

Gender in Global and Regional Trade Policy: Contrasting Views
and New Research.

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**Linking Gender and International Trade Policy
Is Interaction Possible?**

Catherine Hoskyns
CSGR and Coventry University
c.hoskyns@coventry.ac.uk

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Linking Gender and International Trade Policy Is Interaction Possible?

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between gender and international trade policy, two concepts which on the face of it seem distant and hard to relate. It is an attempt to get behind the terms in order to understand the nature of and the reasons for this apparent disconnect, and the possibilities for rapprochement.

Despite the distance, trade policy is increasingly being confronted with social and gender issues. This is mainly due to the politicisation of trade policy, the connections being made between trade¹ and development and the expansion of trade to services. All these factors are involving trade policy more directly in the lives of citizens and communities. The gender aspects and implications are thus becoming clearer.

At the same time, an emphasis on 'gender mainstreaming', the idea that gender awareness should be incorporated in all aspects of policy, has been accepted by many governments.² While this has only sketchily been implemented, and hardly at all in macroeconomic policy, it does represent an attempt to move policies on gender equality away from small targeted interventions, towards a more cross cutting general remit. Trade policy, with its link to development and north/south relations, and its increasingly high profile, has become a prime site for testing out these commitments.

As a result, there has been a build up of activism and research directed by civil society organisations such as the International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN) and Women in Development Europe (WIDE). Academic research has produced substantial studies on the effects of trade on women's employment and livelihoods in various parts of the world, and on the position of women in global production chains (Fontana and Wood 2000; Barrientos et al 2003) The Bridge Cutting Edge Pack on Gender and Trade (2006) usefully summarises some of these activities.

International institutions and government departments have also become involved. Both UNCTAD and the Commonwealth Secretariat have produced substantial studies on trade and gender in the last two years and the OECD has issued a cautious working paper (UNCTAD 2004, Williams 2005, OECD 2005). In 2003 the UK Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) set up the Gender Expert Group on Trade (GEGT) to advise it on the gender dimensions of trade policy.

¹ Unless otherwise specified in the paper 'trade' means 'international trade'.

² The most authoritative definition of gender mainstreaming comes from the Council of Europe: 'Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels, and all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making'. (Council of Europe 1998, p 15). Gender mainstreaming was adopted as part of its gender equality policy by the EU in 1996.

As might be expected, not all of this work points in the same direction and a variety of views and approaches are expressed. Clearly some women do benefit from trade liberalisation (Nordas 2003). The question remains: are there inbuilt inequalities within the system, and what should be done about those who do not benefit? The need to answer these questions coincides with greater public attention to and concern about international development and poverty. How the evidence and arguments are interpreted, and the significance given, depends very much on the perspective from which they are surveyed.

Much of this work, along with other development literature, suggests that what is needed in internationally negotiated trade policy is a period of reflection and monitoring, in order to reconsider the present system and the assumptions upon which it is based. However, a slowing down suits neither the dynamics of trade competition, nor the impetus of trade policy, as was made very clear at the recent World Trade Organisation (WTO) ministerial held in Hong Kong in December 2005. The message there was that a broad agreement was needed at all costs. Without it the Doha Development Round would be a failure and the WTO in danger. Hong Kong also made clear how difficult it is for the current negotiating process to take on board development issues (despite this being labelled a development round) let alone those involving a consideration of gender relations.

How to explain this disconnect? In order to do this, we need to examine the make up and content of these two concepts, gender and trade, both of which embody different theoretical and political approaches to the globalised world. Each represents an attempt to prioritise a certain perspective and use this to suggest forms of organisation and shifts in structure at the global level which embed the concerns more fully. In this situation, gender is the challenger, the *demandeur*. At the moment, power lies with the trade process, although negotiating agreements, even among those with 'standing' on the issues, is becoming increasingly difficult.

Gender analysis and activism

Gender is a social construct, and gender analysis foregrounds relations between women and men and the ways in which aspects of these are embedded in culture, tradition, institutions, forms of regulation, and political and economic processes. The impetus for gender analysis comes from women since overall the way gender relations have been embedded has tended to favour men over women in terms of access to power and resources. At the same time, the activities in which women predominate, which can be summed up in the term 'social reproduction', have been undervalued and in particular not 'counted' in classical economic analysis. Social reproduction is the term normally used to encompass the roles which women have traditionally played. These include: biological reproduction, maintenance of the household, transmission of education and values, and protection of the community (Picchio 1992).

Women are a diverse and diffuse constituency who approach and are affected by these issues in a myriad of ways. Some accept the world as it is, some like the traditional division of gendered labour as long as they are given sufficient status, some want to participate more fully in public life and work on a more level

playing field, others want a more profound transformation. Some campaign for themselves; some for other women who they feel are voiceless. In general, however, gender analysis and activism starts from social relations and concerns about the distribution of power, and works up from the micro and personal experience toward the macro and general regulation. It has been difficult for women's organisations, starting from these concerns, to find an appropriate voice and level through which to address trade negotiations (Liebowitz, forthcoming).

As far as the application of gender analysis to the trade environment is concerned, a number of points are made:

- Women overall are more likely than men to suffer through the disruption that opening an economy may bring; they have fewer resources and less capacity to benefit from the changes
- 'Food sovereignty' and 'food security' are of particular importance to women. Subsistence agriculture and local production can be threatened by trade liberalisation and cheap imports. This may offset the advantages of lower prices
- Work in global production chains may give extra employment opportunities to women but research suggests that their vulnerability is being used to depress wages and reduce costs (see papers by Gilma Madrid and Sarah Gammage at this workshop).
- Women are under-represented in trade negotiations and women's organisations (and citizens groups in general) are inadequately involved and consulted in the formulation of trade policy
- Women have overall an intricate involvement with public services. Many rely on them for support while others contribute to them or are employed by them. The changing functions of the state and in particular the designation of services as traded goods may be damaging in this respect.
- While trade liberalisation in itself may overall be beneficial, and may create new employment and commercial opportunities for women, more needs to be done to anticipate and monitor its effects and manage and embed the consequences.
- Finally, economic analysis generally, and with it trade theory, sees the household and the domestic as mainly outside the market, and yet the market itself crucially depends on the maintenance of families, the labour force and the community. This in turn depends to a large extent on the unpaid work of women.

These points rest on sustained work by feminist economists, carried out over many years, addressing particularly what they see as the gendered assumptions upon which economics rests, and the problems which both the theory and practice of caring present for economic analysis (Elson 2000; Folbre 2003).

Against this background, we need now to examine trade theory and trade policy and the very different worlds which they inhabit.

Trade theory

Trade theory maintains that trading is generally good, a natural activity, from which both parties to the exchange will gain.³ Open markets are flexible, create opportunities and generate export led growth. They lead to efficiency and better use of resources, which in turn produce cheaper goods for the consumer. Protection and government intervention generally are seen as trade distorting and therefore to be discouraged except in cases of market failure. For developing countries increased trade is seen as a kick-start for growth, for developed countries as a way of expanding or maintaining growth. The basic assumption of neo-classical economics as a body of theory is that the main participant in economic activity is the utility maximising individual engaged in exchange and acting out of self interest. What economists and theorists are concerned with is not whether this or other assumptions are realistic but whether the models they build on this basis yield good predictions. This equally applies to trade theory.

Trade theory is based on the theory of comparative advantage, that is that a country will have a trade advantage if it has lower opportunity costs than other countries producing similar goods, and hence will benefit by specialising and from economies of scale. This prioritises difference – trade is not about equality or sameness (Risse 2005). Comparative advantage can, however, be undercut or modified by competitive advantage where countries (or companies) are able to gain an advantage by offering greater value to consumers through increasing performance and appeal, creative advertising or superior distribution and support. This is increasingly the case in a globalised economy.

Trade theorists are not generally concerned with the consequences or social effects of trade liberalisation. As they see it, trade is an overall good for the economy, even if it involves changes in the composition of economic activity which advantage some and disadvantage others. In a way this is the intention: those disadvantaged will provide resources for new enterprises or will be forced to be innovative and do something different which is more competitive. The effects of international trade, therefore, will almost certainly be uneven both within and between states. These effects will be specific to each country, and trade policy is likely to be only one causal factor among many. The effects, according to trade theory, should normally therefore be managed by other policies. The process of management is ‘not observed’ – that is it is not taken account of, or factored in - by the trade community. It is somebody else’s problem. An example of this is the WTO’s Trade Policy Review Mechanism which looks primarily at how the WTO’s rules have been implemented by governments, and their effects on the multilateral trading system, and not at what the effect has been in terms of well-being.⁴

³ See Krugman and Obstfeld (2006) for a standard introduction to the subject. I have drawn on this text in the next two sections. I am grateful to Marzia Fontana and Carlo Perroni for help with these sections. They bear no responsibility for either my errors or my opinions.

⁴ Annex 3 of the Marrakech Agreement establishing the WTO states:

‘The purpose of the Trade Policy Review Mechanism ("TPRM") is to contribute to improved adherence by all Members to rules, disciplines and commitments made under the Multilateral Trade Agreements and, where applicable, the Plurilateral Trade Agreements, and hence to the smoother functioning of the multilateral trading system, by achieving greater transparency in, and understanding of, the trade policies and practices of Members. Accordingly, the review mechanism enables the regular collective appreciation and evaluation of the full range of individual Members' trade policies

It is clear from this that trade theory in fact relies heavily upon the state to manage and mediate the consequences of trade policy. This, however, is becoming more difficult given the current change in state functions, encapsulated by the reduction in the welfare role of states and their increasing role in ensuring competitiveness (Strange 1995; Cox 1996). At the same time, trade liberalisation reduces the types of instruments that states can use to mediate social effects and their ability to experiment with new social arrangements. It is this that has fuelled the demand from some developing countries for more 'policy space' in the trade environment (South Centre, 2005).

The current political situation is, however, forcing trade theorists to argue rather more concretely about the effects of trade on poverty. Krugman and Obstfeld deal quite extensively with the arguments (or wrong perceptions as they would see them) underlying popular protest about low wages and bad work conditions in, for example, export processing zones in poor countries. Given no other alternative, they argue, a low wage and bad conditions may still be preferable to rural poverty and stagnation, and may in the long run provide an important trigger for development. They also make clear that although trade affects the distribution of income between different resource holders this is not necessarily in the direction of the poor.⁵ Other policies will be needed to compensate for disadvantage and force some redistribution from gainers to losers (2006: pp 36-40 and 267-71). Another work by development economists, *Trade Liberalisation and Poverty*, makes similar points about the specificity of poverty, and gives rather precise advice to developing country governments about how to deal with particular aspects of trade policy which may increase poverty in the short run (McCulloch et al 2004).

One must conclude from this, that just as gender has difficulty finding a terrain upon which to engage with macroeconomics, so the trade community finds it hard to deal with arguments rooted in poverty and disadvantage.

Trade policy

Trade economists and negotiators admit that while trade theory underpins policy, the negotiation of actual trade arrangements involves a different process altogether. This is because politics intrudes. Negotiations are driven by 'predominant pressure groups', those that are best organised and have coherent interests. As Pascal Lamy put it recently, each trade negotiator has 'his authorising environment'. So Peter Mandelson, the EU's trade commissioner, at a meeting with civil society before the Hong Kong ministerial, faced forceful and targeted interventions from agricultural and business organisations, leaving little space for arguments around development.⁶ Diffuse constituencies, like consumers or

and practices and their impact on the functioning of the multilateral trading system' (Article 3 objectives).

⁵ There is in fact quite an extensive literature among trade economists on the effects of trade on wages. See, for example, Wood 1994; Anderson 2007.

⁶ Civil Society Dialogue meeting, Brussels, 10 November 2005. Stiglitz and Charlton point out that while northern trade negotiators will admit in private that subsidies to agriculture in advanced economies are indefensible in terms of trade theory, there is no way their constituencies will allow them to reduce these without some very real concessions elsewhere (2005, p.)

women, have much less influence. Development has come up the trade agenda because it has had some powerful advocates (southern governments, some influential NGOs and some disquieted northern consumers) and because the evidence of continuing and increasing inequality has become an embarrassment, and a danger to stability.

Despite this, the negotiations in Hong Kong showed the interests of northern pressure groups and lobbies predominating, so that the prevailing question was not 'what needs to be done for development' but 'what do we need to give on development issues in order to keep the momentum of trade liberalisation going?' The emphasis is on reciprocity. At the same time, the development groups were far from united, demonstrating both conflicting interests, and for some, a lack of capacity to intervene effectively. The emphasis on and pressure for services liberalisation in Hong Kong was striking, given that this is the most problematic area of liberalisation for many developing countries.

The attitude of southern governments on gender is also mixed. Despite the presence of a number of activist women in delegations, gender issues were hardly raised in Hong Kong – the shape of negotiations leaves little space for social issues to be debated except on the fringe. Southern governments have in general opposed linking trade negotiations with issues about labour standards or decent work in the belief that cheap labour is their main comparative advantage, and that provisions of this kind would be used against them (Ajit and Zammit 2000). The same arguments apply to provisions on gender equality

The above accounts make clear that starting points and perspectives are key components in the disconnect between trade and gender. Gender analysis is informed and inflected by the degree of poverty and disadvantage at the base and gender activists cannot understand how officials and policy makers can apparently ignore these facts. Trade theorists and policy makers on the other hand take the broad and long view and argue that trade is overall beneficial and that open economies are superior to any likely alternative. They point to the women who do benefit, and to the counterfactual: – would people be better off without trade liberalisation? However, trade theory remains relatively closed to the problems of social consequences and to the distortions in trade policy that a bargaining model creates.

Although at this point the disconnect between gender and trade may seem fairly absolute, in fact around the edges changes are taking place. In this paper I want to deal with two aspects of this. First the various small but maybe significant policy initiatives which have been undertaken in response to pressure on gender issues and for gender mainstreaming, and second the alternatives which are emerging under the general title of 'fair' rather than 'free' trade. Though the latter are not particularly gender aware they do (or could) provide spaces where gender issues can be taken seriously.

Policy responses

There are at the moment some small but potentially significant initiatives taking place which attempt either to address the real needs of women within the trade process, or sensitise the broader trade community to gender issues. I am giving

here three examples by way of illustration but there are others which could be used.

The first concerns *support for women entrepreneurs*. This is an area where a broad level of agreement is possible. Women entrepreneurs in northern as well as southern countries who wish to take advantage of new trade opportunities can find themselves disadvantaged by lack of skills, knowledge and credit and can find traditional ways of achieving these either inaccessible or discriminatory. Greater awareness of these limitations and assistance in combating them can have a considerable effect. The history of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association (UWEAL), described in detail in the Bridge Cutting Edge Pack (2006), is a good example of this. This group was formed in 1987 to assist women members trying to develop enterprises, mainly in handicrafts, textiles, education and tourism, in overcoming the barriers they faced as women. They needed very specific gender sensitive training and advice. They have subsequently received help from the Commonwealth Secretariat and the gender section of the World Bank in exploring export markets.

Another example of help to women entrepreneurs concerns the Northern Homebased Worker's Network, part of Homenet Thailand, which was set up to support women in handicrafts production who needed advice and expertise in extending export markets. They had experienced extreme difficulty (and still do) in managing the global market place but were assisted by the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) and Canadian International Development Assistance (CIDA). In addition to marketing issues, Homenet also advises and tries to encourage collective action on issues such as social protection and childcare. A full report on this initiative is tabled for Session 4 of the workshop.

My second example concerns the comprehensive attempt at *gender mainstreaming in trade* which has taken place within the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC).⁷ 21 countries which border on the Pacific are members of APEC, including the US and Canada. It is a unique trade and economic forum which aims to share experience and concerns and develop a 'concerted unilateral approach'. From 1998 onwards a strong monitoring organisation and structure was developed within APEC to assess how women were affected by its agenda for trade and investment, and to enforce a three pronged action based on gender analysis, collection and use of gender disaggregated data, and increased participation of women. Leadership from Canada and the Philippines, and support from a high level group of women, seems to have been crucial in initiating this. But because of the Asian financial crisis in 1997, there was also a stronger appreciation among some of the Asian members of APEC of the links between the economic and the social, and also of the costs for women in coping with the consequences of economic crisis (Truong 2000). The effects of this effort seem to have been more procedural than substantive, largely because, despite all the activity, the core assumptions of the institution were hardly challenged and because 'gender equity and liberal trade are not directly resonant norms' (True, p 16). Nevertheless, APEC did initiate an important study on the ending of the Multi-Fibre Agreement, looking particularly at the effect on

⁷ In writing this section I have drawn substantially on the work of Jacqui True. See particularly, Gender Mainstreaming and Regional Trade Governance in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum. (APEC) (forthcoming 2006).

women workers. APEC also funded the report on the Thai Women Exporters, mentioned above and tabled in Session 4.

The third example concerns the introduction of *gender criteria into the impact assessment and general monitoring of trade measures and outcomes* which are beginning to be introduced. One of the most important of these are the Sustainability Impact Assessments (SIAs) which the EU has been developing over the last seven years.⁸ Through the SIAs, the European Commission undertakes to monitor all the trade negotiations which it carries out (multilateral, regional and bilateral) in terms of the sustainability development criteria adopted at the Rio World Summit in 1992. These cover economic development, social development and the environment. The SIA process takes place during and after particular negotiations. Significantly, however, it does not form part of the process which sets up the Commission's negotiating mandate for such negotiations, and which represents the power bargaining stage in determining the EU's trade strategy. Nor is it entirely clear how the findings will feed into the policy process and if money will be available to back up proposals.

There are two gender criteria included in the equity subsection of the social dimension of the monitoring, one concerns discrimination at work and the other follows the aim of the Millennium Development Goals to end gender disparity in education by 2015 (European Commission 2006, p.50). The process by which these two came to be selected is by no means clear; nor do they seem to correspond to the references to the situation of women which are made in the examples given of monitoring procedures already completed. WIDE, the main women's NGO active at EU level, was involved in the early days of the SIAs, and made a critique of the Mercosur agreement from the point of view of women (WIDE 2001). However, they seem now to have backed off, partly at least it seems because they do not feel they have the level of resources and expertise required to participate in an exercise of this kind.

The SIAs represent a change in the conceptualisation of trade at the level of the EU and a willingness to concede that trade liberalisation alone may not produce development and that there are consequences that need monitoring. How far that will influence the hard bargaining remains to be seen. Whether the SIA process will apply to the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) is by no means clear. Peter Mandelson has said that there will be some monitoring, but not what or when. Again, the determining of the EU's negotiating mandate and a considerable part of the actual negotiations have passed, without any obvious monitoring process in place. Karin Ulmer's paper for session 5 deals with this situation and its gender implications.

Women's organisations are often happier working outside the formal process. So, for example, the Women's Edge Coalition in the US has developed a trade impact review (TIR) which it applies to trade and investment agreements to highlight the effects on poor women (Bridge 2006). It has so far applied this to Mexico under the NAFTA agreement and Jamaica under the proposed Free Trade Area of the

⁸ For further information see DG Trade's website: europa.eu.int/comm/trade. This includes material on the recent 'Trade SIAs stocktaking conference' held in Brussels, 21-22 March 2006 and the Handbook for Trade Sustainability Impact Assessment (2006).

Americas. Its findings have encouraged the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to fund the Greater Access to Trade Expansion (GATE) project, which Sarah Gammage discusses in her paper for Session 3.

The increasing interest in the monitoring of trade agreements opens some possibilities for bringing gender issues and analysis closer to the trade process. Women's organisations have a strong role to play in this and in creating the mobilisation without which such measures will be hard to implement. The difficulties in dealing with big bureaucracies and the resources this requires remain real obstacles.

These then are three examples. We need to consider what the effects are of these sorts of initiatives and if they can act as entry points for the gender sensitising of trade policy. They clearly meet the needs of some women and begin to make small inroads at the margins of policy. Do they have an incremental effect? Can they be sustained? With this in mind I want to go on to consider two initiatives which explore more centrally the trade process and put the emphasis on fair rather than free trade.

Fair trade alternatives

1. What would a 'true' development round look like?

In the aftermath of the failed Cancun summit, the Commonwealth countries, representing a cross section of both developed and developing countries, requested Joseph Stiglitz, formerly chief economist at The World Bank, to undertake a study and make proposals on the WTO's Doha Development Round. They wanted to know what a true development round 'one reflecting the interests and concerns of the developing world, one which would promote their development' would look like. Stiglitz, together with Andrew Charlton, produced the report and has subsequently developed it as a book (Stiglitz and Charlton 2005)

The book attempts to review both trade theory and trade policy from the point of view of developing countries. While recognising that trade can be good for development, the authors point out that conventional theory is flawed in the sense that it assumes full employment and no restraints on resources, whereas most developing countries suffer from high unemployment and limited resources. This limits the gains that can be expected from trade. They also make clear that more successful developing economies like the East Asian countries and India have not pursued trade liberalisation relentlessly but have slowed it down when necessary and have introduced important complementary policies. They also criticise the failure of trade economists to do good empirical monitoring of the impacts and consequences of different trade regimes.

However, their main criticism is directed at the self-interested bargaining procedure through which trade policy is made. The WTO has been unable to meet development objectives, they maintain, because to do so would have required some discussion of collective principles and an idea of what a 'fair' agreement would be. This in turn would require impact assessments of different proposals and detailed monitoring of effects (ch 5). The debate on this is interesting and comes near to the argument developed by Matthias Risse who also reached the

conclusion that some broader principles are needed at the level of the WTO in order to achieve 'fairness in trade' (Risse 2005). Such arguments open the way to a view of development nearer to that of Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, which sees development and individual well-being as being based on a broader range of factors than economic growth and increased income. With this broader view of well-being, Sen has no problems in including gender in the equation (Sen 1999:ch 8).

Stiglitz and Charlton are not in fact saying much that is new. They are drawing together work by development economists and attempting to give it more coherence and political punch. They make no suggestion as to how their ideas could be implemented. They seem to intend the book as a contribution to the debate about international trade and have the merit of recognising the positive aspects of trade while showing very concretely how inequities come about. No mention is made of gender or women (except for one reference to discrimination) and the authors show no sign of having read any of the gender and trade literature mentioned earlier. Nevertheless it would not be difficult to include gender considerations in the analysis. The space is there and the link between the social and the economic already made.

2. The Fairtrade movement

The Fairtrade movement has not waited to convince officials or theorists of the rightness of what it is doing. It has acted instinctively and from conviction to bring the micro and the macro together in the trade field and link producers directly with consumers. The development and growing importance of this movement is a fairly recent phenomenon though it is miniscule in global trade terms and total sales in 2003 represented only £500m (Nicholls and Opal 2005). Fairtrade sales in the UK, however, have increased by over 40% in the last two years, though admittedly from a low base.

The Fairtrade system provides a basic minimum price for producers of certain commodities in southern countries calculated on costs of production and embodying a reasonable return to the producers. There is also a small social premium in the price which must be used for development projects in the community. Producers sell to buyers who guarantee at least this price, and meet certain other standards, and who can then use the Fairtrade logo on their products. Unlike the agricultural price support in the EU, the producers have to sell in order to get the subsidy. This acts to discourage overproduction. The emphasis is on high quality production which at the moment sells mainly in niche markets.

Examples of coops selling to Fairtrade markets suggest that the stability of the return, together with the development premium, creates a situation where projects which are geared to improving gender relations are more likely to be implemented (see papers by Elaine Jones and Nicholas Hoskyns at this workshop). However, as far as I can see, there is as yet no explicit reference to or recognition of specific gender needs in the Fairtrade criteria.

The Fairtrade system is based on a recognition of development needs and entails a subsidy from consumers in the north to producers in the south. Its strength lies the fact that it is a market based mechanism which aims to restructure markets. It

assumes a subject other than the utility maximising individual acting on self interest. Nor should it fall foul of WTO market liberalisation principles since it is a market based arrangement between consumers and producers not involving government measures.

Some economists, however, have been sceptical about the effect of Fairtrade on the choices of individuals and overall on the economy. By subsidizing uncompetitive production, they argue, Fairtrade is enticing people into something they would be better off not doing (Leclair 2002; Risse 2005). However, this seems a somewhat abstract argument. In fact, Fairtrade support should encourage diversification, as well as a shift to non-traded goods and food production, just because there is more money in the community. However, it is true that diversification does not at the moment form part of the criteria. In addition, having some additional resources and a more stable community should also open a wider range of options for the individual.

The questions for the future for Fairtrade would seem to be how far this form of exchange can be expanded, both in terms of products covered and market share, and how the expansion of this sector affects more conventional trade flows and economic activity. In the long run its future depends entirely upon the willingness of a segment of northern consumers to continue to buy Fairtrade products at Fairtrade prices.

Neither of these two examples of how to make trade fairer, is particularly gender sensitive. However, both of them by seeking to alter the norms upon which trade policy operates open the way for gender initiatives.

Conclusions

This paper has demonstrated the extent of the disconnect between gender and trade policy and has attempted to examine both how this operates and some of the reasons for it. It poses the question of what kinds of policies and actions can help to bridge the gap rather than reinforce divisions, while encouraging real and, I would argue, necessary changes in the way in which trade policy is made. Are gender initiatives as described above, and research into the situations of women, primarily ameliorative, in the sense that they help to cope with the undesirable side effects of trade policy, or can they, together with other similar initiatives, provide a starting point for bringing social and gender issues more centrally into trade bargaining?

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