ...The broadness of what they understood to 'count' as political activity was remarkable.

In sum, the respondents considered the market an imperfect mechanism for bringing about the world they sought. They located this in the inability of most consumers to exploit their agency *per se*. The respondents did not argue that market mechanisms are flawed – or unjust - in themselves. Their ethical consumption patterns formed part of a systemic approach to bringing about change. They were tussling with the world and its imperfections in many ways.

D. Agency 3: Location of Agency

The questions posed here explored agency further. Having established the felt reach of the respondents' agency as consumers and as ethical citizens, the discussion switched to the responsibility of other stakeholders in the producer to consumer chain to bring about change. The debate was pursued in two stages: the responsibility of retailers, and the responsibility of the state, to support ethical behaviour.

Question: Earlier we talked about fair trade and organic labels. Some people say that it is too much work for customers to read all the different labels. They argue that (show flipchart), *'I think organic shops should pre-select all their products according to ethical criteria.'*
- **What do you think of this statement?**
    Optional question: Do you think that retailers in general should take ethical decisions on behalf of their customers?
    Optional question: Or should customers be free to choose?

Participants usually had problems with the words ‚ethical criteria'. Many found the terminology too abstract – for them it was important to know exactly which criteria were being discussed. One participant even argued that pre-selecting goods according to ethical criteria echoed National Socialism. No one else went as far as this, but several worried that the pre-selection of goods according to ethical criteria would limit their freedom of choice as well as making products more expensive: *It would be simpler, that's for sure. Yet the real question is, how expensive would things become? If it would mean that all products become as expensive as those in organic shops, well ...*

Those who thought that consumers should be allowed to decide for themselves argued that ethical criteria are deeply personal and should remain so. If every retailer applied ethical criteria then this would mean that the consumer's right to decide had been subordinated. They argued further that if ethical criteria were applied only by certain large retailers, then people who bought in discount chains would be stigmatised: *Cheaper products must also be made available, since I simply cannot afford to buy organic all the time.* On the other hand a good number of participants welcomed the idea of ethical pre-selection of goods given that this would ensure better social conditions. Some felt, however, that it was important that retailers made their ethical pre-selection criteria transparent to all, just as organic and fair-trade shops currently do.

Question: In Germany the concept of the politically mature citizen (mündiger Bürger) is important. However some people say (show flipchart), *'A more ethical society should not be a matter of consumer choice. The government, or decision-making bodies in the European Union, should intervene to set high environmental and social standards for all players in industry and agriculture.'*
- **Is it the role of government, or the European Union, to set high standards for everyone to meet?**
- **Should a more ethical society be a matter of consumer choice?**

All participants agreed that higher standards were necessary. At the same time it was hard for them to imagine that it would be possible to achieve such standards. Distrust of the European Union or their own government was widespread; some felt that lobby groups had too much influence, and others worried whether such standards would, in fact, be observed: *Naturally that would be my wish. But it is a wish and as such remains totally utopian in my view.* Some participants were also concerned that higher standards would mean more expensive goods: *All products would then have to be more expensive. Could everyone manage, I ask myself.* Only one person was concerned about limits to freedom of choice: *I see the danger that standards could be applied with which I am in total disagreement. And obviously that would be dangerous and not desirable.* Yet the great majority pleaded along similar lines, though less vehemently, as this respondent.

> *I'd rather have standards than a free choice ... I can't claim to be entitled to a choice when I take coffee from a blood-stained business on the one hand, and on the other buy myself fair trade coffee. I can scarcely demand, or claim, such a choice.*

In sum, respondents generally agreed that ethical standards covering a range of social and environmental issues should be set by regulatory bodies. This generally seemed more acceptable than retailer action along the same lines. The justification was that many consumers simply do not think consciously about the social, ecological or health consequences of their purchase (for whatever reason) and thus could not be relied upon for enforcing ethical decision-making in the marketplace. The key barrier to the implementation of ethical standards across the board was the belief that ethical consumption is more expensive. A good number of respondents stated here, and elsewhere, that they were not prepared to pay more.

310

(3)   Relativising Ethical Decision-making

One of the assumptions lying behind the focus group work was that the process, if carefully led, would lead to a sense of 'group coherence'. The creation of coherence was felt to be necessary in order to enable explicitly self-reflexive questions to be posed. For instance, one question touched upon the significance of age and gender to ethical decision-making processes. The analysis of the pilot and full questionnaires (see Farnworth, 2003d; Otto, 2002) suggested that there was a correlation between these variables and the types of ethical decisions consumers made. In other words, the respondents did not take decisions on the basis of the 'abstract' ethical content of such decisions alone. This observation was pursued in the focus groups, given that it could have a significant bearing on the development of social labels.

Some of the results of the Biofach survey[185] were presented to the respondents for consideration (on a poster). The purpose here was two-fold (1) to permit the respondents to think about how their gender and age might have a bearing on their ethical behaviour, and (2) to provide the foundation for a discussion on the overlap, or otherwise, of producer and consumer quality of life values. This demanded that the respondents consider how their view on the kind of quality of life producers 'ought to have' might contradict with the producers' own views.

A. Relativing Ethical Decision-Making According to Gender and Age
Question: I now want to talk to you specifically about the kinds of projects fair trade labels might support in farming communities. For instance, this fair trade coffee company, [show packet] supports long-term contracts, minimum prices and direct trading links to farmers.

We carried out a survey of organic consumers here in Germany. We asked them to think about the well-being of organic farmers in the South. In particular, we asked them to consider specific criteria like the health of farmers, the position of women, increasing incomes, and the education of farm children. We then analysed the findings by gender and by age. Here are some of the results according to age (show flipchart).

> **The top four criteria of young people (up to age 30) were:**
> **(1) education of farmer children (2) improving the social status of women farmers (3) improving the local environment (4) improving community life. The lowest-placed criterion was: securing a guaranteed income over a long time to farmers.**

185 The data here were taken from Farnworth, C.R., (2003d) *Biofach 2001: Pilot questionnaire on German organic consumer interest in producer well-being and their willingness to reward 'more than purely price' values* (available on the author's website www.pandiawarleggan.com). The age-disaggregated results are very similar to those produced by Otto (2002: 27) in the main questionnaire survey.

People in the middle age range (age 31-50) had the following top four: (1) education of farmer children (2) increasing income (3) improving the local environment (4) securing a guaranteed income over a long time to farmers. The lowest placed criterion was: securing farmer access to land.

The top four of people in the 50 plus age group were: (1) education of farmer children (2) improving the social status of women farmers (3) increasing income (4) improving farmer health. The lowest placed criterion was: securing farmer access to land.

Question: I would like to ask you some questions on the basis of these results. First, thinking about yourself, do you think that your age, or the fact that you are a man or woman, makes a difference to your decision to purchase organic or fair trade?

The majority of respondents felt that their age influenced their purchasing decisions with respect to fair trade and organic products. They argued that factors such as greater life experience and a higher income were important, in addition to the fact that increasing age made health concerns come to the fore:

> *The last group - my age group – is certainly representative. Certainly due to my experiences in life, and due to my current health status, I have to catch up on all those things I didn't give a darn about in my youth. Anyway we didn't have organic then. I mean, I try to emphasise the health aspect as much as possible.*

Some felt that membership of a particular generation was a significant factor. They argued that each generation is influenced by different trends and influences:

> *Sociological influences are important - where you grow up and the kind of environment you have. I did a lot during the 80s and fair trade and organic was a matter of great public concern. I know lots of people in my generation that really care about this. My parents too, well my mother, my father doesn't. I do think that there are small differences there. Their generation thought everything was normal, the consciousness wasn't there that something could be unhealthy. They grew things in their own gardens and just ate it. Yet we have learnt that it can be different.*

It was more difficult for participants to consider whether their gender played a role in their purchasing decisions, simply because they were so much at home in themselves. They could not imagine what it was like to be a member of the opposite sex and thus could not draw a distinction between how they, as a woman or a man, might behave differently to someone of the other gender. Respondents, both male and female, who felt that gender did in fact play a role said that women are more likely to take conscious purchasing decisions. They justifed their opinion by either asserting that women were responsible for the household, or because they thought women tended towards caring and looking after children.

I actually think that women buy more organic than men and now that I am thinking about families, in my fantasy it is so – the women is more of a carer, concerned, health, the children.

Several argued – as an indirect response to the question – that both women and men who wanted children should make sure that their bodies remain as free as possible from harmful chemicals: ... *a small aspect perhaps, when one thinks about harmful chemicals in the body - if one wants children then one should take personal responsibility.*

B. Relativising Ethical Decision-making According to One's Own Quality of Life Values

The final discussion took as its starting point the age-differentiated data just presented, in particular referring to the criteria that the Biofach survey respondents had felt important to a good producer quality of life. Selected findings from the Malagasy fieldwork, chosen to provoke discussion around the views of the focus groups participants, were then presented on a poster. The aim was to pose an indirect challenge: *Who is to decide what counts?*

Question: It is <u>possible</u> that the projects supported by fair trade organisations in third world countries - and described on the label of a jar of coffee to encourage your purchase - might not really be the kind of project the farmers want. Fieldwork in Madagascar with organic farmers and plantation workers showed that, with respect to farmers:

> **Many farmers did not think the education of their children was a priority.**
> **Farmers prized independence above all else, meaning that they were prepared to have less money than be bound to a supply contract.**
> **Food production was more important than the production of cash crops.**
> **Farmers thought their health was good.**
> - **What do you think? Should labels represent 'our' values as consumers or 'their' values as farmers?**
> - **If labels more closely represented farmer values, do you think you personally would - or could - support projects that might conflict with your own values (e.g. setting up a video salon[186] instead of a primary school)?**

A good number of participants argued forcefully that the wishes of the farmers should be made clear on product labels. Two reasons were given, one being that

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186 The idea of posing a video salon as an alternative to a school came from a dream map prepared by men at Plantation MonDésir. They wanted to set up a dance hall. The aim in the focus group sessions was to try and impose an artificial dilemma upon the participants that was founded in reality (the Malagasy themselves were not asked to choose between a school or video salon. The example is nevertheless thinkable given that a good number of farmers – for good reason - expressed no interest in the formal education system).

farmers 'know best' what is good for them. The other lay in a rejection of neo-colonial attitudes:

> *For example, if the farmer thinks that his own land is more important to him than a long-term contract, then I find that okay. And if he thinks he is healthy, then that is okay too. In my opinion, when we start to pressurize farmers in other countries to accept our ideas, that is exploitation all over again.*

The perception that consumer values were more important to many of the respondents was not expressly made clear though it clearly underpinned a number of statements:

> *I am not really sure, but I think that if the farmer families carry on as they always have done, then not much will happen, the education of the children won't happen, then one will carry on just as one always has done. But I would so much like to show these people another model. Of course they have to decide by themselves, but I would so much like to give the children a chance, because the world is changing and in the long term it just isn't good when they stay where they are, where they have always been.*

Some participants tried to find a compromise by arguing for a balanced mixture between consumer and producer values.

> *I would say that they have to draw the line somewhere, so that they can sell their products and not just sit on them.*

> *I share the opinion that, if we have to finance something, the school comes first. And if they have their school and then want a video salon, then they can have their video salon. But the school has to come first.*

Several participants said they could not decide until more information was made available on the packaging. In such a case they might indeed support a project that appeared at first glance to be contrary to their own values: *I would need all this information on the packet ... it would all depend on the example.*

10.5   Conclusion

This chapter has presented the fieldwork findings in the context of Germany's strong organic sector. It has sought to provide a rich picture of the respondents' ideas, through letting them speak at much as possible in their words.

314

Chapter Eleven: The New Social Label and Quality Relationships in the Organic Food Chain

The first snow
Just enough to bend the jonquil leaves.[187]

This chapter returns to some of the lead questions of this thesis. It asks:

- *How can German organic consumers connect and engage with the lives of producers in meaningful ways?*
- *Can, and should, social labels be shaped in part by producer values?*

And in the course of answering these questions it addresses the following:

- *Is it possible to create new relationships between producers and consumers?*
- *What are the pre-conditions for the forging of successful quality relationships?*

The challenge is great. Chapter eight suggested that current consumption patterns in the North cause real harm to people, their livelihoods, and their environment in the South. The humanity of producer – consumer relationships in international commodity chains is distorted and disfigured by power relationships that confine the ability of people in the South *'to be, and to do'*. At the same time, the situatedness of human life on earth means that the harm caused by current levels of consumption is already rebounding on Northern consumers. Harm can only be ameliorated, and disguised, in the short term by technological advance. Moreover, trade between North and South is certain to increase. The problem needs to be tackled urgently.

However, real world complexity muffles attempts by ethical consumers to consume wisely. Consumers are engaged in functional relationships over which they have little control. They cannot properly trace the 'real world' effects of their consumption choices, and are thus not rewarded through direct (tangible) feedback upon the impact of these choices upon the intended beneficiaries. Although some analysts – and the German fieldwork findings - suggest that consumers *are* rewarded through a sense that they have 'done good', this is of course not the same thing. The feedback loop engendered by the hope that one has done good is very fragile, very simple, and easily fractured by doubt. These remarks imply that consumers need a certain strength of character to engage in ethical consumption.

Despite the difficulties that real world complexity engender for ethical decision-making, it can be argued that ethical consumption choices do help to improve, or

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[187] Bashō (1644-94).

maintain, the global commons in less immediately tangible ways. Ethical consumption choices make a difference. However, the problem arises that the cost falls disproportionately upon ethical consumers due to the higher costs associated with producing 'ethically'. Since public goods are by definition in the public domain, consumers who do not make deliberate ethical choices can free ride. Furthermore, it is improbable that ethical consumers can disassociate themselves completely from cultural norms that reward exponential consumption. It is hard for consumers to distinguish on an everyday basis between material and non-material needs, let alone attempt to make 'wise' choices within these categories. Moreover, all kinds of conflicting discourses impinge upon consumer decision-making. These include good parenting, budget balancing, peer pressure, advertising and so on. These factors make it highly problematic to try and conflate 'ethical consumption' with 'wise consumption', even if the former implies the latter.

The evidence presented in the last few chapters suggests that 'ethical values' are widely shared in a population, though not everyone feels able (or is able) to translate these into ethical consumption choices. The German questionnaire surveys and the focus group discussions showed that the respondents see synergies between apparently diverse issues, like social justice, ability to access health care, corruption, and holistic understandings of the biosphere. One focus group respondent said, *I believe that the purchasers of fair trade products belong to the group of people that try to view problems globally, that see that everything is entangled, that the one without the other isn't actually possible.'* However, on the basis of the fieldwork findings, it can be argued that the 'real world', expressed in political and market mechanisms, frequently frustrates the desire of consumers to follow through on their synergistic, complex thought processes. Retailers generally seem to lack ethical consistency, even if 'ethical concerns' increasingly thread through their bottom lines. They often fail to exploit the potential of their role as heads of buyer-led chains in helping to lever ethical practice right down the chain. Furthermore, there seems to be a kind of moral discrepancy in encoding 'things that really matter' like a living wage, the right to collective bargaining, and other issues with a material bearing on quality of life into codes of conduct that can then be marketed as ethical propositions, rather than as a regulatory requirement, to consumers. Respondents in the German fieldwork were not asked for their views on this hypothesis. However, it is plausible to argue that the resistance of a good many of them to retailers as 'ethical arbitrators' in the marketplace may arise from unease at the idea that ethical behaviour can provide retailers with a selling point. Furthermore, the discussions on incommensurable values and goal integration, pursued throughout this thesis, suggest that people are generally quite aware that money is an ineffective and inappropriate mechanism for capturing and fixing particular kinds of value.

The evidence suggests that consumers are driven to make trade-offs due to the frequent failure of real world arbitrators like retailers to act as go-betweens between what consumers want to achieve, and what they think they are actually able to achieve through their consumption choices. Consumers generally understand that these trade-offs dismantle the ethical consistency of their personal value systems. The image of an hourglass is useful. The top end represents the

316

complex, synergistic quality of people's thinking. The middle is the market, which squeezes, narrows, and challenges the ability of consumers to respond to the complex synergistic quality of the real world at the other end of the hourglass.

Credence labels are one response to this challenge. They denote that an ethical practice is occurring at some point in the producer to consumer chain. If they are taken up by consumers, they help to strengthen and entrench that practice. They thus have great potential as real world mechanisms to 'create and fix' some kind of quality relationship to the world. However, labels are rather 'slithery' in that they resist full capture by their 'owners'. Even if they have been brought into being by one actor, and thus to some extent are identified with a particular brand, like Café Direct or The Gap, it is impossible for these actor-owners to maintain full control over the *processes* which lie behind the label. Too many stakeholders are (or become) involved in such processes, ranging from the producers themselves, to the consumers, NGOs, trades unions and civil society at large. Too many gaps with respect to interpreting the meaning of these processes emerge.

There are important operational difficulties with labels that compound their slithery character. The analyses presented in chapter eight suggest that it can be difficult for consumers to translate data actually on, or associated with (for example on the Internet), physical labels into information that enables them to engage in 'right action'. The data is frequently inadequately contextualised. It is not always of the quality, and type, that consumers need to make satisfactory, and wise, consumption decisions. The author contends that, over and beyond these operational difficulties, that credence labels have a very limited brief. Consumers are primarily viewed as a means of channelling benefits, via the mechanism of a credence label, to a range of beneficiaries. Organic labels isolate ecosystems as prime beneficiaries – and via feedback loops, ourselves. Fair trade labels target quite specific and narrow aspects of the lives of beneficiaries. The typical credence label works on the basis that consumers and producers occupy static categories. Although this is a rather crude characterisation, it does permit us to see that the agency of both producers and consumers is confined by the intent and practice of current credence labelling. They do not engage in an iterative, learning relationship.

Despite all these reservations about the efficacy of credence labelling, it is clear that consumers try to express their care and concern through engaging in real world ethical consumption behaviour. The ethical market is growing despite all the difficulties just outlined. The purpose of this chapter is to suggest ways in which producers and consumers can work together in order to produce outcomes that do not only address and ameliorate some of the difficulties that we have been discussing, but move far beyond them to create *'a quality relationship between producers and consumers'*. The brief of credence labels needs to be expanded enormously to help to achieve this aim. The goal of a new social label was defined in chapter one thus:

> *The social label conceptualised by the author would occupy quite different ground to labels dealing with the conditions of production, or trading*

relationships. Attention would be paid to other values and aspirations producers hold, the aim being to ensure that these are supported, rather than eroded, through production for the Northern market. An important feature of the label would be its ability to acknowledge and build upon the ethical values held by the consumer. Indeed, a central selling point of such a label would be its dynamic character. It should evolve as quality of life aspirations among organic producers and consumers change. An iterative learning process would need to set up between producers and consumers to achieve the goal of a true social label.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide pointers for how a new social label may become a reality. It is acknowledged at the outset that it is in many ways contradictory for the author to engage in a discussion that should, if it were ever to happen, take place between a number of stakeholders. This chapter therefore represents a 'thought-piece' that could form the framework of such a discussion. It is divided into four parts.

Part 11.1, *'Operationalising the New Social Label: Logistics'*, examines some of the practical issues that need to be tackled. It is not possible in this thesis to become involved in the nitty-gritty of the challenging task of setting up a new social label, but this part provides some pointers.

'Part 11.2, *Operationalising the New Social Label: The Stakeholders'*, examines 'who counts'. It is necessary to continue our deconstruction of the consumer in order to ensure that stakeholders enrolled in a soft system set up to create a new social label are 'representative'.

Part 11.3, *'Operationalising the New Social Label: Values'*, explores 'what counts'. It suggests that the values underpinning social labels need to be unpacked if progress is to made. It cannot be assumed that producers and consumers share the same values. This is important because evidence presented elsewhere in the thesis suggests that a lack of ethical consistency between stakeholders in the organic food chain leads to disillusionment, not least among consumers.

Part 11.4, *'Operationalising the New Social Label: Promoting Conversations'*, discusses the 'how' of the social labelling enterprise. It argues that rich information is a pre-requisite of a label that promotes a quality relationship between producers and consumers. The author's quality of life toolkit is a significant source. Ways in which the data provided by the toolkit can be processed to provide action-enabling information are presented. Arenas in which conversations may be conducted are outlined. Finally, the author puts forward her own proposal for a social label.

11.1   Operationalising the New Social Label: Logistics

This part provides an overview of some of the issues that would need to be addressed if a new social label were to be created: the role of the change agent, marketing of the label, cost, and information flows.

Boxelaar (2004) argues that change agents should deliberately position themselves as brokers at the boundaries of a practice or platform, where they are both operating from within the research setting, but also from a position that transcends it. This is a precariously balanced position that needs to be carefully considered and negotiated at the outset of a project. In her opinion a change agent should be a social researcher since theory is needed to make sense of the broader processes, structures and power relations that connect people's experiences across practices. Facilitators with appropriate skills are needed to create the social spaces in which meaningful dialogue and interaction can take place (SLIM Policy Briefing No. 2, 2004: 4).[188]

Marketing is key. Allan (2004: 27) explains that creating name recognition involves either high promotional spend, or an energized network of supporting organizations. In cases where money is in limited supply, it is necessary to create a marketing buzz using the media. The support of credible high profile social organizations could help the new label to build its own reputation. Such organisations could also make their communication vehicles available to get the label's message out. A media strategy could focus on the need being addressed, and how the social label is meeting it (ibid). Box 11.1 provides three exciting examples of how the values that inform social labels can be communicated to the public.

Box 11.1:   Communicating the Values Behind Social Labels

Allan (2004: 27) argues that an information strategy needs to be multi-layered. It should start with a simple point of sale symbol, to summary information on websites and search engines, to interactive forums and resource databases containing detailed information. This is the approach taken by Nature and More, a Dutch organic company that sells 'green' products. Their aim is to provide consumers with the basis for an informed purchasing decision. This new awareness, they say, is a precondition to establish a *'conscious link between producers and consumers'*. Each product has a label that indicates the number of 'points' it has achieved with respect to product quality, ecological quality, and social quality. If consumers want to know more, they can log onto the Nature and More website. Here they can type in the product code. This takes them to a new site with summary information on the product. For example the code 385 (navel oranges) provides access to pictures of a citrus farm called Modderfontein in South

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[188] The literature on how to conceptualise the role of change agents is huge. Much management literature puts forward 'recipes' for change agents to follow, but Wilson (1993) and Stacey (1994) discuss how change agents need to work with chaos and complexity if they are to be effective. Stacey puts forward a theory of 'extraordinary management', in contrast to 'ordinary management'.

Africa. Clicking onto the box 'social quality' activates a pop-up that explains how the composite score of 6.8 for this particular quality was arrived at (for example, contracts and agreements - 8 points/ excellent; wages and salaries – 5 points/ good; mutual respect and recognition – 9 points/ outstanding). Background information on the farm and an interview with its owner is also provided. It is not clear from the site, though, how product, ecological and social quality are assessed. Information on the farm workers is also lacking – their well-being can only be deduced from the numbers in the social quality box. It is here that the author's quality of life toolkit could make an exciting contribution. It is capable of providing 'rich pictures' (insights) and nuanced information on the workers' lives. The Nature and More website is attractive and easy to use. See www.natureandmore.com.

A German initiative is trying to 'embed' a typically Southern product in a Northern community through localising it. One World Forums (Eine-Welt-Foren) and Agenda 21 initiatives have come together to produce a fairly traded certified organic coffee that carries the name of towns in the Ruhr area of Germany. *'Der Pott kocht Fair: Essener Kaffee'* brand is sold in Essen, for example. The brand name combines the idea of making a 'fair' pot of coffee with a play on the colloquial name in Germany for the Ruhr area and its dialect – 'Ruhrpott'. *Der Pott kocht Fair* coffee is made from arabica beans grown in the Columbian highlands by smallholder cooperatives. It is hoped that the premiums paid on organically grown coffee - plus the fair trade promise of a basic purchase price – will enable the smallholders to increase their incomes significantly. The project also supports subsistence food production. The long-term hope of the sponsors of *Der Pott kocht Fair* initiative is that it will help the Columbian smallholders to escape from their dependence on illegal drug production by providing a profitable alternative. At the same time they want to make the fair trade concept more accessible to consumers in towns like Essen. The coffee's logo is a mine tower. Essen was built around coalmining and it remains a strongly working class town (www.pottkaffee.de).

The social label *'Grown and Picked in the USA by Workers Paid a Living Wage'* appeals to the consumer's sense of social justice much more directly than is usual in social labelling initiatives. The Harvest for Humanity Farm in Immokalee, Florida, was established by Richard and Florence Nogaj in 1999 to address the tough social and economic challenges faced by seasonal farm workers. To do this the farm (40 ha) pays a 'living wage' starting at $8.50 per hour (2003 figure). It provides the workers with year-round employment as well as agricultural, business and language training. The project has built a new 'neighbourhood' on the farm with attractive houses available for purchase by low-income families. The Harvest Blueberry Store sells baked and other goods – a source of revenue and employment. The overall goal of the project is to build sufficient capacity among the workers to enable them to purchase the farm through stock options using no-profit, no-interest loans in the very near future and then to run it effectively. Richard and Florence Nogaj hope to spread the concept of worker-owned

farms throughout America. The label itself, *'Grown and Picked in the USA by Workers Paid a Living Wage',* has been designed as a marketing tool for the farm's high quality early blueberries. The label includes characteristics such as local origin, insecticide-free, use of integrated pest management procedures and social justice. At the time of writing the farm has received a Sustainable Community Innovation grant, funded by Southern Region SARE and the Southern Rural Development Center in order to explore whether consumers are willing to pay slightly more for blueberries marketed under this label (Sources: Abstracts, Conference on '*Ecolabels and the Greening of the Market'*, 2002, and www.aboutharvest.org).

Setting up social labels like the ones presented in Box 11.1 is expensive. A new social label would have to generate revenue in order to cover the costs of setting up the label, advertising and maintaining it, and carrying out impact assessment. In order to do this, Allan (2004: 28) suggests that such a label would need to charge a fee to join, and annual membership fees based on sales. It may need to offer discounted membership initially in order to attract the minimum number of users required for market visibility (ibid). Blowfield (1999: 12) says that the costs would have to be recouped either by efficiency savings, or through increased prices to consumers. Premiums are the typical route taken by fair trade brands. Blowfield stresses, however, that little work has been done on the actual cost of implementing enterprise initiatives. Costs vary according to where the auditing team is based, the amount of time the team spends in the field, the extent of the audit, and the cost of implementing improvements. He notes that significant extra costs may not be incurred if companies have well-functioning management systems (ibid: 13). The author suggests that the quality of life toolkit could provide the rich data that is needed to legitimise the new social label. The data would not come free. The costs, in terms of money, time and capacity building – particularly in terms of human capital, that are associated with social certification in the producer communities would need to be borne by several stakeholders in the project. Lengthy discussion on how to share the burden and on how to avoid imposing too much upon the producer communities is a necessity.

We now turn to examine the logistics of information flows in some detail. Knowledge relies on quality data. The power to make wise decisions rests on appropriate knowledge. The remarks made in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, and evidence presented throughout this thesis, show that information flows are squeezed all down the line. We study the bundling of such flows in one commodity chain here.

Courville (2001) has analysed information flows in five coffee production-to-consumption case studies starting from three organic coffee producer co-operatives in Mexico through to importers, roasters and retailers in the USA, Spain, Germany and Denmark. She undertook three levels of analysis (1) an organisational perspective, which examined the size and structures of the networks and the role of key individuals, (2) an examination of the channels or modes of communication, including the capacity and multiplexity of the channels, and (3) a discussion of the information flows themselves – information flow symmetry, strength and intensity,

as well as different types of information flow (ibid: 225). Readers are referred to her work for a valuable and sophisticated analysis of these flows. For our purposes, it is helpful to refer to the production-to-consumption case study that links Mexican producers to German consumers (ibid: 234-6).

Courville's study opens by showing great differences in the structure and quality of information flows in two regional organisations, La Mixteca del Pacifico and UCOCAM. They are members of CEPCO[189], the smallholder coffee producer's umbrella body. Producers belonging to La Mixteca del Pacifico benefit from strong technical assistance visits by CEPCO, whereas UCOCAM producers only receive a limited amount of agronomic and environmental information at CEPCO's monthly meetings, and CEPCO biannual congress. Both regional organisations have women's committees. These facilitate the flow of socio-economic and financial information between the producer women and CEPCO's technical assistance team. Women in La Mixteca del Pacifico benefit, in addition, from CEPCO training visits targeted specifically at women. In addition to the biannual congress, biannual women's encounter days also help to build internal relations. They also enable financial, agronomic and logistical information flows to women in both regional organisations. La Mixteca del Pacifico and UCOCAM have better information flows upwards to CEPCO than downwards to the producer members.

In contrast to this rich patterning, information flows at the other end of the commodity chain in Germany are highly formalised. Monetary flows are dominant between the main actors. Socio-economic and environmental information is organised through fair trade and organic certification and labelling systems. It is presented to end consumers in the form of labels. Figure 11.1 (taken from Courville's doctoral thesis, 2001, Figure 35: 235 with her permission) depicts the information flows between all the actors in the producer to consumer chain. Courville stresses that each of the five case studies varied dramatically in terms of the number and the kinds of information flow in the system. This is important to bear in mind when examining Figure 11.1. Nonetheless, Figure 11.1 demonstrates the varied complexity and intensity of the information (and other, such as energy) flows between different actors in the system.[190]

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[189] Coodinadora Estatal de Productores de Café de Oaxoca.
[190] Refer to Courville's doctoral thesis (2001) for an enlarged version of Figure 11.1. This would enable the reader to gain greater understanding of the information flows portrayed. The figure is reproduced here to enable the complexity of the flows to be represented visually, rather than to provide particular information about those flows.

Figure 11.1: Information Flows Between Mexican Producers and German Consumers
Source: Courville (2001: 235)

Case Study 4
La Mixteca Alta Del Pacifico

323
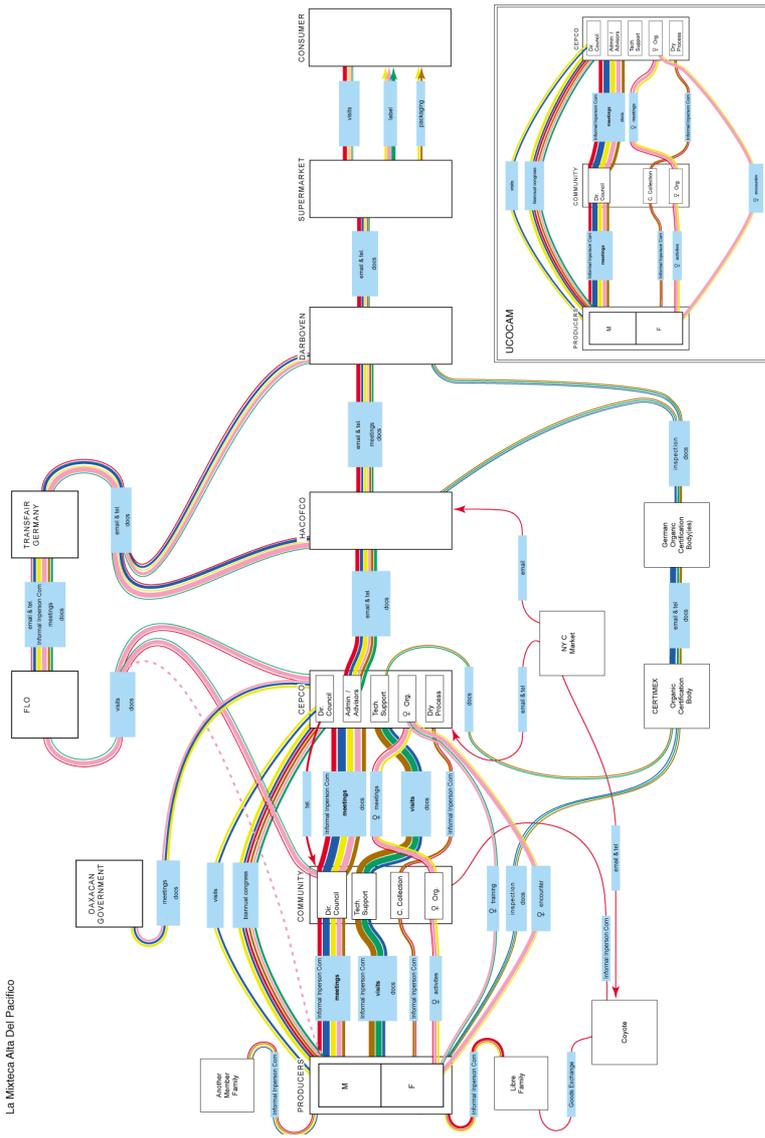
On the basis of her analysis of the five case studies, Courville observes that almost all information flows are localised. However, the following span the whole system (ibid: 255):

- Price information. The NY C market serves as a reference point for all coffee transactions, save for the transaction between retailer and consumer. In the latter case, price information remains important.
- Information about the quality of the coffee.
- Socio-economic and environmental information. Whilst this information is passed on mainly from one actor to the next, certification and labelling systems enable such information to flow between producers and consumers more directly.
- Only two other (non-information) flows span the whole system – energy, and of course coffee itself.

Courville (ibid: 253) notes that appropriate, diverse, and consistent information flows are an important basis for building a sustainable production, trade and consumption system. Such flows can reduce material and energy throughput and enable a more equitable distribution of monetary flows. However, she continues, in order for communication systems to work all parties must be able to interact effectively. This demands that they understand the information transferred, have the ability to apply the knowledge gained, and can learn from experience.

These provisos are not being properly met in the case of consumers. Figure 11.1 and Courville's analysis reveal that there is plenty of informational activity, though of varying quantity and quality, in the producer domain, and a somewhat abbreviated version between importers, roasters, retailers and consumers at the other end of the chain. Consumers themselves are mere recipients of information flows presented in summary form on labels and packaging. Their realm of action is limited to either purchasing the coffee, or not. Courville (ibid: 254) herself suggests that consumer education could be facilitated by knowledgeable shop-front retail staff able to provide information on the socio-economic and environmental conditions of production. This is probably quite important given that respondents to the author's German questionnaire surveys and seminars were caught in a double bind of wanting more information about producers, but not trusting the information when it was there. Some of the focus group respondents expressed similar sentiments, and in addition associated credence labels with more expensive products. This impacted on their willingness to purchase ethically.

The question of profit margins and premiums on 'ethical' products is important, and it formed one of the investigative foci of the German fieldwork. It is worth noting that, whilst the majority of respondents to the questionnaire surveys would pay a higher premium on organic products to benefit Southern producers, this readiness was weakened, again, by doubt as to whether the premium actually reached the producer. This finding is a further testimonial to the felt weakness of consumers in the international organic commodity chain.

A new social label cannot address this felt weakness simply by providing more information. Courville's work highlights the largely unidirectional nature of the information flows about producers via certifiers and retailers to consumers. Given this, more cannot be argued to be better. Chapter eight in this thesis made it clear that information overload is a real problem for consumers. However, it is possible to negotiate one's way around the block posed by information overload by considering how to address information <u>asymmetry</u>. This was identified in chapter eight as one of the key stumbling blocks of credence labels. The evidence presented indicated that consumers wanted information that enabled them to take proper ethical decisions. It is quite easy to confuse this with the need for more information. Redressing information asymmetry, involves tackling not only what, but <u>how</u>, information is mediated in the producer to consumer chain. Certifiers and buyers quite clearly occupy a top-heavy position here. The solution cannot be to merely expedite information flows between these stakeholders (and others) for two reasons:

1. Considerable vested power is bundled in the organisations occupying these nodes. Their power is derived from their role as creators and mediators of information to other organisations willing to pay for that information. Tackling their vested power is quite a task because information asymmetry is the reason for their existence.
2. 'Unsticking' the information that these organisations have by making it more accessible (in terms of content and flow) to consumers does not, in itself, resolve the problem.

It is not appropriate to tackle these difficulties here since this part is about alerting readers to logistical issues. Part 11.3, however, puts forward a method of transforming the data in a way that enables consumer decision-making, and in so doing hopefully enables quality relationships between producers and consumers to be generated. Ways of working productively with retailers, certifiers and the state in entanglement spaces are outlined.

In conclusion to Part 11.1, the author remarks that it is important to ensure that stakeholders, whether primary (the consumers and the producers), intermediate (the certifiers) or key (the retailers and traders) can move with the process. The danger is of moving too far ahead too fast. Multi-stakeholder negotiations must allow space and time for break-out groups to set their own agendas, think through the issues at stake and bring recommendations to the table. We turn to the stakeholders now.

11.2   Operationalising the New Social Label: Stakeholders

The slithery character of labels all too often lays them open to attack on the basis that they lack integrity. However, we can turn this problem around by arguing that integrity can be built through overt acknowledgement of, and work with, these slithery characteristics. To do so means that labels have to be detached from particular sites of power, such as retailers. It is this attachment that makes labels

weak and unable to deal properly with complexity. Key stakeholders need to relinquish ownership over how meanings come to be enacted in labels. To examine the implications of this assertion, this part, like all the parts in this chapter, is divided into two subsections. The first asks: *What needs to be done?* The second asks: *How might this be done?*

The Stakeholders – What needs to be done?

Developing a new social label involves setting up multi-stakeholder negotiations. Hemmati defines multi-stakeholder negotiations as *'processes which aim to bring together all the major stakeholders in a new form of communication, decision-finding (and possibly decision-making) on a particular issue'* (Hemmati, 2002: 2). The presenting issue has already been defined – the creation of a social label. The key stakeholders have also been defined – producers and consumers in the international organic chain. These terms are, however, mere descriptors. It is helpful to unpack them a little if we want to understand how to 'get people on board'.

   A first step is to deconstruct the category of 'stakeholder'. Stakeholders should not be taken as a given. It is necessary to ask: *Who are the stakeholders? How might the ways in which stakeholders identify themselves bear upon the process?* These are important questions because they fundamentally affect the process of multi-stakeholder negotiations - how they will be conducted, and the outcomes which might be expected. Although a range of stakeholders would be involved in constructing a new social label, the discussion here focuses chiefly, though not exclusively, on consumers as stakeholders. This is because a good understanding of how to deconstruct the category of 'producer' has already been provided in various chapters of this thesis. The discussion that follows pursues issues relevant to consumers <u>actually enrolled</u> on the process of creating a social label, and change agents trying to guide that process. It is obvious that a social label needs to appeal to a much wider body of consumers if it is to be effective.

The Stakeholders – how might this be done?

The questions just posed: *Who are the stakeholders? How might the ways in which stakeholders identify themselves bear upon the process?* can be tackled in two steps. The first step involves breaking down the category of consumer into more-or-less discrete subcategories, for example according to gender and/ or age, ethnic identity *etc*. The second step involves examining how consumers, once enrolled as stakeholders, might bring their identities to bear upon the negotiations. The discreteness of the original categorisation will be challenged in the second step, though it does not render the first step invalid as a starting point. We commence the discussion with step one.

Step One: Who are the consumers?

Within the broad category of 'consumer' whole sub-categories can be overlooked, for example poor women (Farnworth & Jiggins, 2003). This may be a particular concern with respect to organic products, since, as has been made clear in preceding chapters, wealthier people are frequently targeted as 'new' organic consumers by retailers. This is in the interest of reaping more 'added value' from

organic products. However, failing to enable poor women and men to enact their ethical values in the marketplace cannot be justified. They need to be drawn into the process.

The relationship, if any, between the ethnic identity of consumers in the North, and their engagement in ethical consumption, did not provide an analytic focus in the German fieldwork. It would be important, though, to examine this in any future work on creating a new social label. Although some of the respondents in the author's focus groups were black, they were spoken to only as consumers – probably, though it is difficult to justify this assertion - *as if* they were white. Does this matter? The author's work (Farnworth, 1996b, Farnworth & Magombe, 1997) with a range of community groups and development education centres in Britain suggests that it does. It became evident that black people in the North felt overlooked as centres of knowledge and expertise. Sample comments (Farnworth & Magombe, 1997) include:

- *Southern people argue that there must be genuine and continuous dialogue. We are not interested in gestures, to front conferences and workshops, in being a token consultant. We want to be involved in processes that help determine agendas; consulted on what we think are the issues, supported when we organise [We want to be] heard on our own terms.*
- *Do a handful of partners make you experts on the South? Does [living here] invalidate those of us who are bonded [to the South] by pain and love and anger?*
- *We [African] women tend to be intimidated by committees that are dominated by white, middle-class males. It is more difficult for us to fit into these types of male dominated structures. The result is that the few vocal women who are brave enough to stand up are 'recycled' again and again.*
- *Authenticity seems to be measured by the length of time a Southern person has spent in the North – the longer the time, the less 'authentic' the voice.*

Southern people in the North must be identified as stakeholders in the producer to consumer chain, both as consumers, and also as people with (potentially) specific insights into the South. This is particularly important given the international dimension of the commodity chain under investigation. The comments made by Southerners above suggest that they will attach conditions to their participation (should the initiative start off as being white-led) to ensure that their participation is meaningful, rather than tokenistic. Acceptance of tough talking is vital.

Two further potential candidates for stakeholder status, future people, and 'the environment', can be factored in to our preliminary categorisation of stakeholders. This is important because these two candidates can be argued to have a 'stake' in current consumption patterns. To proceed, it is necessary to bring the concept of moral considerability to bear upon our definition of stakeholder. Although future

people, and 'the environment' are voiceless in themselves, they <u>can</u> be construed to have moral standing. Representatives <u>may</u> on this basis be appointed on their behalf (Goodpaster, 1978; Stone, 1974).

A great number of organisations, like Greenpeace and the Worldwide Fund for Nature, already act as advocates for different components of the environment. Much ethical consumption is performed with an eye to the well-being of future generations. This is not what is meant here. The activities of conscientious organisations, and individuals, tend to construct (components in) the environment, and future people, as passive recipients of what we do. We are speaking here, though, of attempting to 'centre' future generations, and components of the environment, by conceptualising them as stakeholders – as 'doers'. Change agents aiming to kick-start a process to develop a new social label would need to engage in the debates around contested, and complex, concepts like moral considerability and moral standing. The outcomes of this engagement would allow us to understand whether, and if, these candidates can be properly represented, and 'voiced'.

What light do the German fieldwork findings shed on the likelihood of these two candidates being accepted as stakeholders by consumers? The focus groups respondents were not asked to engage in a debate as to whether future people, or the environment, had moral standing. It is clear, though, that the majority of respondents supported synergistic and holistic views. They saw significant interdependencies between humans, animals and the environment. As one person said, '*For me, everything belongs together. The one cannot exist without the other – water, air, plants, animals, people. For me that means that the whole belongs together, and no one thing is more important than another.*' At the same time weak anthropological views were widely shared. These findings, and other findings analysed in chapter ten, suggest that consumers can engage in a sophisticated debate on the concepts of moral standing and moral considerability provided that appropriate facilitation is available.

The role of Southern producers in creating a new social label is examined later in this chapter. It is pertinent here to touch upon those aspects of the German fieldwork findings that indicate the tenor of working relationships that could occur between Northern consumers and Southern producers recruited into the project of creating a new social label. The majority of (white) respondents in the focus groups provided Southern producers (and Southern people in general) with qualified membership in their moral community. This is probably because Southern people quite clearly have agency, and in this respect differ greatly from potential stakeholders like the environment and future people, who have to have agency <u>ascribed</u> on their behalf to a third party. Some respondents clearly had doubts about the choices that some Southern people appear to be making, or they felt that it was their responsibility to lend a guiding hand, particularly with respect to the transmission of knowledge from North to South. Discussions would thus need to be facilitated with care.

328

Step Two: How might the ways in which consumers identify themselves bear upon the process?

We have been discussing how to enrol different categories of consumer (and other stakeholders) into our project. This is a necessary first step to ensure 'representation', and to avoid overlooking certain potential stakeholder groups. However, consumers may resist categorisation along the lines of female, white, disabled, and so on.[191] Bhabha (1994, no page) argues that *'the representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits ... The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation.'* This is important because the attempts of consumers to bring their identities to bear upon the process of shaping a social label will affect the final look of the label. Boxelaar *et al.* (2003: 6) warn against thinking in terms of sub-cultures, *'that somehow sit underneath and challenge an overarching culture.'* Rather, it is preferable to think in terms of '*simultaneous, competing and multiple identity narratives that construct, and are constructed by, people.'* In order to gain a better understanding of what the interaction between consumer identities and the process of developing a new social label might produce, we start our discussion by trying to achieve a reasonable understanding of how 'stakes' in the process might be built.

Stakeholders are those who have a 'stake' - a real, material interest, from their perspective – in the situation, activity or resource under consideration. Stakeholding expresses the idea that individuals actively construct, promote and defend their stake (SLIM Policy Briefing No. 2, 2004: 1; Farnworth & Jiggins, 2003: 25-6). Stakes can be identified in different ways:

1. They can be identified by virtue of a person's (or group's) positionality, or structural location, with respect to the significant resource, activity or situation. The stakes of producers, food processors, retailers and consumers in international organic commodity chains can be associated with where they are in this system. For the purposes of developing a social label, it is important to consider the hindrances to action that 'positional stakes' may pose. Consumers and producers, on the basis of their position in the food chain, may not have sufficient stakes in common for 'positionality' to form the basis of multi-stakeholder negotiations. For example, the positional stakes of consumers may revolve around food quality, taste and price, whereas the positional stakes of producers may centre on characteristics like the disease resistance of particular varieties, and on the profitability of farming. Källstrom (2004) notes that Swedish farmers generally feel that consumers are hostile to them in the belief that their farming practices are injurious to both farm animals, and to the wider environment. In Germany farmers often feel they are not receiving enough money for their produce, but consumers often feel that food prices should be kept low.

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[191] It is recognised here that *'essentialist identities continue to be invoked and deeply felt'* (Calhoun, 1994, cited in Boxelaar *et al.* 2003: 8). Bhabha (1994) discusses essentialist identity making in depth.

2. Stakes can also come into existence through the flipping of a kind of *'ethical light switch'*. It was suggested in chapter seven, for example, that Northern consumers might consider they have a stake in the biodiversity of the Brickaville rainforest in Madagascar on the grounds that the biodiversity forms part of the global commons. It is quite hard to decipher what flips the ethical light switch, but certainly broad movements in civil society – as discussed in chapter nine - play a role. Changes across the human life-cycle may also flip an ethical light switch. For instance, some respondents in the focus groups said:

- *I did a lot during the 80s and fair trade and organic was a matter of great public concern. I know lots of people in my generation that really care about this.*
- *Certainly due to my experiences in life, and due to my current health status, I have to catch up on all those things I didn't give a darn about in my youth.*
- *[I feel] great responsibility: how I treat my resources, my environment. Might have something to do with the fact that I have two children.*

Photograph 11.1 Flipping the Ethical Light Switch

The 'value stakes' that result in a flipping of an ethical light switch can be quite wide-ranging and transituational in character. They may enable people to override their positional stakes in the interests of creating a 'good' in which a wider body of stakeholders may feel they have a stake. This is important since clearly not all consumers can be involved in the actual creation of a social label. One approach to developing value stakes may be to try and achieve consensus around a 'vision' – a future desirable system state, and then to use a back-casting methodology to negotiate what has to be done to make sure stakeholders arrive there (Jiggins, pers. comm. 05/03). However, it is important to be alert to the potentially constricting effect a vision may place on the process of developing a social label. One way of overcoming this is to search for negotiated agreements on values (ibid).

3. A stake might have overlapping qualities (SLIM Policy Briefing No. 2, 2004: 1). This is because a (proposed) action tends to have knock-on effects in different domains. The SLIM Briefing provides the example of how a planned road project may destroy a wetland and lower property values. A person, or institution, may then face the dilemma of prioritising or trading off the quality aspects of what is at stake for them. The idea of multiple stakes, regardless of their distribution between stakeholders, permits us to see that consumers may become stakeholders in the social labelling project on the basis of wanting to defend both their value stakes, *and* their positional stakes.

Jiggins (pers. comm. 05/03) posits that in situations like these stakeholders may aim to achieve a consensus on the action that needs to be taken. This enables each of them to work with their own motivation, allowing each individually to 'score' their own goals through the actions of themselves and others. Farnworth (1997: 69) adds that to be *against* something may bring people with very different stakes together; to be *for* something allows them to start setting a common agenda. The process of getting together to defend particular stakes can enable people to override the distinctions that may previously have set them apart from one another.

In sum, stakes, and stakeholder identities, are not immediately obvious. Our discussion suggests that stakes can take two main forms. First, stakes can be structural in character: they relate to someone's positionality in the activities that engender international commodity chains. Positional stakes can be conceptualised as already extant, but latent stakes. Second, value stakes may be 'called into being'. These stakes cannot easily be related to real world structures. They have a shifting, dynamic character that can be changed. They are highly dependent on stakeholder interactions. Although value stakes are hard to capture and to understand, they are tremendously important to our work on social labels. This is because they arguably have greater potential to enable 'entanglement' between producer and consumer than do positional stakes. A final remark: both forms of stake need to be 'activated' by an event of some kind before they come to be conceptualised as stakes by their

potential holders. It is at this point that consumers may become enrolled as stakeholders in the process of creating a new social label.

The value stakes that may arise as emergent properties of a multi-stakeholder negotiation will be flavoured not only by the process, but also by already extant identity markers. Goodwin (2000, pers. comm. 01/01) maintains that there is a degree of consistency between the emergent property of a system and its components. Although the emergent properties that arise in a system cannot be predicted, Goodwin contends that those emergent properties that do arise contain a *'whiff'* of the components in the system. It is most likely that the felt identities of the stakeholders, as women, as men, as disabled people, or as members of Southern communities in the North, will exert a continual 'pull' on the process. Their wants and needs will direct, as much as emerge from, the process. Edmunds & Wollenberg (2001: 236) maintain that *'issues of identity and representation are central to feminist and radical pluralist work ... any neutral representation of a group within a negotiation process would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.'* Following Freire, hooks (1994: 53) says that it is her *'right as a subject in resistance to define reality.'* [192]

We are not only speaking of uni-linear identity narratives here, and the consequences of their representation. The fieldwork findings show that consumers try to unite quite different personal identity narratives through the mechanism of their organic purchase: *'I do something for nature, ... I do something for me, ... I do something healthy.'* Another commented that, *'Every single time I buy fair trade I profit through gaining a clear conscience, or the feeling that spreads through me that I have perhaps done something good, however tiny.'* It is quite likely that tensions among these personal narratives will become more evident as a result in engaging in multi-stakeholder negotiations to create a label – the more robust sense of having done something of direct physical benefit to oneself, and the more fragile and hesitant narrative of connection to the wider world.

The tensions that may result from the various tugs upon the process may cause the project to falter. However, it is equally possible for situated knowledges, needs and wants to flow continually into a learning process that of itself produces new knowledge, and new relationships. Jiggins (pers. comm. 05/03) comments that *'inter-dependence is an essential element in systems thinking. I suppose some practitioners would say that multi-SH negotiation is necessary because there are gaps in relationships (so that certain things can't happen), or because there are pathological relationships that need to be re-ordered if other ends are to be reached (for example, shortening the producer-to-consumer chain). Multi-stakeholder negotiations in this view can be seen as the co-creation of new relationships (and the breaking off of others).'*

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[192] An aspect of this is naming oneself. The author of this thesis understands that bell hooks writes her name in lower case letters in recognition of the fact that her ancesters lost their African names when they were taken into slavery. Her name, therefore, lacks a kind of authenticity. It is no longer rooted in a lineage and has a provisional, arbitrary character.

The implications of the discussion so far are that it would be quite wrong to consider that a 'value-free' social label can be produced. All labels reflect and transmit the values of their creators, as was made clear in the discussion on social labels in chapter eight. The difference here is that the subjectivity of the new social label would be made explicit. The key to ensuring that it can somehow remain 'representative' is by involving a wide range of stakeholders. The ways their narrative identities may shape the label need to be acknowledged and factored into a carefully managed process. A further way of ensuring a 'representative' label is by exploring, as part of the process, the value stakes that the label will embody.

11.3   Operationalising the New Social Label: Values

One of the questions guiding this thesis is: *Can, and should, social labels be shaped in part by producer values?* Here we examine the implications of weaving producer values into the social label story.

Values – what needs to be done?
Nikolic & Habul (2003: 31) assert that the *'heart'* of the organic market is the value-laden concept of food quality, and its voluntary and market driven quality assurance system. These seek correspondence with the beliefs, ethical values and lifestyles of the consumers. Darnhofer & Vogl (2003: 18) remark that *'it is easy to ask for strict rules, higher standards and efficient inspection in organic agriculture. But often what consumers expect is a higher moral standard.'* Connor (2003: 37-8) notes that labels are often based on a list of permitted practices and do not necessarily facilitate purchases by consumers with values like *'support for sustainable agriculture'*, or *'support for local food systems'*. The discussion just conducted suggests that foregrounding value stakes might enable producers and consumers to escape the confines of their respective positions in the organic food chain. The process of creating a new social label may produce, as an emergent property, quality producer-consumer relationships.

Federico Borromeo (1628), speaking of the delight that the new Flemish style of painting brought him said, *'I have decorated my room with paintings ... And the pleasure that I feel looking at these painted views ... has seemed to me just as lovely as the open and wide views [of nature] ... In their place, when they cannot be reached, pictures embrace in a small space earth and sky, and we go on long walks in spirit, standing still in our room' (*Source: Federico Borromeo, 1628, Cardinal of Milan and patron of Jan Brueghel the Younger)[193]. The new social

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[193] The author took notes from a placard at an exhibition at Villa Hügel in Essen called *‚Flämische Landschaften'* in 2002. The original placard presented Borromeo's words as follows: *‚Ich habe mein Zimmer mit Gemälden geschmückt ... Und das Vergnügen, das ich beim Anblick dieser gemalten Ansichten empfinde ... ist mir mir ebenso schön erschienen wie die offenen und weiten Blicke (in der Natur) ... An deren Stelle, wenn sie nicht erreichbar sind, umschliessen Bilder auf engen Raum Erde und Himmel, und wir machen lange Wanderungen (im Geist), still in unserem Zimmer stehend.'* The English translation is the author's own. It has not been possible to locate this text through Internet search engines. See www.villahuegel.de for details of the exhibition and www.villahuegel.de/breughel.htm for details of the relationship between Borromeo and Jan Brueghel the Younger, and the excitement that the 'new' Flemish art generated at the time. It suggested a different way of looking at the world.

label the author has in mind takes as a starting point the idea that consumers will need to take 'walks in spirit' in worlds and lives they will not ever personally know. Southern producers and northern consumers, apart from a very few isolated instances, will never meet. Connections have to be made in the world of ideas, in the languaging that permits us to rise above our individual structural coupling to the world to weave our worlds together.
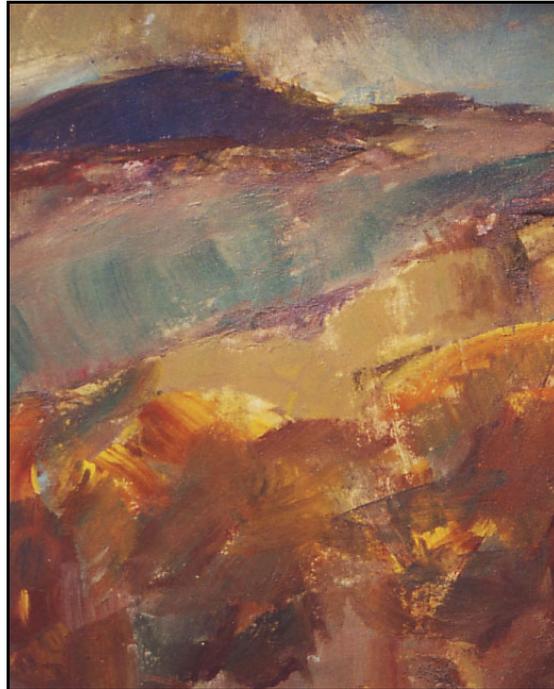
Photograph 11.2 Taking Walks in Spirit
Source: Roger Farnworth

Labels tell stories and paint worlds on our inner eye. To do this they select items from a rich picture and re-work them into a 'social label narrative'.[194] A key question is whether this narrative should aim to be consistent in terms of the values it conveys. The analyses conducted in this thesis suggest that incommensurable values have to be recognised and built into not only social certification initiatives, but also social labelling initiatives. Is it possible to weave a narrative with clashing colours? In order to answer this question, this part examines the concept of values more closely.

Values – how might this be done?

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[194] Cook (2004) explores the messages conveyed by advertising in his paper, *'Follow the Thing : Papaya'*. This is a very valuable study of the different actors involved in managing and maintaining the producer to consumer chain (from Jamaica to the UK) in papaya fruits. The way the actors rationalise their behaviour, even when they are well aware of the way in which it harms other actors in the chain, is fascinating. However, the author of this thesis is not interested here in exploring and discussing 'cynical' attempts by retailers to associate particular products with resonant images.

We now build upon the discussion just conducted on value stakes. The purpose is to tease out different aspects of the concept of value and to relate them to our task of creating a new social label.

Schwartz & Bardi (2001, in Grankvist, 2002: 21) define values as *'desirable transituational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity.'* Schwartz (1992, in ibid) has developed a typology of values based on this definition that we do not follow here (see Grankvist, 2002, for more details). For our purposes, we interpret and enlarge upon this definition thus:

1. Values can 'hold true' in a variety of situations. They can override the specific nature of a particular situation without being shaped by it.
2. Nevertheless, values can be traded off against each other.
3. Values provide individuals and organisations with a means of negotiating the real world. Conflict and misadventure is inherent in this endeavour since the real world is complex. At the same time values are a means of dealing with unpredictability. They enable people to both cope with as yet unknown situations, and to try and configure situations in advance of their actual arising. Values-in-action impose patternings and draw the world behind them, like a skein.

As far as social labels are concerned, these points support the contention that it is possible to override those positional stakes that block conversations between stakeholders through building a relationship based on value stakes. This remark does not imply that it is necessary as a countermeasure to develop *cross cutting* value stakes with 'universal' characteristics. The idea that values can shape and transform real world structures like the international organic commodity chain is, of course, central to the purpose of a social label.

We can build upon the understandings of value just provided by adding another that was introduced in chapter eight of this thesis, namely that actors try to 'produce' particular values in the course of a product's production. The externalities of the productive process can be of as great an interest, if not greater, as the product itself. A 'by-product' of producing an organic good may include a higher density of butterfly species, for example (see Belfrage *et al.* 2004 for evidence of higher butterfly numbers on organic, rather than conventional, farms in a Swedish study). A 'by-product' of a fair trade good is, actually, fairness (a feeling which is engendered by particular economic practices and their outcomes).

The work of Jenkins & Parrot expands our understandings of value still further. Box 11.2 provides an example of how producers in Wales try to manage the production of values across the whole commodity chain in artisanal cheese.

The example in Box 11.2 suggests that:

1. Stakeholders may try to defend, and promote, their positional stakes by developing and controlling sets of values across a particular commodity chain. Certain stakeholders, for example small sales outlets in this case, may be able to advance their own positional stakes through 'buying into' these values. The ability of other potential stakeholders in the production to consumption chain to maximise their own positional stakes may be frustrated, however.
2. Stakeholders need to invest considerable time and energy in order to ensure that particular values remain active.
3. Values cannot be only equated with large principles that help one live a life (as was suggested above by Schwartz & Bardi), though this is a relevant reading. They are messy, bitty, and partial.
4. Products come to act as receptacles for values. They carry a weight far beyond any of their intrinsic quality characteristics, like colour, shape and size.

Credence labels deal in value stories and seek to associate these with particular products. They try to achieve 'rich coherence' by knitting values into one story. The label for Gepa 'Fairena' chocolate, for example, tells us that *today, chocolate is affordable for everyone and literally 'in every mouth'. For the producers of the most important raw materials, though, the sweet success story has a bitter aftertaste: speculation and worldwide overproduction of cocoa and sugar have caused world market prices to collapse. It's different with fair trade chocolate. Cocoa and sugar producers receive well over world market prices, premiums for ecological and social projects, long-term purchase contracts, and partial advance payment before harvest'* (Gepa Fairena Bio Praline product packaging).

It is worth unpacking the idea of the coherent story a little. Credence labels seem to be conceptualised by brands like Gepa, or Nature and More, as 'go-betweens' bearing a story as a gift. In so doing, they act as 'vectors of value' between producers and consumers. If credence labels are successful go-betweens, the producer's value story weaves into the consumer's value story. That is to say, a 'fit' between the values that help guide a particular consumer's life, and the values

336

signified by the product, is achieved. We can apply the vector of value metaphor more widely. Credence labels, as discussed in chapter eight, are intended to be vectors of values like transparency, credibility and accountability. Rather like a telescope, credence labels can foreshorten distance, giving the impression of nearness and of truthfulness.

Whilst these seem worthy goals for credence labels to follow, some issues arise. For example, the story can be unravelled. Sutcliffe (2004: 15-16) researched the product trail of Green and Black's Maya Gold fair trade chocolate and discovered that the actual growers had no understanding of fair trade – or 'unfair trade', nor even of the difference that selling to Green and Black's actually made to their lives. Nor did they particularly prioritise selling to Green and Black's, favouring instead a diverse crop portfolio, and by implication, a range of non fair trade buyers. As far as Sutcliffe could ascertain, though, Green and Black's made rather a lot of positive difference to the producers' lives in terms of purchase guarantees and the price paid for the cocoa. Does it matter that the producers are not helping to weave the threads of the fair trade value story that is presented on labels? The author's work on creating a quality of life toolkit was based on the proposition that it matters a great deal. One of the findings from the toolkit that justifies this proposition is the fact that the Malagasy organic smallholders, in general, did not want to be bound to long-term purchase contracts because they did not want to compromise their independence. This finding, and Sutcliffe's exploration, does not obviate the importance of such contracts, but it does suggest that such contracts are not necessarily part of the 'fair trade story' for some producers. More research needs to be done (by means of the quality of life toolkit, for example), on how to reconcile the fear of some producers of integration into the structures of world trade - and the dependence on the whims of the market this implies - with the need for buyers to have a regular supply of goods.

Sutcliffe (ibid: 16) remarks with respect to his visit to Belize that *'you begin to understand the Fairtrade guarantee is addressed less to the farmers than to shoppers'*. Credence labels speak to the consumer, not to the producer. In so doing they may emphasize projects that consumers are likely to support because they resonate with widely held values in their particular society. It is therefore possible that the transmission of values across the food chain may have the real world effect of narrowing, as much as widening, the decision-making spaces of producers.

Nickoleit (Gepa, pers. comm. 06/03) emphasizes that there are structures in place which seek to ensure that projects really wanted by their partners, whether smallholders co-operatives, or plantation workers, are supported through premiums. Joint Bodies bring plantation owners and workers together to discuss projects. Gepa sends out questionnaires to see if steps are being made towards gender equality. Nickoleit explains, *'this asks about childcare,* [what happens when women become] *pregnant and so on. The focus is upon process. Gepa doesn't have a formalised procedure. As a trader we are able to make demands for steps towards gender equality. We will not buy if progress is not being made.'* It is important to acknowledge the sincerity of this process – and that it is effective in certain ways.

Nonetheless, the author contends that her quality of life approach to understanding and capturing the values of producer communities provides much richer data and information, and a better understanding of the values that different groups of producer may wish to see supported through premiums, than a questionnaire or even a Joint Body is able to provide. It can enable certain values to be represented that may otherwise be eroded simply because the trader, or the plantation owner, <u>does not know</u> that they are there. A plantation owner may institute practices that stifle locally important activities and the values associated with them. For the plantation workers at Plantation MonDésir, an example is the value they place on attending market days in order to meet and converse. These days represent the only real leisure opportunity for women, and are also a major shopping opportunity. However, women and men have to work on market days if they want to achieve, or retain, permanent status on the plantation. Considerable benefits like a higher wage, health care in times of need, and schooling for children are associated with permanent status. It is not possible for the plantation workers to resolve this dilemma adequately. One 'solution' the women put forward (in the dream map exercise) was a shop on the plantation itself in order to avoid a lengthy walk in the evenings to purchase necessities, but clearly such a shop would do little more than help women fulfil their gendered responsibilities more adequately.

The author of this thesis recognises that fair trade relationships may help to provide producers with the material means, and the security, that they need in order to make meaningful choices (Kabeer, 2000; Nussbaum, 2001). This is necessary and right. Yet it is equally necessary to find better ways of institutionalising the producers' own preferences. Part of the task demands that we move beyond presenting the producers as beneficiaries of the consumers' good actions. It is important to dismantle the dichotomy that constructs consumers as 'doers' and the producers as 'being done to'. If consumers are going to take *'walks in spirit'* with the producers then a means has to be found to enable the latter to arise as 'legitimate others' – as equal partners in the project.

This is a big challenge. The author's analysis of the German fieldwork findings makes it clear that consumer values, and producer values, do not always tally. For example, the great majority of the German respondents considered education to be of overriding importance to the well-being of farmer children. This is in marked contrast to the Malagasy smallholders, who for a number of reasons rarely prioritised the education of their children. None-the-less, a good number of the respondents in the focus groups made it clear that they would not support projects that ran counter to what they thought was right for the producer.

- *Of course they have to decide by themselves, but I would so much like to give the children a chance, because the world is changing and in the long term it just isn't good when they stay where they are, where they have always been.*
- *I would say that they have to draw the line somewhere, so that they can sell their products and not just sit on them.*

338

- *I share the opinion that, if we have to finance something, the school comes first.*

Although the values transmitted to the consumers by means of credence labels are not necessarily those that producers may find important, the remarks made by some of the focus group participants indicate that they might well refuse to support other producer values through their purchase. This poses a great challenge to the author's concept of a new social label. Nevertheless, the challenge has to be faced. Truthfulness has to be part of the social label story if a quality relationship between producers and consumers is to mean anything, and if the producers are to be enabled, through the mechanism of 'selling their values' through a social label, to create the world they seek.

It is helpful at this juncture to take a step back and revisit the discussion on 'ethical consistency' (see chapters eight and nine). By ethical consistency the author means values that are recognisably shared by stakeholders across the chain. Is ethical consistency really a pre-requisite to building quality relationships between producer and consumer in the organic commodity chain? A lack of resonance between stakeholders in terms of what values 'count' certainly seems to disturb.

Evidence suggesting that supermarkets, in the eyes of some consumers, lack ethical consistency has been presented in earlier chapters. As a consequence, supermarkets are distrusted as mediators of ethical values by these consumers. Another example of a failure to close the ethical circle is provided by the motivation of some farmers entering organic agriculture. A German organic farmer, Dr. Maas, responded to the author's question on his motivation for moving from conventional into organic farming by saying, *'I myself am not idealistic. In the early 1990s all farmers had to think of new ways forward for their enterprises'* (pers. comm. 03/03). This is far from being a rare assertion, as the author's discussions with organic farmers at the Soil Association conferences in 2000 and 2003 made clear. Further evidence for the increasing preponderance of the 'business model' of organic farming is provided by a range of commentators (see for example Conford, 1988, 2001; Pollan, 2001; Guthman, 2002; Brand, 2003; Frost, 2003; Milestad, 2003; Frost & Walcher, 2003; Holt, 2003; Howard & Jansen, 2003; Holt, 2003; Ilsøe, 2003; Darnhofer, 2003, and Schermer, 2003). A failure to close ethical circles between consumers and other stakeholders may place a considerable obstacle in the way of the discussion processes that are needed to construct a social label. Furthermore, the assumed universality of a particular stakeholder's value sets may confound understanding. Chrissiane, one of the Malagasy plantation workers said, *'Like everyone else, I want a cow'* (Farnworth, 2003e, Life on an Organic Plantation in Madagascar, Video). It is quite tenable to argue that having a cow is a key Malagasy value and, as such, one that consumers should support even if this value not consistent with their own values, or even seems to harm them (the holding of cattle may be seen as contributing to the destruction of the global commons).

The starting point of the discussion held in this part was the assertion that a new social label will need to weave consumer and producer values into a 'narrative of clashing colours'. The rationale behind this assertion has been explored and found to be reasonable. The next part tackles the hurdle that demands for ethical consistency represents. The notion that it is necessary to 'close the ethical circle' is questioned. It is suggested that the task is better expressed in terms of 'extending the collective ethical boundary'. We conclude with some remarks designed to reflect both upon the discussion just conducted, and to feed into the discussion to come.

- Nussbaum (1998: 313) asks: *'How can we violate the moral integrity of citizens as choosers?'* She says that there is *'a distinctive human good expressed in the freedom we give our fellow citizens to make choices that we ourselves hold to be profoundly wrong. Respect for the ethical separateness and the good faith searching of our fellow citizens'* is essential (ibid. 336).

- *'Sharing does not mean that if someone gives you two sacks of cassava you have to give two bags of cassava back'* (Nana Ama Amamoo, cited in Farnworth, 1996b: 81)

- *'I think that if everyone saw things like that, 'if I do, or don't do, something, it makes no difference', it wouldn't be good. Each little thing that each individual does brings something. In my opinion one shouldn't think like that, that one should not or cannot try'* (German focus group respondent, cited in chapter ten of this thesis).

- *'We need to co-create reality in participative processes in the service of human flourishing.'* This involves the *'the critique and transformation of the social, economic, gender and ethnic structures which constrain humankind'* (Heron & Reason, 1997: 187, 188).

- *'When we are working with people from different cultures and value systems we have to see beyond our Northern mindset. We need to be able to debate and to suspend disbelief'* (Martin Mikhail, cited in Farnworth & Magombe, 1996: 23).

- *'Hawk's happiness is not chicken's happiness'* (1986, cited by During in 'Krio Adages and Fables').

- *'One of the successes of ethical trade is that it has opened the North's eyes to conditions in the South, but it will require courage in the South's capacity and ability to define its own ethical goals if Northern companies, civil society organisations and consumers are to relinquish the control over the ethical trade movement that they currently exert'* (Blowfield, 1999: 21).

- *'You have to become more courageous, because freedom requires courage. You have to learn to let go, because that is what fair trade is about'* (Hernandez, cited in Otto, 2002: 20).

- *'Participation has to do with the pause, receiving, listening, hearing the other'* (Goodwin, pers. comm. 01/01).

11.4   Operationalising the New Social Label: Promoting Conversations

The purpose of Part 11.3 is to take the discussion on value stakes forward. The questions that guide the discussion are:

- *How can German organic consumers connect and engage with the lives of producers in meaningful ways?*
- *What difference might the emergent properties/ higher values arising in such relationships make?*

In order to proceed two things are required. First, rich situated quality information is an essential input into the soft discussion system being proposed. This can be provided by the quality of life toolkit. Second, a variety of discussion spaces need to be enacted in order to process the information from the quality of life toolkit, and to bring the consumers' own agendas to bear upon the process. Before we launch into the how and what, it is useful to install some ground rules for the conversations being proposed.

Promoting Conversations – what needs to be done?
A liberal pluralist approach to multi-stakeholder negotiations *'treats groups as distinct from one another and as having particular interests. The public interest is created from the bargaining and synthesis of particular views, and is ethically superior to, and 'contains', those particular views'* (Jakobsen, 1998, cited in Edmunds & Wollenberg, 2001: 235).[195] Decision outcomes are syncretic, *'all the alternatives should be accepted: all those seemingly discordant positions ... must, somehow, be conjoined and juxtaposed'* (Rescher, cited in ibid). Hemmati (2002: 49) argues for *'unity in diversity ... maintaining and celebrating diversity are indeed among the major reasons to embark on designing multi-stakeholder processes (MSPs), and the integration of diverse views is the major challenge.'* Integration of diverse views is possible, she argues, because *'people who come together in MSPs tend to build a group culture and identity'*.

Boxelaar *et al.* (2003: 7) do not challenge the liberal basis of multi-stakeholder negotiations propounded by the writers above, namely that groups should be conceptualized as having particular interests. However, they argue against the conclusion that it is necessary to synthesize the views of groups in order to arrive at the public interest. Boxelaar *et al.* build their argument on the observation that *'often the focus on participation, engagement and consensus in participatory approaches emphasizes the construction of similarity, or processes of 'identification with''* (ibid: 7). They recognize that such approaches enable some sense of integration and mutuality – without which collaboration between stakeholders is impossible. However, they contend, it is important to be attentive to the problems that are inherent to this endeavour. Action research conducted by

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[195] The fundamental liberal tenet is that humans are '*individual rational agents who maximise their own self-interest ... the optimal society results when each individual maximises her own productive potential*' (Merchant, 1992: 188-9).

341

Boxelaar and her colleagues as part of the 'Developing Social Capability' project in the agriculture and food sector in Australia led them to the conclusion *'that the construction of similarity can be negotiated through processes that reconcile differences in a way that assimilates, or marginalizes, certain groups and hence disempowers them.'* That is to say, convergence between stakeholders is apparent, rather than real. Boxelaar (2004) adds, *'aiming to achieve convergence around problem definitions can lead to the exclusion and marginalization of diverse stakeholders and their perspectives and ways of doing things. Diversity needs to be recognized as an opportunity for differentiation and innovation. The pathway for change can emerge from a focus on ambiguity and difference.'* In terms of what this means for practice, Boxelaar (2004) suggests that:

- Reflexive practice needs to be focused on the exploration of differences and ambiguities. The process must be facilitated as a sense-making process, rather than one that facilitates mere cognition of the situation and its inherent ambiguities.
- We need to mediate differences between people in a way that does not seek to synthesize or assimilate these differences.
- It is important to develop methods that do not only attend to the way in which meanings are constructed, but also to the way in which practices and structures affect a platform for change.

Promoting Conversations – how might this done?
In chapter nine the concept of moral considerability was brought to bear upon the question of how to *'determine the reach of the relationships we care about'*. We now turn to the second part of that equation: *How can we act in order to develop, and preserve, the quality of the relationships we have selected?*

Dillier (1999: 11) notes that, despite the fanfare that attends their unveiling in the North, codes of conduct are often unknown, unavailable, or not available in translation at the producing facilities. The author of this thesis learnt that organic certification materials provided by ECOCERT in Madagascar are in French rather than in Malagasy. This is a great hindrance in terms of the requirements the farmers are expected to fulfil to achieve certification. They are also worried about signing papers that they cannot read (Farnworth, 2002c, 2003b).

Despite the 'fanfare' to which Dillier refers, several respondents in all the focus groups admitted that they had never noticed fair trade labels. However, they quickly built associations around the word 'fair': *'I would imagine that there must be an organisation that ensures that people in the Third World are paid fairly for their work, and that they are supported properly – naturally I find that just super.'* Respondents to the focus groups, the seminar, and particularly the questionnaire surveys readily agreed that they lack detailed and, for the purposes of assessing which quality of life criteria might be important for Southern producers, appropriate knowledge of the South (Otto, 2002; Raabe, 2003).

342

Empowering consumers so that they might better be able to take action to 'develop, and preserve, the quality of the relationships they have selected' involves building upon their *'decentred capacity to act'* say Goodman & DuPuis (2002). Goodman & DuPuis note that organised movements are one of the ways in which consumers can express their agency. The author of this thesis remarks on the basis of the German fieldwork findings that such movements are not necessarily popular with consumers. None of the respondents to the focus groups mentioned involvement in organised consumer movements like the Verbraucher-Zentrale (www.verbraucherzentrale.de), for example. They were, however, involved in activities in many domains that can be bundled under the rubric of 'changing the world'. Consumers thus need to be permitted to retain the 'decentredness' of their agency in that no particular organisational form should be prescribed for the task of creating a social label. Conversational spaces need to be found to enable them to coalesce around the shared stake of creating quality relationships between producers and consumers.

Goodman & DuPuis' analysis also enables us to recognise and conceptualise the plurality of ways in which consumers act. The German findings show that the focus group respondents use the market to express their will: *'I believe that demand somehow regulates the market, and if things move slowly, well, consciousness is being built.'* On the other hand, the respondents were equally clear that a decentred capacity to act had limitations: *'[The effectiveness of consumer demand in changing the market] founders on the fact that consumers are not united. If they were united, then this would possible, but it isn't so.'* The concept of a 'decentred capacity to act' puts a name to new organisational forms and ways of behaving, but it does not tackle the efficacy of that organising. The customer may well be king, but this is a lonely pinnacle with only limited accoutrements of power.

We now address the question guiding this part *How can German organic consumers connect and engage with the lives of producers in meaningful ways?* more specifically. This is done in four stages. First, the contribution of the quality of life toolkit can make to the new social label is explored. Second, a method of working with the data provided by the toolkit is put forward. Third, a variety of possible 'conversational spaces' is outlined. Finally, the potential of retailers and the state to provide 'entanglement spaces' for productive discussions is addressed. We conclude with the author's own suggestion for a social label.

As mentioned above, the role of certifiers[196] as mediators of information needs to recognised and worked with. The challenge is to 'unstick' the information that they mediate in a form that enables German organic consumers to connect and engage with the lives of producers in meaningful ways. This is a pre-requisite of forming a social label. The author has suggested throughout this thesis that the quality of life toolkit is capable of delivering the complex realities of the producers for the purposes of both social certification in organic agriculture, and social

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[196] Traders like Gepa represent an alternative site for the quality of life toolkit. However, the focus of this thesis has been upon using the quality of life toolkit as a means of transforming social certification in organic agriculture, and in so doing create rich information for the purposes of a social label.

labelling. It provides valuable, verifiable data that convey the positional and value stakes of producers. Furthermore:

- The quality of life toolkit has an internally consistent construction. Rather than requiring that the producers meet pre-determined standards, rigour is achieved by paying attention to the process of how, on the basis of quality baseline data, values become articulated and then transformed into principles, standards and indicators. This feature of robustness might provide a means, by proxy, of enabling the producers to arise as 'legitimate others'[197] – and thus valued conversation partners - for the consumers.

- In chapter seven the author argued that social certification initiatives in organic agriculture will need to work with change. Well-being is a process of becoming. One of the chief aims of the new social label is to provide consumers with the assurance to consumers that producers are on the path to creating the world they seek. The new social label must therefore be 'fluid' in order to work with real world complexity and change in terms of the quality of life values the producers espouse. At the same time it needs to solidify and codify meanings in order to 'market' them. This runs counter to prevailing market sense, which requires stability in order to convey clear and simple messages to the consumer. The challenge is therefore to manage this tension creatively.

- The findings of the quality of life toolkit must to be worked through a transformative mechanism that enables the rich data it provides to be transformed into appropriate knowledge rather than information overload. The author suggests activating the concept of the moral community, or, in the preferred language of this thesis, circles of concern, for this purpose. One step is by applying this concept when identifying stakeholders. Once a broad base of 'representative' stakeholders has been recruited, the second step is to examine the makeup of the stakeholders' circles of concern. What, or who, 'belongs'?

The German focus groups were constructed around Elliot's (1991) taxonomy in order to try and make explicit the way different stakeholders draw boundaries around what matters to them, and what does not. With respect to ethical consumption, this involves asking: *Who belongs to my circle of concern? Where am I drawing the boundary?* According to Midgley (2000), the values that inform where boundaries are drawn determine how issues are seen, and from thence, the actions that will be taken. He argues (ibid: 36) that conflict may arise when different groups of people have different ethics (values in purposive action) relating to the same issue, and therefore make different boundary judgements. Conflictual situations tend *'to be stabilised by the imposition of either a sacred or*

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[197] This is a term that Humberto Maturana used frequently in his keynote address to the UK Systems Society conference in September 2004, which the author attended. The author has borrowed this term since it is very rich in its implications.

a profane status on marginal elements. The words 'sacred' and 'profane' mean valued and devalued respectively' (ibid. 137). If we apply Midgley's approach to the development of a social label, the following practical objective can be developed:

> Render profane values – as articulated in the findings of the quality of life toolkit - sacred. This objective has its aim the arising of the consumer, or the producer, as a 'legitimate other', who is a holder of 'legitimate values'. Re-labelling the values of other stakeholders as sacred does not imply that their values are absorbed or synthesized. Rather, the aim is to ensure that they come to be valued and, in the process, legitimised.

Bhabha (1994) provides a useful addition to Midgley's concept of profane and sacred values. Rather than examining what lies within, or without, a boundary, he focuses on the boundary itself. According to Bhabha, the boundary should not be conceptualised as a dividing line which produces an us/ them dichotomy. Rather, it is a liminal zone: *'A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing'* (Heidegger, no date, cited in ibid.). Conceptualising the boundary as a liminal zone permits dichotomies and hierarchies to be deconstructed. The passage across the boundary, between *'fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy',* he says. *'Rather than being a kind of stasis, the liminal character of the boundary is expressed in the sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond': an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words au-delà - here and there, on all sides, fort/da, hither and thither, back and forth.'* The idea of flow, movement and challenge to fixed categorisations is useful to the concept of entanglement. Equally useful is the recognition that people on the boundaries of a particular moral community are not passive. They are actively exercising their agency and making their presence known. We can conclude that the revised boundary judgements made in the process of creating a social label should not aim to be cohesive. Such a boundary would be highly permeable and agitated, one of disjuncture to enable new meanings to emerge. Profane ethics would constantly be produced around the edges, but, if managed well, could have an energising effect. Dissonance could be celebrated within rough-edged coherence.

How might these objectives be realised? The task of the change agent is to find ways of altering boundary judgements to enable stakeholders to re-label the concerns of the 'other' as sacred. To do this, '*one should think of creating a variety of 'spaces' at varying scales of interaction, and offering varying degrees of intensity of interaction, and not only one grand space (that is bound in some degree to favour one stakeholder interest over another'* (Jiggins, pers. comm. 05/03). Box 11.3 puts forward some real world examples. The examples have quite a lot in common in that they represent, apart from the first one, soft systems set up for the purposes of promoting conversations around a real world task. However, each example brings different dimensions to bear upon the task of creating a new social label.

1. The space in which conversations are conducted can be associated with
    the ability of particular stakeholders to form agendas.

    The author's fieldwork in Madagascar with smallholder organic farmers
    (Farnworth et al. 2002, 2002d, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c) showed that the
    smallholders seemed to feel free only in their carefully constructed
    spaces away from the towns, from identity cards and from dress codes.
    They shunned interaction with outsiders unless it could be on their own
    terms. In the UK, interviews the author carried out with community
    groups demonstrated that ownership over agendas, and places, was vital:
    'We don't want other people to run Saturday schools for us,' says
    Williams, *'it is an African-Caribbean thing'* (Farnworth, 1997: 113). In
    bringing together stakeholders for the purposes of creating a social label,
    it is important to consider the question of ownership over the physical
    space, and agendas, in which discussions are conducted.

    One way of resolving this issue is to employ 'virtual spaces'. Enayati (in
    Hemmati, 2002: 87) argues that the use of electronic communication in
    multi-stakeholder negotiations *'can provide a good basis for
    neutralising differences in status and personality, as related to gender,
    age and ethnicity ... representatives of groups with less status, such as
    women or members of ethnic minorities would benefit primarily from
    this filtering of personal characteristics'* (a view supported by Edmunds
    & Wollenberg, 2001: 232). Against the empowering aspects of
    conversing in virtual spaces need to be weighed the objections outlined
    elsewhere in this chapter. The contention has been put forward that it is
    precisely   these   differences   that   should   not   be   neutralised.
    Notwithstanding this, the potential of electronic communication to assist
    disempowered stakeholders to overcome their disempowered status in
    order to converse should be examined carefully. At the same time, the
    implications for the transmission of narrative identities need to be
    unpacked.

2. Individuals hold multiple identities. However, they are often placed in
    professional positions where they need to defend a particular identity,
    for example, that of farmer, or certifier. In these situations, it is possible
    that the ethics (values in purposeful action) held by other stakeholders
    may be considered profane. A way of resolving this impasse is to free
    up thinking by (i) drawing upon other identities a stakeholder may have,
    (ii) allowing the fluidity thus generated to enable the stakeholder to re-
    label the concerns of other stakeholders as 'sacred', and (iii) to capture
    and stabilise the learning which has occurred.

    An example is provided by the work of van der Hulst van Arkel (pers.
    comm. 04/02) in Holland. The purpose of her government-funded work
    is to find ways of establishing a considerably shortened poultry 'birth to

slaughter' chain in the interests of animal welfare. Her experience suggests that when participants in stakeholder meetings have their 'official hats' on they cannot permit themselves to 'hear' the other side. However when they conceptualise themselves as free-floating agents they are able to listen and to contemplate new ways of doing things without immediately ridiculing them. To allow this to happen, stakeholders need to be brought together into discussion spaces that downplay the official nature of people's roles.

3. Efforts can be focused upon understanding the positional stakes of other stakeholders. This provides a foundation for collaboration across the system.

    The Papa Andina project is helping to organise meetings of food chain actors in Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador. A SWOT analysis is undertaken in these meetings. Participants discuss the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats posed by other stakeholders. Once the existing linkages and stakeholder interests along the chain are clearly understood, representatives of each segment come together to discuss how to improve the links and preference criteria (regarding varietal selection of potatoes) of each stakeholder. In this example, the food chain actors and stakeholder representatives come together because of their interest in a specific food product in the food chain. Typically, a group of local institutions, farmers' organisations, a wholesaler and an exporter start the initiative. However, informal vendors and processors (many of them likely to be poor women selling to poor urban consumers) have not been involved since their participation is hard to organise (Thiele, 2001, in Farnworth & Jiggins, 2003: 32).

    A similar example is provided by work around the Water Framework Directive in Holland. A 'knowledge circle' has been created as part of a second-generation water conservation project. Fifteen farmers from two provinces, three officials from a water board, province and farmers' organisation, and scientists from three consultant organisations are working together in an experiential learning project designed to achieve the optimal management of on-farm weirs (SLIM Policy Briefing No. 2, 2004: 1). For our purposes, it is useful to observe that the *starting point* of these two interventions is not to re-label the ethics of the other stakeholders as sacred – although this is a possible outcome of the exercise – but to overcome professional boundaries through working together on trans-boundary tasks.

4. So far we have been discussing how soft systems that have been set up to achieve a particular task facilitate conversations. Whilst improved knowledge is one planned-for outcome, it is possible to identify other outcomes through contemplating the soft system and its effects upon a range of stakeholders. These emergent properties, though they may not

have provided the original rationale of the exercise, can come to be crucial in enabling further action.

For example, the Forestry Commission in Scotland chose to develop its new Forest and Water Guidelines in interaction with stakeholders. It found that the process of 'joint fact finding' began to create collaborative networks. This led to the creation of mutual respect and trust that has expanded the capacity of stakeholders to coordinate their actions across wide spatial scales within the catchment of the River Tweed. Through interaction, stakeholders have begun to create new, or qualitatively different, relationships that act as a bridge to cooperation (bid: 2).

5. Finally, it is possible to agree upon a value stake around which action to promote positional stakes can be co-ordinated. This is the converse of most of the examples above, which bring stakeholders together around practical objectives that require the overriding – to a degree - of positional stakes to be achieved.

Our example is Prince Charles in the UK. He has developed the concept of 'virtuous circles', by which he means the development of ethical trading partnerships between Northern businesses and small organic community projects in the South. His own brand, Duchy Originals, has established such a partnership with a cocoa producing co-operative in Guyana. The Prince asks governments, for their part, to be supportive of organic agriculture and also to support local marketing initiatives (www.princeofwales.gov.uk/speeches/agriculture_21032004.html).

Box 11.3 shows that it is possible to conduct conversations in a range of spaces, and in different ways. It has suggested ways in which stakeholders can be 'freed' to think and work creatively together. The number, type, and composition of conversational spaces that would be required to set up a social label would emerge in the course of initial discussions between stakeholders representing producers and consumers (and perhaps other stakeholders). It would be important to learn from, and be inspired by, other initiatives.

The author has been speaking throughout this chapter of a highly idealised and simple system that ignores the 'mess in the middle'. This is in the interests of achieving some analytical clarity about what needs to be done and what can be done. The author has thus chosen to reduce complexity by not tackling the entire domain. However, in the German fieldwork she explored the ability of the state and the retailer to provide 'entanglement spaces' that were respected by the respondents. These two actors are key and intermediate stakeholders in the social labelling project.[198] If the idea of a soft system created for the purposes of

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[198] Stakeholder analysis distinguishes between three kinds of stakeholder (Farnworth & Jiggins, 2003).
    1.   Primary stakeholders are those who are directly affected by project activities, either positively or negatively, whether through inclusion or exclusion.

developing a social label were ever to be realised it would be necessary to work with them. Some preliminary remarks, based on the remarks made by respondents in the focus groups on the possible roles of these stakeholders, are therefore made here.

With few exceptions (and these exceptions should not be ignored), the respondents to the focus groups agreed that the creation of ethical standards fell within the legitimate realm of the state's activity: *'Naturally that would be my wish'*, said one. Several argued that the state should be responsible for ensuring an ethical bottom line on the basis that consumers should be exonerated from ethical decision-making on basic issues like social justice. One person expressed this colourfully: *'I'd rather have [regulatory] standards than a free choice ... I can't claim to be entitled to a choice when I take coffee from a blood-stained business on the one hand, and on the other buy myself fair trade coffee. I can scarcely demand, or claim, such a choice.'* There was quite a degree of cynicism, however, as to whether the state would be able to properly introduce and enforce appropriate legislation: *'It is a wish and as such remains totally utopian in my view.'*

The focus group respondents, then, would in the main like the state to establish a 'framework of decency'. This view is held quite by a range of actors in civil society, and, according to Zadek (2004), becoming more popular with business after a lengthy period of deregulation. He quotes a senior corporate executive who said, *'[We] ... believe that the best way in which standards can be agreed and imposed is through government regulatory action. Government action tends to ensure fairness and transparency because the standards are agreed in democratic institutions'* (in ibid: 7). In 2000 members of the German Social Democratic Party and the Bündnis 90/ the Greens placed a proposal before parliament that aimed to develop standards for voluntary agricultural-environmental-social certification in developing countries (Dr. Peter Struck und Fraktion, 2000). The proposal was not taken forward. However, it provides a useful indication of how members of parliament are defining their contribution in this area, and in particular how they conceptualise the role of the state in helping to provide an international forum for debate. The German proposal suggested working within the framework of international development co-operation in order to (1) develop a working concept of how standards might be developed, (2) implement pilot projects, (3) provide an organisational space to enable producers, traders, NGOs and relevant scientific organisations to work together, (4) support certification bodies, and (5) examine how the state can work with business in developing countries as well as in Germany to improve the framework conditions for fair trade products. The German Biosiegel, which is based on EU Regulation 2092/91, is a more limited example of how the state can provide a voluntary ethical baseline to business and consumers (www.bio-siegel.de). The Belgium government is the first in Europe to

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2. Intermediate stakeholders are intermediaries in the delivery or execution of project resources, flows, or activities.
3. Key stakeholders are those with the power or influence to stop, or delay, the transforming actions.

See SLIM Policy Briefing No. 2 (2004) and Farnworth & Jiggins (2003) on how to carry out a stakeholder analysis.

have passed legislation enabling it to award consumer product labels to products that can live up to the ILO's labour conventions (http://www.csrcampaign.org/publications/excellence report2002/europeancsroverview/sociallabels/printpage/content.aspx; 02-September-2004).

The German fieldwork findings, and the analysis above, suggest that it would be wise to acknowledge, or cooperate with regulatory initiatives like these. However, the analysis provided in chapter nine suggests that regulations in themselves do not enable quality relationships between producers and consumers to occur. This activity has to be performed in a different domain through creating a soft system that has the creation of quality relationships as its *raison d'être*.

Respondents to the questionnaire surveys, to the Gut Wulksfelde seminar, and to the focus groups had ambivalent feelings about retailers as ethical arbitrators in the marketplace: *'It would be simpler, that's for sure'*. However, it was felt that retailers might exploit their role as ethical arbitrators simply to make money: *'The real question is, how expensive would things become?'* These and other remarks made by the respondents support analyses presented elsewhere in the thesis that suggest that retailers struggle to achieve legitimacy as ethical brokers. Whilst the great majority of respondents were willing to ascribe ethical decision-making capacity to the state, a good number of respondents were not willing to ascribe the same freedom to retailers. Those respondents that welcomed the idea of ethical pre-selection by retailers outlined three provisos:

- Ethical pre-selection must ensure better social conditions.
- Retailers must make their ethical selection criteria fully transparent.
- Ethical pre-selection must not be a profit-making exercise.

Establishing legitimacy implies that retailers need to abandon their 'neutral' ethical stance. Respondents in the Gut Wulksfelde seminar argued that retailers should show people working on conventional plantations as well as on fair trade and organic ones. In other words, retailers need to make visible the 'whole story' behind the choices they are already making on behalf of consumers. Moreover, the differential ways in which retailers handle fair trade and organic goods should be examined carefully. With respect to fair trade goods, retailers appear to be mere intermediaries between the producers/certifiers and the consumer. Many fair trade goods are tightly packaged. They constitute a hermetic package of value – and a physical good - that can be transferred from producer to consumer quite easily. However, retailers are more heavily implicated in the construction of meanings around organic products as the analysis in chapter eight made clear. For example, retailers are actively engaged in co-constructing particular types of organic consumer to whom they then market particular products. They also process and package the organic product in ways that disorientate some categories of organic consumer. These activities effectively break the producer to consumer chain. According to respondents in the focus groups:

- *I have never, I believe, thought about the farmer,* and *I cannot imagine that someone thinks about the farmer.*

- *Yes, I think of the farmer because I always buy direct from an organic farm. I come into direct contact with the people working there. Those that sell the products are really incredibly nice, one has a very special relationship to them. But if I were to buy in a supermarket I am sure that would be much more anonymous, I would probably not think about the farmer.*

Retailers do not act alone in the creation of meanings around organic. The organic movement itself has for years tried to sell organic to the public on the grounds of its health benefits to consumers[199], and its benefits to ecosystems. It is only recently, as discussed in chapter three, that the organic movement is actually trying to institutionalise the well-being of farmers through social certification in organic farming. If a social label for <u>organic</u> producers is going to be effectively marketed retailers need to work at re-establishing the producer to consumer chain in organic produce. The chain needs to be made explicit and visible to the consumer. In tandem with this, 'ethical consistency' across the product life cycle in terms of processing and packaging is important.

It is hard to imagine what the new social label could look like. Its final form would be the result of discussions between the stakeholders involved. Yet it is useful to conclude this chapter by putting forward a tentative vision of the new social label that combines some of the elements that have been discussed in this chapter. Box 11.4 outlines the author's own suggestion, which she developed with Roger Farnworth (pers. comm. 09/04).

Box 11.4:   The New Social Label

One can take up the image of spotlights converging upon a dancer on the stage. This overall image signifies convergence between producers and consumers in terms of a quality relationship. A logo of overlapping circles (spotlights) could be developed. The overlapping area signifies areas of significant ethical coherence (schools, perhaps). The non-overlapping parts of the circles would indicate differences in values in action (incommensurable values). An Internet site, say, would enable people to click on to different parts of the logo. Through this they would discover what they might have in common with one another, and what is different in terms of their values in action. The data and information upon which these claims rest would need to be backed up by data provided through the quality of life toolkit, and through studies carried out in Germany. This proposal allows for dynamism since it would be possible to make the circles overlap in many different ways. A certifying body could provide a 'date stamp' that indicated the most recent review.

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[199] Nabs Suma (pers. comm. 09/04) remarks how the organic movement failed to sell the health benefits for <u>farmers</u> of farming organically to consumers. This has left it fighting a rearguard action against claims that the health benefits of organic consumption to consumers cannot be proved (see for example van Mansveld, 2000; Krebs, 2003; Brown, 2003, Giles, 2004). The case that the health of farmers and farm workers is damaged by the use of synthetic chemicals is much easier to make, concludes Suma.

11.5   Conclusion

It would be necessary to observe the soft system set up to create the social label in order to register, capture and fix some of its emergent properties. This would allow us to understand whether a quality relationship between producers and consumers was being achieved through the mechanism of the social label.

What might these emergent properties be? Let me, as the author of this thesis, place my cards on the table. I hope that they could include love, care, respect and knowledge of and for the 'other'. It would not, though, be possible for someone monitoring the process to get 'inside' the feeling that these words convey. They would have to content themselves with the limited advice given by Maturana: *'An observer says that there is love in a relation when he or she sees a behaviour through which another arises as a legitimate other in the living of that relation'* (pers. comm. 09/04)[200].

Zadek *et al.* (1998: 45) outline seven criteria for effective labels. These are (i) Relevance, (ii) Clarity, (iii) Trust, (iv) Accessibility, (v) Accuracy, (vi) Financial viability, and (vii) Legal viability. This is sensible advice. And yet it seems necessary to get away from too much pragmatism. It is just as important to be brave and bold. The work of Harvest for Humanity, described in Box 11.1, is poignant and even absurd in its hope that worker-owned farms might become the new model for farming in the USA. 'Der Pott kocht Fair' initiative is trying to make one of the most international of products local. It would be good to see a social label that brings the producer more fully into our world through allowing them to speak and shape what is important to them as well as to us.

It <u>is</u> plausible to argue that the emergent properties of a social label along the lines of the one conceived by the author like love, care, respect and knowledge are in themselves mechanisms capable of eroding real world structures of inequality. This is because, through the preferential purchasing inspired by the social label, they will start to create new weightings of relationships that actually pull and tug at what is wrong in order to make it right.

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[200] Maturana wrote this definition on the blackboard in advance of his lecture at the UKSS Conference, September, 2004.

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364

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Alexander von Hildebrand (06/01): key informant interview.

Atakilte Beyene (09/03, 08/04): email communications.

Bernard Hubert, INRA (10/00 and 04/04): discussion at DRDS, Uppsala, Sweden and advisory committee meeting at IFSA Conference in Florence.

Bodo Rabary, PRIAM (11/00): key informant interview at CGIAR Conference, Nairobi, Kenya.

Brian Goodwin, Schumacher College, UK (01/01): key informant interview, and course notes

Christine von Weiszäcker, course lecturer at Schumacher College, UK (01/01): key informant interview.

Detlef Kalus, IFOAM (06/03): key informant interview.

Dr. Maas, organic farmer (03/03): response to author's questions at 2 Jahre "Agrarwende" – und nun?' Lecture in the Environment Forum series at the Volkshochschule, Essen, 20/03/03.

Frau Thomsen, Manager of local Reformhaus store (07/03): key informant interview.

Fritjof Capra (07/04): fax communication from Schumacher College, UK.

Gerd Nikoleit, GEPA (06/03): key informant interview.

Hans Schiere (02/04): email communication.

Hiltrud Nieberg (09/03): key informant interview.

Humberto Maturana (09/04): notes taken by the author during a discussion between Steven Rose and Humberto Maturana on the topic *'Love, Biology and Social Responsibility',* 7th September 2004, UKSS Conference at St. Anne's College, Oxford.

Janice Jiggins, thesis supervisor: various email communications.

Jean-René Ravelonohina, USAID/ Landscape Development Interventions (03/01): email communication.

Jules Pretty (11/00): email communication.

Mae-Wan Ho (01/01): author's lecture notes.

Mike Goodman (09/04): email communication.

Nabs Suma (pers. comm. 09/04): telephone call.

Rhiannon Pyburn (09/03): email communication.

Richard Mandelbaum, (02/04): email communication.

Robert Duxbury (06/03): key informant interview.

Roger Farnworth; various discussions.

Roger Packham, University of Western Sydney (01/01): key informant interview.

Rolland Rambotiana, Phaelflor (07/00): key informant interview at Phaelflor's offices in Antananarivo, Madagascar.

Ruth van der Hulst van Arkel (04/02): notes taken by the author during a discussion at the International Farming Systems Association conference, Italy, in April 2002.

Satish Kumar, Schumacher College, UK (01/01): author's lecture notes.

Stephanie Gallett (08/03): email communication.

Valerie Moller (11/03): email communication.

Wee Chong Tan (02/04): email communication.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Central Human Functional Capabilities (Nussbaum, 1998)

Life. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length, not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.

Bodily Health and Integrity. Being able to have good health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and choice in matters of reproduction; being able to move from place to place; being secure against violent assault, including sexual assault, marital rape, and domestic violence.

Pleasure and Pain. Being able to avoid unnecessary and non-beneficial pain, as far as possible, and to have pleasurable experiences.

Senses. Imagination. Thought. Being able to use the senses; being able to imagine, to think, and to reason – and to do these things in a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing, and producing, spiritually enriching materials and events of one's own choice (religious, literary, musical, and so forth). Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise.

Emotions. Being able to have attachments to things and persons outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.

Practical Reason. Being able to form a conception of the good and engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life. This includes, today, being able to seek employment outside the home (in a regime protecting the free choice of occupation) and to participate in political life.

Affiliation. Being able to live for and to others; to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation; to have the capability for both justice and friendship. Protecting the capability means, once again, protecting institutions that constitute such form of affiliation, and also protecting freedoms of assembly and political speech.

Other Species. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.

Play. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

Separateness. Being able to live one's own life and nobody else's. This means having certain guarantees of non-interference with certain choices that are especially personal and definitive of selfhood, such as choices regarding marriage, childbearing, sexual expression, speech, and employment.

Strong Separateness. Being able to live one's own life in one's own surroundings and context. This means guarantees of freedom of association and of freedom from unwarranted search and seizure; it also means a certain sort of guarantee of the integrity of personal property, though this guarantee may be limited in various ways by the demand of social equality, and is always up for negotiation in connection with the interpretation of the other capabilities.

Appendix B: Transect of Plantation MonDésir
Source: Farnworth & Razanabahoaka (2002)

Plantation MonDesir: Transect

Est ⟶

Description	Cannelle et vertiver: culture en courbe de niveau Un ampalibe, un litchi	- Route vers la pepiniere - Vegetation secondaire - Riziere	1) Culture de curcuma jusqu'a 2 m du bas fond car c'est une culture qui a besoin d'humidite et de fertilite 2) Quelques arbres: banane, ampalibe, coco … partout 3) Poivrier sur glericidia (tuteur): en courbe de niveau; patchouli 4) Compostier: chaque zone de culture en a une plus pres 5) Culture de cannelle si la pente est raide mais culture de poivrier sinon 6) Poivrier	7) Brousse a nettoyer pour un projet de poivrier 8) Brousse et quelques grands arbres: a nettoyer dans l'avenir 9) Manioc des ouvriers immigres de PMD 10) Village des ouvriers immigres (4 familles, 7 batiments)	11) Zone en cours de nettoyage pour un projet de vanille, quelques vanilles plus bas 12) Zone de vanille
Travaux des Femmes	CANNELLE Melanger de sable et de composte, semer dans le pepiniere, mise en pot	RIZ Repiquer et recolter	POIVRIER Semer, couper le semis, preparation bac et mise en pot CURCUMA Culture fait exclusivement par les femmes	CULTURES VIVRIERES Manioc, ananas, patate, riz, banane brede.: cultures font par les ouvriers immigres soit pour l'autosuffisance, soit pour la vente Repartition de taches entre les femmes et les hommes	
Travaux des Hommes	CANNELLE Planter a 50 cm de profondeur	RIZ Couper et nettoyer	POIVRIER Planter les tuteurs et les poivriers		

Appendix C: Transect de Sombina
Source: Farnworth *et al.* (2002)

Transect de Sombina

Sud →	10 metres	50 metres	100 metres
Description	'Vohitsara' Epicerie (sel, café, pétrole, haricots, tabac, sucre …) Maison de Norbert Poulailler (8 poules, 7 coqs, 13 poussins, 7 canards)	Mélange des cultures pour l'autosuffisance et pour la vente	Mélange des plantes sauvages, surtout les fougères. Quelques ravenala et eucalyptus. Les derniers sont cultivés exprès, on trouve et garde les premiers sur place.
Activités	Prix de vente de volailles sur place • Poule : 15,000 FMG • Coq: 12,500 – 25,000 FMG • Canard: 20,000 FMG Les volailles sont aussi prévues pour l'autoconsommation	Le terrain appartient à la famille de Norbert Grands ananas 'Alois' : 2,500-4,000 FMG Manioc : 1,000 (3-4 kgs) vente sur place ; 20,000 – 25,000 (80 kg sac) à Brickaville Pocanelle : 250 FMG sur place ; 350-500 sur la route Café : 2,000 FMG (kg) Banane : 1,500 FMG tas	Le terrain appartient à la famille de Norbert Eucalyptus - La famille utilise le bois pour la construction de maison (vente également) Ravenala - On utilise les feuilles pour le toit des maisons et les grands bois pour faire le parquet. On fait aussi des cuillères, des assiettes et des parapluies avec les feuilles. Avec les branches on fait le mur. Il y a la possibilité de vendre les grains pour 15,000 FMG/kg mais on n'en connaît pas l'utilisation.
Contribution positive au bien-être	La famille de Norbert aime vivre ici parce que : - elle a l'autosuffisance - elle n'a pas de problèmes avec le voisinage : habitations espacées - L'air est pur et l'eau est propre	La famille trouve que le travail est 'moyen'	La famille préserve cet endroit pour l'avenir. Elle va le cultiver s'ils on suffisant de main d'œuvre et de matériels agricoles.
Problèmes pour atteindre le bien-être		La maladie de bananiers qui ravage les plantes depuis trois ans pose un grand problème : dans le passé il était courant d'avoir un régime de 10 kilos par bananier, aujourd'hui c'est impossible. De plus, ils plantent les bananiers autour de la pépinière de café comme protection contre la pluie et pour donner de l'ombre. Maintenant cette pratique est inutile. - On a besoin de charrue, bœuf et tractor	

Source : Transect fait le 11 juillet avec les villageois Norbert, Talata Marcel, Sambitody et Misilahy

379

Transect de Sombina (deuxième partie)

Ouest →	Croisement vers Sombina	650 metres (toute le transect)		Fleuve de Sombina, pont (branche)
Description	Le terrain à gauche : Mélange des plantes sauvages, surtout les fougères, quelques ravenala.	Le terrain à droite : Mélange des arbres et plantes en état sauvage.		
Activités	Le terrain appartient à quelqu'un 'qui habite très loin d'ici'. Pas de cultures, pas d'entretien.	Le terrain à droite jusqu'à la rivière appartient à Sampy Joseph, un villageois. Récolte des fruits et des plantes médicinales.		Collecte d'eau, pêche
Contribution positive au bien-être	'On peut peut-être lui demander si nous pouvons utiliser la terre. Si oui, on planterait du riz en bas et du manioc sur la pente. Mais actuellement nous sommes en manque de main d'oeuvre.'	Les villageois peuvent récolter toutes les plantes médicinales ainsi que les fruits sauf les litchis et les ananas 'Victoria', qui sont réservés à Sampy Joseph. Les fruits et autres arbres : ampalibe, goyaves, mandarines, ananas, hashina (pour le romanzava et planter autour de la maison comme clôture), rotra, lychees, monymony (le pied pour manger, les feuilles pour décoration pendant une fête – c'est interdit de couper cet arbre parce qu'il est rare).	Utilisation de plantes médicinales : Goyave : contre la diarrhée Talapetraka : contre les maladies d'estomac Pistache-mbazaha : contre la maladie du hanche quand on a beaucoup travaillé ; les fruits ont le goût de cacahuète	Les villageois prennent de l'eau pour boire, préparer la nourriture et se laver Les enfants, parfois les femmes et rarement les hommes pêchent (l'autoconsommation) : on trouve ici des tilapia, fiana et fibata. On voit les anguilles mais il est interdit de les manger (fadin-drazana)
Problèmes pour atteindre le bien-être				Les sangliers se cachent dans le sous bois et ils détruisent les cultures. Il y a les gens qui peuvent les manger, mais des autres n'aiment pas le goût ou c'est fady pour eux de manger du porc. On peut trouver chaque sorte de personne dans une seule famille.

Source : Transect fait le 11 juillet avec les villageois Norbert, Talata Marcel, Sambitody et Misilahy

Transect de Sombina (troisième partie)

Ouest →			
	150 metres transect totale		
Description	Trois bâtiments, bois joro, quelques plantes et arbres. Animaux sauvages dans la forêt : chameleon, serpent. Oiseaux : perroquet, martin-pecheur, domina (pigeon), akanga dia (pintade sauvage), tsiakohokoa (une poule qui n'est pas une poule)	Plusieurs arbres	Huit maisons, cinq familles liens avec le Tangalemena ; quelques arbres fruitiers (mangue, papaye, fruit à pain, cafe), volailles (poulet et canards)
Activités	Le terrain appartient à Madame Tody qui habite à côte de la route nationale. Parfois elle séjourne ici.	Le terrain appartient au Tangalemena de Sombina. On récolte les fruits et les plantes médicinales pour l'autoconsommation et la vente	Le tangalamena représente la troisième génération qui habite ici
Contribution positive au bien-être	Le joro est un lieu de sacrifice pour demander la bénédiction des ancêtres pendant une fête (la fête des morts par exemple). Mais comme le sacrifice coût très cher (au minimum un zébu) elle est rarement mise en œuvre. Reculé dans la forêt on trouve les tombeaux, 'on sent un lien avec les ancêtres ici, ça nous plaît'. On aime avoir le domoina à la maison, 'il fait plaisir'	Arbres : café, pêche, pamplemousse, bergamote (huile essentielle), pocanell, fruit à pain, piment, dokterakely (contre la diarrhée), ramy (la sève est utilise pendant le tromba – on jette la sève sur le feu – le fumé qui résulte est très parfume), cola (1,500 FMG/kg à Brickaville ou Anivarana)	
Problèmes pour atteindre le bien-être	La terre appartient aux étrangers		

Source : Transect fait le 11 juillet avec les villageois Norbert, Talata Marcel, Sambitody et Misilahy

Appendix D: Daily Activity Schedule for Velonaody ♂, 25 years and Chrissiane ♀, 24 years.

Horaire	Activite	Femme ♀ Homme ♂
05.00	➔ Tout le monde se réveille ➔ Préparer le feu pour chauffer le petit déjeuner ➔ Aller chercher l'eau ➔ S'occuper du feu pendent ce temps	 ♀ ♀ ♂
06.30	Petit déjeuner: riz avec des bredes ou des feuilles de manioc/patate pour tous – café pour les adultes et thé pour les petits	
06.40	Aller au travail	
06.50	Arrivée au travail	
07.00	Commencer le travail	
11.30	Fin du travail de la matinée, rentrer chez soi	
11.40	Préparer deux feux pour cuire le riz et le mets	♀
12.30	Déjeuner pour tous: 'quand l'une ou autre belle-mère est là, on peut manger tranquillement parce qu'elle prépare le déjeuner en avance'	♀
12.40	Aller au travail	
12.50	Arriver au travail	
13.00	Commencer le travail	
16.30	Fin du travail Aller à l'épicerie tous les deux jours (sel, sucre, huile..) Arriver à la maison • Chercher du bois • Faire cuire du manioc	 ♀ ♂ ♀
17.00	Chercher d'eau Manger du manioc Préparer le dîner (riz avec bredes ou feuilles de manioc ou poisson ou poulet)	♀ ♀
20.00	Dîner	

Source: Farnworth & Razanabahoaka (2002)

382

Appendix E: Names of the Key Informants at the Research Sites in Madagascar

Research Site 1: Brickaville

Informants-clés.	M. Faustin (manager de l'alambic), M. Raoelinarivo Jean-Albert (Chef de Division Programmation du CISCO à Brickaville), M. Tandrimo (manager de l'alambic), M. Claude (Superviseur de l'ASOS à Brickaville), Razanamirary Marthe (infirmiere au CSB 2 à Brickaville).
La Vie Quotidienne.	Marie-Juliette à Andapa.
Calendrier saisonnier à Sombina (fait avec des femmes et des hommes).	Hommes: Francois, Letsara, Sampy Zefa, Jean-Louis, Etienne, Lex. Femmes: Ramisivavy, Berthe, Vavizy, Clairette, Philipine, Mena, Angéle, Sonia.
Transect à Sombina (fait avec des hommes).	Norbert, Talata Marcel, Sambitody, Misilahy.
La Vie Quotidienne à Sahalakana (fait avec des femmes).	Marcie 'Maman i'Kala', Rasoamanahirana Paulette, Celine, Lahadivavy Christine, Sampivavy Jeanne.
La Vie Quotidienne à Sombina.	Hommes: Francois, Letsara, Sampy Zefa, Jean-Louis, Etienne, Lex, Nicolas Femmes: Ramisivavy, Berthe, Vavizy, Clairette, Philipine, Mena, Angéle, Sonia.
Transect à Sahalakana (fait avec des hommes)	Baban'i Kala, Ikala.
Calendrier saisonnier à Sahalakana (fait avec des femmes).	Marcie 'Maman'i Kala', Rasoamanahirana Paulette, Celine, Lahadivavy Christine, Sampivavy Jeanne (avec l'information supplementaire de Kamisy Roger, qui est passé).

Research Site 2: Plantation MonDésir

Informants-clés	Andriamparny Clara (responsable administrative et financier de Plantation MonDésir), Philippart Marc (responsable agronomique de Plantation MonDésir), Razafindriamiarana Faustin (superviseur de Zone Fénerive-Est pour LDI) Tsivolana Armel (Infirmier principal du Centre de Base à Mahambo), Marie-Claude (Président de la FAFED, Fénerive-Est), Rakotojaona Noeline et Mariame Jeannot (enseignants au Collège d'Enseignement Général à Mahambo).
Carte participative (faite avec les hommes)	Jean-Paul, George, Benoit Mananjara, Totoavy, Manajara Thelesphore, Tangisy, Nest, Augustin, Velonaody, Frederic, Fera, Arthur.
Carte participative (faite avec des femmes)	Telovavy Julienne, Marta, Zoma, Mamy Chrissiane, Rosa Millienne, Georgine.
Calendrier saisonnier (fait avec un couple)	Rosaline ♀ et Armely ♂.
Transect (fait avec des hommes)	Velonaody, Frederic, Augustin, Rico.
Transect (fait avec des femmes)	Telovavy Julienne, Marta, Zoma, Mamy Chrissiane.
La vie quotidienne d'une femme seule	Rosa Millienne.
La vie quotidienne d'un couple	Velonaody ♂ et Chrissiane ♀.
Matrice historique sur la santé	Martha ♀, Rosaline ♀, Totoavy ♂ et Benoit Mananjary ♂.
Les entretiens TATs	Maru ♀ Mamy Chrissiane ♀ Fera ♂ et Tangisy ♂.
Discussion sur le bien-être (fait avec des femmes)	Maru, Chrissiane, Zoma, Marta.
Discussion sur le bien-être (fait avec des hommes)	Benoit Mananjara, Manajara Thelesphore, Tangisy, Frido, Christophe.
Calendrier saisonnier: intensité du travail (fait avec des femmes)	Telovavy Julienne, Marta, Zoma, Mamy Chrissiane, Rosa Millienne.
Calendrier saisonnier: intensité de travail (fait avec des hommes)	Fera, Arthur, Manajara Thelesphore, Frido, Felix, Christophe.

Appendix F: The Pilot Questionnaire Survey

Biofach 2001

Wir bitten Sie, folgende Fragen aus der Sicht eines Konsumenten ökologischer Produkte zu beantworten.

Besuchen Sie die Biofach als:

	Verbraucher	Händler	Produzent

Sind Sie: männlich   weiblich

Ihre Staats – angehörigkeit: deutsch   europäisch   sonstige

Ihr Alter: bis 30   31-50   über 50

Würden Sie sich wünschen, auf den Produktlabeln ökologischer Produkte mehr Informationen über die Produzenten zu finden?
          Ja   Nein

Wenn ja, fänden Sie ein Kurzportrait des Produzenten auf dem Label wünschenswert
          Ja   Nein

Berücksichtigen Sie sog. Fair Trade Label beim Kauf von Produkten (ökologisch oder konventionell) aus Drittweltländern (Afrika, Asien, Lateinamerika)?
          Ja   Nein

Die folgenden Fragen behandeln Kriterien zur Messung der Lebensqualität der Produzenten ökologischer Produkte. Diese Kriterien gehen weit über eine einfache Einkommenserhöhungen hinaus und können dazu dienen, Konsumenten über die Auswirkungen ihrer Kaufentscheidungen zu informieren. Es wird angenommen, dass diese Produkte nicht in Europa produziert werden können.

Die Produktion und der Verkauf ökologischer Produkte kann sowohl den Kleinbauern in Drittweltländern als auch der natürlichen Umwelt eine Vielzahl von Vorteilen bringen. Bitte teilen Sie uns mit, welche der folgenden Kriterien bezüglich der Lebenssituation der Produzenten Sie als wichtig erachten.

Verbesserung der Umweltsituation vor Ort
sehr wichtig   wichtig   unwichtig

Aufrechterhaltung / Verbesserung von sozialen Strukturen
sehr wichtig   wichtig   unwichtig

Verbesserung der Einkommenssituation
sehr wichtig   wichtig   unwichtig

Relative Verbesserung des sozialen Staus von Bäuerinnen in den Produktionsgebieten
sehr wichtig   wichtig   unwichtig

Zugang zu Schulbildung für die Kinder der Produzenten
sehr wichtig   wichtig   unwichtig

Verbesserung der Gesundheitssituation für die gesamte Produzentengemeinschaft
sehr wichtig   wichtig   unwichtig

Sicherung eines langfristigen Einkommens für die Produzenten
sehr wichtig   wichtig   unwichtig

Den Produzenten den Zugang zu Land zu sichern

sehr wichtig   wichtig   unwichtig

Wenn Sie unter den oben genannten Kriterien die wichtigsten auswählen müssten, welche 3 würden Sie wählen?

Bitte, fügen Sie weitere Kriterien hinzu, die nicht genannt wurden, aber für Sie von Wichtigkeit wären:

Würden zusätzliche Information zu diesen Themen auf den Produktlabeln ihre Kaufentscheidung beeinflussen?

              Ja   Nein

Schließlich: wären Sie bereit, einen geringfügig höheren Preis für ein Produkt aus einem Drittweltland zu zahlen wenn Sie - mittels Zertifikation entsprechend der oben genannten sozialen Kriterien - sicher sein könnten, dass die Produzenten vom Kauf direkt profitieren?

              Ja   Nein

Das Ergebnis der Untersuchung dient als Grundlage einer Forschungsarbeit, welche die Möglichkeiten und Grenzen von ‚Sozialkriterien' auf Produktlabeln ökologischer Produkte untersucht. Diese Kriterien setzen die Lebensbedingungen der Produzenten im Vermarktungsprozess in den Mittelpunkt des Zertifizierungsprozesses und nicht – wie so häufig – das Produkt. Wenn Sie sich für zusätzliche Informationen zum diesem Thema interessieren schreiben Sie bitte an Cathy Farnworth (cathyrozel@hotmail.com).

Appendix G: The Final Questionnaire Survey

Fragebogen zu ökologischem bzw. ethischem Konsum

Wir bitten Sie freundlich darum, die folgenden Fragen zu beantworten.

Sind Sie:	männlich	weiblich	
Ihr Alter:	bis 30	31-50	über 50

Welcher Anteil haben Ökoprodukte an Ihrem Lebensmittelkonsum?

Bis zu 33%   Bis zu 66%   Bis zu 100%

Wählen Sie beim Einkauf gezielt Produkte mit Fair Trade Labeln aus?

Ja   Nein

Die folgenden Fragen behandeln Kriterien zur Messung der Lebensqualität der Produzenten ökologischer Produkte aus Drittweltländern. Diese Kriterien gehen, im Gegensatz zum klassischen ‚Fair-Trade-Ansatz', weit über eine einfache Einkommenserhöhungen für die Produzenten hinaus. Bitte teilen Sie uns mit, *wie* Sie die folgenden Kriterien bezüglich der Lebenssituation der Produzenten Sie bewerten.

1. Verbesserung der Umweltsituation vor Ort
sehr wichtig   wichtig   weniger wichtig
2. Verbesserung der Einkommenssituation
sehr wichtig   wichtig   weniger wichtig
3. Relative Verbesserung des sozialen Status (z.B. finanziell, Bildungsniveau) von Bäuerinnen in den Produktionsgebieten
sehr wichtig   wichtig   weniger wichtig
4. Zugang zu Schulbildung für die Kinder der Produzenten
sehr wichtig   wichtig   weniger wichtig

5. Verbesserung der Gesundheitssituation für die gesamte Produzentengemeinschaft

sehr wichtig   wichtig   weniger wichtig
6. Gesicherte Abnahme der Produkte durch die Großhändler
sehr wichtig   wichtig   weniger wichtig

Wenn Sie unter den oben genannten Kriterien die wichtigsten auswählen müssten, welche 3 (in Rangordnung) würden Sie wählen?
1.   2.   3.
Bitte fügen Sie weitere Kriterien hinzu, die oben nicht genannt wurden, aber für Sie von Wichtigkeit wären:

Würden Sie sich wünschen, auf den Produktlabeln ökologischer Produkte (oder als Informationsdienst der Großhändler) mehr Informationen über die Produzenten zu finden?
Ja   Nein
Wenn ja, fänden Sie ein Kurzportrait des Produzenten auf dem Label wünschenswert?
Ja   Nein
Vielen Dank

Cathy Farnworth und Lilja Otto (University of Agricultural Sciences, Schweden)
Das Ergebnis der Untersuchung dient als Grundlage einer Doktorsarbeit, welche die Möglichkeiten und Grenzen von ‚Sozialkriterien' auf Produktlabeln ökologischer Produkte untersucht. Diese Kriterien setzen die Lebensbedingungen der Produzenten im Vermarktungsprozess in den Mittelpunkt des Zertifizierungsprozesses und nicht – wie so häufig – das Produkt. Wenn Sie sich für zusätzliche Informationen zum diesem Thema interessieren schreiben Sie bitte an Cathy Farnworth (cathyrozel@hotmail.com)

Appendix H: Gut Wulksfelde Discussion Guide

Ziele:
1. Die vorhandenen Unterschiede, daraus resultierende Spannungen, aber auch Übereinstimmungen der Lebensqualtätskonzepte der Kunden (wir) und der Produzenten (die anderen) aufzeigen und verdeutlichen.
2. Wege zu finden, wie die beiden Seiten einander nähergebracht werden können.

Programm

Aktivität	Methode	Time
Teil Eins: Perspektive der Konsumenten		
Einleitung – Ziele des Seminars, Programm (es geht um Fragen nicht um Antworten), einige madagassische Produkte herumreichen, Vorstellung der Teilnehmer	Flipchart, reihum fragen	10
1. Was bedeutet ‚fair gehandelt' 2. Was bedeutet ‚biologisch/ökologisch' hergestelltes Produkt	Brainstorm in zwei Gruppen – auf Flipchartbögen, Gruppenvertreter präsentieren Ergebnisse • Überschneidungen • Unterschiede • Schlüsselbegriffe • Kommentar zur Bedeutung des Wortes 'Mensch' in beiden Definitionen. Diskussion: 1. Die Bedeutung von 'organisch'und 'fair gehandelt' ist oft sehr unterschiedlich 2. Unser eigener Standpunkt, unsere eigene Weltanschauungen.	15
Es existieren Ansätze, die beiden Richtungen 'biologisch' und 'fair gehandelt' zusammenzubringen: • Rapunzel 'Hand in Hand' • SASA Project • Fair Trade Foundation and Soil Association Pilot Project in UK • ISEAL ⇨ wer legt die Standards fest? ⇨ wer entscheidet was wichtig ist?	Flipchart Cathy, zwei Fragen	5
Vorstellung von Lebensqualitätskriterien, die deutsche Konsumenten für organische Produzenten im Süden als wichtig erachten.	Flipchart - Wolfgang	5
Diskussion ⇨ Denken Sie, dass Ihr Alter und Ihr Geschlecht Einfluß auf die Frage hat ob Du organisch produzierte / fair gehandelte Produkte kaufst? ⇨ Ist es denkbar, unterschiedliche Produktlabel für unterschiedliche Alters – und Geschlechtsgruppen zu benutzen?	Geleitet von Cathy, in der Runde	10
Teil Zwei: Die Perspektive der Produzenten		
1. Einige Fair Trade Labels zeigen (Viva el Café) und Ihre Produktionsbedingungen vorstellen. 2. Vorstellung ausgewählter Ergebnisse von Befragungen bezüglich Lebensqualitätskriterien, die unter madagassischen Kleinbauern durchgeführt worden sind	Wolfgang liesst Labels und FC Cathy ⇨ es ist *möglich*, dass es sehr starke Unterschiede gibt zwischen dem, was Fair Trade Label versprechen, und dem was Produzenten wirklich haben wollen.	5

388

Pause 15 Minutes, madagassische Musik, Photo Ausstellungn, Objekte aus Madagaskar Erfrischungen (bis 11.05)		
Präsentation des Videos. Arbeitsfragen werden vor der Präsentation gestellt: • Welche Lebensqualitätskriterien und Wünsche der Plantagenarbeiter entsprechen den unsrigen. • Welche Punkte unterscheiden sich? • Was denken Sie, warum die Arbeiter sich dafür entschieden haben, auf der Plantage zu arbeiten? • Andere Beobachtungen	Video, Flipchart, Fragen von Cathy	15
Diskussion des Videos anhand der obigen Fragen	Plenumdiskussion, geleitet von Cathy	15
Diskussion ⇨ Wie kann die Diskrepanz zwischen den Lebenszielen der Produzenten, und dem, was die deutschen Konsumenten als wichtig für die Produzenten erachten, überbrückt werden? ⇨ Wie kann das durch ein Produktlabel erreicht werden?	Zwei Gruppen	15
Präsentation durch Gruppenrepräsentanten	Gruppenrepräsentanten	10
Feedback, Verabschiedung , Ende	Cathy, Wolfgang, Gruppe	5
Gesamtzeit 2.05 h		

Aussagen deutscher Befragten bezüglich der Lebensqualitätskriterien der Produzenten, geordnet nach Alter (Beispiel – wie bei den FGs)

Up to 30	31-50	Over 50
1. Ausbildung der Bauernkinder	1. Ausbildung der Bauernkinder	1. Ausbildung der Bauernkinder
2. Frauenförderung	2. Verbessertes Einkommen	2. Frauenförderung

Bei ökologischen Kleinbauern

1. Viele Bauern betrachten die Ausbildung ihrer Kinder als relativ unbedeutend.

2. Kleinbauern schätzen Unabhängigkeit über alles. Sie wären zum Beispiel eher bereit, weniger Geld zu verdienen,als an einem langfristigen Liefervertrag gebunden zu sein.

3. Die Produktion von Lebensmitteln ist ihnen wichtiger, als die Produktion von Pflanzen für den Export.

4. Kleinbauern betrachten ihre Gesundheit als gut.

Appendix I: The Focus Group Interview Guide

Einleitung und Vorstellung,

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herrn - Ich begrüße Sie sehr herzlich zu unserer Gruppendiskussion zum Thema *Bio- und Fairtrade-Produkte.*

Mein Name ist Mathias Boysen. Ich bin heute Ihr Gesprächsleiter. Zu meiner Rechten sitzt Cathy Farnworth, sie ist die Leiterin unserer Forschungsgruppe. Und links neben mir sitzt Wolfgang Raabe. Er assistiert mir beim Protokoll und beim technischen Ablauf.

Ich danke Ihnen sehr, dass Sie der Einladung zu diesem Gespräch gefolgt sind. Das Gespräch ist Teil eines über mehrere Jahre laufenden Forschungsprojekts - zu dem neben diesen Gruppengesprächen - auch Feldstudien in Madagaskar gehören, die Frau Farnworth durchgeführt hat.

Wie gesagt: Hier und heute wollen wir uns über Bioprodukte und über fairgehandelten Produkten aus den Ländern des Südens unterhalten. Dabei wollen wir vor allem Ihre Sichtweise der Dinge kennen lernen. Es gibt also keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten! - Wir stellen uns heute ein offenes Gespräch vor - und zögern Sie nicht, ihre persönliche Meinung zu sagen.

Alles, was Sie hier sagen, ist natürlich absolut vertraulich. Damit wir hinterher noch wissen, was Sie gesagt haben, zeichnen wir das Gespräch auf Tonband auf. Wenn die Aufzeichnungen schriftlich abgetippt sind, werden die Aufnahmen gelöscht. Bei der Auswertung werden alle Angaben selbstverständlich anonymisiert. Wir gehen davon aus, dass Sie mit diesem Vorgehen einverstanden sind.

[Einverständnis einholen]

Zum weitern Ablauf: Wir werden nach ca. einer Stunde ein kurze Pause machen. Und gegen 20.45 Uhr wird die Gesprächsrunde dann zu Ende sein. Ich möchte Sie jetzt bitten, mit dem Filzstift Ihren Vornamen auf das Kärtchen von Ihnen zu schreiben. Dann wollen wir uns kurz reihum vorstellen. Bitte verraten Sie uns Ihren Vornamen und sagen Sie uns dann noch, wo sie nächste Woche am liebsten in Urlaub fliegen würden.

▪▪

[Kartensets verteilen]

(1) Lesen Sie sich die Karten in Ruhe durch. Wählen sie bitte die Karten aus, welche am meisten ihrer Meinung entspricht. Zeigen Sie die Karte aber noch nicht vor, sondern warten Sie bitte, bis alle ihre Wahl getroffen haben. Jeder soll in Ruhe Zeit haben, seine eigene Wahl zu treffen!

1. Menschen sind am Wichtigsten. Tiere sind wichtig, da sie dem menschlichen Wohlbefinden dienen.
2. Menschen und Tiere sind gleich wichtig.
3. Alle lebendigen Wesen, inklusive Pflanzen, sind gleich wichtig.
4. Alle lebendigen sowie nicht-lebendige Sachen (z.B. landschaftliche Merkmale wie Berge, Flüsse usw) sind gleich wichtig.
5. Die Biosphäre als Ganzes und seine Ökosystem ist am Wichtigsten.

➔ Wenn alle soweit sind, dann zeigen sie ihre Wahl hoch

[alle Karten vorlesen]

[bei E nachfragen] Ganzheitlichkeit ist wichtiger als ein einzelner Mensch oder eines Tier, meinen sie das ?

➔ (Name), sie haben (Kartentext) gewählt. Möchten Sie kurz sagen, warum ?

[alle Personen fragen]

(2) Wenn Sie einmal direkte Familienbeziehungen und Freundschaften außer Acht lassen,

[offen in die Runde fragen]

was für eine Beziehung empfinden sie gegenüber künftigen Generationen ? (Verantwortung)

Was für eine Beziehung empfinden sie gegenüber Menschen in anderen Ländern, z.B. Afrika und Asien ?

[Wandtext aufdecken]

Manche Leute sagen

Ich bin sehr idealistisch, aber die Welt ist zu groß und kompliziert heutzutage. Ob ich etwas mache, oder nicht mache, macht kein Unterscheid.

(3) Meinen Bitte: Erläutern Sie, warum Sie dieser Aussage zustimmen, oder nicht zustimmen können.

[alle Personen fragen]

(4) Stellen Sie sich bitte einmal vor, sie gehen einkaufen und auf einer Verpackung finden sie ein solches Bio-Siegel.

[Bsp. zeigen]

➔ Was bedeutet ein solches Bio-Siegel für Sie?

[offen in die Runde fragen, bei Bio-Käufern nachfragen]

(5) Stellen Sie Sich nun vor, sie würden auf der Verpackung ein Siegel finden, das das Produkt als „fair gehandelt" ausweist.

[Bsp. zeigen]

➔ Was bedeutet ein solches Fairgehandel-Siegel für Sie?

[offen in die Runde fragen, bei Fairtrade-Käufern nachfragen]

(6) Was meinen Sie, unterscheiden sich die beiden Siegel in ihren Aussagen?

[offen in die Runde fragen]

(7) [nur ggf. nachfragen] Gibt es Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen den beiden Siegeln?

Im nächsten Abschnitt möchte Ihnen einige Fragen zu Ihrer Kaufentscheidungen stellen.

(8) Aus welchen Gründen kaufen Sie Bioprodukte?

[offen in die Runde fragen, bei Bio-Käufern nachfragen]

(9) [nur ggf. nachfragen] Was für Auswirkungen erwarten sie durch Ihre Kaufentscheidung?

(10) Aus welchen Gründen kaufen Sie Fairtradeprodukte?

[offen in die Runde fragen, bei Fairtrade-Käufern nachfragen]

(11) [nur ggf. nachfragen] Was für Auswirkungen erwarten sie durch Ihre Kaufentscheidung?

Meine Letzte Frage in diesem Block lautet:

(12) Denken Sie beim Kauf von Bio- oder Fairtrade-Produkten an den Bauern oder die Bäuerin, die die Produkte herstellen?
[ggf. nachfragen] In welche Weise ?
[alle Personen fragen, bei Bio-Käufern nachfragen]

[Wandtext aufdecken]
Manche Leute, die Bio oder Fairtrade kaufen, sagen:
⇨ Ich kaufe Bio. mir und der Umwelt zuliebe
⇨ Ich selbe profitiere nicht von meinem Fairtradekauf. Mein Ziel ist es, Bauern in der dritten Welt zu helfen.
(13) Meine Frage an Sie: Was halten Sie von den beiden Aussagen?
[offen in die Runde fragen]

(14) Teilen Sie die Meinung, dass Fairtrade und Biokonsumenten unterschiedliche Ziele haben? Denken Sie dabei nicht an Sich selber, sondern an durchschnittliche Konsumenten von Bio- oder FT und Produkten.
[offen in die Runde fragen]

(15) Was denken Sie: Sind Biokonsumenten in der Regel an dem Wohlbefinden der Bauern interessiert, die die Produkte herstellen?
[offen in die Runde fragen, bei Bio-Käufern nachfragen]

[Wandtext aufdecken]
Manche Leute meinen:
Heutzutage ist der Markt und die Macht der Konsumenten der einzige noch offene Weg, eine andere Art von Welt zu schaffen
(16) Wieder meine Frage an Sie: Was halten Sie von dieser Aussage?
[offen in die Runde fragen]

(17) [nur ggf. nachfragen] Wie wirksam ist der Macht der Konsumenten, um soziale Veränderung hervorzurufen?
[offen in die Runde fragen]
(18) [entfällt]

(19) Meine Anschlussfrage: Nutzen Sie andere Wege, um die von ihnen erwünschten gesellschaftlichen Veränderung zu erreichen? (z.B. Wählen, Mitgliedschaft einer NRO, Patenkind, Spenden)
[offen in die Runde fragen]

[Wandtext aufdecken]
Wir haben schon über Fairtrade und Biosiegel gesprochen. Einige Leute meinen, dass Konsumenten einfach beim Einkaufen die Zeit nicht haben, alle Siegel zu lesen.
Sie sagen deswegen:
Ich bin der Meinung, dass Lebensmittegeschäfte alle Ihre Produkte nach ethischen Kriterien vorwählen sollen
(20) Was halten Sie von dieser Aussage?
[offen in die Runde fragen]

(21) [nur ggf. nachfragen] Soll der Ladenbesitzer ethische Entscheidungen im Interesse der Kunden treffen?

(22) [nur ggf. nachfragen] Oder sollen Kunden selber entscheiden können?

[Wandtext aufdecken]
In Deutschland wird viel vom „mündigen Bürger" gesprochen. Dagegen meinen einige:
Eine ethischere Gesellschaft darf nicht auf freiwilligen Konsumentscheidungen basieren. Die Regierung, oder Entscheidungsträger in der Europäischen Gemeinschaft sollen strenge Sozial -und Umweltstandards für alle Beteiligten in Industrie und Landwirtschaft setzen. Solche Standards würden Fair Trade- und Biosiegel einfach ersetzen.
(23) Was meinen Sie: Ist es Rolle der Regierung, oder der EU, Standards für alle zu setzen?
[offen in die Runde fragen]

(24) Soll eine ‚bessere' ethischere Gesellschaft auf freiwilligem Konsumverhalten basieren ?
[offen in die Runde fragen]

(25) Jetzt würde ich gerne mit Ihnen die Art von Projekten in Bauerngemeinden diskutieren, die häufig von fairtrade Initiativen unterstützt werden. Diese fairtrade Firma, Viva el café [Packet zeigen] unterstützt zum Beispiel, langfristige Verträge, und direkte Handlungskontakte mit den Bauern. [Beschriftung lesen]

Wir haben deutsche Biokonsumenten darum gebeten, sich zum Wohlbefinden von Biobauern in südlichen Ländern Afrikas, in Asien und Latein Amerika zu äußern. Wir haben ihnen eine Auswahl von spezifische Kriterien vorgelegt, (z. B. Gesundheit der Bauern, die Lage von Frauen, Einkommenserhöhung oder Ausbildung der Kinder.)
Solche Projekte werden häufig von Fairtrade-Organisationen unterstützt [noch ein mal auf FT Beschriftung zeigen].
Die Ergebnisse haben wir nach Geschlecht und Alter der Befragten analysiert. Hier finden Sie einige der Ergebnisse, die aufgrund des Alters aufgestellt sind.
Die wichtigsten vier Kriterien für junge Leute (bis zu 30 Jahre alt) waren:
- Ausbildung der Bauernkinder
- Verbesserung des sozialen Status von Bäuerinnen
- Verbesserung der lokalen Umweltsituation
- Verbesserung des Gemeindelebens.
- Das Kriterium, das am seltensten genannt wurde, war: Sicherung eines langfristigen Einkommens

Leute in der mittleren Altersgruppe (31-50 Jahre) hielten die folgenden vier Kriterien für wichtig:
- Ausbildung der Bauernkinder
- Gehaltsverbesserungen
- Verbesserung der lokalen Umweltsituation
- Sicherung eines langfristigen Einkommens.
- Am seltensten wurde genannt: Den Farmern Zugang zu Land zu sichern.

Für Leute ab 50 Jahre waren die folgenden vier Kriterien wichtig:
- Ausbildung der Bauernkindern
- Verbesserung des sozialen Status von Bäuerinnen

- Gehaltsverbesserungen
- Verbesserung der Gesundheit von Bauern.
- Am seltensten wurde genannt: Den Farmern Zugang zu Land zu sichern.

Unsere Ergebnisse zeigen, dass Alter (und Geschlecht) des Befragten einen wesentlichen Einfluss auf die Prioritätensetzung haben.

➔ (25) Ausgehend von diesen Ergebnissen, möchte ich ihnen drei Fragen stellen:
Zuerst einmal, Was glauben Sie: Auf welche Art und Weise beeinflusst Ihr Alter oder die Tatsache, dass Sie Mann oder Frau sind, Ihre Entscheidung, Bio- oder Fair-Trade-Produkte zu kaufen?
[alle Personen fragen]

(26) Bitte behalten Sie die Ergebnisse der deutschen Feldforschung im Kopf. Sie zeigen, welche Art von Drittweltprojekten Konsumenten hierzulande gerne unterstützen.

Drittweltprojekte, die von Fair Trade Organisationen unterstützt werden – und die auf Kaffeedosen explizit beschrieben werden, um zum Kauf zu animieren – sind möglicherweise nicht die Projekte, die die Bauern selber haben wollen. Unsere Feldforschung mit madagassischen Bauern und Plantagenarbeitern, die ökologisch aber nicht fair-trade produzieren, zeigt:

Bei ökologisch produzierenden Kleinbauern
- Viele Bauern betrachten die Ausbildung ihrer Kinder als relativ unbedeutend.
- Kleinbauern schätzen Unabhängigkeit über alles. Sie wären zum Beispiel eher bereit, weniger Geld zu verdienen, als an einem langfristigen Liefervertrag gebunden zu sein.
- Die Produktion von Lebensmitteln ist ihnen wichtiger, als die Produktion von Pflanzen für den Export.
- Kleinbauern betrachten ihre Gesundheit als gut.

➔ (26) Was denken Sie? Sollen Fair Trade Labels ‚unsere' Wertvorstellungen als Konsumenten oder die Wertvorstellungen der Bauern wiedergeben? [Auf die Wandtafel deuten]
[alle Personen fragen]

(27) Wenn Fairtradelabels den Wertvorstellungen der Bauern näher kommen würden, könnten Sie persönlich Projekte unterstützen, die möglicherweise gegen Ihre eigenen Wertvorstellung verstoßen (zum Beispiel ein Videosaal anstelle einer Grundschule)?
[offen in die Runde fragen]

➔ Damit sind wir am Ende unserer Diskussion. Ich hoffe, es hat ihnen ein wenig Spaß gemacht!
Wolfgang wird jetzt mit der Anwesendheitsliste herum gehen und das Teilnahmehonorar an sie aushändigen.

Wenn Sie Interesse an den Ergebnissen dieses Projektes haben, dann können sie ihre Adresse oder am besten ihre a-mail eintragen. Wir senden ihnen den Projektbericht dann

später zu. Und wenn sie jetzt sofort Fragen haben, dann beantworten wir diese jetzt ebenfalls gerne.

Wenn Sie darüber hinaus an unsrer Forschung teilnehmen möchten (es geht dabei um einen Fragebogen per email, aber leider nicht gegen Bezahlung) so würden wir uns sehr darüber freuen. Geben Sie uns dann ihren Wunsch bitte mit an.

Appendix J: Federal Programme for Organic Farming - Overview of Individual Measures

Set A: Agricultural Production

A1 The central Organic Farming Internet portal.

A2 Development of information material on organic farming for classroom instruction at agricultural vocational schools & agricultural trade & technical schools.

A3 Continuing training for advisors, veterinarians & heads of working groups

A4 Grants to cover the cost of obtaining conversion advice.

A5 Information events on organic farming for active & young farmers.

A6 Establishment of a network of demonstration farms.

A7 Presentation of organic farming at agricultural trade fairs.

Set B: Primary Marketing and Processing

B1 The central Organic Farming Internet portal.

B2 Information material on the processing of organic produce for use in basic & continuing training activities in the food sector & food industry.

B3 Information for the food industry

B4 Presentations at food industry trade fairs to demonstrate the processing of organic produce.

B5 The Organic Food Innovation award.

Set C: Trade, Marketing and Consumers

C1 The central Organic Farming Internet portal.

C2 Consumer Information about the organic farming production system.

    Information campaign

    Press & media work

    Experience Organic Food days

    Travelling exhibits, information stands, decentralised events

    Events for young people

    Games for pre-schoolers

    Film competition with events

    Coordination with producers & trade

C3 Set up a photographic archive on organic farming.

C4 Information material on organic farming for use in schools offering general education.

C5 The Organic Farming at School competition.

C6 Information for persons working in food retailing & in health food retailing.

C7 Concepts, checklists & manuals for evaluation of the presentation of organic produce at various sales outlets.

C8 Information on the use of organic products for the restaurant trade & industrial caterers.

C9 Awards to cooks who use organic produce.

D/E Research and development projects and measures for the transfer of technology and knowledge.

Source: Nieberg (2003)

Appendix K. Assessment of the Effectiveness of the German Toolkit

The discussion in this part explores, first, the effectiveness of the questionnaire surveys in producing data useful to the author's research objectives. The second part discusses the focus groups.

The Questionnaire Surveys

Developing the pilot questionnaire survey was a painstaking and slow process that involved isolating the key questions, unpacking often hidden assumptions held by the author, and arriving at the real purpose of the exercise. Once this groundwork had been laid, it was relatively simple to revise the pilot questionnaire survey in line with Dr. Nieberg's comments.

Two significant assumptions were made. These were (1) The respondents would already have an opinion on many of the issues being addressed, and (2) In the course of answering the questionnaire the respondents might start to review and clarify their opinions. This assumption pertained particularly to the task of ranking producer quality of life criteria. In other words, it was assumed that the respondents were being taken on a process that would slightly change them. For this reason, and because the number of questionnaires actually evaluated was small (Pilot 44; Main questionnaire survey 138) representative data production was not the aim.

The data produced by the questionnaire surveys was handled statistically. Mr. Peter devised data entry forms in Access, and provided advice to Ms Otto and the author on how to manipulate the data in Excel. The data that emerged cannot lay claim to statistical verity. However, the process of linking attributes provided a great number of interesting and sometimes tantalising associations that pleaded further exploration. The main questionnaire survey revealed, for example, that people who bought more than 66% of their food in organic quality considered the status of women to be very important. An analysis of the Biofach survey shows that women responded more consistently than men throughout the questionnaire. If they began with a positive response this generally prevailed to the end (and vice-versa). Some of the more promising and, it was hypothesised on the basis of wider reading and discussion by the author, robust associations were followed up in the focus groups. Others remain to be examined.

The pilot and main questionnaire surveys were, in technical terms, successful. As hoped they generated interesting hypotheses and leads. The author planned follow-up seminars with the respondents to the main questionnaire survey. A good number of respondents wanted to be contacted of this purpose. For logistical reasons these seminars were not held and this has to be a cause for regret. Furthermore, the author was primarily responsible for the design of the pilot and main questionnaire surveys but she did not apply them. Although the report supplied by Ms. Otto (2002) and the author on the basis of Ms. Nieberg's work (2003) provided essential input into the author's focus groups, the author could not benefit from the discussions held between the respondents and the enumerators during and following their application. The questionnaire surveys, for the author, therefore lack the embedded quality of her work in Madagascar and in the German seminar and focus groups.

The Focus Groups

These observations made here derive from several sources. They include (1) Written responses provided by Mathias Boysen, the moderator, to a set of questions posed by the author shortly after the focus groups were concluded. (2) Notes made by the author during meetings held by Mr. Boysen, the author, and Mr. Raabe immediately after the conclusion of each focus group in order to make observations on the content and process, and (3) Reflections made by the author in the intervening time period.

<u>The Interview Guide</u>

The interview guide in the focus groups was based in large part upon the hypotheses and findings generated by the German questionnaire surveys and the Malagasy fieldwork. This made for a robust and useful interview guide since many potential questions had been filtered out as irrelevant, or as lacking in interpretative value, early on in the process. Although the first focus group was intended to be a pilot, only minor adjustments needed to be made to the interview guide. The robustness of the guide is shown in the fact that it was possible to engage in detailed questioning and discussion on each point. It had been a concern that the posing of questions that seemed, ostensibly, similar to each other in each block might lead to frustration, but in fact careful exploration of the nuances of a particular topic led to a rich discussion. Although the direction of the focus group discussions took were undoubtedly influenced by the remarks of the participants who opened each section, it was possible to obtain a wide range of opinions. Nonetheless, in each focus group certain words were picked up on by the group and used repeatedly. In one group, for example, the word 'holistic' became something of a totem.

<u>The Process</u>

Energy levels remained high across the two-hour discussion period. This must be attributed not only to the subject matter, but also ensuring that no one person was able to dominate the discussion. This can be attributed to the tactic of asking a new person each time to open the discussion, and through ensuring that each participant (though not in turn) was asked to provide a response. This approach created a climate of careful listening and a willingness to be concise. Individuals across all the focus groups spoke for around 25 seconds in response to each question. This permitted a particular round of responses – including reading the opening question – to be completed in about four minutes. A few respondents had taken part in other focus groups. Perhaps this helped instil conciseness of response, too. Further remarks are:

- Although people were asked to provide a response to a particular question, it became evident that their responses were usually modulated by the responses of previous speakers. Later speakers contradicted, agreed with, or developed ideas presented by others, or they offered new ideas.
- The interview guide was adhered to strictly. This enabled the facilitator to ensure that participants remained with the question. If they drifted he was able to bring them back to the point under discussion with little protest on their side. He also paraphrased a participant's response when it was unclear. Although it is possible to manipulate the respondents by paraphrasing their responses, adopting this approach in the focus groups enabled the respondents to clarify their response. They took the opportunity to do so frequently. When the responses were analysed it was not necessary to indulge in guesswork as to what a person might have meant. Paraphrasing also helped to identify people who simply echoed the opinions of others. When they were confronted with a paraphrase such people found it hard to defend a position that was not, in fact, theirs.

398

In this situation they had the option of either thinking through their ideas and presenting their opinion, or floundering.

- Notwithstanding these efforts, it is not possible to say with any degree of real certainty that people only expressed their own opinions, and were not latching on to the ideas of others in the focus group. A degree of latching on is to be expected since the interview guide probably confronted the respondents with ideas in combinations that they had not yet encountered. A simple example is the fact that a good number of participants in every focus group only became aware that organic and fair-trade labels are not the same thing during the course of discussion. A more complex example is provided by the opening question, which potentially offered ways of defining the reach of one's 'circle of concern / moral community' that they had never considered. Taking the respondents through a lengthy discussion process that attempted to establish their views on quality of life issues, and then confronting them with contradictory data from the Malagasy producers, is another.

- These conundrums were, of course, planned by the author. They aimed to provoke the respondents into fresh thinking on the problem domains, and to prevent them from articulating lazy certainties. They were challenged to articulate their views carefully. The author believes that this approach was very successful. The focus groups generated a wealth of thought-provoking material that it has not been possible to properly analyse and interpret. The findings presented in chapter ten, though they are sufficient for the purposes of this thesis, represent just a fragment of the material generated.

- During the course of each focus group, it was possible to identify the emergence of a kind of group profile. This profile seemed characteristic of all the groups. Due to the small number of focus groups held (4) and the small number of participants (36) it is not possible, though, to draw the conclusion that this profile is one that might be expected of organic and fair trade consumers – though of course this may be a reasonable hypothesis. It may well be that the structure of the interview guide, and the way the groups were facilitated, enabled a typical group profile to arise.

- A break was taken after 50 minutes. Although this point cannot be properly verified, notes taken during the focus groups discussions indicate that the participants were more relaxed in the second half and more sure of their opinions. They engaged in much more body language, like laughing and nodding. The break seems to have allowed respondents to gather their thoughts and to give them a few moments to reflect upon what was required of them. The implication is that responses in the first half would possess different quality characteristics to those in the second half.

These questions arose for the author in the course of observing the focus groups:

1. To what extent should the author take responsibility for introducing information that may shape the 'world view' of the respondents? The Malagasy data clearly surprised some participants. It is important to note that the author is not Malagasy, that she selected a small amount of data designed to conflict with other data presented to the respondents, and that the Malagasy data was not otherwise embedded in a rich picture.

2. In how far do respondents able to speak clearly and concise 'rob' other participants of the ability to follow their own thoughts and speak freely?

3. Would it be useful to 'track' particular people through a focus group discussion in the interests of gaining a better understanding of how process and content operate iteratively upon each other?