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A new means of governing artisanal and small-scale mining? Fairtrade gold and development in Tanzania

John Childs

Lancaster Environment Centre, Faculty of Science and Technology, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YQ, UK

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a critical analysis of the most contemporary development intervention concerned with ameliorating the problems of Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM) in sub-Saharan Africa, namely the emergence of Fairtrade Gold. Through an analysis of Fairtrade Gold in Tanzania, this paper argues that despite Fairtrade's promises to ASM operators of better prices, its potential efficacy is compromised by the informality of local gold markets and a deeply-rooted mistrust of development intervention more broadly. However, its greatest contribution may lie elsewhere in the drive for a social and environmental justice framework that privileges increased recognition for small-scale gold miners in the global South.

Introduction

Alongside the exponential rise in the global price of gold, there has been a concurrent rise in the geographical scale of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). Globally, upwards of 13 million people are directly employed by a sector which has highlighted a number of development-related issues (ILO, 1999). Indeed, scholarship has historically tended to define the activity as poverty-driven and has pointed out its association with, inter alia, elevated levels of environmental degradation, a high degree of informality, poor health and safety practices and below market prices for its operators (Hilson, 2012; Jonsson and Fold., 2011). More contemporary work has problematised this perspective, noting ASM's ability to generate wealth. These studies have demonstrated that households dependent on income from ASM have lower poverty rates than those following alternative livelihood strategies both in Tanzania and elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa (Mwaipopo et al., 2004; Bryceson et al., 2012). Nonetheless, despite its possibilities for wealth creation, it remains a sector which is poorly regulated and is characterised by the use of rudimentary and inefficient extraction methods (with mercury a notable presence). Groups of varying sizes and levels of organisation, whose groups are often composed of women and children, strive to overcome environmental and political barriers to economic progress and human health (Hilson, 2010). Yet, despite these putatively conceived problems, there has been a historical and widespread failure by policy makers to significantly improve the socio-economic and environmental conditions facing ASM's operators (Labonne, 2003; Hilson, 2007, 2008).

Recently, however, there have been signs that the strategies used in the attempts to govern the ASM sector have been shifting. Erstwhile foci on techno-centric approaches that have favoured efficiency gains through increased gold capture and increased environmental awareness through the reduction of mercury usage (Bridge, 2004) are being replaced by newer voluntary forms of regulation.[1] These approaches, whilst still characterised by techno-scientific imperatives, do so through values associated with ‘independence, objectivity, and transparency in an attempt to increase trust and legitimacy’ in the supply chain (Hatanaka et al., 2005). This paper critically analyses the emergence of one such example, namely the Fairtrade Labelling Organistion and the

[1] Voluntary regulation is often referred to in the literature as synonymous with ‘private’ regulation. In this paper it is used to describe a process of co-ordination and consensus between key participants in a given industry. In the mining sector, it refers to those joint efforts made by state, business and civil society to regulate metals and mineral extraction.

E-mail address: J.Childs@lancaster.ac.uk

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Alliance for Responsible Mining's dual launch of 'Fairtrade™' and 'Fairmined™' (FT/FM) certified gold.[2]

Inspired by the past successes of the Fairtrade movement in a range of products (but most notably in coffee, tea, cocoa and bananas) and grounded in a discourse of 'fairness', its application to ASM promises access to the 'shaped advantage' of Fair Trade, through the protection for miners 'from the worst effects of neoliberal globalisation' and enhancement of 'their capabilities to gain greater access to its purported benefits' (Fridell, 2007: 277). This is to be achieved, so the movement posits, in exchange for the fulfilment of standards relating to environmental stewardship, a commitment to democratic structures and responsible mining practices.

Following the experiences of Fairtrade gold in nine pilot projects in Latin America, its expansion into gold producing countries in sub-Saharan Africa began in 2012.[3] In order to initiate a programme of critical analysis into its efficacy and to address a notable lack of methodologically grounded studies, this paper addresses the commonalities and divergences between the discursive and material ways that Fairtrade and Fairmined gold could potentially operate in the Tanzanian context. In other words, differing perceptions of 'what is fair' in the context of ASM belie substantive barriers to FT/FM's efficacy that centre upon the past failure of development intervention in the ASM sector. In order to demonstrate this relationship and in an added layer of complexity, a private company, African Precious Metals (APM), has constructed four 'Fair Trade Gold Centres' that offer ASM operators in the Mwanza and Shinyanga regions of Tanzania a new means of selling gold. Ideologically and institutionally separate from the official FT/FM model outlined above, their presence in local marketing arrangements for gold mined on a small-scale has served to obscure the way that 'fairness' is conceptualised by ASM operators in the area. Moreover, APM's substantive failure in policy terms, allied to their close rhetorical association with the rhetorical tropes of FT/FM gold, has served to damage the moral ballast of 'fairness' found in the official 'Fairtrade' gold discourse.

Through a critical analysis of life histories narrated by ASM operators in Tanzania, the paper reveals that there is a substantive gap between the ways in which 'fairness' is discursively conceptualised in the 'Fair Trade' discourse and how it is practically realised. In order to investigate these dynamics, fieldwork was conducted in the Mwanza and Shinyanga regions focusing on three main sites at Nyarugusu, Ruamgasa, and Ushirombo where forty life histories were recorded.[4] In order to ensure a broad representation of social backgrounds, a 'theoretically motivated decision' (Valentine, 2005: 112) was taken to analyse the stories of those ASM operators who had a minimum of fifteen years' experience in mining. This figure was decided upon not only so that respondents were able to reflect a broad historical trajectory of ASM practices, but also so that they were able to recall any shifts in experience as a result of the inception of the Tanzanian Mining Act in 1997 and the attendant legalisation of the sector.

The choice of oral life histories as the central research technique for this project is predicated on the eliciting of narratives from ASM operators affected by the *full range of* development interventions concerning ASM in Tanzania. It functions here in order to 'understand how history-as-lived is connected to history-as-recorded' (Tonkin, 1992: 12). The narrators that were selected had a temporally wide-ranging experience of ASM based upon the assumption that these were people 'living and developing in times that also change' (Tonkin, 1992: 12). These 'times' included a history of development intervention and the governance of ASM from long before the arrival of 'Fairtrade' or 'Fairmined' gold. In this way, the aim was for ASM operators to 'narrate the story of his or her life in all dimensions: personal, spiritual, social and economic' (Slim et al., 1998: 116). In doing so, the research methodology was keen to avoid previous approaches to measuring the development impact of Fair Trade which have foregrounded measures of income. On the contrary, its aim was to measure impact through a more holistic and fluid means which allowed for producers (the miners) to present a more nuanced account of development intervention.

Against this background, the emergence of Fair Trade gold as a potential solution to ASM's problems was read by ASM operators firmly within such a narrative of intervention. Indeed, it is argued in this paper that barriers to FT/FM's potential efficacy include the fact that the 'Fair Trade' price is often significantly *lower* than local market conditions and that, in light of their historical failure, there is a deeply-rooted mistrust of development intervention more broadly. In struggling for a 'fair' future for ASM operators, the Fairtrade movement must also remain careful to avoid the paternalism that has defined erstwhile ASM policy that has promoted partnership but rather has focused on technical interventions.

The emergence of 'fairtrade' and 'fairmined' gold

In addition to the ways in which state, multilateral institutions and large-scale business have intervened, the emergence of Fairtrade as a means of regulating ASM is part of the current shift in emphasis towards a multi-stakeholder approach to natural resource governance more generally. Alongside myriad 'ethical' initiatives and increased media exposure of the mining industry's problems, voluntary initiatives such as Oxfam's 'No Dirty Gold' campaign and the International Council on Minerals and Metals' (ICMM) Mining Certification Evaluation Project exist to tackle the issues surrounding large-scale mining. Conversely, Fairtrade and Fairmined gold is marketed as a potential solution to the specific problems involved in ASM and is unique in the sense that it attempts to regulate gold mining on an *artisanal and small scale*. In this regard, the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation (FLO) has drafted a now operational protocol under the guidance of the Alliance for Responsible Mining (ARM), a multi-stakeholder group that provides expert guidance on the specifics of ASM, in order to set a dual Fairtrade/Fairmined label for gold. In this new form of governance in ASM, Fairtrade certification makes the promise of a 'more formalized, organised and profitable activity' (ARM, 2011b).

The Fairtrade movement's focus on ASM is marked by a desire to address all of the different documented forms of poverty that characterise the industry and to break a poverty trap in which miners 'chase limited resources' but are compromised by 'low incomes and a lack of investment opportunities' (Gilman, 1999). The resulting reliance on 'inadequate technology' leads, in turn, to human health and environmental degradation and it this cycle of poverty (Hilson, 2006) that the Fair Trade gold movement aims to break. Indeed, there is as much attention given to an amelioration of health conditions for small-scale miners and a reduction in the environmental impact of their activities as there is towards ensuring a better price for their gold. Invoking collaboration between the FLO and other smaller Fairtrade actors, ARM – comprised of policymakers, activists and industry

[2] In this paper, careful attention is forwarded to the ways in which 'Fairtrade gold' is articulated. Where it refers to the broader social movement inclusive of activists, 'Fairtrade' is used. 'FT/FM' gold is deployed when it refers specifically to the dually certified labels of 'Fairtrade™' and 'Fairmined™' gold. Finally, 'Fair Trade' is written where it refers to the APM version later in the article.

[3] On March 6th 2012, the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation International (FLO) and the Alliance for Responsible Mining (ARM) issued a press release announcing the implementation of Fair Trade certified gold in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya that began in 2012 (ARM2012).

[4] This fieldwork was made possible through generous support from a small grant awarded by the British Academy/Leverhulme.

researchers – has established certification criteria to serve as a model for a global Fairtrade gold initiative (ARM, 2010). Prescribing Fairtrade initiatives similar to those in place for agricultural tropical commodities (most notably, coffee), ARM officers have asserted since its initial drafting, that the standards are 'an adaptation of the FLO standards for small producers to the situation of ASM and therefore follow the characteristic Fairtrade grouping of social, economic, labour and environmental development standards' (ARM, 2007: 2).

In light of Fairtrade's historical experiences regarding agricultural commodities and their attendant successes, the search for new markets has been an active part of the movement's strategy of expansion in recent years. However, this growth has not hitherto included the move towards precious metals and minerals, a market that is likely to enjoy robust growth (at least in the short term). Indeed, while these experiences provide a platform of empirical evidence upon which to base the movement's further expansion into fairtrade-certified gold, it should be emphasised that the fairtrade gold initiative has emerged only recently and betrays a history that did not include precious metals and minerals as part of its 'alternative' to the paradigm of neo-liberal market relations. Only fifteen years ago, it was considered a key certification criterion that a commodity should be

> traditionally grown in the Third World and of major importance as a source of foreign earnings […] but not […] metals and minerals, because the supply chain is not direct to the final consumer, but the product is consumed only after complex processing. (Barratt-Brown, 1993: 181).

That it should emerge as it has, fairtrade/fairmined gold can be seen as a paragon of the fairtrade movement's rapid expansion into new markets.

It should be noted that the most widely cited 'successes' relate to Fairtrade's economic performance. This notwithstanding, ARM assumes a broader scope in applying Fairtrade criteria to gold mined on an artisanal and small-scale by adapting its standard setting protocol to that which is characteristic of (Fairtrade) environmental and social development standards. In this way, its guarantee at its inception to 'pay a fair price […] reflecting the costs of production and quality of the product plus a margin for investment and development' supports its original aim to 'encourage environmentally sustainable production' (Barratt-Brown, 1993: 183). Policy that has aimed to alleviate poverty through 'sustainable development' is as well established as the versatility of the terminology itself, and the analysis of Fairtrade's 'successes' and 'failures' alludes to this multiplicity. Erstwhile typographies have shown the benefits that variously affect individual producers, their dependents, broader communities and the 'organisation' of Fairtrade structures (Murray et al., 2003, Nelson and Pound, 2009). These benefits are said to include the aims that: individual producers benefit through higher prices that ensure 'greater economic and social stability', while advance payments provide them with 'greater access to credit'; producers' families have better access to 'a diverse range of products' including education and medical support; affected communities are augmented by an 'improving natural environment'; while the 'organisational capacity' of producers is improved through a model that encourages democracy and accountability (Murray et al., 2003).

Fairtrade and its theoretical challenges

The recent developments in its scope notwithstanding, the Fairtrade movement faces unprecedented levels of critique and must engage with a gamut of widely articulated concerns. Raynolds and Murray (2007) frame these challenges coherently by presenting three interrelated debates at the heart of the challenges set before it: the 'mainstreaming of Fair Trade distribution'; 'the increasing scale and complexity of Fair Trade production'; and the specific 'challenges of Fair Trade governance' (p. 229). This provides a useful conceptual framework for thinking about Fair Trade and each of these theoretical dimensions are considered in what follows.

Fairtrade and mainstreaming

The myriad conceptualizations of Fairtrade's relationship with neoliberalism have fuelled much of the recent debate and have questioned whether Fair Trade offers an alternative to the globalised norms of international trade relations or rather reinforces them. The 'mainstreaming' of Fairtrade products being sold through conventional large-scale distribution channels has been a notable development 'made possible by the growth of the FLO international certification system' (Raynolds and Murray, 2007: 224). This has caused polarity within the movement between, on the one hand, its apologists (e.g. Redfern and Snedker 2002), who see it as a reconfiguring of conventional market relations that includes Fairtrade's moral purpose as its ultimate aim and a means of positively impact greater numbers of producers in the developing world (Fairtrade Foundation, 2009). On the other hand, its detractors 'argue that this reflects nothing more than mainstream corporate efforts to profit from Fair Trade products' and to improve their reputations (Raynolds and Murray, 2007: 225, Low and Davenport, 2006).

Indeed, Raynolds argues cogently that the Fairtrade movement is increasingly characterised by 'market driven buyers', which means that in certain cases the value chain is oriented solely towards profit maximisation (Raynolds, 2009). Certainly, in the case of agri-foods there are a burgeoning number of examples of companies that control all aspects of production, exporting and importing as well as distribution. Deeper integration into such conventional channels may 'weaken' and obscure Fairtrade's message, especially against a burgeoning background of alternative 'green' and 'ethical' labels that pervade the distribution channels of the global North (Murray et al., 2003: 22, Reed, 2009). The distribution of Fairtrade products in the northern jewellery sector, though incipient, may have to face the same challenges. For example, large jewellery companies are increasingly developing independent 'ethical' guidelines, just as ARM attempts to co-ordinate an ethically contiguous, small retailer-led version of Fairtrade gold. With the current emphasis on branding as a 'strategic option' in negotiating the relationship between ethics and capitalism (Nicholls, 2002), Fairtrade gold must clearly situate its development aspirations against an expanding background of labels and initiatives that promote 'fairness', 'sustainability' or 'responsibility'. As shall be seen in the case of APM (a subsidiary of the Federal Bank of the Middle East) in the analysis that follows, this is of critical importance to ASM operators in Tanzania who struggle to differentiate between FLO Certifed 'Fairtrade™' and the discursive deployment of 'fairness' by private sector companies at the point of purchase of their gold.

The increasing scale and complexity of fairtrade production

In order to meet the demand from ethical consumers, there has been a 'scaling-up' of both the numbers of commodities certified as Fairtrade (of which Fairtrade gold is the latest example) and the 'complexity of production arrangements' incorporating 'increasingly large production units' (Raynolds and Murray, 2007: 227). Indeed there remains a suspicion amongst certain critics that the fair trade project has forwarded more attention to the search for new markets in recent years than towards a reconfiguration of north–south market inequities (Fridell, 2007). However, some contemporary studies have shown how such an increase in scale can be associated with a deeper integration with the key processes of Fairtrade management such as a buttressing of the commitment to capacity building amongst suppliers (Smith, 2010). The export of many commodities is notoriously difficult and, as such, it may be impossible to fulfil Fairtrade's desire to remove middlemen from the production chain, meaning that ‘intermediary firms are often essential’ (Smith, 2010). Certainly, ASM has many stages of production and the extent to which these can be managed by a single co-operative is unstudied. Accompanying the increasingly complex production arrangements has been the incidence of ever-larger producers that stand in opposition to the fair trade movement's original focus on small co-operative organisations. This has led to some critics to question whether ‘exports should be promoted at all’ supported on a variety of empirical evidence (Raynolds and Murray, 2007: 227). For example, some have warned against the export of nutritionally rich crops such as quinoa owing to its importance for ‘local food security’ (Caceres et al., 2007: 195). Other critics have pointed to the erosion of small-scale worker bases in the face of an escalating demand for Fairtrade products and the associated rise of larger distributors (Kruger and Du Toit, 2007, Wilkinson and Mascarenhas, 2007), Renard and Perez-Grovaz, 2007). Smith and Barrientos (2005) assert that the prevalence of ‘own brand’ Fairtrade products in supermarkets mean that ‘competition may drive out traders with the most affinity to Fairtrade principles, and that producers able to meet their exacting standards have a comparative advantage over the more disadvantaged producers Fairtrade originally set out to support’ (p. 120). In the case of ASM, where the ‘producers’ are small-scale miners, it will be important to ensure that even those smallest mining associations with the strongest commitment to the sustainable principles of FT/FM gold have the same market access as larger mining co-operatives without the same ethical parallels.

The challenges of fairtrade governance

In distinction to the variety of ‘ethical trade’ initiatives that saturate consumer markets in the global north, which are purportedly focused on ‘the welfare of producers’, Fairtrade has been characterised by its mission to ‘change unequal relationships between producers and consumers [in order to] empower producers’ (Tallontire, 2002: 13). However, in spite of its marginal volume of sales as a proportion of global trade (Littrell and Dickson, 1999) – Fairtrade's steady growth across the majority of sectors, its burgeoning search for new products, markets and areas of production has placed increased pressures on the bureaucratic structures of its governance systems. Indeed, there is widespread discontent at the ways in which southern producer groups are affected by the machinations of the FLO's certification system. Critiqued for its advancement of ‘commercial over development interests’, the legitimacy of FLO's pursuit of ‘Fair Trade certified volumes’ has been said to be ‘divorced from local empowerment and development concerns’ (Raynolds and Long, 2007: 229).

This has been despite the fact that one of Fairtrade's defining characteristics has been the emphasis and reliance on a ‘partnership model’ between Alternative Trading Organisations (ATOs) in the global North and producers in the global South (Tallontire, 2000). However the dynamics of the relationship, one whose ‘ethical dimension is based on participatory development’, remains largely contested where the ‘levels of commitment’ of the respective partners may differ (Tallontire, 2000: 176). For example, Tallontire has shown how the ATO ‘was perceived more in terms of assistance or as a consultant than as a partner’, while the producer organisation displayed a ‘weak commitment […] to the developmental as opposed to the market dimensions of the partnership’ (Tallontire, 2000: 176). This can be supported by the post-colonial critique of development which has noted that ‘the creation of a non-paternalist, equal relationship has proven difficult in practice’ (Eriksson-Baaz, 2005: 6). Following this argument, Reed (2009) has emphasised precisely the critical need to move towards a non-paternalistic partnership and to think strategically about the ways in which Fairtrade movement engages with both co-operatives and corporations. First, the movement needs to establish the means by which large retail markets can be accessed without being marginalised by corporate power (which echoes the ‘mainstreaming’ argument outlined above). Secondly, Reed argues, there is a need to avoid the deployment of the rhetorical ballast of ‘Fair Trade’ without suitable substantive change to support its use (Reed, 2009).

In terms of its likely application to ASM, the ways in which ASM operators conceptualise the Fairtrade ‘partnership’ differ from the instrumental purpose of ‘sustainable development’ set forth by the marketing imperatives in the global North. Indeed, securing consensus over the terms of ‘partnership’ between small-scale producers (artisanal miners) and alternative trade organisations in the global North, as well as a coherent vision of what ‘partnership’ even looks like, is a critical challenge to Fairtrade gold's efficacy. For example Tallontire (2000) has shown that whilst ATOs may privilege the ‘developmental aspects’ of Fairtrade partnerships, producers may understand the Fairtrade partnership ‘primarily in terms of the market offered by fair trade, rather than [as] a process of learning and self-help’ (p. 175) and is a notion that is reinforced in the findings presented below. The negotiation of this dissonance, and with it a coherent understanding of what ‘Fairtrade’ actually means to the different actors involved in ASM, lies at the heart of the analysis. In this way, this paper moves beyond the existing reading of Fairtrade and its links with social justice that has focused upon the economic and distributional limitations of a market-based approach to reform (Fridell, 2007). Rather, the argument is made that better recognition, as well as better redistribution for Fairtrade producers (in this case, ASM operators) is an essential starting point in a move towards ‘fair’ trading conditions.

From rhetoric to reality: fairtrade gold in practice

Fairtrade's recasting of ASM in a positive light promises much at the discursive level but serious, substantive barriers that it faces in establishing FT/FM certified gold in Tanzania were revealed through the course of this research. It tackles an ASM sector whose operators experience a distinct type of ‘spatial disadvantage’: miners work in remote areas, are disconnected from economic and social support with ‘poor work opportunities’ such that ASM is the only viable livelihood strategy. The numbers of participants are significant as well. Though estimates vary, there are between an estimated 300,000 and 550,000 people engaging in ASM in Tanzania (Jønsson and Bryceson, 2009). Its large gold reserves have long attracted interest from foreign direct investment (FDI). As Bridge (2004) has mapped, ‘investments by Australian and Canadian gold mining concerns in the late 1990s represented over 60% of total FDI inflows to Tanzania’ (p. 407). Moreover, the growth in Tanzania's mineral sector has rendered it the third largest producer of gold after South Africa and Ghana (Kitula, 2006). Finally, gold in Tanzania is estimated to contribute 44% of total exports, delineating its significance in terms of foreign exchange (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), 2011).

A significant development intervention has recently occurred in the region through the establishment of four ‘Fair Trade Gold Centres’ (FTGCs) in Tanzania which have been built and facilitated by the Federal Bank of the Middle East (FBME). It should be noted that these are ideologically and substantively distinct from the ARM/FLO version of 'Fairtrade' and 'Fairmined' gold. Notwithstanding this disjuncture, African Precious Metals (APM), a subsidiary of the aforementioned bank, provides services for ASM operators in the area that, according to its chairman, promise 'to provide a new, fairer, more just way of trading gold in the region'. Crucially, although it uses the same rhetoric of fairness employed by the official FLO/ARM version of Fairtrade gold, it has either failed to improve marketing opportunities for miners in the area or had little impact in terms of encouraging more sustainable mining practices.

APM premises its particular version of 'Fair Trade' upon four dynamics of 'fairness'. First, there is a commitment to an improvement in communications and a commitment to increased professionalism between ASM operators and buyers by providing free access to internet-enabled computers. Secondly, APM's version of 'fairness' is enacted through the distribution of microfinance loans for ASM related investment. Thirdly, it privileges the notion of transparency as central to fair trading relations by giving ASM operators the opportunity to witness the measurement of the gold's purity at the FTGCs. Finally, but perhaps most importantly for the ASM operators interviewed, 'fairness' means the promise of a price in line with the global market rate and at a superior rate to anything available locally. However, these commitments to 'fairness' were variously compromised by a breakdown in trust between the bank and ASM operators due to unrepaid loans, a reluctance from miners to use 'scientifically accurate' gold measuring equipment in favour of more traditional methods and the co-existence of competitive pricing for gold through informal markets. This final point is detailed below.

Questioning the notion of 'fairness' as 'best price'

The promise of a 'fair' price forms a centrepiece of APM's outreach work with small-scale miners in Mwanza region. As an APM official clarified, the Fair Trade buying centres 'offer the same price as any seller would get if he was in London or New York, the world market price. It is fair. Every morning they would know what is the price per ounce'. For the management of APM, the success of their 'fair trade' model resolutely depended upon 'the need for the APM price received by miners [to] be the equal or better than prices received under local conditions'. This notion was supported fully by the narratives of ASM operators who confirmed variously that, 'I'll sell my gold where I can get the best price' and 'the only way that I'll sell to Fair Trade is if they start to offer me a fair price'. In short, APM's model of 'fairness' echoed the historical emphasis of appropriate levels of price setting in the extant Fairtrade movement more generally.

However, during this research, it was revealed that this 'fair' price did not, in most cases, equate to a better price for ASM operators in the Geita district. Instead, miners would enter either contractual or ad hoc buying relationships with the area's *makota* (informal gold buyers). Moreover, the price obtained by selling gold to these people varied depending on the nature of the transaction. In the case of those miners who had a contractual relationship, the price, and indeed the very production, of gold was determined largely by a programme of money lending for investment in mining equipment. The *makota* act, therefore, as *de facto* sponsors to ASM operators in exchange for exclusive rights on the purchase of any gold produced. The dynamics of the *makota*/ASM operator relationship echo the finding of other research on ASM in Ghana, where Banchirigah recorded how informal miners 'must secure funds through informal channels – principally, gold buyers, who sponsor activities in exchange for gold at below-market prices' (Banchirigah, 2008: 35). Further, just as the ASM operators researched here relied on the *makota's* financial capital to facilitate their gold production, so too in Ghana were the 'individuals who had secured loans to develop sites […] heavily indebted to buyers, convinced that the only means of eliminating this debt quickly was through mining' (Banchirigah, 2008: 35).

These informal contractual relationships can be seen to have strong theoretical parallels with other fields of commerce, notably the informal agricultural trading sector where the important role played by financial intermediaries has been examined. Barbara Harriss for example, accurately theorised the links between the capital of informal food merchants in India with that of usurers or 'finance capital' (Harriss, 1990: 93). Though the research is over two decades old, it is still salient in describing the ways in which 'moneylending capital' can 'control the reproduction of producers via money advances and crop pledges' (Harriss, 1990: 93). Likewise, here it can be seen how the *makota* serve to control local gold marketing arrangements through a system of micro-loans replete with economic rights to exclusivity. The contractual aspect of the *makota*/miner relationship invoked competing discourses of content and discontent from ASM operators, who saw it as either an example of 'financial assistance' or as 'unfair practice' respectively. For a mining co-operative in Ushirombo, the *makota* were an example of the latter.

Initially we sold to the *makota*, who would support us with the condition that we would then sell to us. However, we do it in line with the law and taxes so we now work with APM. The *makota* buy the gold at an unreasonable price and they try to con you. Initially that was okay as they would support you and there was no alternative. In contrast, working with APM has been beneficial because we have been supported by APM to get equipment and they also buy it at a fair price. This is how it should be done.

This account remained, however, an exception to the research findings and was one of only two examples of ASM operators who viewi APM's 'fair trade' price as the best price. Rather, APM's intervention has had the effect of increasing the prevailing rates offered by the *makota*, such that they are buying gold at rates 5–10% *higher* than the world market price. For miners, 'fairness', in the context of securing the best price available for their gold, resulted from selling to the unlicensed *makota* rather than to APM. One operator reflected this dominant narrative to emerge from the miners:

> 'I know there is the bank in Ruamgasa, but I will always go for the best price. And in my experience, it is the *makota* that offer the best prices. This, to me, is fair.'

Not surprisingly, both governmental and APM officials refuted the legitimacy of transactions with the *makota,* alleging that either the scales that are used to weigh the gold are fixed, or that the *makota* are part of a money laundering exercise from unnamed master buyers, known locally as *tajiri*, who are above them in the supply chain. Additionally the government's district mining officer for Geita contended that the *makota* were only able to buy at such high rates because they were seeking to export gold in exchange for highly valued goods for import. The mechanics of this pseudo-mercantilism were alleged in some detail.

> The gold will find its way to someone of an Indian business in Nairobi. The next day, that Indian sends that gold to Dubai. In Dubai, what they will do, they will exchange the gold with commodities; someone will go there with 10 kg of gold and say 'I need to have these mobile phones.' So they will be given these mobile phones when you bring them to Tanzania or Kenya and sell them – you can get maybe three times what they cost over the price of the gold. Now you find that someone

> in Nairobi is buying gold at a price maybe two times what is the official price in the London metal market. Because at Dubai, they are not exchanging by dollars, they are exchanging with commodities. So now those commodities you get by using a kilogram of gold, if you bring them to Tanzania or to Kenya […] you end up getting three or four times. That is why it is a problem even with APM explaining to the people that this is the real price.

APM also accused the *makota* of smearing their name. A manager of one of the FTGCs argued that:

> they started spreading malicious propoganda against us, about prices. If anyone offers above our price, then you do not know how they will steal from you. But they do. They have to. So they started spreading rumours that we were not offering the best price. The miners just believe at the tip [sic.] of whatever information they come across without researching the truth. In a way, they [the *makota*] did quite a good job by swaying those doubters from bringing their gold here and selling it instead to them. So in terms of buying, our graph started shooting down over a period of time.

This profoundly negative representation of the *makota* was not shared by all ASM operators, many of whom saw them as an essential part of both credit provision and as providers of a rudimentary form of social security, even describing them in one case as 'like family'. This is in marked contrast to existing academic and policy-driven thought that has hitherto assumed that small-scale miners in sub-Saharan Africa were receiving a below-market rate for their gold (Hilson, 2006). Because these transactions are enacted through informal channels it is difficult to quantify the ways in which the *makota* profit from the transactions. However, it was made clear that the arrival of 'Fair Trade Gold' did not have a damaging effect on the frequency of such informal relationships.

The further study of the ways in which the *makota* and other informal buyers interact with ASM supply chains is a particularly fertile ground for research. During this research however, it was only possible to gain limited access to such *makota* largely owing to the elevated levels of security that surrounds a group of people that are actively seen as criminals by the state. Nonetheless, this narrative did reveal further evidence that the 'fair' price offered by APM is not the best price locally available. As the *makota* stated,

> I am aware of the bank, APM in Ushirombo. I do not feel particularly threatened by it because their prices are no better than mine and, what's more they do not provide loans to the miners when they do like I do. Some people do sell their gold there, like the local co-operative, because they do not need advances on a day-to-day basis. The bank gets its money from them. Having said that, I still get the same amount of miners coming to me as I did before the bank arrived.

It was suggested by all respondents who did not understand APM to be offering 'fair' prices that unless APM had a radical change in business strategy, there was no prospect that ASM operators would sell gold through 'fair' channels. 'Fairness' was seen not only as merely a rhetorical marketing strategy but also as untrustworthy and duplicitous. A former employee of APM in Nyarugusu emphasised the gap between rhetoric and his personal reality by noting, in relation to the large signs on the walls of the FTGCs promoting 'FAIR TRADE' that 'the writing on the wall is writing. It can shine with fancy paint but essentially it is there to lure. It is there to bring people in. This is my perspective. When you get there it is not what you think it is'.

It could be argued that APM's failure to communicate 'fairness' successfully to the ASM communities in Mwanza region was the result, in part, of a cumulative erosion of trust through the failure to deliver on other promises made by the company which were not met. Certainly trust was a key component of transparency, which in turn was identified as a central tenet of 'fair trade' practice. However, there were also specific barriers to APM 'fair' pricing strategy, not least the requirement that there is a need for a minimum sale, in weight terms, of three *chapa* (6 g) of gold. This criteria was considered to be an unrealistically high quantity to hold by miners either owing to fears over opportunistic looting or because mine productivity was not high enough, resulting in a large percentage of primary mining licence (PML) holders being unable to meet the conditions and thus to sell to APM.

Thus, it can be seen how a major barrier to participation from ASM operators in the 'fair trade gold' system is development intervention's failure to understand the pre-existing social and economic conditions. The *makota* are, in short, far more pervasive and influential in managing local gold markets than APM had understood them to be prior to its intervention. The bank did, to a large degree, identify key aspects of 'fairness', but failed to implement them appropriately, a sentiment expressed by the secretary of the region's mining union:

> If you compare Fair Trade to the brokers, it is a big mistake by APM. If you look at the price being traded by brokers in the surrounding villages, it is quite different from the price that APM are buying at. The price of APM is below. The price of brokers is high. When we ask APM about this they say, 'no, we have got some things to run, costs and so on' […] and that is one of the reasons why people do not sell gold there. It is one thing to say, 'we know what you want – a better price. But it is another to do it! They did not do any research. If they had, they would have found out that it is the *makota* that control things around here.

To summarise, it has been argued how 'fair trade' gold is materially enacted in Tanzania. APM's conceptualization of fairness often mirrored that of the ASM communities that it was targeting. Notions of transparency, better price and the need for financial support were all identified by the bank as tenets of fairness that would encourage responsibility and professionalism to the sector. However, the discursive positioning of 'fair trade' failed to dissociate itself from the historical failure of ASM projects experienced by interviewees. Many miners felt that 'fair trade gold' was little more than a rhetorical device and failed to separate it from its profit motives, which, as a private bank, it was assumed to have. One female mine worker at an ASM site in Nyarugusu outlined this perceived paradox; namely that the profit maximisation imperatives of private institutions preclude trading relations from being considered 'fair'. In her own words, she concluded that,

> It is difficult to say what fairness should mean because we are talking about a business […]. When it comes to a business, it is difficult to say what fair is because the business only wants to be viable. There is no such thing as fairness in small-scale mining – with the exception of market price and honesty, the concept does not apply.

It is with this closing statement that the FLO/ARM model of FT/FM gold must directly engage in Tanzania, as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa. In other words, in seeking a more just ASM sector featuring increased recognition and economic opportunity for its participants, it must prove that artisanal and small-scale mining can be considered to be 'fair' for all actors in the supply chain.

'Here we go again': FT/FM gold and the failure of development intervention

The quotation in the title to this subsection refers to another element in determining the way in which FT/FM gold will be adopted into ASM policy in Tanzania. This is the notion that the perceived failure of development intervention in the past is something likely to be replicated by future interventions such as that proposed by ARM and FLO. This view, common to the narratives of ASM operators and echoing the research of Green (2000), is, to be yet more specific, a particular mistrust of development intervention *from the outside*. To expand and contextualise the aforementioned epigraph, it was contended by the treasurer of the Mwanza regional mining association and *de facto* representative of Primary Mining Licence holders in the region that,

> Always we are seeing new people from outside coming in and offering new ideas about how we should mine. We had Meremeta, we had the Bank of Tanzania, and you can see now in the village we have APM. But the thing that people really want to know, when you ask me what I think about Fairtrade gold, is how is this going to be different? All those people that I mentioned failed to bring change to our lives. Why should this 'Fairtrade gold' be any different to them. Of course, I am open minded but I think there is still a sense when we see a new initiative like the one you mentioned [FT/FM gold] coming in, there is still a sense of 'here we go again'.

In this example, it is made evident that FT/FM is generalised as being part of a broader package of (failed) development interventions. This notion has theoretical support from Crewe and Harrison (1998) whose ethnography of development in practice illustrates how the way in which previous development interventions are perceived have direct influence over the views of future ones. Here, regarding the specificities of ASM, operators' views of development do not exist in a political vacuum; rather, they are informed by a series of institutional failure, broken promises and marginalisation. A member of a mining co-operative in Ushirombo was sceptical that FT/FM would deliver solutions to the problems of ASM because, 'A good many organisations have come here and said 'we will empower you' or 'improve your productivity' but it is always the case that when they leave, they are gone'.

The resolution that 'they are gone' indicates a firm belief that development works in a short-termist, extractive manner whereby research participants, such as the miner in question are 'used in the name of science'. It also reduces all development initiatives to a single entity ('they') whereby potential differences in research methodology and aims are lost. In this way, FT/FM gold, despite its ideology of participation, is seen as operating in the same way as, for example, foreign mining companies whose reputations are severely damaged.

This is not to say that ASM operators who, in spite a history of economic marginalisation, and despite their suspicion of the benefits of new ASM policies, necessarily reject development out of hand. After being asked about his hopes for FT/FM gold, a male gold panner from Nyaragusu shared his position:

> I am unsure whether Fairtrade gold will work. After all there has been so much disappointment with broken promises. The thing is, I will always try to make the most money that I can depending on my options for selling. If it means that I need to sell to Fairtrade then I will.

This resonates with previous academic study in Tanzania, notably Marsland's (2006) exposition of 'how local actors must view new projects through the lens of past experience' (p. 78). That paper's conclusion that 'memories of project failures and corruption have led to cynicism and withdrawal from participation' is one that has parallels with ASM operators studied here (Marsland, 2006). Also supported is the economic imperative to continue in spite of the mistrust of development, a suspicion that 'should not be construed as indicating that local people do not want development. On the contrary, many (although not all) are highly desirous of the commodities that come with development' (Marsland, 2006).

The will to achieve greater economic security on the part of the ASM operators is evident in the searching for the best available price for their gold. But as was shown earlier this is not likely to be the Fairtrade price when the *makota* are able to buy at prices higher than the global market rate. This complexity in terms of price setting can be read as an example of what Tallontire (2009) has termed 'a delicate balance of commercial objectives and developmental objectives [that] is wrought with difficulties' (p. 1011). In short, it may be that price may usurp developmental reputation as the most important factor in assessing the potential for FT/FM's success in Tanzania. However, the suspicion with which development intervention is held, most pertinently illustrated by the general disregard that has been the legacy of APM's erstwhile intervention, is certain to have a lasting impact. Indeed, there was some confusion over differentiating between the 'Fair Trade' written on the outside of APM FTGCs and the 'Fairtrade' being propounded by ARM and FLO. One miner encapsulated the problem that FLO/ARM most overcome by simply asking, 'what *is* the difference between the two'?

These experiences raise as many ideological constraints to FT/FM's adoption in Tanzania as they provide substantive barriers to enacting ASM governance in the region. There can be little doubt that the negative experiences of ASM operators vis-à-vis APM have seriously damaged the rhetorical strength of the 'Fairtrade' and 'Fairmined' labels. Fairness, because of APM's deployment of 'Fair Trade', has become a byword for empty promises and substantive hollowness in the areas studied. However, it would be facile to conclude that the mistrust forwarded to the discourse of 'Fairtrade' gold is *only* a result of APM's failed intervention. Rather, a more convincing a nuanced argument is that there is a suspicion of a deeper-rooted, historically grounded trajectory of development intervention based on a history of failed ASM policy from international development efforts at all scales.

Conclusion: directions for a fair future in ASM

There are a plethora of possible directions for the future of ASM governance in Tanzania especially in the light of the forthcoming introduction of the FT/FM initiative. Since the first pilot projects began in 2012, there has been a crucial need to further evaluate the divergent understandings of fairness between Fairtrade and ASM operators. There is clearly much work to be done in this regard. However, this is not the sole employ of academia but rather a collective duty with the Fairtrade movement itself. The aim should not be the imposition of a particular version of justice, of 'fairness' onto ASM operators – for that the risks of paternalism are too great. On the contrary, the move towards a genuine framework of environmental and social justice must be one that understands meaning as negotiated and embraces its plurality. In other words, defining 'fairness' through a process of shared experience whereby the voices of ASM operators are not only heard but also acted upon is the essential starting point for any FT/FM intervention.

The Fairtrade movement does have a range of substantive experience to guide its future practice in Tanzania. Its pilot projects in Latin America certainly present a body of empirical data from which lessons can be learnt. The ability to draw upon these experiences will shed new light on the ways in which ASM differs between different geographies, cultures and socio-economic realities. Moreover, in light of the historical failure to redress the problems besetting ASM communities, Fairtrade gold's recent emergence is both intriguing and opportune. It approaches this not inconsiderable challenge, however, having to negotiate between Fairtrade's moral purpose and its relationship to the market.

It is also necessary to reflect upon the implications of this study for the Fairtrade movement more generally. The movement stands at something of a crossroads relating to its possible future direction, a notion that is best captured in the academic debate over mainstreaming. In short, should Fairtrade's aim be to access the largest distribution channels, and to be aggressive in its pursuit of new products, retailers and market opportunity even if this means confronting the problems of unequal power relations that emerge? Or conversely, as Fridell (2007) points out, is the need to be aware of both the imperatives and limitations of market-based solutions to development problems and to reassert the movement's original emphasis on social justice? In terms of the findings presented in this paper, the implication is that it is the latter side of the mainstreaming debate that should be privileged. Issues of scalability and low prospects for formalization of the ASM sector in Tanzania mean that the mainstreaming of the movement would do more to strengthen the reputations of large-scale companies, than it would to substantively answer any specific development challenges. As Reed contends, 'fair trade needs to find effective ways to combat the efforts of conventional business to "fair wash," that is, attempts to portray themselves as participating in fair trade (e.g., by adopting the language of Fair Trade, developing rival CSR initiatives, etc.) while not living up to fair trade standards' (Reed and Reed, 2009: 15; Renard and Perez-Grovaz, 2007). It is clear, in this study, how APM's intervention in Mwanza can be read as one such example.

However, even at the time of writing, this issue has already created not only academic debate but also substantive division in terms of contemporary Fairtrade policy. Fair Trade USA, the leading advocate of the Fairtrade movement in the United States, has separated itself from FLO in order to facilitate an increase in Fairtrade volume. Such moves include, most controversially, the certification of large-scale coffee plantations as 'Fairtrade' even in light of minimal commitment to Fairtrade standards (products with as little as 10% of 'Fairtrade' ingredients can still be certified as Fairtrade). The continuing trend towards this so-called 'mass balancing' has caused concerns in the movement with many actors in Fairtrade coffee supply chains abandoning its US Fairtrade partner (Neuman, 2011). This policy development clearly echoes the mainstreaming debate but it also acts as a warning for Fairtrade gold's potential to be realised more globally. A final open question refers to a sense that Fairtrade's greatest contribution to altering the dynamics of the ASM sector in Tanzania (and elsewhere) may lie in the drive for a social and environmental justice framework that privileges not only redistributive equity but also increased recognition for small-scale gold miners in the global South. Its potential success would appear to depend on the maintenance and hardening of this stance.

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