

# **Market shaping and valuation in the ugandan coffee market**

Research proposal

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## **Abstract**

This research project seeks to explain from a market practice perspective how the coffee market in Uganda is shaped, and draws from the works of Çalışkan and Callon (2009) and anthropology to investigate the pragmatics of economic valuation of Ugandan coffee. While much previous work on agri-food commodities has been undertaken within the global commodity chain (GCC) perspective (Jackson et al, 2006), the approach draws criticism for being loosely defined and constraining; ignoring commodity flows which do not qualify for chain status, especially in Africa (Raikes et al, 2000). Moreover, it ignores actions, economic practices (Dicken et al, 2001) and material conditions of production (Hartwick, 2000). The practice approach to markets counters the weaknesses of the GCC approach by providing a superior characterisation of the economic configuration of agents and markets (Araujo et al, 2008; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a). It directs attention to markets as ongoing constructions (Araujo et al, 2008; Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009), capturing market practices and material arrangements as they emerge from social and material entities (Araujo et al, 2008; Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009).

Focusing on the upstream chain link between farmers and exporters in the coffee supply chain, this ongoing study seeks to understand the market practices and valuation processes involving farmers and their associations. Using an ethnographic case study methodology, this research enquires into the emergent local market practices and valuation processes up to the point of purchase by Good African Ltd, a coffee exporting company in Uganda. This work will contribute to the effort to re-establish the link between marketing theory and markets (Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009), introducing a new dimension to the market practice approach by studying markets at commodity chain level. It will also illuminate the social and cultural practices that objectify the value of Ugandan coffee (Weiss, 1996), which aspects will conceptually and empirically build on Çalışkan and Callon's (2009) approach to the pragmatics of economic valuation.

Key words: Market practice, global commodity chains, valuation, coffee

## INTRODUCTION

Although central to the marketing discipline, markets have not been on the forefront in the development of marketing theory (Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009; Araujo, 2007). Focusing on the Ugandan coffee market, this research draws attention to marketing as a performative science (Callon, 1998; Cochoy, 1998a, b in Azimont and Araujo, 2007; Araujo, 2007). By attempting to re-establish the link between markets and marketing (Araujo, 2009), this study attempts to explain the Ugandan coffee market by examining the market and valuation practices involved.

This research draws from the practice approach to markets to examine how the Ugandan coffee market is shaped, and from the works of Çalişkan and Callon (2009), Appadurai (1986) and Weiss (1996) to investigate the pragmatics of valuation of Ugandan coffee. Responding to the call for further empirical research to better explain how markets are shaped (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006, 2007; Araujo, 2007; Andersson et al, 2008; Golfetto et al, 2007; Finch and Acha, 2008), this study will contribute to the effort to re-establish the link between marketing theory and markets (Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009). This study focuses on a single case study comprising of farmers and farmer associations of Good African Ltd, a coffee exporting company in Uganda. *Good African* employs a unique market model, mobilising smallholder coffee farmers and other actors who facilitate coffee production.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### GLOBAL COMMODITY CHAINS

Whereas this study centres on market shaping and valuation practices, the chain nature of the coffee market deems it necessary to review commodity chain literature. Coffee, a global and transnational commodity (Ponte, 2002; Weiss, 1996), characterised by Southern production and Northern consumption, connects least developing countries like Uganda to global markets (Bitzer et al, 2008). This section therefore presents an overview of the commodity chain approach and the global commodity chain approach, highlighting the limitations that this study seeks to address.

### A COMMODITY CHAIN APPROACH

The ‘commodity chain’ notion was initially defined by Hopkins and Wallerstein (1977 in Bair, 2005) as the linked set of input processes including transformations, raw materials, transportation mechanisms and labour inputs traced from ultimate consumption to production. Succinctly, commodity chains trace the entire trajectory of a product from its conception to final consumption (Leslie and Reimer, 1999). Several network- and chain-based paradigms attempt to explain how global industries work. They include global commodity chains, international production networks, global production networks, global production systems, the French *filière* concept (Bair, 2005), systems of provision, and commodity circuits (Leslie and Reimer, 1999). In an attempt to establish converging developments across distinct approaches to studying global industries, a ‘global value chain’ (GVC) research network was formed in 2000 (Bair, 2005; Sturgeon, 2007). This group developed a common terminology, ‘value chain analysis’, more inclusive than commodity chains or supply chains that accounts for all possible chain activities and a variety of end

products (Gereffi *et al.* 2001b in Bair, 2005; Ponte and Gibbon, 2005; Sturgeon, 2007). The scholars also recognised the particularity of emphases in each individual concept (Gereffi *et al.* 2001b in Bair, 2005). Some scholars use the terms GCC and GVC interchangeably. For example, Bair (2005) cites Ponte (2002) as referring to “global commodity chain analysis” as “value chain analysis” (Bair, 2005), while Ponte and Gibbon (2005) posit that the term “global commodity chain is now known as global value chain analysis. The debate on whether this new nomenclature successfully achieves its aim or is the beginning of a new chain framework (Gereffi *et al.*, 2005 in Bair, 2005) however remains ongoing (Bair, 2005).

## THE GLOBAL COMMODITY CHAIN APPROACH

Global commodity chains provide a coherent body of literature on global industries and have generated the most extensive body of chain scholarship to date (Bair, 2005). The GCC framework constitutes inter-organisational networks clustered around a commodity (Gereffi *et al.*, 1994 in Leslie and Reimer, 1999; Long and Villarreal, 1998; Smith *et al.*, 2002), connecting discrete locations and activities as constituent links (Bair, 2005). Although the GCC paradigm is largely drawn from the world systems view, it has redirected research away from the “*long-range historical and holistic analysis characteristic of the world-systems school ... to a network-based, organizational approach to studying the dynamics of global industries*” (Raikes *et al.* 2000 in Bair, 2005: 158). GCC enquiry draws attention to consumption as “*a starting point from which to trace relations back to the underlying exploitative reality of production*” (Leslie and Reimer, 1999), with research focused on internal governance, economic power, spatial configuration, inter-country/firm distribution of resources, and the social organization of industrial product networks (Gibbon, 2001; Raynolds, 2004; Bair, 2005). Agri-food and coffee commodity markets have largely been explored using the GCC framework (Jackson *et al.*, 2006; Ponte, 2002; Raynolds *et al.*, 2004; Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005; Bacon, 2005; Raynolds, 2004).

Global commodity chains significantly contribute to methodology and theory, providing researchers with a grounded framework to map and analyse global commodities and promoting the understanding particularly of governance and power relations along the chain (Bair, 2005). Governments and international institutions also attest that the GCC framework orients and informs policy (Gereffi forthcoming; Henderson *et al.* 2002 in Bair, 2005). This approach also addresses political issues relating to exploitation (Leslie and Reimer, 1999) and the marginalisation of small scale producers (Gibbon, 2001; Raynolds, 2004; Ponte, 2002). Despite the popularity of this the GCC framework, the approach draws criticism for being loosely defined and constraining, ignoring commodity flows which do not qualify for chain status, especially in Africa (Raikes *et al.*, 2000). GCC analyses have broadly been criticised for focusing more on explicit structural elements (Ponte and Gibbon, 2005), systems, and flows, only periodically examining individual nodes (Leslie and Reimer, 1999; Hughes, 2000). The approach also weakly examines the notion of networks (Dicken *et al.*, 2001; Gereffi *et al.*, 2005) in spite of its centrality to the GCC concept. GCCs also promote the unidirectional linearity of links (Hughes, 2000), neglecting consumption, knowledge and circulatory processes of feedback between end-consumers and producers (Hughes, 2000; Leslie and Reimer, 1999).

A major setback of the GCC approach that this study seeks to address is its reductionist nature (Hartwick, 2000). Although Leslie and Reimer (1999) argue that commodity chain analyses direct attention to specific practices shaping the flow of goods, GCC analyses explain chain links at a surface level; neglecting actions, economic practices and material

conditions of production (Hartwick, 2000; Dicken et al, 2001) and simply provide dualistic and linear understandings of economic practices (Raikes et al, 2000; Reynolds, 2004). While the approach recognises the socially embedded nature of commodity chains (Raikes et al, 2000), it forecloses the cultural and social symbolic relations among actors (Ponte and Gibbon, 2005), conceiving contextual factors as being external to the framework (Gereffi et al, 2005 in Bair, 2005). Even so, contextual factors constitute chains and shape their configuration (Bair, 2005; Smith et al, 2002). This study develops Bair (2005) and Smith et al's (2002) conception by recognising the significance of human and material practices as well as the social and cultural factors shaping the coffee market.

### THE PRACTICE APPROACH TO MARKETS

The practice approach to markets presented in this section details research within the marketing discipline, a conceptualisation of the market practice approach, including Kjellberg and Helgesson's model, performativity and multiple markets, configuration of actors, calculation within markets, and the pragmatics of valuation.

Recent research within economic sociology, the sociology of science and techniques, and anthropology has made major inroads in the practice approach to understanding markets (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a, 2007b; Golfetto et al, 2007, Andersson et al, 2008). The work of Callon and associates has particularly made significant influence in directing research in social sciences towards market exchanges and market-making practices (Araujo, 2007: 211). Notwithstanding these developments within the social sciences, the practice perspective on markets within the marketing discipline is still emerging (Araujo 2007, Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a, Andersson et al, 2008; Brownlie et al, 2008), with previous research focusing on marketing practice and consumption practice, which ignore practices involving the actual exchange of goods and services (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a; 2006).

Albeit considered to be the core of established market studies (Finch and Acha, 2008) and central to the marketing discipline, markets have not been on the forefront in the development of marketing theory (Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009; Araujo, 2007). Proponents of the approach within marketing however highlight the promising contribution of marketing to this "*interdisciplinary debate*" (Golfetto et al, 2007: 845; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a), with IMP researchers emphasising the superior characterisations and understandings of markets that this approach provides (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a, 2006; Azimont and Araujo, 2007). Largely drawing on the Actor Network Theory (ANT), market practice research directs attention to explaining how marketing constructs and shapes markets (Araujo, 2007, Finch and Acha, 2008). Moreover, these researchers build upon the axioms of the Markets-as-networks tradition. Indeed certain critical points of departure for the work of the IMP serve to differentiate this work from the more traditional marketing management perspective, including the rejection of the notions of: atomistic consumer markets; comprised of multiple independent actors; where the consumer is seen as passive; and therefore merely responding to marketing mix signals (Cunningham, 1980; Möller and Wilson, 1995). There was a clear move away from what the group felt was a "*restricted understanding of much of the reality of what occurs in [industrial] markets*" (Ford, 1990: 1) which had heretofore dominated the marketing discipline.

### CONCEPTUALISING MARKET PRACTICE

Broadly defined, market practices comprise of all concrete activities that contribute to constitute markets, including efforts to shape markets and market in (consumer and industrial) markets (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a; 2006). Markets are conceived to result from a continuous process of market shaping, which if stopped would render the market non-existent (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a). The wide academic interest in studying practice (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a, 2006; Araujo, 2007) within management disciplines like marketing, draws attention to the notion as both an analytic object and research design (Brownlie et al, 2008). Conceived as a micro-level concept, practice constitutes the core of markets (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a) and denotes the involvement of acting entities in practice rather than praxis, the application of skill (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a; 2006; Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009).

Kjellberg and Helgesson developed a generic conceptual model that addresses the practical shaping of markets and guides empirical studies on market shaping (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a; 2006); Rinallo and Golfetto, 2006). This heuristic model, which significantly draws on empirical and theoretical work within science and technology studies, constitutes three categories of market practice “*linked through chains of translations involving various intermediaries, such as rules, tools, measures and measurements*” (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006: 843, 2007a,b). These market practices comprise exchange, representational, and normalizing practices and typically repetitive and heterogeneous (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006), comprising. Exchange practices are the seemingly obvious activities that make possible economic exchange (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a) and relate to the consummation of individual economic exchanges (Alderson and Cox, 1948 in Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a; 2006). Representational practices describe markets (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a; Rinallo and Golfetto, 2006; Araujo and Azimont, 2007), re-present economic exchanges as markets (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006) and depict markets and/or how they work (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a: 143, 2006; Rinallo and Golfetto, 2006). A postmodern view of representation is presented by Rinallo and Golfetto (2006), that representations shape rather than mirror markets (Rinallo and Golfetto, 2006; Golfetto et al, 2007). The third category, normalising practices, refer to activities that establish guidelines on the (re) shaping or operation of markets (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a: 143, 2006; Rinallo and Golfetto, 2006; Azimont and Araujo, 2007) and normative objectives for actors (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a, 2006).

Continuous translation processes (or chains of translation) link exchange, representational and normalising market practices into “*semi-cyclical and reversible chains that intersect and interfere with each other*” (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a: 150). These chains inevitably transform market practices from one form to another (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006, 2007a, b) and significantly qualify market construction (Finch and Acha, 2008; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006), sustaining ideas, activities, and realities (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). Entities like buyers, sellers and objects exchanged, alongside their capacities to act, constitute the practical outcomes of associating practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007b; Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009). These entities are conceived as emergent but provisional outcomes of associations (Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009) socially embedded and well-established in material arrangements (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007b).

Research among practice scholars has been directed towards studying the “*interaction between theoretical understandings of markets and market practices*” (Kjellberg and Helgesson: 139; Çalışkan and Callon, 2009). This interaction is what constitutes the core of the performativity research program (Araujo, 2007). Performativity draws attention to, and concedes that ideas (or theories) about markets shape market forms and practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a, 2006; Rinallo and Golfetto, 2006). Kjellberg and Helgesson describe performativity as a translation process linking practices appearing as ideas to concrete practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006: 845), which process encompasses “*concepts, routines, habits or practices which are immediately submerged in shaping a social setting*” (Finch and Acha, 2008: 50). Performativity goes beyond social embeddedness to include the role of objects, apparatus and technologies in making markets work (Callon, 1998b; Muniesa et al., 2007 in Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009). While most work on performativity has been done in the disciplines of economic sociology, sociology, and science and techniques (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a; Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009), research on performativity within the marketing discipline has hitherto been confined to managerial relevance (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006) and remains largely understudied (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; Rinallo and Golfetto, 2006). While most market studies focus on market theories proposed by academic theorists, researchers recognize the role of “*self-interested theorists*” (Rinallo and Golfetto, 2006; Golfetto et al, 2007; Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009), actors, buyers, sellers and third parties in the shaping of markets (Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009).

Proponents of performativity research within marketing elucidate the performativity interest within the discipline by drawing attention to MacKenzie’s (2004) distinction between Austinian and generic performativity (Araujo, 2007; Azimont and Araujo, 2007; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006, 2007a). Austinian performativity on the other hand is a more empirically researched form of performativity typified as ideal, narrow, limiting, and uncommon (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). It denotes an exclusive and exceptionally strong linkage between a specific theory and real market, with the two becoming inseparable (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). Most mundane and multiple market practices typically addressed in marketing, however, involve generic performativity (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a, 2006), which entails ideas in form of theories or social categories shaping reality in multiple ways (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006).

Generic performativity, which is poorly understood and is largely unexplored (Azimont and Araujo, 2007; Araujo, 2007) often gives rise to multiple versions of markets (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). Markets involve multiple efforts by different actors engaged in divergent market practices to simultaneously configure markets differently (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006; Azimont and Araujo, 2007; Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009). Golfetto et al (2007) concisely put it that “*multiple and often divergent versions of the market co-exist and compete with each other for supremacy*” (Golfetto et al, 2007: 845). This is a common case of generic performativity that often gives rise to inconsistencies (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006) encountered alongside conflicting efforts to realise specific modes of exchange, configure buyers and sellers, and stabilise exchange objects (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007b). These inconsistencies and conflicts take on a local character, being enacted through specific practices (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006: 850). Reconciling the multiple market versions therefore becomes necessary if these markets are to work (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; Azimont and Araujo, 2007).

#### CONFIGURATION OF MARKET ACTORS

Andersson et al (2008) sustain that the market practice approach directs attention to the practical forms in which actors may appear: - the concrete actions they perform, and rules and tools they employ as part of concrete exchange situations (Callon et al., 2002; Helgesson et al., 2004 in Andersson et al, 2008). Buyers, sellers and objects exchanged are constituted differently in different situations (Latour, 1996 in Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006) and make up the actor-networks characteristic of markets (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; Finch and Acha, 2008). Andersson et al (2008) recognise the rich agential diversity in market practice and distinguish actors from actants. Market actors are variable composites comprising of a collection of actants, and have actions attributed to them. Actors evolve over time (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006) and perpetually create markets (Andersson et al, 2008), while actants act and are realised in concrete interactions. Although actants lack the reflexive abilities that actors have, they are involved in each step of the reflexive loop encircling the actant recognition process (Andersson et al, 2008). Araujo and Kjellberg (2009) posit that agencies are not restricted to humans, but are outcomes of socio-technical configurations relying on associations between social and material entities.

#### CALCULATION WITHIN MARKETS

Recent IMP research draws attention to “*how markets are performed and shaped by multiple calculative agencies*” (Callon & Muniesa, 2005; Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006; Rinallo & Golfetto, 2006 in Azimont and Araujo, 2007: 849; Araujo, 2007). Callon and Muniesa (2005) perceive concrete markets as being defined by calculable economic goods, calculative economic agencies, and calculated economic exchanges. These conventional categories of market activity constitute the starting point for exploring markets as complex calculative devices (Callon and Muniesa, 2005), and as Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) argue, can also be analysed as chains of translation. Callon and Muniesa (2005) conceive that economic calculation emphasises the diversity of possible configurations and establishes a continuum between qualitative judgement and numeric calculation; suggesting *qualcalculation*, another form of economic rationality (Araujo, 2007) denoting the quality-based rational judgments used when calculation is impossible (Cochoy, 2002 in Cochoy, 2008). Finch and Acha argue that markets and market objects are ever-changing and inherently unstable, constantly being “*(re)made, (re)defined, (re)qualified and (re)calculated*” (Finch and Acha, 2008: 50). They also observe markets are defined and stabilised in a recursive process and that calculations stabilise markets. The multiple calculative agencies in markets entail routine and stabilised encounters (Callon and Muniesa, 2005); enact social categories in instances of generic performativity; and are equipped with diverse tools and capabilities (Azimont and Araujo, 2007; Araujo, 2007). A common occurrence often arising in markets is the uneven distribution of calculative power among calculative agencies. This often leads to unstable asymmetries formed as they cooperate, compete, or are disconnected from one another (Callon and Muniesa, 2005). Even so, Appadurai (1986) argues that relations, assumptions and contests pertaining to power link value to the exchange of commodities.

#### VALUATION WITHIN MARKETS

Çalışkan and Callon (2009) draw attention to the study of economisation, a concept often qualified as *economic* denoting “*the processes that constitute the behaviours, organizations, institutions and, more generally, the objects in a particular society*” (Çalışkan and Callon, 2009: 370). Of specific interest to this ongoing groundwork are the anthropological works of

Guyer (2004), Appadurai (1986) and Thomas (1991), which instigate a pragmatics of valuation approach that emphasises the increasingly dominant role of materialities and economic knowledges in processes of market-making. Unlike other standard theories of action that reserve agency for humans only, this approach to valuation emphasises the notion of distributed agency that involves both human actors (competencies) and material devices. Çalışkan and Callon assert that the pragmatics of valuation approach promotes understanding of how humans and circulating material entities engaged in valuation practices perpetually construct complex and hybrid social configurations (Latour, forthcoming in Çalışkan and Callon, 2009). Even as Callon and Muniesa (2005) argue, multiple and repetitive processes of mutual adjustment between things and humans remains significant in markets. Although anthropologists of valuation perceive that human cognitive capacities are superior over things, Çalışkan and Callon (2009) argue that by introducing the link between circulation, transformation, and valuation, anthropologists actually recognise the significance of materialities in conferring value on things and transforming them into economic goods through continuous circulation processes of requalification and qualification. Moreover, Appadurai (1986) argues that the circulation of commodities is facilitated by criteria that qualify and ascribe value to commodities.

Çalışkan and Callon's (2009) research reiterates the significance of markets as organised collective devices that calculate compromises on the values of goods (Callon and Muniesa, 2005), translating objects by means of calculation (Finch and Acha, 2008). Goods, which represent a value, become calculable through market practice (Callon et al., 2002 in Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006) and simultaneous processes of objectification and singularisation that economic agencies perform in diverse ways (Callon and Muniesa, 2005). Through objectification, goods become detachable and obtain objective properties. They are qualified and progressively transformed through singularisation, adjust to and even transform the buyer's world in the process (Callon and Muniesa, 2005).

## **FURTHER RESEARCH ON MARKET PRACTICES AND VALUATION**

In spite of the growing literature on market practice within the marketing discipline, the notion remains largely understudied. There is much conceptual and empirical work also needed to advance understanding the works of Çalışkan and Callon (2009) on the pragmatics of valuation, which are still emerging. Proponents of market practice approach call for empirical studies to further develop understanding on how markets are shaped, and the contribution of marketing to this endeavour (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006, 2007a, b; Araujo, 2007; Andersson et al, 2008; Golfetto et al, 2007; Finch and Acha, 2008). Much research is also needed to investigate the applicability of the practice model of markets developed by Kjellberg and Helgesson to different market situations. Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) highlight the need to further understand the notion of performativity and into the process and consequences of translating market theories into market practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a). They further call for an extended enquiry into the multiple realizations of markets, arguing that this could narrow the gap between the different understandings of markets between academic researchers and market practitioners. Much conceptual and empirical work is yet to be done regarding actors and agency, specifically on concrete interactions in exchange situations; the tools and multiple efforts to pre-configure actors; the different manifestations of actors; and the organising of actors and actants involved in economic exchange (Andersson et al, 2008).

Callon and Muniesa's (2005) framework on calculation also opens avenues for research into the capacity of markets to grasp political issues relating to justice and equity, and their propensity to destroy any form of personal relationship. In light of the unevenly distributed calculative power among agencies, further research into ways of organizing calculations (or on the way of excluding certain modes of calculation) becomes necessary. There is also need for research into the effect of calculative tools on the provision of goods (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a) and on how marketing expertise cohere to perform particular market forms (Araujo, 2007).

## **MARKET SHAPING AND VALUATION IN THE UGANDAN COFFEE MARKET**

Coffee accounts for 20-30% of Uganda's foreign exchange earnings with over 3.5 million people's livelihoods dependent on coffee production (UCDA, 2010). In January 2010, Uganda was the 5<sup>th</sup> largest exporter of green (raw) Robusta coffee in the world (ICO, 2010), exporting mainly to the European Union. Leading coffee exporters in Uganda are networked through vertical integration with international buyers with contracts to procure coffee from the farmers (Munyambonera and Nangatsa, 2008). Most coffee in Uganda is grown by approximately 500,000 smallholder farmers, employing 3.5 million families in coffee-related activities (UCDA, 2010). Globally, smallholder farmer gains from the total value generated in the coffee supply chain, or from the price paid by final consumer, are minimal (Ponte, 2001; Bacon, 2005). This marginalised position was triggered by the plummeting of world conventional coffee prices following the changing patterns of global coffee trade including the collapse of the International Coffee Agreement in 1989, market liberalisation, corporate consolidation, and a worldwide coffee glut (Ponte 2002a; Ponte 2002b in Bacon, 2005). After the liberalisation of the coffee industry in Uganda in 1991 and the consequent closure of the government-run coffee marketing board and cooperative movement in 1993, Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) was established to oversee research, quality assurance, and the marketing of coffee in Uganda (UCDA, 2010; Bigirwa, 2005). Liberalising the coffee sector meant that the unprepared smallholder farmers literally took over the role of government, parastatals and cooperatives (Bigirwa, 2005). Some smallholder farmers in Uganda however have penetrated into the specialty and sustainable coffee market such as organic and fairtrade (UCDA, 2006; 2007). Ponte (2001) argues that Ugandan coffee growers can upgrade their coffee through fragmenting markets and marketing 'conscious' coffee.

### **GOOD AFRICAN LTD.**

This study will focus on a single case study (of farmers and farmer associations) of Good African Ltd, a coffee exporting company in Uganda that started operations in 2003. *Good African* employs a distinctive market model that merges sustainable coffee methods (like shade tree growing and organic farming) with its own innovative farming and marketing methods. Unlike the conventional coffee firms that export green coffee and do not directly source coffee from farmers, *Good African* mobilises smallholder farmers and actors (like development agencies and training specialists) to facilitate in the production of coffee. Within two years of operation, the company had penetrated retail stores in South Africa and the UK with processed coffee brands, and in 2009 had launched the first coffee roasting and packaging company in Africa. Today, *Good African* processed coffee is sold in Sainsbury's and Waitrose supermarkets in the UK, and will be available in the US and Canada markets in 2010 (Good African, 2010).

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In light of the research gap identified in market practice and valuation literature, this study will be guided by the following research questions that are elaborated further in this section:

1. What exchange, representational and normalising practices constitute the *Good African* coffee market, and how are they linked and transformed from one form of practice to another?
2. What theories shape the coffee market, and how are they translated into practice?
3. How is calculative power distributed among agencies in the *Good African* market? How are the justice and equity issues arising from calculative power imbalances addressed in this market?
4. What are the economic processes and practices involved in the circulation, transformation and valuation of coffee in the *Good African* market? How are compromises on the value of coffee effected in this market?
5. What social and cultural practices do coffee farmers engage in? In what ways do these practices influence the valuation of *Good African* coffee?

Applying the framework developed by Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006, 2007) that guides empirical studies on market practice, this study will investigate the exchange, representational, and normalising market practices (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007a; Rinallo and Golfetto, 2006; Azimont and Araujo, 2007). The translation processes and concrete interactions between agencies will also be investigated. In view of the multiple agencies involved in the *Good African* market, theories emanating from various sources including farmers, *Good African* and other entities will be investigated in order to establish their role in shaping the market. Other questions of interest in this enquiry will be: What versions of the *Good African* market arise from these multiple entities and theories? Are there efforts by actors to reconcile these market versions?

Because of varying control over calculative tools by agencies involved in the coffee market (Callon and Muniesa, 2005), it becomes imperative to examine the calculative power of agencies, and also investigate whether this market addresses justice and equity issues arising from calculative power imbalances. Additionally, this study will investigate the economic processes and operations (valuation practices) that human and non-human actors engage in to constitute behaviours, organisations and institutions and objects in the coffee market (Çalışkan and Callon, 2009). The competencies and capabilities of human actors will also be examined (Callon and Muniesa, 2005; Finch and Acha, 2008). This study builds on Çalışkan and Callon's (2009) conception that pragmatics of valuation promote the understanding of how humans and circulating material entities engaged in valuation practices perpetually construct complex and hybrid social configurations (Latour, forthcoming in Çalışkan and Callon, 2009). The social life of coffee (Appadurai, 1986) deeply entangled in the networks of socio-technical relations of the farmers and *Good African's* (the buyer) world (Callon and Muniesa, 2005) will necessitate research into the social values and practices of farmers that objectify the value of coffee in its trajectory from farmers to *Good African* (Weiss, 1996; Appadurai, 1986). Even so, Appadurai (1986) asserts that calculations enliven commodities.

## METHODOLOGY

This section details the methodological insights into the next phase of study, data collection. It includes the philosophical underpinnings of this research, the research design, and insights into data analysis. Albeit much of the work undertaken so far in this 3-year project has been conceptual, data collection will take place in Uganda in July - September, 2010. Being an ethnographic study, the research questions highlighted in this paper provide a framework for the emerging research design that will evolve during the fieldwork.

### PHILOSOPHICAL POSITION OF THE STUDY

The philosophy guiding this study is majorly drawn from sociology of translation (Callon, 1986; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a; Andersson et al, 2008). In investigating the performativity of the coffee market, the analytical starting point will be that “*no radical gap exists between a world of ideas and a world out there*” (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006: 844). This study takes on a relativist position that multiple realities are concurrently constructed (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; 2007), with humans and non-humans actively involved in shaping reality (Andersson et al, 2008; Finch and Acha, 2008: 50; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006). In effect, social reality is assumed to be emergent and plastic (Andersson et al, 2008), constantly shaped and reshaped through a recursive process (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006: 840, 2007, Andersson et al, 2008).

### QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher will employ a qualitative research design to answer the research questions of this study. A qualitative design essentially provides vivid and rich descriptive reports of the meanings and interpretations that individuals attribute to events and things, including their behaviour (Hakim, 2000: 34; Miles and Huberman, 1994: 10). Qualitative data emphasises the “lived experience” of people and provides the best strategy for exploring a new area (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Notwithstanding the criticisms of qualitative data that question its reliability, validity, and formulation of methods of analysis (Miles, 1979; Miles and Huberman, 1984), the researcher will employ measures to address and minimize these limitations. Transparency of research processes undertaken will be ensured by the researcher in a twofold process: describing in detail the research strategy and analysis methods; and by making explicit the theoretical stance from which interpretation will be done (Silverman, 2006). To ensure validity of data, the researcher will incorporate quantitative data into the research design as reflected by Kirk and Miller (1986:10) in Silverman (2006: 299) that qualitative research “*does not imply a commitment to innumeracy*”.

### ETHNOGRAPHY

This study will employ an ethnographic research methodology involving participation in the group of study (Good African, their farmers, and other acting entities). Ethnography provides a suitable methodology for this study as it allows the researcher to obtain direct and sustained social contact with the agents under study (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006: 48), enabling a detailed exploration of processes, practices and activities. By minimising the distance between the researcher and those being researched, ethnography allows the researcher to work inductively with an emerging design, describing the context of the case study in detail (Creswell, 1998).

The methods used in this study will include researcher participation, participant and non-participant observation, interviews, documentary sources, photography, video and audio data. The researcher will identify key informants who will steer the researcher to information and contacts and provide useful insights into the groups. Intensive and repeated open-ended interviews with key informants will be carried out. Using judgement sampling, these informants will be selectively chosen from farmers, staff from *Good African* and representatives from entities such as NGOs, extension workers and training specialists. Photographs to capture ongoing activities and artefacts will be taken, with notes written to explain the actions/objects captured. Audio recordings of interviews and video coverage of actor activities will be taken. Care will be taken to capture in detail the actual depictions made in visual data to ensure the quality and validity of the academic knowledge transmitted (Hill, 2008). Even so, the researcher will bear in mind the pervasive inadequacy of an ontological framework to conceive the relationship between the visual and symbolic (Hill, 2008: 12). Documentary sources of data will also be gathered from actors under study and other sources, for example UCDA.

This assortment of methods will enable the researcher capture in rich detail the emergent and ongoing practices of farmers and the entities they associate with, including the local practices and economic processes involved in the valuation of coffee. Guided by Creswell (1998), the cultural meanings of behaviour, language and interactions of actors will be inferred from the words and actions of the actors under study. The issues examined will include the rituals, stories, myths; and diverse cultural themes guided by structures such as kinship and functions reflecting the patterns of social relations among members of a group which regulate their behaviour (Creswell, 1998).

#### CASE STUDY METHOD

This study will employ a case study approach focusing on the farmers and farmer associations of Good African Ltd. A case study provides “*an exploration of a bounded system of a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context*” (Creswell 1998: 61). *Good African* was chosen for study because it provides a unique context, different from other companies employing conventional and sustainable farming schemes. Embarking on more than one case study in this research would weaken the richness and depth of data content (Creswell, 1998). The intrinsic study of the *Good African* provides a unique context within which to explore the market practices and the pragmatics of valuation.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

Audio and video recorded data from this study will be transcribed and then organised into easily retrievable sections. Before the formal analysis begins, the researcher will familiarise herself with the data by listening to the audio recording and watching the videos; reading and re-reading the data; making memos and summaries. Preliminary coding will then be done in order to identify emerging themes from the data, after which more well-defined categories or codes will be developed. The next phases will involve the exploration of relationships between categories; development of theory and incorporation of pre-existing knowledge; testing of theory against data; and finally report writing. The data analysis approach taken is informed by Lacey and Luff (2001), also incorporating reflections by Creswell (1998). Although there is no consensus on analysing qualitative data, the data analysis process will typically involve: a general review of all information so as to obtain a sense of the overall

data; initial sorting-out of data by writing memos, reflective notes and summaries; data reduction and theme formulation using metaphors and diagrams; coding and categorising data (Creswell, 1998).

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Owing to the ethnographic nature of this study, ethical considerations will be made before, during and after undertaking research. This study will largely be guided by the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR) world research codes & guidelines (ESOMAR, 2009a, b). This section highlights some key ethical considerations.

The researcher will inform all interested parties including subjects of study, funders and colleagues about the purpose of the study, and the potential impacts and sources of support for this study. Informed consent of persons being studied will be obtained in advance; with researcher will ensuring that the study will comply with the informed consent codes, laws and regulations affecting the organisation, parties, communities and country of research (ESOMAR, 2009a, b; AAA, 1998). Because this study involves the collection of audio and video data, great care will be taken to obtain permission for audio-visual recording. Appropriate safeguards will be made to protect the rights of participants and avoid unnecessary intrusions on their privacy. From the onset, participants will be informed that tape and video recording techniques will be used. Participants will be given the opportunity to view or hear relevant recordings and, if they so wish, to have this destroyed or to have their image pixelated to ensure anonymity (ESOMAR, 2009a).

Voluntary participation of research subjects will be ensured, with data obtained used solely for the current study. The researcher will inform participants about the nature and purpose of the data being collected, ensuring voluntary participation. Anonymity will be ensured, with personal identifiable data only passed on to third parties (requiring the data for purposes for which the data was collected) with explicit permission from the data subject(s). If required by third parties for purposes besides the current research, only anonymised data will be provided (ESOMAR, 2009a). The safety, dignity and privacy of the people under study will be safeguarded, with measures taken in advance to establish, and comply with their anonymity interests. The possible impacts of participants' choices will be made known to them. Owing to the obligation to reciprocate with people studied, the researcher will ensure that persons and organisations under study will not be exploited (AAA, 1998). All information supplied to the researcher will be used in the research context and will be treated with utmost confidence. Secure storage will be assured (ESOMAR, 2009b)

The researcher will take all reasonable precautions to ensure that participants are in no way harmed or adversely affected as a direct result of their participation in the study (ESOMAR, 2009b). Extra caution will be taken to respect the wellbeing of subjects, and not to wrong them. Active consultations with the individuals and groups under study will be undertaken in order to establish a mutual beneficial working relationship (AAA, 1998).

The integrity and reputation of scholarship and science will be ensured. Misrepresentation, deception, or the obstruction of scientific research of others will be avoided. As best as the researcher can, opportunities for future fieldworkers will be preserved. The results of this study will be utilised for academic purposes and disseminated appropriately in a timely fashion in conferences, workshops and journals. Access to the data researched will be

seriously considered in order to encourage future research. The results of this study will also be appropriately made available to sponsors, students and decision makers, with the researcher assuming all responsibility for the information disseminated. In as much as is possible the researcher will ensure that this information is well understood, contextualised appropriately, and is responsibly utilised (AAA, 1998).

## CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT PHASE OF RESEARCH

This PhD study is still ongoing, with much of the work presented being conceptual. The next phase of study which involves field work in Uganda will take place in July - September 2010.

The study has so far uncovered some inroads into commodity chain research by focusing market and valuation practices undertaken in the upstream chain link between coffee farmers and exporters in Uganda. It develops Bair's (2005) argument that contextual factors shape the configuration of chains and the extent to which actors benefit from participating in chains; and that dialectical relationships between chains and their national, regional and local contexts must be emphasised in commodity chain research (Smith et al, 2002).

By investigating the culturally-formed mythologies arising from the spatial distance between farmers and exporters (Appadurai, 1986) and the social values and rituals that farmers associate with coffee, the study also illuminates the activities that objectify the value of Ugandan coffee (Weiss, 1996). It builds on Çalışkan and Callon's (2009) conception that the pragmatics of valuation approach promotes the understanding of how humans and circulating material entities engaged in valuation practices perpetually construct complex and hybrid social configurations (Latour, forthcoming in Çalışkan and Callon, 2009). This research also extends Appadurai's (1986) argument that commodities are highly socialised things that circulate "*through different hands, contexts, and uses*" (Appadurai, 1986: 34), and Callon and Muniesa's (2005) assertion that goods get "*entangled in the networks of socio-technical relations constituting the buyer's world*" (Callon and Muniesa, 2005: 1234).

In sum, the contributions highlighted are still preliminary. More concrete contributions however will be possible after completing the field study.

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