

**Women's empowerment in Fair Trade coffee co-operatives in Oaxaca, Mexico**

By

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A Thesis Submitted to  
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts in International Development Studies

August, 2006, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Date: August 28, 2006



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*Your file* *Votre référence*  
*ISBN: 978-0-494-23859-2*  
*Our file* *Notre référence*  
*ISBN: 978-0-494-23859-2*

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## **Abstract**

Women's empowerment in Fair Trade coffee co-operatives in Oaxaca, Mexico

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**Abstract:** This study explores the influence of Fair Trade on the empowerment of women co-operative members by examining a primary and a secondary level producer organisation in Oaxaca, Mexico. The data collection techniques included observation, participant observation, focus groups, and semi-standardised and informal interviews. The Women's Empowerment Framework (WEF) provided the analytic tools to assess to what extent a development intervention, such as a Fair Trade co-operative, is empowering for women by measuring levels of gender equality and levels of recognition of gender issues. Grounded categories were also used in the analysis. The findings of this study were that Fair Trade has an indirect impact on women's empowerment. Separate women's groups, key individuals, and 'conscientisation' campaigns were found to be important factors in achieving women's empowerment.

August 30, 2006

## Acknowledgements

I dedicate this thesis to Leonor Fernandez Allende in gratitude for making my research at the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'* possible. Her commitment to helping others is truly inspirational. I am also grateful to the advisors of the women's department at *CEPCO* for hosting me at their organisation in Oaxaca.

I am thankful to my parents for always encouraging my curiosity and supporting my international ventures. I am grateful to Matt for his love and encouragement in writing this thesis (and knowing that I could do it). And I am thankful to Beto and Chay for giving me a second home in Mexico. Thank you all for your love and support.

I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Lisa Kowalchuk, for her guidance and patience, and for agreeing to supervise my thesis even as she was transferring universities. I am appreciative of her insightful comments, and those of my other committee members Dr. Martha MacDonald and Dr. Rachel Brickner. They greatly helped me clarify, organise and edit my thesis.

I conducted my field research in Oaxaca, Mexico with the financial support of a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and an international fellowship from J. Armand Bombardier. I am very grateful for these awards, and was honoured to have received them.

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## **Chapter 1: Fair Trade, Gender and Coffee Co-operatives**

### Introduction

In Mexico, as in many developing countries, coffee-producing families and coffee workers have been faced with a development crisis since the deregulation of the international coffee market in 1989. The plummeted price of coffee has increased poverty and decreased the standard of living for an estimated 100 million people dependent upon the crop around the world (Global Exchange, 2005). In the state of Oaxaca, Mexican peasant leaders organised small coffee producers to confront the 'coffee crisis' by forming producer co-operatives and joining the Fair Trade system (Aranda & Morales, 2002). The Fair Trade movement seeks to empower disadvantaged Southern producers and promote sustainable development through trade networks based on solidarity and fairness (Murray *et al.*, 2003). Fair Trade is a viable and advantageous alternative to the conventional coffee system that favours large trans-national corporations (TNCs) and exploits small producers and workers (Waridel, 2002). Furthermore, the Fair Trade development strategy has had a beneficial impact on coffee producing families and their communities, which has been proven in numerous studies.

However, little research has been conducted on the impact of Fair Trade on gender equality in coffee co-operatives. The Fair Trade objectives for social and economic justice include the empowerment of women. Therefore, my research question is: 'How and to what extent are women members empowered by their involvement in Fair Trade coffee co-operatives?' The objectives of my thesis are to determine how the principles of gender equality and women's empowerment are shared throughout the Fair Trade network, and implemented and achieved at the grassroots level. I examine women's

varying levels of participation in different sectors of the primary and secondary level producer organisation. My research sites at the secondary level organisation in Oaxaca City, and at the primary level co-operative in Tenango, Oaxaca, provide remarkable settings to observe and examine the involvement and empowerment of women in Fair Trade coffee producer organisations.

## **1. Fair Trade**

My intent in including the details of the Fair Trade system, how it originated and operates, is to provide an understanding of Fair Trade standards and practices that are pertinent to my gender analysis. Presenting the Fair Trade principles of sustainable development introduces the Fair Trade gender principles and objectives, and sets the stage for the further exploration of Fair Trade as a development strategy.

### 1.1. Definition of Fair Trade

The most common and widely agreed upon definition of Fair Trade is that of the FINE group of organisations (Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International, International Fair Trade Association, Network of European Worldshops and European Fair Trade Association).

Fair Trade is a trading partnership based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalised producers and workers - especially in the South. Fair Trade organisations (backed by consumers) are engaged actively in supporting producers, awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade. (EFTA, 2006).

‘Fair Trade’ means an equitable and fair partnership between consumers in the North and producers in the South with the goal of sustainable development. It is a global movement for social and economic justice (Global Exchange, 2005).

## 1.2. Origins of Fair Trade

The roots of the Fair Trade movement can be traced back to various projects that emerged internationally, beginning in the late 1940s, post-world war era. Around the world, the projects were run by church groups and volunteers who wanted to help disadvantaged southern producers and raise awareness about their struggles. In North America, Mennonite Committees were the first to establish direct-purchasing with impoverished artisans in Latin America. Their stores were called Self-Help Crafts, and are now well-known as Ten Thousand Villages. Similar projects emerged in Europe in the following years. For example, in the 1950s Oxfam Great Britain began selling crafts made by Chinese refugees (Waridel, 2002). These initiatives shared a common goal, which was to help poverty-stricken communities through direct trade and fair prices, in other words through “fair trade” (Transfair USA, 2004). The groups were called Alternative Trading Organisations (ATOs) because the original aim was not to reform conventional trading practices, but rather to create a parallel system that would open up an alternative market to disadvantaged artisans and farmers (Waridel, 2002).

## 1.3. An international movement

In the 1970s, ATOs world-wide began to meet informally in solidarity to discuss their challenges and achievements (IFAT, 2003). By the late 1980s the Fair Trade movement was well organised internationally with two important umbrella organisations: the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) and the International Federation for Alternative Trade (IFAT) (*ibid.*). EFTA is an association of the 12 largest importing organisations in Europe. It is an important means for these groups to work together to ensure importing is more “effective and efficient” (EFTA, 2006). IFAT, on the other hand, is a global network of 270 organisations from around the world, working at each

stage of the Fair Trade chain from production to sale. Their members include producer co-operatives and associations, export marketing companies, importers, retailers, national and regional Fair Trade networks and financial institutions. IFAT provides a forum for collaboration between all these Northern and Southern Fair Trade groups (IFAT, 2003). However, it was the emergence of Fair Trade labelling that truly expanded and solidified the movement.

#### 1.4. Fair Trade labels

Significantly, as these two groups were forming, the first Fair Trade labelling programme began. The labelling of Fair Trade products started with Mexican coffee farmers in 1988 through the Dutch development agency *Solidaridad*. The labelling organisation was named 'Max Havelaar' after the hero of a novel who denounced the treatment of Indonesian coffee plantation workers during the Dutch colonial period (VanderHoff, 2002). The idea was that by having a recognisable Fair Trade label, the product could be sold through conventional channels, such as supermarkets, reaching a greater number of consumers while still being distinguishable from the conventionally traded products. The consumers would be guaranteed by the label that the product had been bought from small farmers at a premium price, with a fair return (IFAT, 2003).

After this first initiative, other national Fair Trade labelling organisations were formed. Max Havelaar, Transfair, Fair Trade Foundation, and Rattvisemarkt are international labelling organisations, which operate all across Europe, North America and Asia. In 1997, the Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO) was formed as an umbrella organisation in order to standardise the certification process of Fair Trade labels. At present, there are 20 National Fairtrade Labelling Initiatives under FLO. FLO is one of the largest international certification bodies in the world and is registered with

ISO 65 for Certification Bodies. This gives credibility to the Fair Trade movement by providing an independent, transparent and competent certification system (FLO, 2006). The introduction of Fair Trade labelling successfully broadened the market and greatly increased Fair Trade coffee sales (Waridel, 2002). Now, other food products are being labelled Fair Trade, such as bananas, sugar, tea, chocolate, honey and orange juice (FLO, 2006). This list is constantly expanding and will increasingly include more non-food items, for example flowers and footballs are now being certified.

### 1.5. Fair Trade Standards

The criteria for certification are based upon agreed standards of fairness set out in the International Fair Trade Standards document. The Standards are developed by the FLO Standards & Policy Committee, which consists of stakeholders from FLO's member organisations, producer organisations, traders and external experts (FLO, 2006). These Standards are regularly reviewed and updated, and are in accordance with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the UN Charter of Human Rights. Each standard is divided into a minimum requirement and a progress requirement. The minimum requirements must be met from the moment the producer organisation joins Fair Trade or within a specified time period. The progress requirements, on the other hand, are social, economic and environmental development goals towards which the producer organisations should be continuously working. These minimum and progress requirements are significant to my gender analysis, as they will be examined to determine if gender objectives are included in the standards, and therefore regulated in the Fair Trade system.

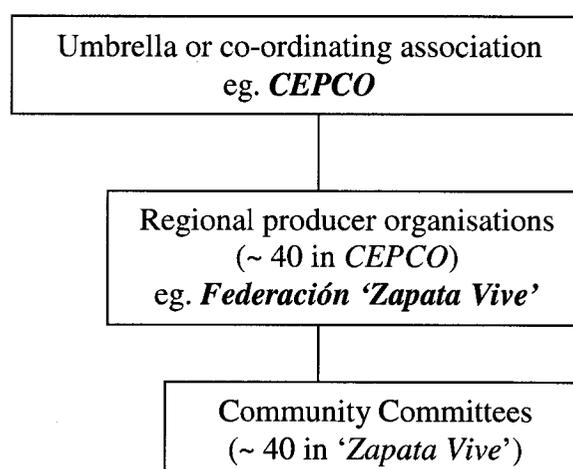
### 1.6. Certification criteria and monitoring

In order for a product to carry the Fair Trade logo, it must come from a producer organisation on FLO's Fair Trade Registry and the importer must also be licensed. For an organisation to become listed in the producer registry and for the importer to be licensed they must meet stringent international criteria and be subject to monitoring through frequent inspection (Waridel, 2002). Specific eligibility criteria are set out for different products. Within the certification of coffee, there are criteria for small coffee producer organisations, and trade standards that they and the importers must meet. The first criterion for eligibility is that the members of the group must themselves produce on a *small scale* with only family labour. Plantation workers, if organised into unions, and if the company they work for is prepared to promote workers' development and to pass on to the workers the additional revenues generated by Fair Trade, may also qualify upon meeting the rest of the certification criteria (FLO, 2004). Small coffee producers or coffee-producing families are organised into local community committees as part of a regional producer organisation, which is referred to as the primary level of organisation. When regional producer organisations form a larger umbrella or co-ordinating association it is called the secondary level of producer organisation. The 'co-operative' refers to the regional producer organisation, or primary level organisation (see Diagram 1.1. below).

### Diagram 1.1. Structure of Fair Trade Producer Organisations

Secondary level: consists of employed advisors and staff, a general assembly of reps from primary level orgs. and an elected board of directors

Primary level: run by board of directors elected by each general assembly



Secondly, the primary and secondary organisations must be *democratically managed* with all representatives participating in the decision-making process of the group, especially when deciding what development projects the group will undertake and what to do with the Fair Trade profits and social premium (Waridel, 2002). Also, the organisation must practice *solidarity* by being open to new members, and having no political, racial, religious or sexual discrimination. These last two criteria are examined in my gender analysis because combined they suggest that according to Fair Trade principles women must be treated equally in all matters of the organisation, including decision-making. The organisations must be run with *transparency*. The board of directors, elected by the members, must ensure transparent operations at all times. The group must also be *independent* from any political affiliation and must demonstrate that they share the social/solidarity principles of Fair Trade (Waridel, 2002). Lastly, the producer organisation must share the Fair Trade values and objectives of *sustainable development*, the details of which will be discussed in the following chapter dealing with the theoretical framework of the Fair Trade development strategy.

Importers and roasters must also meet certain trade criteria in order to be licensed to use the Fair Trade certified label. First of all, the coffee must be bought directly from one of the 197 certified coffee producer organisations listed on the FLO producer registry (FLO, 2006). Buying directly from the producer organisation cuts out intermediaries, creating a shorter path from the producer to the consumer than that of the conventional commodity chain, meaning the producer receives the full sum paid by the importer. The coffee must be purchased at the Fair Trade price set by FLO including social and organic premiums where applicable. Although 'fair' is a relative term, the 'fair price' is agreed upon by Southern and Northern members of FLO, and is fixed according to the cost of production, Southern living wages and Northern markets. It is guaranteed, eliminating the risks of fluctuating markets and always stays above the conventional market price. Also, the buyer must agree to a long-term and stable relationship with agreed upon conditions of sale volume, qualities and dates, and at the seller's request the importer must make available a line of credit up to 60% of the original contract (Waridel, 2002).

All Fair Trade certification organisations are members of FLO and are responsible for ensuring that all participants meet the production and trade criteria. In contrast to organic certification, Fair Trade certification fees have traditionally been paid by the importers, rather than by the producers. However, as of January 1, 2006, a new producer fee system came into effect whereby the producer will be responsible for the real costs related to inspection (FLO, 2006). Inspectors visit producer organisations upon admittance of the co-operative and again every one to two years checking that they continue to meet the criteria of membership in the Fair Trade system (Waridel, 2002). Failure to comply with any criterion results in the organisation's license being revoked and being taken off the FLO registry. Importers must sign contracts with FLO to be

granted a license and then are trade audited regularly to ensure compliance. This procedure varies between national initiatives. In Switzerland, visits are made twice a year, whereas they are less frequent in North America (*ibid.*).

### 1.7. Development principles and objectives

The Fair Trade movement seeks to address structural inequities in the global economy and to promote grassroots development. The objective of grassroots development through Fair Trade is to achieve producer empowerment and poverty alleviation (Murray *et al.*, 2003). The Fairtrade Foundation, the national labelling initiative of England, states that Fair Trade provides disadvantaged producers a chance to increase their control over their own future through sustainable development (2004). Sustainable development is one of the main principles guiding the Fair Trade system (Waridel, 2002). The Fair Trade Standards are structured around social, economic and environmental principles towards sustainable development. All members in the Fair Trade network must share these principles including the producer organisations, as was mentioned in the criteria for membership.

The principle of economic development is set out in the Standards, which govern both producers and importers, focusing on the Fair Trade premium, export ability and the economic strengthening of the organisation. The social premium of 5 US cents per pound paid for Fair Trade coffee goes to the co-operative organisation and it must be decided collectively how to use this money towards a development project. In terms of export ability, Fair Trade partners, such as importers, must provide the producers with access to the logistical, administrative and technical means of exporting a quality product (FLO, 2004). In terms of organisational strengthening, the members should work towards taking on responsibility for the whole export process and strengthening all business-related

operations. This can be done, for example, through building working capital, implementation of quality control and training programmes (*ibid.*). The objective is to have an integrated economic development strategy to improve coffee production techniques, but also to diversify production, in order to reduce dependence on one single product as the source of all income (Waridel, 2002).

Environmentally sustainable development is a main principle of Fair Trade. Fair Trade producers must use agricultural techniques that are environmentally friendly and contribute to the conservation of natural resources (Waridel, 2002). Producers must work towards using non-chemical, organic fertilisers, and biological disease control instead of chemical pesticides. FLO encourages producers to work towards organic certification, for environmental and economic reasons (2004). Organic coffee is certified by separate international labelling organisations than Fair Trade (FLO). Already, the majority of Fair Trade Certified coffee (85%) is also organic and shade-grown (Global Exchange, 2005). Therefore if producers want to continue selling their coffee in Fair Trade networks they are well advised to also be certified organic, as it is in higher demand and comes with a premium of 15 US cents per pound (Waridel, 2002). The objective of environmentally sustainable development is for coffee production to use sustainable agricultural techniques that conserve natural resources and protect the local ecosystems (Global Exchange, 2005). Considering the objective of my thesis to determine to what extent women members are empowered by their involvement in the Fair Trade co-operative, in my analysis I will examine the participation of women in the production and organisation of organic coffee within their Fair Trade co-operative.

According to the Fair Trade Standards, social development in Fair Trade co-operatives should focus on organisational capacity building, meaning empowering the

producers to run their organisation effectively, and ‘integral participation’ increasing the participation of women especially (FLO, 2004). The Fair Trade co-operative must promote integrated social development projects using a variety of means to improve the standard of living of members and the community as a whole. The projects may focus on whatever issues the members identify as an important need in the community (Waridel, 2002). Social development is achieved by raising the standard of living and strengthening the organisation. The Fair Trade Standards articulate the social, economic and environmental principles and objectives for sustainable development. Sustainable development through Fair Trade means contributing to the economic development of the producer organisation and increasing the family income of the producers while using environmentally friendly agricultural techniques. Of the Fair Trade principles towards sustainable development, the social development principles are most pertinent to the analysis of gender in the co-operative.

## **2. Gender**

### **2.1. Fair Trade gender principles and objectives**

The social development principle of ‘integral participation’ including increasing the participation of women means that the co-operative should offer women especially the opportunity to play a more active role in the development process, and in the decision-making and management of the co-operative (Global Exchange, 2005). The producer support network at FLO forms “joint bodies” with producer co-operatives to help producers with their development needs and advises the use of the social premium for development purposes. FLO states that, “as many of the [joint body] members are women, it directly promotes women’s participation in decision-making in community matters” (FLO, 2004). Increasing the participation of women in decision-making remains

a focus of the social development goals. The Eastbourne Declaration, that came out of a meeting of Fair Trade corroborators in Standards setting and revision, states the, “assurance of gender equality as a basic concept of Fair Trade [that] should continue to govern the system” (*ibid.*). Development objectives are intrinsic to the Fair Trade principles and system. Also, “Fair Trade is inextricably tied to and promotes women’s development” (IFAT, 2003). The social development principles and objectives of the international Fair Trade movement focus on producer empowerment, including women’s empowerment. My research analysing the extent to which women members are empowered by their involvement in Fair Trade co-operatives is based on the premise that co-operatives must promote women’s empowerment to adhere to the Fair Trade social development principles.

## 2.2. Fair Trade impact on gender

Fair Trade activists highlight that the empowerment and development of disadvantaged producers and workers in developing countries is their key indicator of success (FLO, 2005). However, while much research has focused on the socio-economic impact of Fair Trade on producers, their families and communities, and producer empowerment (which is presented in Chapter 2), less research has been done on the influence of Fair Trade on gender equality and women’s empowerment in co-operatives. The research that has been done has found some factors that are relevant to my research on Fair Trade and empowerment.

Oxfam Great Britain conducted an impact assessment of the “Oxfam Fair Trade” (OFT) programme, which includes a policy of encouraging women’s empowerment. Oxfam defines empowering women by making an impact on their economic life, income, assets, and earning potential, and their personal life, self-esteem and influence on family

decisions. It also means gaining women access to political decision-making and social empowerment through women's groups and by influencing men and women's beliefs about gender equality (Williams, 2000). Over an eighteen-month period, Oxfam researchers conducted formal monitoring of their producer partners (160 in 25 countries) examining gender indicators, such as wage levels, participation in decision-making, and labour standards. They found that in some groups the Fair Trade programme had made a significant contribution to the empowerment of women, whereas in others the impact was negligible. Women had increased power in the family and increased sense of self-worth in the community when the income went directly to them. The Oxfam GB studies show that women earning their own income and being in control of that income is an influential factor in empowerment. In the context of my research, women receiving the money earned from Fair Trade sales and from the women's groups' productive projects are indicators of personal empowerment in the intra-household sphere (Williams, 2000).

However, the Oxfam Great Britain studies found that cash income in itself did not guarantee empowerment. The participation of women in decision-making in the producer group, Oxfam found to be the key to the women's acquisition of skills that lead to sustainable impact on livelihoods and wider empowerment (Williams, 2000). On the other hand, there were many producer groups in the study where traditional gender roles were unaffected. In these cases, women were excluded from decision-making at work and at home. Likewise, it was found that when women were excluded from decision-making they experienced less empowerment. Therefore, Oxfam GB found that the participation of women in decision-making was an important factor in empowerment, according to their conceptualisation of empowerment. Likewise, decision-making is a paramount component in my analytic framework, which I will present in Chapter 3.

Other factors limiting the impact of the Fair Trade programme on women's empowerment were limited literacy and numeracy, and having a male-dominated management committee. Also in these cases where women were not empowered, Oxfam GB found that the women's contribution to the household livelihood was undervalued, and their domestic responsibilities were not adjusted to compensate for their increased workloads due to productive activities (Williams, 2000). This supports feminist theories that the sexual division of labour perpetuates woman's subordination (Moser, 1993). Furthermore, Moser's (1993) theory, called *the triple role*, identifies a third category of women's work in addition to their reproductive and productive roles. The third role is community managing, which is an extension of women's reproductive role to ensure scarce resources, but at the community level for collective consumption. This role is voluntary, unpaid labour done in women's "free-time". In the context of my research the *socias* (women co-op members) have a triple role between reproductive labour, productive labour in coffee and the productive projects of women's groups, the community development projects of the Fair Trade co-operative. I analyse women's empowerment through productive labour in the Fair Trade co-operative, examining if their involvement is contributing to changing power relations to empower women. This past research and labour theory indicate that, in the context of my research, *socias* may be instrumentalised for development projects through their third role, adding to women's burden in the sexual division of labour.

The Fair Trade Research Group (FTRG) conducted and compiled seven case studies assessing the impact of Fair Trade on coffee producers in Latin America. The FTRG found that Fair Trade had a positive impact on the farmers, families, communities and organisations in the alternative trade system, which was directly attributed to the

benefits from Fair Trade membership. However, they found the influence of Fair Trade on improving gender equality to be indirect (Murray *et al.*, 2003). For my research, this is an indication that I should be looking for ways in which Fair Trade affects gender equality indirectly. The FTRG studies showed that although gender issues are one of the areas that have been prioritised by Fair Trade, this area remains underdeveloped. Many of the co-operatives had implemented specific projects and activities intended to strengthen the role of women in the co-operative. However, only in a few co-operatives were women actually coffee producers, and women only had sporadic participation within the co-op. This assessment concludes that the sporadic participation seems to recreate, rather than challenge, traditional gender biases in coffee production (Murray *et al.*, 2003). I address these issues in my research, examining if the wives and daughters of co-op members are also considered coffee producers and members, and by analysing the participation of women members in the co-operatives. The FTRG report also notes that newer co-operatives seem more willing to provide opportunities for women to participate not only as producers, but also as co-operative leaders, than well-established co-operatives run by older generations, indicating that cultural differences between generations is a factor in women's empowerment (*ibid.*).

The FTRG reports also conclude that Fair Trade has been one of the dynamic forces in overcoming the isolation of women in co-operatives. The sexual division of labour traditionally excludes women from commercial farming, and Fair Trade provides opportunities for women to become involved in the co-operative in non-traditional roles. In another case, a study of women's participation in Fair Trade coffee co-operatives, where I conducted my research at *CEPCO* in Oaxaca, Mexico, also found that the sexual division of labour was changing. Women were participating more directly in productive

activities in correlation to the increased number of female-headed households due to emigration. Both men and women of all ages were emigrating in the early years of the coffee crisis, the 1990s (the coffee crisis is discussed in the following chapter). However, when a husband would leave for an urban centre, his wife would take over his productive labour becoming the primary producer, contrary to the traditional sexual division of labour (Aranda, 2000). In my analysis and discussion, I address how involvement in co-operative activities is changing the sexual division of labour.

Oxfam America financially and technically supports many Fair Trade coffee co-operatives, and encourages increasing the participation of women through the *campesina a campesina* programme (woman producer to woman producer). In this programme women are trained in various skills, often animal husbandry, and return to their communities where they train other *socias* (women co-operative members). Oxfam America reports that while the *campesina a campesina* programme gets good reviews from its participants, the *socias* express that their co-operatives continue to be very *machista* and do not fully allow the participation of women in the co-operative. An Oxfam America representative told me, in e-mail correspondence, that:

“Because of the involvement of importers and buyers, co-operatives are learning that they will improve their image and thus their business relations (and hopefully profits) if they are seen as gender sensitive.”

(Betsy Rakocy, representative of the Central America and Mexico programmes, February 6, 2004).

This is an indirect influence of Fair Trade on gender equality in co-operatives to be considered in my case study.

### **3. Coffee Co-operatives in Oaxaca, Mexico**

When deciding on the setting of my research, Mexico stood out as the longest standing and largest exporter of Fair Trade coffee indicating substantial experience in Fair

Trade and likely more notable outcomes compared to countries where organisations are only recently entering Fair Trade (Raynolds, 2002a). Based on the same reasoning, I chose to do my research in Oaxaca, which is a primary coffee producing state in Mexico. There are over 55,000 families dependent on coffee production in the state of Oaxaca, putting it in third place after the states of Chiapas and Veracruz (INEGI, 2000). The Oaxacan State Collective of Coffee Producers (*Coordinadora Estatal de Productores de Café de Oaxaca*), known by its Spanish acronym *CEPCO*, is the largest association of small coffee producer organisations in Oaxaca (Oxfam America, 2005). *CEPCO*'s membership is made up of around 40 regional producer organisations with approximately 16,000 producer members. Covering all six regions of the state: Costa, Mazateca, Mixteca, Paploapan, Sierra Norte and Sierra Sur, *CEPCO*'s membership is culturally diverse with 8 different indigenous languages spoken by its members (Aranda & Morales, 2002). The coffee producing areas of Oaxaca, which are 94% indigenous and 6% *mestizo* (mixed), are also the poorest areas due to various factors, including the effects of the coffee crisis (INEGI, 2000).

The main reason *CEPCO* was a good site for my field research is that its membership has a high representation of women at 39% (Congress Report, 2005). Not coincidentally it also has a strong women's organisation, called the women's commission, with hired advisors, elected *directivas* (board of directors), monthly assemblies, bi-annual congresses and numerous development projects (see Diagram 1.2. below). Of the 37 regional organisations currently registered in *CEPCO*, 26 have women's groups amounting to 104 women's groups with over 1,600 *socias* in total. *CEPCO* was also a viable option because its offices are centrally located in Oaxaca City and thus accessible. The existence of the women's commission suggests high levels of participation of women

and concerted efforts towards increasing women's equality in coffee co-operatives. Thus this association of producer organisations, *CEPCO*, provides fertile ground for my research on women's empowerment in Fair Trade coffee co-operatives at this secondary level organisation. *CEPCO* also provided a general perspective on primary level organisations through its numerous member organisations.

I studied one primary level organisation specifically, the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*. This regional organisation is located in Tenango, which serves as a rural centre for the surrounding villages. Tenango is in the Sierra Mazateca, Oaxaca's most Northern mountain range. There are 1020 coffee producers that are members of the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*, meaning they have sold their coffee to the co-operative in the last few years and the *Federación* has their *socio* card on record. However, no records exist as to what percentage of the total *socios* are women. All the *socios* are encouraged to transition to organic production, as there is little demand for non-organic coffee and therefore no guarantee of its purchase. Of the 192 organic coffee producers and *socios* in transition to organic production that sold to the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'* in 2004, 93 were women (internal record of organic producers at the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*, 2004). Therefore, women constitute 48% of organic or transition *socios* of the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*. There are also 394 *socias* involved in the productive projects of the women's groups, not all of whom directly sell coffee to the co-operative but are considered members because of a husband or father, and contribute to the familial labour of coffee production. The following short history of the primary and secondary organisations' formation and the formation of their women's organisations is intended to elucidate the organisational process, its motivation, the structure of the organisations, and the history of women's participation.

### 3.1. CEPCO and the women's commission

In 1989 as the International Coffee Agreements were dissolved and the international coffee market was liberalised, a similar process was taking place in Mexico. Then president, Carlos Salinas, under the structural adjustment programme of the IMF, was implementing neo-liberal policies to liberalise the Mexican economy. These policies discriminated against peasant producers, and favoured large agri-businesses and foreign investment (Hellman, 1999). The government cut all funding to the Mexican Coffee Institute (*Inmecafe*), which had promoted coffee production, technical training and coffee commercialisation for decades (Aranda & Morales, 2002). Without government support small peasant producers were left with a lack of basic infrastructure: transportation, processing facilities, financing, and market information. The most pressing problem was that they no longer had guaranteed sales and no means to export their coffee (Carlsen & Cervantes, 2004). In response to the coffee crisis and the deregulation of the coffee sector in Mexico, peasant leaders and activists organised to lobby *Inmecafe* to arrange that year's sales while planning how they were going to handle the crisis in the long term. Out of this activism and organising, *CEPCO* was formed as a means to confront the coffee crisis and an alternative to selling to *caciques* (local traders) who pay poorly. *CEPCO* became a co-ordinating, or umbrella organisation for already existent and newly formed regional producer organisations in the state of Oaxaca. *CEPCO* also plays an important role in the peasant movement nationally through the National Coalition of Coffee Producing Organisations (*CNOC*) (Bartra, 2002).

The leaders of *CEPCO* had to figure out how to sell the coffee, which they did successfully by creating a separate legal body called *CAEO* (*Comercializadora Agropecuaria del Estado de Oaxaca*) in 1990 for commercialisation. In 1994, they

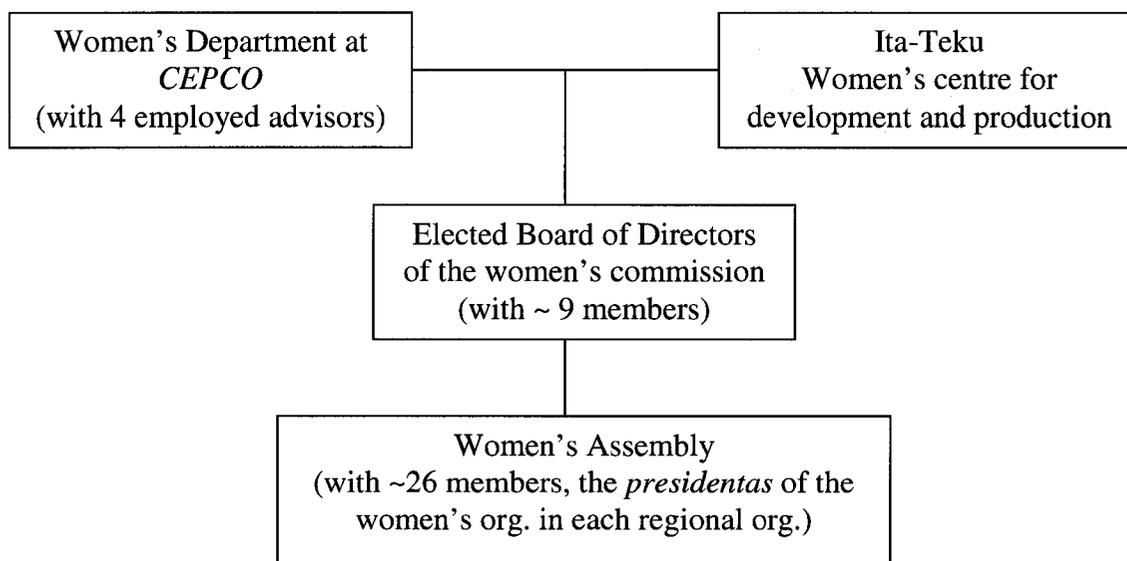
founded a credit union (*UCEPCO*) to provide their members and others with access to credit (Bartra, 2002). From the beginning contacts were made with Fair Trade buyers and certifying organisations, and in 1993, 13 of the regional producer organisations were certified Fair Trade. Each regional producer organisation had to be inspected and certified individually. *CEPCO* presented a proposal to FLO that they be given one certification for all of its member organisations. After years of meetings and visits, this was finally granted in 2000. Now *CEPCO* is both subject to inspection by FLO and responsible for monitoring that their producer organisations meet Fair Trade requirements. They are also constantly working to increase their internal organic monitoring to lower outside inspection costs. Technically, Fair Trade coffee is independent of organic coffee, as they have separate certification agencies. However, since the early 1990s they have occupied the same niche and *CEPCO* was unable to sell their coffee through Fair Trade channels until they had also become certified organic. *CEPCO* first became certified through OCIA International, the Organic Crop Improvement Association, which is a North American organisation, however European buyers wanted a more recognisable European label so *CEPCO* sought Naturland-Verband Association for Organic Agriculture's certification from Germany. It is useful to have more than one organic certification since different buyers prefer different labels but it is also an expensive process. Therefore, *CEPCO* was involved in the formation of Certimex, a Mexican organic certification organisation in order to reduce certification costs (Aranda & Morales, 2002).

During the first few years, *CEPCO* was technically a mixed gender organisation with both male and female members on paper, however the *socias* (women members) did not actively participate. To remedy this gender inequality, *CEPCO*'s leaders started a

'conscientisation' campaign where the male leaders or advisors discussed with the male members of regional organisations how important it is to recognise women as coffee producers and confront the historical subordination of women. Meanwhile *CEPCO*'s female advisors met with the *socias* to raise their consciousness that as coffee producers they have equal rights to participate in their regional organisations. The objective of the 'conscientisation' campaign, carried out by *CEPCO* and regional organisation leaders, was, first, to raise awareness about gender issues that prohibited women's equality in all levels of producer organisations, and secondly, to address this inequality by organising and increasing the participation of women. The incentive to address issues of gender inequality in *CEPCO*'s co-operatives seems to have originated with one woman, Dra. Josefina Aranda. She and her husband were involved in Mexican rural and urban social movements, and were founding members of *CEPCO* (Castellanos, 2004). Although there may have been external influences encouraging *CEPCO* to become more gender conscious, such as pressure from Fair Trade partners, there is no evidence to that effect (either in written documents, or written or verbal communications). The *socias* certainly point to Aranda as the motivating force behind women's organising, having gone around to many regional organisations herself to encourage the women. The incentive to increase the participation of women in *CEPCO* will be further addressed in the analysis and discussion.

In 1992 at *CEPCO*'s bi-annual congress, the motion was passed to create the "women's commission" whose purpose would be to promote the organisation and participation of women producers in *CEPCO* and in their regional organisations (Aranda, 2000) (see Diagram 1.2. below). One objective of organising women in a separate department was to increase their interest in participating in the co-operative in general.

Over the next few years, the activities of the women's commission involved consciousness raising about gender issues, figuring out how women could increase their participation within the group, what projects they would like to create for themselves, and how they could get their organisations to support them. In 1995, the first women's congress was held and a *mesa directiva* (board of directors) was elected with one representative from each of the eight regional organisations that were present (Aranda, 2000). A new women's board of directors is elected every two to three years at the women's congress (the number of board members fluctuates but generally the board is made up of a president, secretary, treasurer and one representative of each region of the state, totalling nine) (Aranda & Morales, 2002). In addition to the board of directors of the women's commission, each regional organisation with active women's groups elects a committee (president, secretary, treasurer and an oversight officer) and sends the president as a representative to the women's monthly assembly meetings at *CEPCO* in Oaxaca City. The president of the women's commission attends *CEPCO*'s monthly assembly meetings and congresses as the women's representative, however other *socias* are encouraged to attend as well.

**Diagram 1.2. Structure of Women's Organisation within CEPCO**

The board members of the newly created women's commission rallied interested *socias* to join "women's groups". Each regional organisation of CEPCO is made up of smaller local 'community committees', which are located in small rural villages of 100-200 people. The women's groups are made up of *socias*, who sell coffee to their regional organisation directly under their own name, and are also made up of the wives and daughters of registered *socios*. Once the women's groups formed in each community committee they could start working together on productive projects. The objective of the productive projects is to improve the quality of life of these rural women, creating a health programme in their communities, and to strengthen the democratic involvement of the *socias* in the co-operative, and the democratic process of their separate groups by having internal regulations to follow. Also, the objective of the women's groups is that the *socias* learn to recuperate their costs and create a community savings, micro-financing system so that they have more financial stability and sustainable productive projects (internal report, 2000). The objective of the women's groups overall is not only to

implement productive projects but also to promote the participation of *socias* in these groups and within their regional organisation and *CEPCO*.

As the women's groups formed, the participation of women in *CEPCO* grew, and they organised a new legal body, a co-operative society, as a centre for development and production, which they named Ita-Teku (an indigenous name meaning flower and life). Under this title they bought two hectares of land in 1998, in order to develop agricultural projects for the women's groups with the goal of diversifying their productive work and incomes. The infrastructure of Ita-Teku has evolved to include a laboratory, a farmyard of various animals, and an arboretum. The objective of Ita-Teku is to inform and train the *socias*, and to develop productive projects for the women's groups. In 2002, the network of *promotoras técnicas* (technical promoters) was formed. A bilingual (in Spanish and in the indigenous language of her community) and literate representative is chosen from the regional organisation to come to Ita-Teku for workshops and training in various agricultural and organisational topics, and then returns to the community to share this knowledge with the other *socias*. Through Ita-Teku, *CEPCO*'s women's commission has also developed a series of pamphlets also used as an educational tool. The technical promoters and the pamphlets facilitate the planning and operation of productive projects.

### 3.2. Federación 'Zapata Vive' and the women's organisation

In 1989 the *campesino* leaders, who were trying to organise an alternative for small coffee producers in the face of the national and international deregulation of the coffee market, went to the Mazateca mountains and held meetings with producers there to discuss their options. Out of these talks, analysing their situation, a group of producers in San José Tenango decided to form an organisation and joined *CEPCO* early in 1990

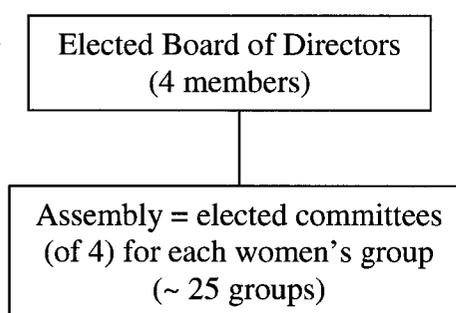
(interview, March 12, 2005). Their organisation was called ‘the agricultural association of local small coffee producers of Tenango’ and was the first social organisation in the area (there had been “coffee unions” but they were just organised middlemen buying small producers’ coffee with no social development aspect). The few leaders who decided to form the organisation went out into the mountains and valleys for weeks visiting all the local communities and discussing the coffee crisis and the prospects of joining their organisation. This resulted in the formation of over 100 local community committees with over 4000 members. Through *CEPCO* they were able to get enough credit to finance that year’s harvest of all their members. In 1996, due to changes in government funding agencies, they were required to register as a “*Sociedad de Solidaridad Social*” (SSS), a social solidarity society, which they named ‘*Zapata Vive*’ to represent how campesinos are still fighting for their rights and a better life (interview, March 12, 2005). Although the *Federación SSS ‘Zapata Vive*’ had been certified Fair Trade through *CEPCO* from the beginning, in 2003 many of their producers finally received organic certification after three years of transitioning their soil and farming practices (interview, March 29, 2005). The *Federación* has been successful in developing local infrastructure, buying a coffee warehouse with offices and a truck for transporting their coffee to *CEPCO*, a technological platform, and opened a micro-bank. This last achievement was largely due to the success of the women’s projects at the *Federación*. The productive projects of the women’s groups, when successful, accumulate group savings, which they reinvest in new projects. With numerous women’s groups in the area there was enough demand for a micro-bank that the co-operative went through the bureaucratic process and had the capital to open one.

The regional organisation was formed in 1990, and in the following years the female advisors from *CEPCO* would visit the women and ask them, “since you cultivate coffee and sell to the co-operative, why shouldn’t you also be involved in the organising?” In 1993, the women of Tenango’s regional organisation formed a *Comité de Solidaridad* (a “solidarity committee”) with a women’s *directiva* (board of directors) in order to start working with productive projects. Of the 83 *socias* in the women’s organisation, 25 of them participated in a coffee tree planting project and 40 women participated in a goat-raising project. There was also a home improvement project where roofs were tiled, and a community supplies store was created (interview with first *presidenta*, March 21, 2005). These projects were organised through the women’s groups, and both men and women co-op members contributed time and labour. Due mostly to the failure to recuperate the initial costs, these projects only lasted a few years, or were only planned for one project cycle.

Again, in 1998 *CEPCO*’s advisors came around to promote women’s participation this time by encouraging the *Federación ‘Zapata Vive’* to motivate their *socias* by telling of all the projects in which they could be involved. The president of ‘*Zapata Vive*’ spoke to an assembly of 368 women from 38 communities and they elected a women’s *directiva* to start organising (internal document, *Fed. ‘Zapata Vive’*) (see Diagram 1.3. below). Similar to when the regional organisation was first forming, the women’s *directiva* (board of directors) went out to every community to raise awareness and promote the women’s projects. Although women were interested in joining it was a difficult task to meet because of political tensions. The ruling PRI party members accused the women of recruiting for the newly formed PRD party. Despite challenges, they were successful in organising women to form local community women’s groups and the women’s

organisation was under way at the regional organisation '*Zapata Vive*' (interview with current *presidenta*, March 12, 2005). Currently, almost 400 *socias* are in '*Zapata Vive*'s women's groups with various projects, such as crafts, raising sheep, goats and pigs, and running community supply stores. There are 50 *socias* working with an organic chicken-raising project directly through *CEPCO*'s women's commission. The *Federación* has almost 100 *socias* involved in their organic coffee programme, constituting nearly 50% of the organic growers.

**Diagram 1.3. Structure of the Women's Org. at the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'***



The existence of the women's commission at *CEPCO*, and the high level of involvement of *socias* in the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*, make these primary and secondary level organisations ideal sites for my research on women's empowerment through Fair Trade coffee co-operatives. Women's empowerment is my gender focus in studying the development strategy of Fair Trade. Fair Trade is an alternative in the midst of the development crisis of coffee producing countries, such as Mexico. Coffee producing families and coffee workers are poverty stricken, and struggling to survive with the stress of the "coffee crisis", which will be examined in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 2: Coffee Crisis and the Fair Trade Alternative**

My research is located in the context of the ‘coffee crisis’ and the development crisis that has ensued for millions of small coffee producing families and coffee workers around the world. Fair Trade emerged as an alternative for disadvantaged Southern producers. The beneficial impact Fair Trade has had thus far is evidence of the viability of Fair Trade as *a* solution to the coffee crisis and a viable development strategy.

### **1. Coffee Crisis**

The Fair Trade movement emerged from various projects selling crafts made by Southern artisans, but it largely evolved through the certification of coffee. Coffee was the first Fair Trade labelled commodity and it remains the backbone of the Fair Trade system (Raynolds, 2002a). Fair Trade coffee networks were formed largely as a response to the coffee crisis in the 1990s. The ‘coffee crisis’ is a term used to describe the plummeted price of coffee beans on the world market, and the social and economic development crisis that ensued. The deregulated market with extremely low export prices, compounded with the historically exploitative production and trade systems has resulted in a development crisis for coffee producing developing countries, and for millions of coffee producers and workers around the world. Exploring the causes and effects of the coffee crisis demonstrates how it is a development crisis and sets the context for arguing how Fair Trade is a viable solution and development strategy.

#### **1.1. Deregulation**

The deregulation of the coffee market was the principal cause of the severely low prices of the coffee crisis. Between 1962 and 1989, there were four International Coffee Agreements (ICAs) signed by coffee exporting and importing countries that were

members of the International Coffee Organisation (ICO) (Ponte, 2002). These ICAs functioned to regulate the market and stabilise coffee prices. If the market price fell below a set price, a quota regulation system came into effect and the producing countries could not export more than their quota. This ensured that the market would not be flooded and the prices would not be driven below a set bottom price (Renkema, 2001). However, quotas were hard to regulate, especially with the emergence of new producing countries. Additionally, consuming countries that were not members of the ICO could purchase coffee outside of the agreements more cheaply, creating two coffee markets (Renkema, 2001). These issues escalated and in 1989 the agreements collapsed leaving the coffee market deregulated (Ponte, 2002). The ICO no longer has any instruments enabling it to intervene in the market, which is now referred to as the 'free coffee market'.

The deregulation of the international coffee market caused an immediate crash in the price of coffee as producing countries, free from quotas, dumped their excess stock on the market (Renkema, 2001). In January 1990, the ICO indicator price of coffee fell to 62 US cents per pound, which is half of what it was in January 1989. The monthly prices continued to fall reaching an historical low of 45 US cents per pound in August of 1992, the lowest it had been in 30 years (ICO, 2006). These prices are well below the estimated cost of production, which is on average \$1 US per pound (Carlsen & Cervantes, 2004). There were short-lived recoveries in the mid-1990s, but in 2001 the price hit a new historical low at 41 US cents per pound and hovered around there for the next few years. At the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006 the price began to increase and has even gone just over a dollar (ICO, 2006). However, these recent improvements in the international price of coffee do not signal the end of the crisis. The market is still very unstable with the price constantly yo-yoing. Besides, short-lived higher prices do not

change the fact that small-scale coffee producers remain vulnerable to the disproportionate market power of local buyers, international traders and multinational coffee companies (Daniels & Petchers, 2005).

### 1.2. Free coffee market

The deregulated, free coffee market is extremely volatile and highly manipulated causing the price of coffee to be unstable and its export an unreliable source of income. Coffee prices are set according to the New York “C” Contract market. Most coffee is traded by speculators in New York, who trade approximately eight to ten times the amount of actual coffee produced each year (Global Exchange, 2005). Big financial investors have had a growing influence on the price of coffee. For example, Nestlé and Philip Morris are giant trans-national corporations (TNCs) that own numerous coffee brands, in addition to other food products, cigarette and beer brands. They have their own brokers who buy and sell on commission without ever owning or handling the coffee they trade (Waridel, 2002). When prices are low they invest. Their sudden large ‘demand’ raises the price until they decide to pull out with their profits and the price crashes again. The price fluctuates but the producer never receives the short-lived higher prices. The free coffee market is so manipulated by speculators and investors that it is hardly connected to the physical market of supply and demand (Renkema, 2001).

The fallacy of the free market is the supposed ability of the ‘elasticity’ of supply and demand to regulate the market. Unfortunately, this is particularly impractical in the case of coffee. Overproduction, or increased supply, causes the price of coffee beans to fall but does not incite consumers to drink more coffee, as the demand is inelastic. Furthermore, due to dependence on coffee as a main source of income, coffee growers

actually produce *more* coffee when the price drops to make up for their losses, exacerbating the problem of overproduction (FLO, 2006).

### 1.3. Debt and overproduction

Overproduction of coffee is another cause of severely low prices. The amount of coffee produced globally far exceeds the consumer demand for coffee. In the past decade, production increased at twice the rate of consumption (Charveriat, 2001). This is largely due to the fact that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), through loan conditions and structural adjustment policies, have forced indebted national governments to encourage the production of coffee (Nigh, 2002). Coffee is an extremely powerful commodity, reigning as the world's second most heavily traded product, behind petroleum, and the largest food import of the United States (Global Exchange, 2005). What are now the top five coffee producing countries in the world were advised by the World Bank and the IMF to increase coffee production in order to increase export earnings (Nigh, 2002). Vietnam was an insignificant coffee producing country in the early 1990s but by 2000 it had the second largest exports of coffee in the world (Ponte, 2002). The great increase in coffee producing countries has resulted in overproduction, which has flooded the market, driving down the price of coffee.

### 1.4. Conventional coffee system

The conditions of the free coffee market, namely extremely low prices, exacerbate the already dire situation for small coffee producers and workers. The production and trade of coffee has an exploitative colonial history that shapes the current day conventional coffee system. During the colonial period, the coffee plant was brought to Latin America by colonial settlers, who became wealthy landowners by displacing peasants from collectively held lands. The peasants were then hired to work on the large

*haciendas* under slave-like conditions where they were forced into debt from little pay and high living expenses (Pendergrast, 1999). Today, coffee workers on plantations face similar conditions of debt peonage, and labour and safety laws are weak or not well enforced (Dicum & Luttinger, 1999). Men, women and children go from plantation to plantation as migrant workers. They are paid poorly and work long hours, earning on average less than US \$3/day for picking 100 pounds of coffee (Waridel, 2002). In other words, the colonial slave-like conditions for coffee workers on plantations continue to be exploitative in the present day.

Small coffee farmers who own their own land are also exploited by the trading conditions in the conventional coffee system (Ponte, 2002). Due to economy of scale, it would be impossible for small producers to export individually. They do not produce enough or have the resources to export directly. They have little choice but to sell to '*coyotes*'. *Coyotes* are local middlemen who buy from several small producers, paying them far less than the market value (often half) and selling the collected coffee to larger middlemen or exporters (Waridel, 2002). The conventional path of a coffee bean from the field to the cup has many intermediaries each taking a percentage of the price the coffee will fetch on the market while the producers receive unjust remuneration for their labour. The conventional trading system has many structural inequities for Southern producers.

Although the export prices are low on the free coffee market, the consumer prices have not reflected these lows. In fact, between the mid-1970s and mid-1990s, the average export price of coffee dropped 18% while the consumer price rose by 240% (Renkema, 2001). Large trans-national corporations (TNCs) are gaining the difference. A few major international trading and roasting corporations, such as Sara Lee and Nestlé, dominate the

coffee trade. These TNCs are making huge net profit margins while the price paid to producers doesn't even cover the cost of production (*ibid.*). Low prices and the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth generated by the coffee trade leave small coffee producers without a viable livelihood.

### 1.5. Development crisis

The coffee crisis has had negative social and economic effects on coffee producing developing countries, small producers and coffee workers. Coffee is cultivated almost exclusively in developing countries. As discussed above, it is an important cash crop for debt repayment, especially for those countries whose economies are largely dependent on coffee. For example, in Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda, coffee makes up 80% of total exports (Waridel, 2002). The coffee crisis is devastating to their economies. The coffee crisis directly impacts 25 million small coffee producers around the world who suffer greatly from the loss of earnings when coffee prices fall since they often have little other means of income (Gresser & Tickell, 2003). Many are forced to rent or sell their land since they can no longer afford to cultivate it or they go into debt trying. Coffee is also the livelihood of millions of workers around the world of all ages, who are likewise left without a livelihood when plantations close (Gresser & Tickell, 2003). Small coffee producers and coffee workers depend on this cash income to pay for food, and other essential items such as school fees, and health care (James, 2000). In Mexico and Central America, as a result of the coffee crisis there has been increased migration to urban centres and to the United States in search of employment (Murray *et al.*, 2003). Although both men and women of all ages have emigrated, there is now an absence of working-aged men who traditionally cultivated coffee but were forced to leave because they could no longer make a living from it. This has created more female-headed

households, and a new phenomenon known as ‘coffee widows’ who were left behind to live off the meagre earnings of coffee or find alternative strategies for survival in the rural coffee-producing areas (Aranda, 2000). In the current context of corporate globalisation with its related neo-liberal policies, underdeveloped countries already face extreme poverty and inequality (Fridell, 2003). The coffee crisis has resulted in increased poverty and decreased standard of living from the loss of livelihoods from the coffee sector. It is an acute social and economic development crisis.

## **2. Viability of Fair Trade**

In the context of the coffee crisis, Fair Trade has emerged as a successful strategy for survival where few other alternatives exist. However, the ability of Fair Trade to provide a viable solution to the tremendous consequences of the coffee crisis is debated among academics and practitioners in the field. The main points of contention, significant to my research, are whether Fair Trade can continue to expand and remain inclusive, and whether it will provide new income-generating opportunities or only increase coffee dependency. This discussion demonstrates that although there are challenges to the growth of Fair Trade it has the potential to be a long-term, inclusive alternative to the crisis conditions of the conventional coffee system. Furthermore, Fair Trade has the potential to be a strategy for sustainable development. This is addressed in Chapter 3.

### 2.1. Growth potential

A common critique of Fair Trade is that it is a niche market with limited potential for growth and therefore not an inclusive or sustainable alternative. Both critics and advocates agree that Fair Trade is a niche in the international coffee market (Gresser & Tickell, 2003; Fridell, 2003). Fair Trade is marketable because conscious consumers are

willing to pay an ethical premium for a cause in which they believe (Raynolds, 2002b; Global Exchange, 2005). Quality and ethical premiums are not the norm but rather market niches in the coffee industry. As a niche, it is assumed that Fair Trade will eventually reach its market ceiling (Murray *et al.*, 2003). It is questionable whether Fair Trade will be able to expand its consumer market in order to accommodate all producers interested in the Fair Trade system.

Oxfam's policy papers, while recognising the social and economic benefits of Fair Trade for coffee producers within the Fair Trade network, warn of the danger of encouraging everyone "to run for the same exit" (Gresser & Tickell, 2003). With the success of the Fair Trade movement, more and more producer organisations wanted to become Fair Trade certified. Although Fair Trade sales continued to grow, they did not grow fast enough to match the increase in the number of Fair Trade registered coffee co-operatives (Renard, 1999). Most Fair Trade co-ops only manage to sell 20% of their coffee through Fair Trade networks, and have to sell the rest through conventional means (Global Exchange, 2005). The limited demand has made FLO reluctant to register new co-operatives. This evidence suggests that while Fair Trade constitutes a small moral niche in the free coffee market only a small percentage of coffee producers will be able to partake in the Fair Trade network.

Indeed, the dynamics of Northern markets fundamentally shape the potential for further expansion of Fair Trade in the South (Murray *et al.*, 2003). Although Fair Trade only constitutes a small share of the international market, it is growing rapidly (Raynolds, 2002a). In some European countries Fair Trade makes up to 20% of the market share. In 2002, almost 80% of Fair Trade certified coffee was sold in Europe (Waridel, 2002). The growth of Fair Trade in Europe has slowed, raising concerns about reaching the market

ceiling. However, in North America Fair Trade markets are still growing rapidly and between 2003 and 2004, Fairtrade labelled sales globally grew by 56% (FLO, 2006). Also, FLO was able to certify over 100 new producer organisations between 2004 and 2005 (FLO, 2005). The continued growth of the Fair Trade market is largely due to vigorous national Fair Trade campaigns.

Advocates of Fair Trade have been trying to expand further into the mainstream. Getting Fair Trade coffee on supermarket shelves was the first big step expanding from church groups and specialty shops. Recently, activists have also been rallying for the large coffee roasters and retailers to sell Fair Trade. Since 2000, Global Exchange, an American human rights organisation, has campaigned for Starbucks, the largest specialty coffee company in the world, to sell Fair Trade coffee (Global Exchange, 2005). They were successful in getting Starbucks to carry some Fair Trade coffee. Global Exchange continues to campaign Starbucks for a further commitment to Fair Trade, which would result in greater Fair Trade sales and thus more business for Fair Trade coffee co-operatives. Recently, Oxfam America successfully campaigned McDonald's to start serving 100% of their coffee products as Fair Trade in 658 restaurants in New England (Oxfam America, 2005). The coffee programme manager for Oxfam America, Seth Petchers says that, "this is a sign that the Fair Trade market is growing in strength and numbers" (*ibid.*). These campaigns to have large roasters and retailers sell Fair Trade demonstrates the intent of expanding beyond a moral market niche (Fridell, 2003).

The recent entry of mainstream distributors into the Fair Trade system raises concerns about diluting social justice goals. Fridell questions whether Fair Trade principles are not being compromised by working with TNCs that are only concerned with small-producers insofar as it helps their image and sales (2003). Starbucks, as well

as other large roasters and retailers, often claim to follow standards of corporate social responsibility (Renkema, 2001). This can only be guaranteed when they commit to Fair Trade certified coffee. Dealing with dominant actors in the coffee industry is one of the challenges Fair Trade faces by operating both in and against the market (Brown, 1993). However, operating in the mainstream is what allows Fair Trade to grow, and maintain and expand its membership.

## 2.2. Dependency and diversification

Another critique of Fair Trade is that it is a “Band-Aid solution” to a deep-rooted problem, providing a quick fix to the coffee crisis while increasing coffee dependency. It is well documented that small producers, hit hardest by the crisis, are largely dependent upon coffee as their sole source of cash income (Global Exchange, 2005). Many national governments of developing countries are also dependent on coffee exports. For example, as mentioned above, coffee constitutes 80% of Burundi’s national exports (Gresser & Tickell, 2003). Fair Trade has been blamed for coffee dependency by some economists who believe that the high prices received through Fair Trade networks convince producers to continue to cultivate coffee when they would be better off seeking an alternative (Gresser & Tickell, 2003). Bill Fishbein, a coffee roaster and the founder of the development aid organisation Coffee Kids, writes that “noble programmes” that offer premiums to coffee-farmers help alleviate some of the symptoms but the dependency upon coffee is not lessened, in fact, it is deepened (2004). However, these critiques do not consider the systematic, structural inequalities that limit the opportunities of disadvantaged producers, which is why they remain dependent upon coffee even in times of crisis. Technical assistance is needed to help farmers switch crops, and it is financially risky after long investments in coffee cultivation. Fair Trade advocates recognise the

dangers of coffee dependency and the Fair Trade network provides the assistance needed to help farmers diversify their sources of income and subsistence (Gresser & Tickell, 2003).

### 2.3. A viable alternative

Advocates of Fair Trade claim that it is a viable alternative for producers in the coffee crisis. First of all, because it is clearly more profitable than the conventional coffee system. The free market export prices are so low that they do not cover the cost of production. Besides, the actual price that small producers in the conventional trade receive for their coffee is only a portion of the market price. Comparatively the Fair Trade alternative is much more profitable. From 1989 to 2002, the international price of coffee reached historical lows. Since then, the annual average indicator price on the free market has risen from 51.91 US cents per pound in 2003 to 89.36 US cents per pound in 2005 (ICO, 2006). Despite this increase, the coffee crisis has not significantly lessened as the free market indicator prices remain extremely volatile and disproportionate market power for local buyers, international traders, and trans-national coffee companies grows unchecked (Daniels & Petchers, 2005). Fair Trade is an appealing alternative with a guaranteed floor price currently fixed at \$1.26 US per pound, with a consistent social premium of 5 US cents per pound, plus an additional 15 US cents per pound for certified organic beans (Global Exchange, 2005; Equal Exchange, 2006). Plus, of course, the producer organisation is paid the higher Fair Trade price directly and in full. In addition to a higher income, producers have many opportunities through Fair Trade networks that provide means of survival in the climate of crisis. Fair Trade helps small producers continue and succeed despite many challenges and disadvantages. It seeks to address small-scale farmers' most pressing needs: price stability, access to finance, market access,

technical assistance in quality improvement and diversification, organisational strengthening, and participation in international debate (Daniels & Petchers, 2005).

Although debates continue on how Fair Trade can move forward as a viable alternative, practically all voices in the discussion agree that systemic change is needed to solve the coffee crisis. In other words, changes need to be made to the historically unjust systems of the coffee trade and the coffee market. Even Nestlé, one of the largest trading and roasting corporations in the world, has recognised the need and is willing to support initiatives for a co-ordinated and international approach to manage the supply of coffee (Gresser & Tickell, 2003). Oxfam has drafted a Coffee Rescue Plan that addresses how supply can be brought back in line with demand to give farmers a decent living from coffee. The Rescue Plan makes recommendations for what the ICO, coffee companies, governments and institutions, the World Bank, investors, and consumers can do to alleviate the coffee crisis. Oxfam concludes in its policy paper, that until these systemic changes are made, and while the lack of alternatives and the absence of government safety nets for poor producers continue, Fair Trade is the most justifiable and appropriate manner for producers to cope with the coffee crisis (Gresser & Tickell, 2003). The most salient argument in favour of Fair Trade as the most viable alternative in the coffee crisis is its development impact beyond fairer prices.

#### 2.4. Development impact

From various case studies assessing the impact of Fair Trade on coffee producers in Latin America, the Fair Trade Research Group (FTRG), based at Colorado State University, reports on the numerous benefits of Fair Trade for producers, their families, their organisations and their communities (Murray *et al.*, 2003). There are the obvious benefits that come from the advantageous principles of Fair Trade that have already been

listed, such as a higher standard of living from receiving a better price, more security from access to credit, and increased productivity from technical assistance. There are numerous other social and economic benefits for coffee producing families. Participation in Fair Trade co-operatives provides families with access to a diverse range of opportunities, such as small credit programmes in case of family emergencies, and training and marketing assistance for families to develop alternative sources of income (Murray *et al.*, 2003). Particularly, such income-generating projects are often organised through the co-op in women's groups. The productive projects of women's groups are a realm of Fair Trade production in which I will examine women's empowerment. As well, there have been noted improvements in access to education and healthcare for the family from involvement in Fair Trade, not just because of the higher income but because of Fair Trade development projects that provide education and healthcare services (*ibid.*).

The many projects undertaken by Fair Trade co-operatives benefit entire communities. The list of community development projects that have been undertaken by Fair Trade co-operatives in Latin America is extensive. It includes local pharmacies, basic needs stores, medical clinics, computer training and facilities, and micro-banks, to name a few, all of which provide services to non-co-op members as well (Equal Exchange, 2006). Organisational strengthening, or capacity building, is one of the most notable results of being involved in the well-structured Fair Trade system. The co-operative being well organised not only makes coffee production and trade more efficient, but it also enables such community development projects to be carried out through the co-operative. The FTRG report on *CEPCO* showed that an advantage of Fair Trade participation was becoming well organised. The organic producers were the most active at all levels in the co-op indicating that participation in the organic programme, which

requires much training and planning, increasing participation in general and also contributes to the capacity building of the organisation (Aranda & Morales, 2002). The positive development impact of Fair Trade has been well documented by this academic group (FTRG), as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Oxfam, human-rights organisations such as Global Exchange, and ATOs such as Equal Exchange. The beneficial impact Fair Trade has had on producer families and their communities through various social and economic projects within the co-operative and in the broader community is evidence of the viability of the Fair Trade development strategy.

### **Chapter 3: Theoretical Frameworks**

The theoretical frameworks that inform my research approach are situated in the fields of development studies, and gender and development studies. In this chapter I will argue that Fair Trade is a development strategy, and locate it within development theory in order to highlight the main tenets of the Fair Trade framework. This framework is both theoretical and practical, as it is based on theories of the most beneficial model of development for producers' communities, and the experience gained through the practice of Fair Trade methods. The Fair Trade framework for development is important to my research because it grounds my gender analysis within development processes, and illuminates my research objective of determining how Fair Trade impacts the empowerment of women members of co-operatives. The Empowerment framework is located in Gender and Development theory. Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework (WEF) greatly informs my theoretical perspective and provides analytic tools appropriate for my research question. The aim of the framework is to question what women's empowerment and equality mean in practice, and to critically assess to what extent a development intervention is supporting this empowerment. The Fair Trade and Women's Empowerment frameworks share some important concepts and have a similar perspective on development, namely that development should be participatory and empowering. The combination of these theoretical frameworks permits the analysis of women's empowerment within Fair Trade development processes.

#### **1. Fair Trade Development Framework**

There is more to 'Fair Trade' than its name suggests. It is a trading partnership that seeks greater equity in international trade relations by guaranteeing direct, equitable

conditions, namely a fairer price (EFTA, 2006). This is the definition in terms of trade. However, Fair Trade is more than just an ethical business venture. It is an international movement for social and economic justice. Grassroots producer co-operatives in the South, and activists and conscious consumers in the North form a global Fair Trade network based on solidarity, above and beyond trade and retail operations. When Fair Trade is considered in terms of the development principles and objectives towards producer empowerment and sustainable development, which were presented in Chapter 1, Fair Trade can more aptly be conceptualised as a strategy for community development with the grassroots co-operative as the principal agent of development. The Fair Trade principles reveal their theoretical foundation in, and the objectives show a clear intent of, sustainable development. Also, the beneficial impact Fair Trade has had thus far on coffee producing communities, as was presented in Chapter 2, is empirical evidence of ‘development’ as defined by the Fair Trade framework. The Fair Trade conceptualisation of development is both in terms of changing unjust international structures and in terms of poverty alleviation and empowerment through social, economic and environmentally sustainable methods. My research question again is: “how and to what extent are women members empowered by their involvement in Fair Trade co-operatives?” The theoretical framework of Fair Trade informs my research question with the premise that empowerment and development are interconnected processes that can be achieved through participation in Fair Trade. In order to properly illuminate the theoretical framework, that is the basis of the Fair Trade development strategy, I will situate it in the shifting paradigms of development theory where Another Development (AD) emerged.

### 1.1. Another Development (AD) and the Fair Trade development strategy

The 'Another Development' framework emerged in the 1980s as a broad-based movement of theorists and practitioners looking for alternative forms of development outside of the existing paradigms. This search has gone in various directions with different approaches focusing on particular issues. Some commonalities may be drawn from the different models of Another Development. The ideals of AD are for development to be equitable, 'human in form and scale', environmentally friendly, and support sustainable livelihoods. Development should come from the grassroots level and be socially inclusive in terms of gender, ethnicity and class (Veltmeyer, 2001). Fair Trade shares all of these general principles with AD but the two are divergent in some respects.

First of all, in AD the concept of 'community' is central to its theory. Unlike the orthodox paradigm that defines either the state or the market as the agent of development, AD is based on the belief that in the development process these institutions should be secondary in importance to community-based organisations. According to AD, the community is a social entity that shares a collective identity and 'community spirit' which is the social basis of development. This makes development a more unified process, as the community is both the driving force (social subject) and the recipient (the object) of development (Veltmeyer & Petras, 2000). In the Fair Trade development model, the agent of development is the co-operative. This is a locally based organisation with membership in the co-operative being the unifying social basis, rather than the vague concept of 'community'. The shared principle is that the agency for development is in grassroots organisations.

Secondly, AD stresses that development should happen locally. This should not be confused with the neo-liberal concept of localism. Neo-liberal models promote decentralised decision-making to pawn off responsibilities, without funding, to local governments, whereas AD promotes development that starts locally and stays local (Veltmeyer, 2001). The AD model proposes bringing the whole development process local by de-linking from the world economy. Technologies and resources should be used locally at a smaller, more human scale. Industries and local financial institutions should be developed in the community to strengthen local markets. All action and control in the development process should take place at the local level according to the AD framework (Veltmeyer & Petras, 2000). Similarly, action and control in the development process occur in the grassroots co-operative in the Fair Trade development model. Also, strengthening local facilities and institutions is encouraged in Fair Trade. For example, co-operatives have opened their own micro-banks, and coffee processing facilities. However, Fair trade is about linking Northern consumers to Southern producers, and trying to build ethical trading relations in the capitalist market (Raynolds, 2002b). Therefore, Fair Trade does not concur with the more radical theory of completely de-linking from the world economy. The common principle is that resources and institutions, that will increase self-efficiency, should be developed locally.

Thirdly, popular participation is an important tenet in AD. The concept of 'participation' has been central to various development schools of thought. To have the same discourse used by differing political and ideological frameworks is problematic. Neo-liberal theories have promoted the participation of development recipients as a tool to increase the efficiency and cost effectiveness of development project design and implementation (Veltmeyer, 2001). However in AD, participation is not a tool of

development but is an objective in itself as it is seen as potentially empowering. The goal of participation is for the people to be empowered by their own actions, rather than 'incorporating' participation into development projects that come from outside or above. The Fair Trade development framework is in agreement with the AD conceptualisation of popular participation, emphasising that all members should be active in the management of the co-operative and development processes. Again, Fair Trade co-operatives are part of an international network. Therefore, support and encouragement for development projects sometimes come from Fair Trade partners 'outside' the co-operative. However, all projects must be decided and acted upon collectively by the co-operative.

In AD, development must be socially inclusive of women, poor and indigenous people, from the first stage of the process that should be initiated through the agency of community-based or grassroots social organisations (Veltmeyer & Petras, 2000). Fair Trade shares the AD principle that development must be equitable and socially inclusive in terms of gender, ethnicity and class. The Fair Trade Standards state that there is to be no discrimination based on race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion or social origin (FLO, 2004). And in fact, Fair Trade co-operatives, in Latin America and specifically in Mexico, are composed mostly of very poor, indigenous people. Fair Trade development principles emphasise offering women especially the opportunity to play a more active role in the decision-making process, the management of the producer organisation, and the development process (Global Exchange, 2005). Social inclusion is also a shared principle between AD and the Fair Trade development theory.

Proponents of Another Development do not see a straight and narrow path or a single model of development. AD encourages a form of development that emphasises social and human development in an integrated process with ecological and economic

aspects. AD supports multiple approaches to achieving this goal (Veltmeyer & Petras, 2000). My intention in comparing Fair Trade development theory to Another Development theory is to highlight the main tenets of the Fair Trade framework. Fair Trade co-operatives are an example of an alternative form of development, whose framework shares some of the AD principles, such as the importance of being grassroots, having popular participation and social inclusion. The theoretical framework of Fair Trade informs my research question, to what extent women members are empowered by their involvement in Fair Trade co-operatives, with the theory that empowerment and development are interconnected processes that can be achieved through participation in Fair Trade. The emphasis on participation and empowerment in the Fair Trade framework is also congruent with my gender framework.

## **2. Gender and Development: Empowerment Framework**

The study of women and development processes is located at the intersection of development studies and women's studies. The international women's movement was largely responsible for lobbying the United Nations and getting women onto the international development agenda in the mainstream (Visvanathan *et al.*, 2000). However, there are many divergent theoretical perspectives on women and development. I briefly outline the main frameworks, the dominant Women in Development (WID) framework and the more radical Gender and Development (GAD) framework in which my gender analysis is based. These are rough guidelines to categorise different women and development approaches. The Southern feminist group, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), emphasises heterogeneous alternatives (as does AD) from the perspectives of Third World women and popularised the 'empowerment approach' to gender and development. This approach is the basis for the theoretical and

analytical Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework (WEF). The main theories and the key concepts of this framework are discussed, as they greatly inform my research.

My research question is illuminated by the WEF theory, similar to the Fair Trade framework, that empowerment and development are interconnected processes. WEF posits that empowerment can be achieved depending on the degree and extent that a development intervention, such as Fair Trade, addresses issues of women's equality and empowerment.

### 2.1. Women/gender and development theories

Women in Development (WID) is the oldest and most dominant school of thought in the field of women/gender and development. Ester Boserup's book in 1970, *Woman's Role in Economic Development*, was influential in strengthening the WID school of thought. Her research brought attention to the impact of development projects on Third World women, which until then had largely been ignored. WID is situated within the orthodox development paradigm and is based on liberal feminist theories that focus on the need to "integrate" women into economic systems emphasising women's productive role (Visvanathan *et al.*, 2000). The implicit assumption in WID is that women's main problem is insufficient participation in an otherwise benevolent process of growth and development, without questioning the structure of the system (McFarland, 1988).

Moser's (1993) classification of the evolution of the five main approaches in the WID school of thought is widely accepted. She examines them in terms of which women's roles are recognised and if practical or strategic gender needs are met. Molyneux (1985) originated the concepts of practical gender interests, which are basic needs specific to one's gender position, and strategic gender interests, which are typically feminist-oriented and aim to eliminate barriers to women's empowerment. These

concepts are important in gender planning and the Gender and Development framework, which I will examine next. Moser's first category predates Boserup's work. She claims that in the first two decades of the development project, women's practical needs came into the picture with the 'welfare' approach. Women's reproductive role was of significance to population control programmes aimed at addressing poverty. The 'equity' approach is the original WID approach, which dominated the UN Decade for Women (1976-85). Western feminists called for the strategic goal of gender equality. In the 1970s, the international feminist development agenda toned down their approach to match the general direction of the development agenda stressing the practical gender goal of meeting people's basic needs. This was called the 'anti-poverty' approach, which concentrated on enhancing women's productive role through waged work and income-generation, neglecting strategic needs (Moser, 1993). The 'efficiency' approach became predominant in the debt crisis of the 1980s. It seeks to meet practical gender needs, equating women's participation with equality, stressing women's economic contribution for efficient development (*ibid.*). The final approach that Moser identifies is the 'empowerment' approach that represents a Third World feminist perspective. Although Moser summarises this approach in relation to the other WID approaches, Parpart (*et al.*, 2000) argues that the empowerment approach does not fit into the WID framework. WID accepts existing social structures, whereas the empowerment approach questions them, as well as the development structure that WID is based upon. The empowerment approach is more appropriately situated within the Gender and Development framework and thus will be discussed therein.

Gender and Development (GAD) emerged in the 1980s as the main competing theoretical framework. It was formulated as an alternative to WID. This framework

belongs to the political economy development paradigm (McFarland, 1988). Based on gender and class analysis, GAD is influenced by socialist feminism and emphasises that patriarchy operates within and across classes to oppress women. The emergence of GAD came out of the discussion that reforms were insufficient, and there was a need for more radical social change in the development process (Parpart *et al.*, 2000). GAD represents an important shift in discourse changing the discussion from focusing solely on women's roles to analysing gender relations. GAD emphasises the social construction of gender relations between men and women, and the interaction between women's productive and reproductive roles. GAD critiques WID for only considering 'women' as the unit of analysis (Visvanathan *et al.*, 2000). GAD stresses the need for women to organise themselves for a more effective political voice. It views women as active agents of change rather than passive recipients of development assistance, but does not assume that women are conscious of the structural roots of discrimination and subordination, even if as individuals they are well aware of their subordinate position (Young, 1992). GAD emphasises the role of consciousness-raising and community-based organising as the prescription for structural change and upsetting the existing power relations in society between men and women (Visvanathan *et al.*, 2000). In this way the GAD framework is consistent with the AD framework, in that both believe development should involve community-based organising to change power relations, and gender relations. Combined they form the theoretical basis to analyse gender in Fair Trade development practices.

Molyneux's (1985) concepts of practical and strategic gender interests, which Moser (1993) uses to analyse the different WID approaches, are paramount to GAD theory. Practical gender interests arise from the immediate perceived needs identified by women themselves for basic welfare and survival. Whereas strategic gender interests are

derived from the analysis of the gender division of labour and women's subordination to men, with the strategic objective of overcoming these inequalities and injustices (Molyneux, 1985). Addressing practical needs does not in itself challenge the prevailing forms of gender subordination, which is the main objective of GAD approaches. However, enabling women to become agents of their own development by addressing their practical gender needs can transform gender relations and thus address strategic gender needs (Parpart *et al.*, 2000). Young (1987) introduced another key concept in GAD, 'transformative (or redistributive) potential, to complement the concepts of practical and strategic gender interests. Addressing practical gender needs in such a way as to assist women in challenging unequal gender power relations can have the transformative potential for women's empowerment (*ibid.*).

In women/gender and development studies, the categorisation of different approaches includes the "Southern feminist" perspective. Many southern feminists have emphasised the need to analyse women's subordination as it intersects with race, class, colonial history and the current position in the international economic order (Moser, 1993). A network of Southern activists, researchers and policymakers called Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) published a landmark critique of development's impact on Third World women from their perspective and propose an alternative model (Sen & Grown, 1987). Their vision of a New Era is a world without inequalities, poverty or subordination, among other goals. The strategies for change involve short-term strategies to meet women's practical gender interests under current crises, in conjunction with long-term, large-scale strategies such as reduction of military expenditure and debt.

However, the most pertinent part of DAWN's theoretical framework to my research is the method of achieving their vision and strategies, which is through empowering individual women and their organisations (*ibid.*). According to DAWN, organising is important for women in their struggle for survival and power. Women's strategic gender needs must be met indirectly through bottom-up mobilisation around practical gender needs, the purpose of which is to empower women through greater self-reliance (Moser, 1993). DAWN's approach has been coined the 'empowerment' approach, and has popularised the concept of empowerment. Moser categorised DAWN's empowerment approach as a WID approach. However, others place it in the GAD framework (Parpart *et al.*, 2000). I argue that the empowerment approach belongs to the GAD framework because it subscribes to the main tenets of the GAD theoretical framework. That is that women are active agents of development, that gender is socially constructed and development interventions must change social structures in order to change gender relations (McFarland, 1988).

## 2.2. Empowerment approach

As was discussed in the Fair Trade framework, the concept of participation is often regarded in development frameworks as a tool to make development more efficient. Such is also the case with the concept of 'empowerment'. The widespread use of this term in mainstream development discourse has often confused the meaning of the concept. Northern development agencies misinterpret or misuse the term, treating education or employment as 'empowering' instruments in the development process. For example, Northern agencies 'empower' women to reduce fertility rates but it is used more as a tool for the goal of population control than for the objective of women's empowerment (Visvanathan *et al.*, 2000). In the neo-liberal model, development means

economic growth and empowerment refers to electoral rights of the individual and the rights of entrepreneurs. DAWN and other Southern scholars on the other hand, understand power as dispersed throughout human society and speak of the empowerment of the community or group (Townsend *et al.*, 1999). They conceptualise empowerment to imply that the processes and structures that reproduce women's subordinate position as a gender must be radically altered. From this perspective women need to see power as a resource for social transformation (Deere & Leon, 2001).

'Power' is traditionally considered a force or authority exercised by individuals or groups but many theorists have conceptualised different dimensions and distinctions between types of power. Lukes and Foucault both published seminal work on the concept of power, however I have chosen to cite Southern feminist scholars and activists' because their work relates directly to the empowerment of Third World women. For the research conducted for the book *Women & Power: Fighting patriarchy and poverty*, the researchers/authors conceptualise different types and dimensions of power. The first type of power is called 'power over', which is synonymous with the traditional definition of power. 'Power over' may be enforced through violence or fear. It can be a matter of physical strength, or simply be social rules that force the weaker to accept the will of the stronger. 'Power over' refers to the domination of institutions over individuals or individuals over others (Townsend *et al.*, 1999). It implies that power is zero sum; a gain in power for women is a loss for men (Deere & Leon, 2001). The GAD empowerment approach emphasises that there needs to be a change in gender power relations and power structures to reduce the power held "over" women and alleviate women's subjugation. However, the empowerment approach does not emphasise women's need to gain "power

over”, and does not advocate decreasing men’s other forms of power (eg. “power to”, etc.).

The ‘power from within’ is central to the women’s empowerment approach. In this type of power, it is conceptualised less in terms of domination over others and more in terms of the capacity of women to increase their own self-reliance and internal strength (Antrobus, 1989; Moser, 1993). This is often expressed as ‘self-empowerment’, meaning power attained for oneself individually or collectively. The idea is that if someone were to give power, they would still have the power to take it away. By achieving that power by yourself/yourselves, it is truly yours. Only when self-empowerment is achieved widely and collectively can it bring fundamental change in power relations, which underscores the agency of organised women.

Similarly, ‘power to’ involves gaining access to a full range of human abilities and potential. A dimension of ‘power to’ is ‘personal power’. ‘Personal power’ is when the process of empowerment is experienced as a feeling of personal change and development, a sense of confidence, and is also manifested or demonstrated in changed behaviour and increased abilities (Townsend *et al.*, 1999). The empowerment approach posits that women should seek ‘power with’, meaning the capacity to achieve with others what one could not achieve alone. A dimension of ‘power with’ is ‘group power’, which is when women’s groups co-operate to solve some of the problems they share, organising both in their communities and at the regional level.

The organisational principles of women’s empowerment are underlined throughout empowerment theory emphasising the agency of organised women to act and solve problems in their own development process. DAWN identifies six types of organisations where such empowerment is likely to take place. The list is not meant to be

exhaustive, just exemplary. It includes: traditional service-oriented women's organisations that provide educational or health related services; political party organisations; worker-based organisations; handicraft or credit organisations set up by donor agencies; and participatory action research organisations (Sen & Grown, 1987). Last is the grassroots organisation formed to address a specific issue, often economic in nature but sometimes with other social focuses. This type of organisation best describes a Fair Trade coffee co-operative, but the separate women's groups within the co-op range from traditional service-oriented organisations to handicraft and credit organisations. The types of organisations that DAWN includes in the group empowerment discussion are both mixed gender groups and groups that are predominantly formed by women.

Whether empowerment can be achieved in a mixed gender group in which empowerment is not the central concern, or if it necessitates a separate women's group designated to this cause, is a debated topic among proponents of women's empowerment. Those in favour of separate women's groups claim that the bringing together of women away from men creates the space for women to set their own priorities (Townsend *et al.*, 1999). It is also argued that for an institution or organisation to properly address gender issues they must designate a specialist unit to do so (Williams, 1983 in Moser, 1993). GAD and gender planning theories claim the opposite, that gender issues must be mainstreamed, integrating gender concerns into every aspect of an organisation's priorities and procedures, making gender concerns the responsibility of all (March *et al.*, 1999). Others argue that a combination of the two approaches to address gender concerns in an organisation is the most effective method, both mainstreaming throughout the organisation and having specific groups or projects (Moser, 1993). In my analysis of women's participation in the Fair Trade co-operative I examine women's involvement in

mixed-groups and women-only groups to discuss the relevance of both to women's empowerment.

### 2.3. Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework (WEF)

The Women's Empowerment Framework is one of many gender analysis frameworks put forth by Oxfam, all of which have been important tools for the GAD model, increasing the knowledge of women's issues in settings such as farms, households and communities (Visvanathan *et al.*, 2000). WEF was developed by Sara Hlupekile Longwe. She is an activist for women's rights and a consultant on gender and development based in Zambia. As an experienced gender planner she has written various training materials for Oxfam (March *et al.*, 1999). WEF is an appropriate theoretical framework for my research as it provides a theory of empowerment and development that is intended to help critically assess to what extent a development intervention is supporting women's empowerment (Longwe, 1991). Longwe's empowerment framework informs my research on the extent that women are empowered by their involvement in separate women's groups and in their Fair Trade co-operative.

According to WEF, women's empowerment is the central issue of women's development rather than, for example, welfare or efficiency, which are the main concerns of some WID approaches. Longwe (1991) argues that too often equality is examined according to the conventional sectors of economy and society, concentrating on separate areas of social life without examining women's equality in the development process. In Longwe's framework, 'women's empowerment' is defined as enabling women to take an equal place with men, and to participate equally in the development process in order to achieve control over the factors of production on an equal basis with men. Development is conceptualised by Longwe as enabling people to take charge of their own lives, and

escape from poverty, which arises not from lack of productivity but from exploitation and oppression (*ibid.*). This is the same theoretical perspective and conceptualisation of development as the Fair Trade movement. Fair Trade coffee co-operatives are part of an alternative grassroots development project to empower small producers to escape from poverty and exploitation by gaining control of the factors of coffee production and trade. Women's empowerment is necessary for the Fair Trade development process to be sustainable and true to its social principles.

The analytic objective of WEF is to critically assess to what extent women's empowerment is being supported by a given development intervention. Longwe (1991) posits that this objective can be achieved by analysing the development organisation's degree of commitment to women's empowerment, categorising its projects in terms of the levels of equality that they address and the level of recognition of gender issues. She defines five hierarchical 'levels of equality' that indicate the extent to which women are equal with men, and have achieved empowerment, or the likelihood that a certain development project will reach these goals. These five levels constitute the WEF analytic Tool 1, which will be explained in Chapter 4. The levels are 'welfare', 'access', 'conscientisation', 'participation', and 'control'. These levels are hierarchical; welfare is the most basic level and control is the highest level of equality. Although the lower levels are recognised as important factors towards women's equality, it is argued that if a development intervention focuses on the higher levels, there is greater likelihood that women's empowerment will be increased. Longwe (1991) warns that when using this framework to analyse the impact of development interventions on women's equality and empowerment it is important to understand that an ideal intervention would not necessarily address all the levels but rather would have many components that fit into the

higher levels. For example, a project that is only concerned with access will likely not be very empowering, even if there is an increase in women's equality of access to important resources. Whereas a project that increases women's participation in the decision-making process of key resources will result in greater empowerment.

To identify the extent to which a project addresses women's empowerment, according to Longwe (1991), one must establish whether 'women's issues' are ignored or recognised in the project objectives and implementation. This is based on the premise that the extent to which a development project addresses 'women's issues' determines the degree to which it is empowering for women. Longwe defines 'women's issues' as all issues concerned with women's equality. The levels of equality identified in Tool 1 are the different forms of women's issues addressed in development projects. For example, women's access to the factors of production on an equal basis with men is a women's issue at the level of access. Issues become more serious when they address a higher level of equality (Longwe, 1991). Although Longwe uses the term 'women's issues', she also states that an issue becomes a 'women's issue' when it involves gender relations, rather than traditional sex-stereotyped women's roles (*ibid.*). This concept is similar to how Molyneux (1985) defined strategic gender interests, since Longwe is discussing the social construct of gender relations and the strategic goal of equality. In my analysis I use the term 'gender issues' in order to avoid the false homogeneity of the concept of universal 'women's issues'. The inclusion or exclusion of gender issues forms the basis of the WEF analytic Tool 2, which will be explained in Chapter 4: Methodology.

The most salient point in Longwe's empowerment theory is that in order for women to be empowered by a development intervention, it must address gender issues at a strategic level and increase women's equality in those areas. Longwe (1991) states that

the extent to which the five levels of equality are present in any area of social or economic life determines the extent of women's empowerment. This can be interpreted as a problematic assumption, if taken out of the context of the framework's definitions, confusing equality and empowerment, which are not synonymous. However, WEF does not assume that where equality is achieved women will automatically be empowered. Rather, according to Longwe (1991), empowerment depends upon the type of equality achieved. Women are empowered if equality is achieved at a level that addresses strategic gender interests. By defining empowerment in terms of strategic equality, Longwe develops criteria of equality at hierarchical levels, of which the highest degree reaches the greatest extent of empowerment.

WEF is situated in the GAD theoretical framework, and makes use of two important concepts, practical and strategic interests, and transformative potential, in its empowerment theory. Longwe posits that the extent to which a development project addresses the strategic, higher levels of equality determines the degree to which it is potentially empowering for women. According to WEF, participation and control are the highest levels of equality. The Fair Trade framework also posits that popular participation is key for development to be just and empowering. Therefore, I conclude from my theoretical frameworks that the greater the extent and degree of women's participation in their Fair Trade co-operative, the greater their empowerment will be, if strategic gender interests are addressed in the co-operative.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

Designing a research project is a political process that entails deciding who or what will be studied and how the research will be done (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). These decisions are based on the ideology of those designing the research, which can result in assumptions that the researchers take for granted without explicitly stating their reasoning. Therefore it is important to acknowledge and articulate what methodological approach one will use. The methodological approach of my research is based on qualitative and feminist epistemologies and data collection methods. Qualitative research stresses the socially constructed nature of “reality” and acknowledges the value-laden nature of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research examines the meanings, concepts, characteristics, symbols, and descriptions of things and social relations. In contrast, quantitative research traditionally subscribes to positivist theories that the scientific method reveals “hard”, objective facts by counting and measuring numbers and amounts (Berg, 2004). Feminist methodologies often employ the same data collection methods as other qualitative approaches, such as interviews, participant observation and focus groups. The main characteristic of the feminist approach is not the uniqueness of the methods but the inclusion of the research “subjects” as participants in the knowledge that is ‘created’, not ‘discovered’, in the research process. This means valuing the knowledge, experiences and opinions of the participants. Feminist researchers ask questions that focus on women and gender issues which have traditionally been excluded from the process of knowledge creation and social analysis (Harding, 1987).

As a feminist, qualitative researcher, it is important to build a good rapport with the research participants so that they feel comfortable sharing their experiences with you

(Kirby & McKenna, 1989). In the feminist research paradigm, the positivist approach of objectivity and distance is critiqued. It is argued that without an empathic, personal interchange it is hard to gain meaningful insight into human interaction or the meanings people give to their own behaviour (Maguire, 1987). I developed good rapport with the participants through spending many hours together, often being helpful when and where I was able and by being genuinely interested in their work and their cause. Developing good rapport also helped address issues of power inequalities between us. I was actually younger and less experienced in research than the women advisors I interviewed at *CEPCO* and was in a position of less power seeing as they were able to grant or deny my involvement at *CEPCO*. However, at the *Federación* in the remote mountain village where they do not see many foreigners, as a privileged, North American student I was regarded warily, and had to try to balance such inequalities by forming a non-exploitative relationship.

Ethnographic methods can be used by researchers to examine various phenomenon as perceived by research participants and use their own observations as accounts (Berg, 2004). This raises concerns about subjectivity and “outsiders” (meaning when the researcher does not belong to the group he/she is studying) projecting their subjective views unto the reality of those being studied (Wolf, 1996). I addressed this issue through reflectivity or reflexivity. This means that the researchers understand that they are part of the social world that they are investigating, and should not take observations at face value as facts but consider the material as raw data that may require corroboration or verification (Berg, 2004). Therefore, when I made an observation in the field, particularly relating to cultural norms I would verify it with research participants, and past research reports.

My research project design evolved throughout my research as I learned more about the Fair Trade system, coffee co-operatives and women's involvement, and reflected upon if I was asking the right questions based on the new information I collected. I originally set out to study the impact of Fair Trade on women's equality in co-operatives but I soon realised that 'Fair Trade' is an abstract concept if not considered in terms of a Fair Trade entity, such as the grassroots co-operative where the Fair Trade principles manifest. Also, studying the impact *on* women ignores their own agency in the empowerment and development processes. Therefore, my research objectives changed to focus on determining *how* Fair Trade is empowering for women and *to what extent* women members are empowered by their involvement in Fair Trade co-operatives. I also focused on the participation of women in coffee co-operatives that are structured by the Fair Trade requirements, rather than the impact of Fair Trade upon women, because that impact is difficult to measure due to many external and cultural variables.

I encountered a few challenges throughout my research. The biggest challenge, or rather the most detrimental to my research, was getting the people I needed to participate. Many people were interested in my research and wanted to chat or be interviewed who presented interesting asides, however were not the bearers of the knowledge I required to fulfil my research objectives. The people who I needed to interview were often too busy, reluctant, shy, or uni-lingual in their indigenous language. The combination of those factors made it challenging to get research participants and limited the number of formal interviews I conducted with *socias*, which was a methodological weakness of my research.

Another potential weakness of my methodology is that, due to time and money constraints, my research was limited to a single-case study of one secondary level

organisation and one of its primary level organisations. The intention in employing the methodological approach of instrumental case studies is to assist the researcher to better understand an external theoretical question or problem (Berg, 2004). In my research that theoretical question is how and to what extent women are empowered by their involvement in Fair Trade coffee co-operatives. Collective case studies enhance the ability to theorise about a broader context (*ibid.*). In my research that means that numerous case studies of various coffee co-operatives would enable me to make a generalisation about Fair Trade's influence on women's empowerment. However, broader studies that have been conducted on the topic have found the influence of Fair Trade on women's empowerment to be indirect, making it a greater research interest to determine how and to what extent women are being empowered by their involvement in Fair Trade co-operatives. Furthermore, the secondary level organisation provided my research with a broader, but less in-depth, perspective on numerous primary level organisations that belong to the collective.

### **1. Data Collection**

I divide my description of the data collection into three stages from the broader topic to the narrow focus. My research project begins at the macro level examining the international Fair Trade movement's commitment to women's equality and empowerment, and then I enter the field at my first research site, which is the secondary level organisation or association of coffee producing organisations and its women's organisation. From there I narrow to the micro level focusing on one particular grassroots producer organisation (primary level) and its women's groups. In addition to the preliminary library research while designing my research project, I conducted library research at the Mexican National Institute of Statistical and Geographical Information

(INEGI) in Oaxaca City. There I collected data on indigenous population and language, and coffee production in the state of Oaxaca and in the Sierra Mazateca.

### 1.1. International Fair Trade regulations

I have already shown that the social development principles and objectives of the international Fair Trade movement include women's equality and empowerment. The Fair Trade gender objectives focus on increasing the participation of women, particularly in decision-making. Again, this is the premise of my research question to determine to what extent women members are in fact empowered by their involvement in a Fair Trade co-operative. Therefore, at the international level my research objective was to assess the commitment in practice to women's equality and empowerment in the Fair Trade network. I was looking for this commitment in the international regulating bodies and I was looking for evidence of any mechanisms in place to transmit gender objectives to other levels of organisation in the Fair Trade coffee network. In this part of my research I employed document analysis and e-mail correspondence as my data-collection techniques. I gathered data on how the gender objectives are operationalised in the Fair Trade coffee system by examining the FLO Standards, FLO being the international umbrella certification body, and the Mexican National Fair Trade initiative's (*Comercio Justo*) Standards. As they are the authorities governing the implementation of Fair Trade Standards in Mexico, textual analysis of these two documents reveals the content of the official regulations. E-mail correspondence with FLO and *Comercio Justo* Mexico was another data collection strategy used to triangulate and confirm the findings from analysing these documents.

## 1.2. CEPCO

The research objectives at this secondary level of producer organisation are to determine *CEPCO*'s commitment to women's equality and empowerment in principle and in practice. To determine *CEPCO*'s commitment to women's equality and empowerment *in principle* I examined whether *CEPCO*'s objectives include increasing women's equality and working towards women's empowerment, how these gender objectives have been prioritised within the organisation's agenda, and whether they were developed internally or influenced by Fair Trade partners. To determine *CEPCO*'s commitment *in practice* I examined the efforts that had been made towards women's equality and empowerment, meaning any projects or programmes through *CEPCO* that had been implemented and work towards these gender equality goals.

I employ triangulation, the use of multiple data-gathering techniques, as a means of confirmation of methods and validation of findings (Berg, 2004). I employed observation, participant observation, semi-standardised interviews and informal, unstructured interviews, and textual analysis (both internal reports and published works). I initiated my field research at *CEPCO* by contacting Dra. Josefina Aranda, the *directora* and founder of the women's programme. Although she was reluctant to be formally interviewed, she was very helpful as a 'gatekeeper' in gaining me access to *CEPCO* and a regional organisation. She granted me permission to enter the women's department where the advisors work, and allowed me to propose to the women's assembly that I be permitted to observe and partake in their programme and activities, which was also granted. To examine *CEPCO*'s gender objectives and the women's programme at *CEPCO*, I conducted semi-standardised, unstructured, and group interviews with the four female advisors of the women's programme, and analysed internal congress reports

dating back to *CEPCO*'s inception. The past reports from women's congresses provided invaluable data on past projects and outcomes that, when compared to present day projects, reveal change over time, such as progress towards women's equality and empowerment.

To further triangulate my data-collection techniques, examining the gender objectives and the women's programme, I used observation techniques and participant observation. These techniques allow the researcher to collect data on how the research participants make sense of their experiences. The direct observation and participation by the researcher provides meaning for the behaviours and attitudes expressed by individuals being researched (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). I was in the women's office at *CEPCO* during regular working hours, 'shadowing' the women's advisors throughout their various administrative tasks running the women's programme, planning projects and organising meetings. I observed the women's monthly assembly meetings and activities, taking extensive notes, paying attention to their agenda, their organisational challenges, and the level of interest and involvement of the *socias* present. I asked many questions and helped out where possible. I studied not only the work of the women's department and the women's programme, but also the women's department's relation to *CEPCO* generally, and how it was regarded by other departments. I did this by observing the daily operations and meetings at *CEPCO* while accompanying the advisors of the women's department and always taking extensive notes. I was not observing from a distance. I was interacting with the women's department advisors, employees in other departments, and the *socios* conducting unstructured interviews with them, taking notes and adding my own perspective and reflections as part of the observation techniques.

I conducted my research over a period of five months, spending the first week of each month at *CEPCO*, and was present for four women's monthly assembly meetings and the women's bi-annual congress. Leading up to the women's congress my observations of the work and organising of the women's programme became more participatory as I was invited to help organise the women's congress and facilitate a focus group during the congress. For the purposes of my research objectives, carrying out a focus group allowed me to examine the experiences of the *socias*. The focus group was conducted with a research tool called *FODA* (*Fortalezas, Oportunidades, Debilidades, Amenazas*; or Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats) that was designed by the women's advisors as a means for the participants to evaluate the women's programme. The objective of *FODA* is for the participants to reflect, identify and analyse their experiences, achievements and challenges in the past and present, and for improvements of the women's programme in the future.

*FODA* is a research tool used by the women's advisors to have the *socias* evaluate the women's programme. The focus group was also an appropriate technique for me to gather data on the experiences of women members because it created a forum for discussion among peers where the women could express their opinions and concerns based on their individual and collective experiences (Berg, 2004). Facilitating a focus group not only provided me with the discussions that arose from my group, but five other focus groups took place at the same time, each group ranging from ten to fifteen women. Focus groups using the *FODA* tool had also been employed in the past. This data is in past congress reports providing comparable data revealing changes within the women's organisation's objectives and efforts over time. This data is invaluable for evaluating the progress towards women's empowerment. I was given access to these past congress

reports by the women's advisors, and gained permission from the participants in my focus group to tape record it and use the data in my thesis.

### 1.3. Federación 'Zapata Vive'

My presence, observing and conducting interviews, at the women's monthly assembly meetings at *CEPCO*, which usually lasted around a day and a half, enabled me to meet the *socias* who were representatives of their regional organisation to the women's organisation at *CEPCO*. The *directora* (Dra. Aranda, the head women's advisor) introduced me to one of these representatives and suggested her co-operative for my research due to the fact that it had many large women's groups with active participation in the women's programme at *CEPCO*. The representative she introduced me to is also the *presidenta* of her local coffee producer organisation, the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*!

At the primary organisational level, again the research objective is to ascertain the co-operative's commitment to women's equality and empowerment in principle and in practice. This means collecting data on the co-operative's gender objectives, and how they have been transformed into action, or what action has been taken towards women's equality and empowerment by the co-operative leaders and *socios*. The research objective is also to collect data on the women members' experiences of involvement in the co-operative, particularly in its women's groups, in order to analyse to what extent their involvement has been empowering. I use analytic tools from WEF to analyse the extent of empowerment, and also develop grounded categories that relate to personal empowerment, which I will discuss in the data analysis section that follows. Intra-household gender relations and power dynamics have a strong impact on a woman's personal empowerment and ability to become involved in productive activities outside of the household. The intra-household issues relevant to my research were who had title of

land in the household, and whether family members permitted or prohibited women from being involved in the co-operative, despite breaking cultural norms. Other important issues in women's empowerment within the household are control over resources and decision-making in the household, however I did not conduct in-depth intra-household research. Rather, the focus of my thesis was on gender equality and women's empowerment within the organisational structure of a coffee co-operative, concentrating on the influence of Fair Trade.

To examine the *Federación* (its history, structure and operations) and the way gender objectives are prioritised within it, I used observation and semi-standardised interview techniques. I was in Tenango for a total of two months (spread out over three months with lapses at *CEPCO* in Oaxaca City). During this time my observation consisted of going to the co-operative's warehouse/offices, observing daily operations, such as members bringing in their coffee, and observing organic producer meetings held weekly for two to four hours, while taking extensive notes and speaking with the members and leaders. This allowed me to become familiar with the general operation of the organisation, particularly observing women's participation. It also allowed me to become acquainted with many *socios* including the elected *directivo* (board of directors).

I conducted semi-standardised interviews with three of the male *directivos* and founding members of the organisation to collect data on the history of its formation and the conditions prior to the formation of the co-operative and joining Fair Trade, and their attitudes towards the women's organisation and participation of *socias*. The semi-standardised interview was an appropriate method of interviewing at the *Federación* because it permitted a fluid conversation between the participant and myself. I could re-word and re-order questions or follow the participant's train of thought while still having

a guideline of topic areas I wanted to address (Berg, 2004). I used purposive sampling in order to interview those most knowledgeable about the organisation and confirm that their recollections matched, seeing as there were no written documents of the organisation's formation and objectives.

I extensively examined the women's programme in the *Federación* by triangulating observation, unstructured and semi-standardised interviews, and document analysis of an internal report. The observation consisted of shadowing the *presidenta* through her daily tasks with the organisation and the women's organisation. I was with her most of the day, every day for the two months of my research in Tenango, as I was also boarding at her house. Much of my observation while shadowing her took place outside of the offices. People would drop in at her house or stop her in the street to discuss co-operative business. They wanted her advice because she was respected as a community leader, and they met with her in this manner because there are no phones to call ahead. I took notes on these interactions, and she would translate for me or explain later. I observed the meetings of the women's groups, which were held once a week for two to four hours, and helped out when I could, for example filling out *CEPCO*'s project evaluation forms for illiterate women members. This helped me become familiar with the functioning of the women's programme and acquainted with the women.

I conducted semi-standardised interviews with the current *presidenta* and the founding *presidenta* of the women's committee in order to gather details on the women's programme, the history of its formation, its goals, and past and present successes and challenges. I also asked these two women about their personal histories as coffee producers, becoming involved in the Fair Trade co-operative, and their experiences as leaders of the women's programme. I interviewed five other women with varying

degrees of participation in the women's groups to learn about their experiences in the organisation. The semi-standardised interview allowed me to collect data on the women's experiences before and since participating in their co-operative and women's programme, and their personal evaluation of these experiences. This comparative data was useful in elucidating the indirect benefits of Fair Trade through the co-operative organisation. In the five semi-standardised interviews with women members of the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*, I began the interviews by asking the women about their background in coffee, for example, how they came to cultivate coffee, if they owned their own land, how much, and how they gained title of it. I asked the women about what it was like for them, if they had been selling coffee before they joined the Fair Trade co-operative, and how things changed when they did join. The next area of questions was about the women's participation in the co-operative, how long they had been members, in what roles or capacities, if they attended meetings and were vocal in decision-making, and the benefits and challenges, in general and specifically as women. The interviews concentrated on participation in the women's groups, how long they had participated, if they were ever organisers, also what were the successes, benefits and challenges.

I was unable to interview more women members because most barely spoke Spanish. Nearly 80% of the population in the Sierra Mazateca speak the indigenous language, Mazateco, and 60% of women and 40% of men are monolingual in Mazateco (INEGI, 2000). However, I was often able to conduct informal, unstructured interviews during a meeting or gathering when a woman fluent in both Spanish and Mazateco could translate for us. Therefore, observation was a valuable data-gathering technique in that it enabled me to collect pieces of data slowly but surely that could not be arranged to collect in a formal interview.

## **2. Data Analysis**

My analysis follows the same funnel as the data collection, from the broader topic to the narrow focus in order to answer the research question, to what extent are women members empowered by their involvement in Fair Trade co-operatives? Using the methodological technique of content analysis I converted all data collected into textual form, coded and sorted the data into theoretically developed and inductively identified categories in order to illuminate meaningful patterns and theories. In conducting this content analysis, I employ Longwe's analytic tools from WEF for the theoretically developed categories.

### **2.1. Content analysis**

I employed content analysis as a methodological technique for qualitative analysis. In quantitative studies, content analysis is used to count words and determine proportions and frequency distributions. As a qualitative technique, content analysis is a systematic means of identifying, organising and comparing special characteristics of the data (Berg, 2004). The first step in content analysis is to make the data into text so that it is systematically comparable. Documents and field notes are already in textual form. Shortly after conducting interviews and the focus group, I transcribed the audio-recordings to text and added my field notes. As text, the data can physically be coded and sorted into more than one category. The next step in content analysis is to develop analytic (sociologically or theoretically constructed) categories and a coding scheme for them based on supporting theory. The theoretical framework should suggest the topics most significant for analysis, as well as empirical indicators of these concepts. The criteria of selection are explicit rules consistently applied to the data to identify the content items that should be included in that category (Berg, 2004). Longwe's Women's

Empowerment Framework (WEF), which greatly informs my theoretical framework, provides analytic tools, which I adapted to create theoretically constructed categories and criteria for selecting and coding the content.

As I systematically went through the data asking consistent sets of questions from Longwe's tools for the theoretically constructed categories, I concurrently examined the data for additional information relating to my research question about women's empowerment that was not included in the criteria for these categories. These elements may not have even been intentionally sought through the data collection design, however they emerged in the process with relevance to my research question. These pieces of data were coded and sorted into grounded categories. Grounded categories are useful because they allow patterns to emerge from the data itself that might have been ignored if only considering theoretical criteria (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Conducting content analysis with both theoretically developed and grounded categories allows for the most thorough examination of my data, deductively and inductively analysing all data relevant to my research question. After I coded and organised the data into various categories, I examined the categories to determine what was common and uncommon within and between them. The purpose of examining the connection between categories was to find patterns and determine their magnitude, significance and relation to the pre-existing theories and literature on Fair Trade and women's empowerment.

## 2.2. Longwe's analytic tools

As was discussed in the theoretical frameworks, Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework is designed to critically assess to what extent women's empowerment is being supported by a given development intervention (March *et al.*, 1999). She has developed two analytic tools, which can be used in content analysis as

analytic categories with criteria for selection. Tool 1 measures five hierarchical levels of equality that indicate the extent to which women are equal with men and have achieved empowerment. Tool 2 analyses a development intervention's degree of commitment to gender equality by measuring the organisation, or project's, level of recognition of gender issues. The analytic tools of WEF can be used to determine the likelihood that a development project design will successfully promote women's equality and empowerment, or, as I use it, to evaluate how successful a development project has been in promoting women's equality and empowerment. I use Tool 1 to measure the degree and extent of gender equality to analyse women's empowerment through their involvement in *CEPCO* and the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*. I use Tool 2 to analyse the degree of commitment to women's equality and empowerment in the Fair Trade regulations by assessing the level of recognition of gender issues in the Standards.

Longwe refers to Tool 1 as Women's Development criteria. Each of the five levels of equality can be regarded as an analytic category in determining the extent of women's empowerment. The levels are 'welfare', 'access', 'conscientisation', 'participation', and 'control'. These categories are hierarchical; achieving some extent of equality at the highest degree, control, contributes more to empowerment than attaining a great extent of equality at the lowest degree, welfare. I code my data into these five categories based on the following criteria in order to determine the extent of equality at each level, most importantly participation and control. *Welfare* is defined as the level of women's material wellbeing, relative to men, considering resources, such as food supply, income, and medical care. This level of equality is not concerned with whether women are themselves the active creators and producers of their material needs, just that they are equally accessible to women. Such an active involvement would suggest a higher degree

of empowerment. In the context of my research, the criteria to determine the extent to which the organisation or project addresses women's welfare is that the social services provided increase the material wellbeing of women members. If the material wellbeing of women is not addressed or male members receive greater benefits than women members do, the extent of women's equality at this level will be minimal. Equality of welfare refers to the availability of products and services to meet both men and women's basic needs, whereas *access*, the second level of equality in WEF, refers to women's access to the factors of production on an equal basis with men. This includes equal access to land, labour, credit, training, and marketing facilities. Equality of access is obtained by applying the principle of equality of opportunity, which in this case entails the reform of administrative practices to remove all forms of discrimination against women. Applied to my research, the criteria for this category include that women members either own their own land or have access to a family member's land; have access to hired labour if needed; and have equal access as men to the productive resources and programmes at *CEPCO* and the *Federación*.

'*Conscientisation*' means a conscious understanding of the difference between sex roles and gender roles, and an awareness that gender roles are cultural and can be changed. Gender awareness consists of the recognition that women have different needs as a disadvantaged group relative to men, and that women's development entails working towards increasing equality and empowerment for both men and women. It involves a belief that the sexual division of labour should be fair and agreeable to both sides, and not involve the economic or political domination of one sex by the other. This belief is the basis of collective participation in the process of women's development. Longwe provides examples of how a development intervention can work towards increasing

‘conscientisation’ by raising awareness about gender issues with both men and women, particularly providing women with general education and increasing their self-confidence.

‘Conscientisation’ is difficult to measure, as it involves both a cultural or sociological and psychological analysis of one’s beliefs and levels of understanding. For the scope of my research, I use opinions and attitudes as indicators of gender consciousness, or at least an understanding/acceptance that gender equality is a principle value in their Fair Trade network, and that Fair Trade organisations should support gender equality.

‘Conscientisation’ relates to Tool 2 as they both deal with gender awareness. I will later explain how I used Tool 2 to analyse the level of recognition of gender issues in the Fair Trade principles and objectives at each level of organisation in the Fair Trade network.

*Participation*, as a level of equality and a category in my analysis of empowerment, means women’s equal participation in the decision-making process, in policy-making, planning, and administration. It is a particularly important aspect of development projects where participation means involvement in needs-assessment, project formulation, implementation, and evaluation. According to Longwe, equality of participation means involving women in making the decisions by which they will be affected in a proportion that matches their proportion in the wider community. The criteria include that women are partaking in the decision-making process, and in organising or administrative roles.

The fifth and final level of women’s equality in Longwe’s analytic categories is *control*. This refers to women’s control over the decision-making process (through ‘conscientisation’ and mobilisation), to achieve equality of control over the factors of production and the distribution of benefits. Equality of control means a balance of control between men and women, so that neither side dominates. In my research, the

criteria for full equality is that women members have equal power with male counterparts in controlling the functioning of their organisation and its productive resources. In other words, equality of control means having an equal say in the making of important decisions, and that women in elected or administrative positions have control in their role and responsibilities in the same way as their male counterparts.

Longwe summarises the results from using analytic Tool 1 in a table that simply shows ‘yes’ or ‘no’ if equality has been reached at each level. This is a more quantitative approach that emphasises the number of men versus women at each level. However, for my research in a traditionally male-dominated sector I knew that it was not likely to find full equality, and therefore it would not be very informative to simply conclude ‘no equality’ repeatedly. Therefore, in my analysis, I looked for evidence of progress over time towards empowerment, particularly since becoming Fair Trade certified, and therefore included indicators of some adherence to the criteria of each level of equality. My analysis using the WEF Tool 1 is summarised in a table of the varying extents of equality at each level of equality (see Table 4.1. below). The table is employed by marking each piece of data that indicates progress towards equality at its appropriate level. It is important to remember that the levels of equality are hierarchical. Therefore empowerment is achieved to a greater extent when the higher levels of equality are addressed to some extent than when the lower levels of equality are fully achieved (March *et al.*, 1999).

**Table 4.1. WEF analytic Tool 1**

	Levels of Equality				
	Welfare	Access	‘Conscient-isation’	Participation	Control
Extent of Equality					

The Women's Empowerment Framework Tool 2 measures the level of recognition of gender issues in a development project's plan or objectives. I use Tool 2 to establish whether gender issues are ignored or recognised and incorporated in Fair Trade regulations, and whether co-operative project objectives are concerned with women's empowerment. This contributes to my analysis of the Fair Trade commitment to women's equality and empowerment. Tool 2 is based on the tenet that the extent that a development project is empowering, or potentially empowering, for women depends on the degree to which it addresses gender issues. An issue becomes a gender issue when it deals with women's equality by considering gender relations rather than traditional sex-stereotyped women's roles (Longwe, 1991). Tool 2 is also based on the premise of Tool 1, that the higher degree or level of equality that is reached, the greater the extent of empowerment. Tool 2 charts three different levels of recognition of gender issues: negative, neutral and positive, which are applied at the five levels of equality from Tool 1 (See Table 4.2. below). A negative level is when the project objectives make no mention of gender issues, meaning women will be left worse off. A neutral level is a project that recognises gender issues but conservatively and is only concerned with not affecting women negatively. Whereas a positive level of recognition of gender issues is when project objectives are positively concerned with gender issues, and with improving the position of women relative to men, and gender relations (March *et al.*, 1999). The level of recognition of gender issues in project objectives and the degree to which the project addresses the gender issues indicates the extent to which it is potentially empowering for women. In analysing the levels of recognition of gender issues in the objectives I take

into consideration if gender sensitive language is used because this indicates gender awareness or blindness (*ibid*).

**Table 4.2. WEF analytic Tool 2**

<b>Levels of equality</b>	<b>Level of recognition</b>	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Control				
Participation				
'Conscientisation'				
Access				
Welfare				

## Chapter 5: Empowerment Analysis

### 1. Fair Trade Commitment to Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment is included in the Fair Trade principles and objectives. But do the international and Mexican regulatory bodies make an actual commitment to pursuing women's empowerment in practice, or is only lip service paid to women's empowerment in the international Fair Trade arena? In this chapter, I examine if women's empowerment is operationalised in the Fair Trade system, and if the Fair Trade gender objectives are adapted by producer organisations. This is necessary in order to know whether Fair Trade is an influential factor in women's empowerment at the grassroots level. Towards this objective I examined the Standards of the international and Mexican national certification organisations, Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) and *Comercio Justo* respectively, to see if women's equality and empowerment are included in the requirements and criteria for Fair Trade membership. The requirements in the FLO Standards and the criteria in the *Comercio Justo* Standards are the regulatory mechanisms to ensure the application of the Fair Trade principles and objectives in Mexican Fair Trade certified producer organisations. Therefore, I looked for evidence that women's equality and empowerment were included in both Standards, as evidence as to whether gender objectives are indeed part of the mandate of both Fair Trade regulatory bodies, and whether or not these gender objectives are officially promoted through the Standards to the primary and secondary level producer organisations.

I used WEF analytic Tool 2 to determine the commitment to women's equality and empowerment in practice by analysing to what extent the Fair Trade gender

objectives are included in the Standards. Tool 2 analyses the level of recognition of gender issues, meaning to what extent gender issues are addressed or ignored at the five levels of equality. I considered the language or terminology used in the Standards as an indicator of gender inclusion or exclusion, and looked for grounded categories in addition to the analytic categories of WEF. Also, I conducted informal interviews with representatives of FLO and *Comercio Justo*.

### 1.1. FLO Standards

FLO is the international umbrella organisation for Fair Trade labelling initiatives. FLO's Fair Trade Standards for Coffee document is divided into three sections: standards for small farmer's organisations, product specific standards for coffee, and trade standards for coffee. The FLO standards for small farmer's organisations are most relevant in my gender analysis as they deal with the organisational and developmental aspects. The standards for small farmer's organisations are divided into social development, economic development, environmental development and labour condition standards. The social development standards state: 1) that Fair Trade must add development potential for the producers, 2) that the members must be small-scale producers, 3) that democracy, participation, and transparency must be maintained, and 4) that there is to be no discrimination based on race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin. In accordance with ILO Convention 111, the fourth standard includes any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of sex (and the other above-mentioned attributes) that would nullify or impair equality of opportunity. This is applicable to all other standards, for example, in having no discrimination in the democratic process or participation in general. The minimum requirement is non-discrimination in allowing new members and the progress requirement is to have

programmes to improve the position of disadvantaged or minority groups within the organisation.

None of the minimum or progress requirements for the first three social development standards make reference to women specifically or explicitly address gender issues. However, in conjunction with the fourth social development standard, the first three implicitly include women, most significantly in the participation and democracy standard. The economic and environmental standards make no reference to women or gender issues in the minimum or progress requirements. Finally, the standards on labour conditions, in accordance with the ILO Conventions, are applicable where workers are employed by a small farmer organisation, or where workers are casually hired by farmers themselves. The minimum requirement ensures that employment cannot be dependent on the employment of the spouse, meaning a woman could be hired by a small farmer organisation even if her husband does not work on that plantation. Likewise, the spouse of an employee has the right to off-farm employment, meaning a woman cannot be forced to work for a plantation because her husband does.

The FLO Standards (written in English) use gender sensitive language, which is inclusive of both genders. For example, the requirements address *all* ‘members’, ‘producers’ or ‘workers’, which in English are gender neutral terms. Furthermore, the non-discrimination standard infers that the rest of the standards refer equally to all members, both sexes included since it states explicitly no discrimination based on sex. The minimum requirements of the non-discrimination standard and the labour standard can be considered indicators that women have equal rights in access to membership and employment within the co-operative. On the WEF Tool 2 chart, these standards are considered a neutral level of recognition of gender issues surrounding equality of access

because they do not guarantee or promote an improvement, just guard against discrimination. The progress requirement of non-discrimination encourages efforts at improving the position of minority groups, which indirectly addresses women's welfare, indicating a neutral recognition here as well because it does not explicitly target gender issues. Furthermore, since there are no standards that mention gender issues of control, participation or 'conscientisation', the FLO Standards have a negative recognition at these levels. With negative levels of recognition at the top three levels of equality, and neutral levels of recognition at the bottom two levels of equality, the FLO Standards come out of the WEF analysis with a negative level of recognition of gender issues (see Table 5.1. below).

The minimum and progress requirements of the FLO Standards are the regulatory mechanism to make the social, economic and environmental standards mandatory in producer organisations. Therefore, the FLO Standards provide the opportunity to make improvements in gender equality regulated and mandatory for all small producer organisations in the Fair Trade network. However, neither the minimum or progress requirements of the FLO Standards include the gender objectives expressed in Fair Trade literature, such as increasing the participation of women. In other words, the Fair Trade movement does not utilise the FLO Standards' requirements as a mechanism to transmit Fair Trade gender objectives to other organisational levels. According to the WEF analytic Tool 2, this indicates that in practice the Fair Trade movement does not make a positive commitment to women's equality and empowerment at the international level of Fair Trade regulation (again, refer to Table 5.1. below).

I emailed FLO to ask about the Fair Trade commitment to gender issues. Since many Fair Trade organisations and activists claim that gender equity is included in the

social and economic justice goals of the movement, why isn't this expressed in the FLO

Standard? I was told that:

“in general, it is a good conclusion that fairtrade tries to include gender equity in its work (in economic and social aspects of the producer organisations, production and trade) and also specifically in the empowerment goals...to motivate organisations that women participate equally and have equal rights in decision-making, etc. We include this in our standards”.

(Marije Rhebergen, FLO certification representative, January 27, 2005).

But my gender analysis of the most recent version of the Standards, which this FLO representative directed me to on the FLO website, reveals that these Fair Trade gender objectives were not, in fact, included in the FLO Standards.

**Table 5.1. WEF analytic Tool 2: FLO Standards**

Levels of equality	Level of recognition	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Control		X <sup>I</sup>		
Participation		X <sup>II</sup>		
'Conscientisation'		X <sup>III</sup>		
Access			X <sup>IV</sup>	
Welfare			X <sup>V</sup>	

I – There is no mention of gender issues of control in the FLO Standards

II – There is no mention of gender issues of participation in the FLO Standards

III – There is no mention of gender issues of 'conscientisation' in the FLO Standards

IV – Refers to the minimum requirements of the non-discrimination social standard and the labour standard

V – Refers to the progress requirement of the non-discrimination social standard

### 1.2. Comercio Justo Mexico Standards

*Comercio Justo* Mexico is the Mexican National Fair Trade Organisation. Their Standards are formulated by local and international collaborators, and are based upon the regulations and criteria of the FLO Standards, and the experiences of Mexican small producers (*Comercio Justo*, 2000). In the *Comercio Justo* Standards, under the standards for small producer organisations it is stated explicitly that the term “small producer” refers equally to men and women, unlike the FLO Standards where this has to be inferred

in conjunction with the non-discrimination standard. The *Comercio Justo* standards include that all members of the organisation have “the same official and practical rights” and that the organisation does not discriminate “on the basis of sex, religion, political affiliation, ethnicity and/or sexual preference”. The use of gender sensitive language, stating explicitly that gender-neutral terms refer to both men and women, and a non-discrimination standard indicate that the *Comercio Justo* Standards are gender inclusive and ensure equality of access in the co-operative. Although this is more explicit in the *Comercio Justo* Standards than in the FLO Standards, still *Comercio Justo* Standards register on the WEF Tool 2 chart as a neutral commitment to equality of access. This is because the *Comercio Justo* Standards also only indicate protecting women’s access so that women are not negatively affected, but do not encourage actively improving women’s access.

The *Comercio Justo* standards for small producer organisations include criteria for full sustainable development. This states that small producer organisations must demonstrate that they are committed, both officially and in practice, to the fully sustainable development of the families and communities of their members with a list of aspects to consider. This list includes “the constant and active promotion of an improved standard of living... through projects and activities... These programs may be directed to the community in general and/or to specific groups, such as women”. Suggesting that social programmes be directed to women recognises that women have distinct needs due to gender inequalities. This standard indicates a positive commitment to improving women’s equality of welfare. Secondly, the list of aspects to consider in sustainable development includes fostering the active participation of women in decision-making processes, as well as in technical and organisational development processes. This

standard shows a positive commitment to increasing equality of both participation and control, which are strategic gender interests at the top of the hierarchical levels of WEF.

Lastly, under the minimum trading criteria for small producer organisations, it states that the social premium, generated from Fair Trade sales, may only be used for collective social projects of the small producer organisation, suggesting projects to advance the status of women. Although “status” is not a criterion or indicator in my gender analysis framework, it is an interesting point that arose as a grounded category in my content analysis of these standards. Status relates to the socio-economic ‘positionality’ of women (March *et al.*, 1999). Improving the status of women could refer to women’s welfare or control. Improving the status of women in the co-operative would involve the ‘conscientisation’ of all members to recognise the social construction of gender. I consider the minimum requirement of this Standard to increase the status of women the recognition of a strategic gender interest because the concept of increasing status is based on the premise that gender roles are socially constructed and can be changed.

The WEF Tool 2 analysis of the *Comercio Justo* Standards shows a positive commitment to equality of welfare, a neutral commitment to equality of access, and a positive commitment to equality of participation and control. Since there is no evidence that ‘conscientisation’ is addressed in the Standards, there is a negative level of recognition at this level of equality (see Table 5.2. below). Both FLO Standards and *Comercio Justo* Standards use gender sensitive language (*Comercio Justo* being more explicit) and maintain non-discrimination, which indicates gender inclusion and equality of access. *Comercio Justo* Standards must comply with FLO Standards, as FLO is the

international authoritative certification organisation. However, *Comercio Justo* Standards are organised differently and are more expansive, particularly in addressing gender issues.

Promoting projects directed at women's welfare and encouraging the participation of women in decision-making indicate a positive level of recognition of gender issues on the WEF analytical chart. The *Comercio Justo* Standards also include promoting programmes to improve the status of women, which constitutes another indicator of the commitment in the *Comercio Justo* Standards to implement gender objectives in practice. Additionally, at *CEPCO*'s women's congress (June 2005) I met an employee of *Comercio Justo* Mexico whose job is to help producer organisations meet the Standards, advise them in how to use their social premium and help set up projects. She says that gender issues have not been a top priority at *Comercio Justo* but she has done 'needs assessments' and has started a project to increase the participation of women. This shows that efforts are being made to make gender issues more of a priority and implement Fair Trade gender objectives. Therefore, considering the WEF analysis, the grounded category, and evidence of concerted efforts to implement gender objectives, overall *Comercio Justo* shows a positive commitment to women's equality and empowerment.

**Table 5.2. WEF analytic Tool 2: *Comercio Justo* Mexico Standards**

Levels of equality	Level of recognition	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Control				X <sup>I</sup>
Participation				X <sup>II</sup>
'Conscientisation'	X <sup>III</sup>			
Access			X <sup>IV</sup>	
Welfare				X <sup>V</sup>

I – Refers to the list of aspects to consider in the sustainable development standard

II – Also refers to the list of aspects to consider in the sustainable development standard

III – There is no mention of gender issues of 'conscientisation' in the *Comercio Justo* Standards

IV – Refers to the non-discrimination social standard

V – Refers to the sustainable development standard promoting improving the standard of living for women

## 2. Women's Empowerment and *CEPCO*

### 2.1. Fair Trade gender objectives

In examining the FLO and *Comercio Justo* Standards I was looking for evidence that gender objectives are included in the regulatory mechanisms that ensure the application of the Fair Trade principles and objectives in Mexican Fair Trade certified producer organisations. At *CEPCO*, a secondary level producer organisation, I was looking for evidence of any Fair Trade partners, including FLO and *Comercio Justo*, formally or informally communicating with *CEPCO* about women's equality and empowerment or any gender issues. I asked the *directora* of the women's department if her department or *CEPCO* generally ever receive any information or material on gender issues from Fair Trade partners. She said that they never receive information relating to gender within the Fair Trade network, and despite having recently returned from a FLO meeting in Germany she did not have any material on the topic. There seems to be a missing link between Fair Trade regulating bodies and producer organisations in communicating the Fair Trade principles of gender equality. Consistent with past research on the topic I find the impact of Fair Trade on gender equality to generally be indirect, which will be further addressed in the discussion chapter that follows.

Nonetheless *CEPCO* has developed gender objectives, and concerted efforts have been made to put them in practice. The motivation to include gender equality in the objectives of the organisation, and to organise women's groups, as noted in Chapter 1, seems to have come from Dr. Josefina Aranda, a founding leader of *CEPCO* and the *directora* of the women's department. The role and impact that this individual and other individuals have had on implementing gender objectives towards women's empowerment will be discussed in Chapter 6. The gender objectives of *CEPCO* focus on getting women

involved in organising separate women's groups and productive projects, and increasing the participation of women in the producer organisations (Aranda, 2000). In *CEPCO*'s internal reports, gender objectives explicitly include working towards gender equality. The term "empowerment" is not used in the terminology of the reports, however the gender objectives of *CEPCO* adhere to the WEF conceptualisation of empowerment. For instance, increasing equality of 'participation' is a strategic level of equality in WEF and the central focus of *CEPCO*'s gender objectives.

These same gender objectives are conveyed from *CEPCO* to the producer organisations through grassroots mobilisation. Again, as was stated in Chapter 1, the male and female leaders of *CEPCO* campaigned in their producer organisations to raise consciousness about gender issues and to encourage the participation and organising of women members. Between *CEPCO* and the primary level producer organisations gender objectives are conveyed by means of face to face communication. Of the Oaxacan population monolingual in their indigenous language, 90% are illiterate, and in the bilingual population 22% are illiterate (*INEGI*, 2000). Therefore, having the gender objectives in a written mission statement and distributing printed documents is impractical. *CEPCO*'s gender objectives were adopted by the primary level producer organisation that I studied, the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*, thanks to the employment of the most appropriate and practical means of communicating by the strong leadership in both organisations.

## 2.2. Women in leadership and the general assembly at *CEPCO*

Encouraging the organisation and participation of *socias* is only one step in terms of empowerment. In order to meet strategic gender interests, the participation of *socias* must include being active in decision-making and gaining control in the primary and

secondary level organisations. Having women in leadership at *CEPCO* is important to have equality of control. The four advisors of the women's department are the only female employees at *CEPCO* besides administrative staff. However, Dra. Aranda, an advisor of the women's department, is also a founding member of *CEPCO* and is heavily involved in all areas of the organisation. She shares in the top position of power and control in the organisation, as one of the central advisors of *CEPCO*. She is a representative of *CEPCO* meeting with Fair Trade partners, national coalitions, and *CEPCO*'s regional organisations, making important decisions at all levels. Although the leadership of *CEPCO* remains male-dominated in numbers, the director of *CAEO*, the large and important commercialisation branch of *CEPCO*, is also a woman. And the board of directors at *CEPCO* always includes the *presidenta* of the women's commission. Therefore, there are three women in important positions of power, plus three more advisors in the women's department. However, they are outnumbered by at least a dozen other male board members and advisors. Although there is inequality in the ratio of men to women in positions of control at *CEPCO*, considering its all-male beginnings the existence of a few women in key positions is an improvement towards equality of control.

The general assembly at *CEPCO* also remains male-dominated. Each regional organisation generally sends the president, the secretary and the organic co-ordinator to the monthly assemblies. The *Federación 'Zapata Vive'* is the only regional organisation with a female president. The women's monthly assembly meetings at *CEPCO* are held during the general monthly assembly meetings at *CEPCO*, the first Monday and Tuesday of every month. Since they are held simultaneously it is difficult for a woman to be a member of both assemblies, like the *presidenta* of the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*. When the women's meeting is over they join the general assembly and report on the agreements

that were made by the women's assembly. Also, *CEPCO*'s general assembly elects a representative to attend the women's monthly assemblies, the purpose of which is presumably to aid in communication between the general assembly and the women's assembly.

Of the four monthly assemblies I observed at *CEPCO*, there were only ever three to five women at the general assembly of, on average, 50-70 people. On the other hand, there were, on average, fifteen to twenty women at the separate women's assemblies. Therefore, the general assembly at *CEPCO* remains very male-dominated despite *socias* involvement at *CEPCO* in the women's commission. In other words, although having a women's commission is meant to increase the participation of women in *CEPCO* overall, there is not nearly equality of participation between men and women in the general assembly. According to WEF, equality of participation is achieved when the proportion of men to women matches their proportion in that community (in this case in the regional organisations). Women form 39% of *CEPCO*'s current membership, but are not present to an equal extent in the assembly (Congress Report, 2005). Since the assembly members of *CEPCO* are elected leaders and representatives of the regional organisation, the inequality of participation in *CEPCO* indicates that there is inequality in control at the level of the regional organisations.

There are also cultural factors making it difficult for women to travel and participate in meetings at *CEPCO*. Family and community members maintain the stereotype that women who work outside of the home, and particularly travel alone (not with their husbands), are "up to no good", and they use this to discourage women from participating (focus group, June 7, 2005; Ita-Teku Report, 2004). Also, women may feel uncomfortable with the accommodations. When representatives go to Oaxaca City for

the monthly assembly meetings they stay in separate male and female dorms at *CEPCO*. However, even though it is prohibited, at night when the advisors and administrative staff go home for the night, the men sometimes drink and get rowdy, which makes the women staying there feel uncomfortable (observations and informal interviews). This may be another deterrent for women to travel to *CEPCO*, causing the low representation of women's participation in the monthly assembly meetings.

Furthermore, breaking traditional cultural norms can be outright dangerous. One woman, named Estela Ambrosio Luna, from the co-operative in San Agustin Loxicha, was shot to death in her struggle to organise the women in her community. She was a founding member of the women's commission at *CEPCO*. She was very involved and even went to Germany for an international Fair Trade meeting despite constant threats from community members. She refused to succumb to the threats and continued with the objective of increasing the organisation and participation of *socias* until her dying day. This is an extreme example of the strong resistance that women face to their participation in areas outside of their gender roles.

I examined the attitudes and expressed opinions of *socios* towards *socias* and their work in *CEPCO* as indicators of an understanding that gender equality must be respected as a principle value in the organisation (as a more viable category than "conscientisation" which is difficult to assess). The attitude of male advisors and *socios* towards women at *CEPCO* I found to be generally respectful and based on camaraderie. However, one well-respected advisor in particular did not show much respect towards women, often making inappropriate comments, which I considered sexual harassment. The first day I entered *CEPCO* he made comments to me which I considered to be inappropriate for professional behaviour, however catcalling is common on the streets in Mexico. *Machismo* is a

cultural barrier to *socias* achieving equality and empowerment in the co-operative and in their own households, and is a recurring issue that the 'conscientisation' campaigns seek to address. However, most male advisors and *socios* at assemblies seem to respect the work of the women's department and give its issues equal importance in assembly meetings.

In one women's assembly meeting it was discussed that another department at *CEPCO* was storing garbage on the women's commission Ita-Teku plot of land (April 2005). The *presidenta* brought this to attention at the general assembly and many *socios* spoke up about respecting the work of the women's commission and acknowledging the benefits and importance of the productive projects of the women's commission. This discussion is evidence of a positive attitude towards the women's commission and their work. It was significant to hear that expressed explicitly because I had also noted an underlying attitude from both men and women that the women's department is of lesser importance since the primary function of *CEPCO* is the production and commercialisation of coffee. Although 'conscientisation' is difficult to measure, generally the attitude towards, and opinion of, the women's commission and the participation of *socias* at *CEPCO* was positive. This indicates that the agenda of the 'conscientisation' campaign to educate *socios* was at least generally accepted if not fully internalised by all individuals.

In summary, at the secondary level of producer organisation, the extent of women's empowerment according to the WEF analysis shows that women have gained some ground in 'control' through strong leadership but have not achieved equality of control or participation, with the leadership and general assembly remaining male-dominated. The analysis also shows achievements towards 'conscientisation' indicated

by positive attitudes and opinions of the women's participation and work. However, equality has not been fully achieved at this WEF level either, since there were also some underlying negative attitudes towards women in general. Since the 'welfare' level of equality refers to material well-being, and the 'access' level refers to the key factors of production, I did not include them in my analysis of the more administrative processes of the secondary level organisation. This summary can be visualised in the following table.

**Table 5.3. WEF analytic Tool 1: Extent of Empowerment at CEPCO**

	Levels of Equality				
	Welfare	Access	'Conscientisation'	Participation	Control
<b>Extent of Equality</b>	-N/A at this organisational level	-N/A at this organisational level	-positive attitude towards <i>socias'</i> work	-high part. of women, albeit separately	-numerous women in positions of control

### 2.3. Empowerment in regional organisations of CEPCO

As was explained in Chapter 1, the women's commission of *CEPCO* is a secondary level organisation, but it is made up of representatives from women's organisations at the primary level (regional producer organisations). The women's organisations at the regional producer organisations are made up of women's groups from the communities that belong to the regional producer organisations. I discuss the women's commission of *CEPCO* here not to understand empowerment at the secondary level (as I did in the last section). Rather, by looking at empowerment overall at all the regional organisations of *CEPCO* I get a general idea of empowerment at the primary level before looking specifically at the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*.

I collected data on the regional organisations of *CEPCO* through the focus groups at the last women's congress (2005), from the past congress reports, and from

interviewing the women's commission advisors. I used WEF Tool 1 to analyse the extent of empowerment of the regional organisations at *CEPCO* overall. Therefore, I present the analysis here at each of the five levels of equality in Tool 1, which are then summarised in Table 5.4. I also analysed the data into grounded categories to include all data that was relevant to my empowerment analysis.

### 2.3.1. WEF analytic Tool 1

#### **Welfare:**

At the first women's congress in 1995, it was decided that the women's programme would focus on three main areas of work: literacy, production and services, and health and nutrition (*CEPCO* Congress Report, 1995). These early projects were focused on improving the well-being of women and their families. The productive projects provide women with gardens and animals for subsistence, and income-generating activities, which contribute to the well-being of the *socias* and that of their families. "[The money earned from] coffee is not enough. Coffee producers need alternatives. That is why the women participate in the productive projects, for income and for food" (interview with women's advisors, February 28, 2005). In terms of WEF Tool 1, these projects addressed welfare issues *generally* not focusing particularly on improving *equality* of welfare. Although the separate productive projects of the women's groups may not increase women's welfare relative to men's within the co-operative, they do increase women's *control* over household finances as women earn money that goes directly into their own hands (Congress Report, 1995).

#### **Access:**

The creation of the women's commission at *CEPCO* and separate women's groups in the regional organisations changed what it means to be a '*socia*', gaining

women access to the co-operative and productive resources. Any woman is welcome to join a women's group who is part of a "coffee producing family" that has membership with a regional organisation. The distinction between this term and a "small coffee producer" is that it explicitly recognises that coffee production is based on familial labour (Aranda, 2001). Before the creation of women's groups, '*socia*' only referred to a woman who sold coffee to the co-operative directly under her name, which made the labour of wives and daughters who sold as a household invisible. Through the women's programme wives and daughters were granted membership, whereas formerly only the male head of household was the co-operative member and women were largely excluded. Thus women gained access to the co-operative generally, and the factors of production therein, such as coffee weighing and packaging facilities, agricultural training, and productive projects. In terms of the empowerment analysis using WEF Tool 1, the creation of the women's groups, making wives and daughters *socias*, increased equality of access between men and women to the productive resources of the co-operatives.

Through the productive projects of the women's groups *socias* gained access to key resources such as education and funding, which were not available to women individually before, but once organised they were able to request specific training and apply for funding. When there is a productive project being planned in a women's group, many women show interest in becoming involved and accessing the resources for productive projects. Significantly, even some men are asking to be part of the productive projects run through the women's groups. However, the advisors of the women's commission are concerned that the women's groups are becoming "*maternalista*" meaning maternal. What they mean by this term is that women are becoming dependent upon the productive projects of the women's groups, rather than becoming self sufficient.

“[Some women] get used to the projects being organised for them as a service but they don’t do much to change their lives. It’s not sustainable because they need new funding every year, and they do not ‘conscientise’ themselves. They are only half awake.”

(group interview, February, 28, 2005).

The advisors of the women’s commission emphasise that the *socias* should not abuse the productive opportunities of the women’s groups, but take advantage of them to improve and stabilise their standard of living. They also emphasise that the *socias* need to be interested in learning about gender issues through ‘conscientisation’.

### **‘Conscientisation’:**

In the congress report for 1995 it states that the workshops for the early productive projects were an opportunity for the participants to analyse their situation as women and to look for alternatives in order to confront the gender inequality that impedes their organisational development (*CEPCO* Congress Report, 1995). This indicates that the advisors of the women’s commission at *CEPCO* used the organising around welfare to begin to address strategic gender interests through ‘conscientisation’.

In the early years of *CEPCO* (1990s) before the organisation of women, even the women who owned their own land and could sell under their own name often would send a male family member to sell to the co-operative and attend the assembly in her place. Women were intimidated by the male-dominated assemblies, and were discouraged to participate by family members of both sexes. Many men and women viewed the organisation as a male realm with no need or place for women as it was outside their traditional gender role (interview with women’s commission advisors, February 28, 2005). When the women’s commission began organising, *socias* not only faced objections to their participation from their families and communities, but there was also

mistrust (gossip and jealousy) between the women making it difficult for them to organise and work together (focus group, June 7, 2005).

With pressure from *CEPCO* and then from the leaders of the regional organisations, *socios* had to accept that women had their own place in the co-operative in the separate women's groups and were joining the mixed gender general assembly. From the experiences of the *socias* in the focus groups, it seems that women now face less resistance and discouragement to participate from spouses and family members, although some still feel that their household responsibilities, particularly to their children, are too great and limit their ability to participate. Also, there are some *socias* who express interest in becoming more involved in the women's groups but then don't attend meetings or participate because their husbands are *machistas*, and do not permit them (informal interview, March 29, 2005). Other *socias* report that although they still hear family and community members saying that it is improper for a woman to leave the house and travel, they don't let this dissuade their participation because they know what they're doing is valuable (focus group, June 7, 2005).

The participation of women in the regional organisations has changed the opinions that people had about women. For example, the idea that women only belong in the house and the idea that women's work was not valuable have changed. Now there are new thoughts, specifically that women have equal rights as men. (Women's Congress Report, 2005)

Although 'conscientisation' is difficult to assess, the fact that *socias* are generally facing less resistance to participation is an indication that progress is being made towards accepting that there should be equality between men and women in the co-operative.

### **Participation and Control:**

The separate women's groups were a foot in the door to the co-operative, opening up the opportunity to become involved not only in the women's group activities but also

in the mixed gender activities of the regional organisations, increasing equality of participation between men and women in the co-operative. *Socias* were encouraged by the female advisors of the women's commission at *CEPCO*, and the women's organisation leaders in their regional organisations, to participate in the general assemblies and partake in decision-making that would affect them. Having a separate women's group made *socias* feel welcome and comfortable getting involved in the co-operative. The data from my focus group at the 2005 women's congress compared to past congress reports indicates that *socias* not only participate more in the mixed gender co-operative since forming separate women's groups, but they also participate more vocally in decision-making.

From being involved in the women's organisation, *socias* have greater participation in meetings at all levels. They are no longer afraid to speak up. They take part in decision-making in meetings, and they have gained the ability to direct group meetings and assembly meetings. (Ita-Teku Report, 2004).

In terms of WEF Tool 1, this means that the *socias'* involvement has increased their level of participation and control in the Fair Trade co-operative, which was formerly only a male realm. Using the WEF analytic Tool 1 to analyse women's empowerment at the regional organisations of *CEPCO*, I have found some progress towards equality at each of the five levels, which is summarised here in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4. WEF analytic Tool 1: Primary level orgs. at CEPCO**

	Levels of Equality				
	Welfare	Access	'Conscientisation'	Participation	Control
<b>Extent of Equality</b>	-\$ and subsistence from productive projects increased welfare of women + family	-wives and daughters considered <i>socias</i> through women's org., gaining access to co-op and, -access to productive projects	- <i>socias</i> face less resistance from male and female family members - <i>socias</i> are more accepted in the co-op	-increased equality of participation because many more women were able to participate due to increased access and 'conscientisation'	-increased equality of control as more women participate in decision-making in the mixed gender co-op assemblies

My analysis of the focus groups conducted during the June 2005 women's congress compared to past women's congress reports (beginning 1995) found that the extent of women's empowerment currently is an improvement from women's earlier experiences. It is also apparent from the way the *socias* express their current experiences that these are positive changes compared to when they first joined the women's organisation or before becoming involved. Rather than a direct influence from Fair Trade on women's empowerment, I found that the creation of the women's groups and their productive projects are the greatest factors in the increase in equality at each of the five WEF levels. Nonetheless, Fair Trade is certainly an indirect factor in women's empowerment because the success of the women's groups and their productive projects is contingent upon the organisational strength of the co-operative. Organisational capacity-building has been proven to be a benefit from involvement in the Fair Trade network (Murray *et al.*, 2003). The organisational structure of the women's commission adheres

to the Fair Trade requirements for producer organisations, and therefore arguably Fair Trade does influence the women's commission, although the impact of Fair Trade on women's empowerment is indirect.

### 2.3.2. Grounded analysis

As a grounded category, I found that improved status is a beneficial outcome towards women's empowerment from involvement in productive projects. In the focus groups the *socias* of *CEPCO* expressed that the productive projects gained them more respect and credibility for their capabilities by male family members, and co-op members. The male regional *directivos* are recognising the women's productive work and supporting the women's groups. This data indicates that the success of the productive projects of the separate women's groups help to change attitudes towards the women's groups and therefore could be categorised within the process of 'conscientisation'. However, it also indicates an increase in the status of women within their household and within the co-operative as the *socias* of the women's groups gain respect for their productive labour. Status/respect is a grounded category in my empowerment analysis, which first arose in the *Comercio Justo* Standards. Although it does not fit perfectly into the WEF levels of equality relative to men, it does contribute to women's empowerment.

Another grounded category is the increase in self-confidence that women have gained through involvement in the co-operative. From past congress reports and the focus group interviews, most *socias*, even those extremely active and vocal today, claim that before becoming involved in the women's groups they felt unwelcome at assemblies and if they did attend they felt too shy or self-conscious to speak up. Through the women's groups they became more knowledgeable about the productive processes of the co-operative and gained the self-confidence to attend and actively participate in mixed

gender assembly meetings at their regional organisations. The increase in participation and in decision-making due to increased self-confidence is evidence of progress towards the higher levels of equality in WEF. However, I analysed self-confidence as a grounded category because it contributes to women's personal empowerment, whereas WEF deals more with women's equality within the productive sphere, in this case the co-operative. Personal power, as I described in Chapter 1, is the dimension of power when women develop a sense of confidence and ability, and overcome internalised oppression. In this case, as the *socias* gained personal power they gained the confidence and ability to participate in productive labour outside of the household, in the separate women's groups and in the mixed gender co-operative.

There were many other factors influencing women's empowerment within the co-operative, and ability to become involved in the co-op, that arose in the grounded analysis. Resistance from family members was a factor prohibiting women's involvement, which was discussed under 'conscientisation' as it was an issue of gender consciousness. However, there are other prohibitive factors to involvement from within the household, such as the burden of women's double and triple workloads. Women may have interest in becoming involved, and/or be conscious of gender issues, but because of their household responsibilities, such as the majority of the reproductive labour, they do not have the time and/or energy to join. One woman in the focus group that I facilitated at the women's congress was so determined to participate that she brought her new-born baby with her to the congress (June 7, 2005). I later found out that she already had six children at home and had wanted an abortion, but the doctor had convinced her to have the baby and give it up for adoption. The adoption fell through and now she didn't know

what to do with the baby. This is an example of how women coffee producers are overburdened with productive and reproductive labour.

### 2.3.3. Women's groups and productive projects

The productive projects carried out by women's groups at the grassroots level require a great deal of organisation at the level of *CEPCO* and with outside funding. By the women's congress in 1998 many productive projects had been organised in numerous newly formed women's groups. When the women's commission first began to form in 1993 there were eight women's groups from four different regional organisations. By 1998, there were 277 women's groups working in 28 of the regional organisations. Most of the new groups were working on animal husbandry projects. There were 234 such groups, to be exact, raising sheep, chickens, pigs, and turkeys. Other groups were providing services such as corn mills, bakeries, and tortilla shop, in addition to the community supply stores. By 2002 there were 527 women's groups in 31 regional organisations. The women's groups and projects were able to diversify and grow due to two main factors: external funding from government agencies, and the ability to recuperate funds for the continuation of the project (*CEPCO* Congress Report, 1998). The advisors of the women's commission did not consider Fair Trade a direct factor in the success of the women's groups, although again arguably Fair Trade provided the protocol on how to organise such groups and projects.

Getting government recognition of the participation of rural women in coffee production and organisation, and financial support for their work became the most important priority for the women's commission at *CEPCO*. Thanks to the persistence of the women's commission advisors they were able to get funding from various government agencies although it is an on-going struggle year after year to renew past

funding and get new funding. The women's groups had to become better organised in order to comply with the process of getting funding and in order to be able to recuperate funds. In 2002, Sedesol, a government agency, funded 100 new and continuing women's projects for *CEPCO*'s women's groups. However, in 2003 and 2004 the applications for renewal and new projects were all rejected. At the time of the last women's congress, June 2005, there were only 104 women's groups in 26 regional organisations. There seems to be a correlation between the lack of funding<sup>1</sup> and the decreasing number of women's groups. Without funding many projects cannot continue and women's groups cannot start new projects therefore, women become discouraged without projects and drop out of the women's group. However, almost 400 *socias* applied for funding for productive projects last year (2005), within the women's groups of the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*.

### **3. Women's Empowerment in the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'***

#### **3.1. WEF analytic Tool 1**

Since the inception of the women's organisation at the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*, there has been increased equality between *socios* and *socias* at this regional organisation at all five levels of the WEF analytic Tool 1. There are about 25 women's groups in the various communities that belong to the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*. The involvement of *socias* in these women's groups has increased the participation of *socias* in the regional organisation overall, as was the case in the regional organisations of *CEPCO* generally.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to political corruption, only organisations that are willing to pledge allegiance to the political party in power have been granted funding in the past few years. Fair Trade organisations cannot have political ties.

**Welfare:**

The productive projects of the women's groups of the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'* contribute to the *socias'* well-being and that of their families. When the projects are successful the *socias* recuperate the costs of initiating the project, put enough money in the group micro-bank account for the continuation of the project, and make enough profit to have individual incomes. Even if the project does not earn substantial income for the women, they and their families benefit from the projects which mostly address welfare needs. For example, animal husbandry projects provide meat, chicken and eggs to feed their families. Some productive projects of the women's groups benefit the entire community. For example, the community supply stores organised through the women's groups make foodstuff and other necessities available in the community that would be otherwise inaccessible.

**Access:**

Through the productive projects of the women's groups *socias* gained access to key resources. Indirectly this increased equality of access relative to the male *socios*. Before the inception of the women's groups, women barely participated in the co-operative because they faced the cultural barrier of the co-op being the male realm outside their own gender role, and were not considered *socias*. Being excluded from the co-operative meant that women did not have access to the resources of the co-operative or any productive projects organised through the co-operative. When productive projects were organised through women's groups, *socias* gained access to key productive resources that had previously been denied to them, thus increasing equality of access between *socios* and *socias*. Additionally, through the separate projects the women gained knowledge, confidence, and experience in organisation and production. This enabled

them to join the productive projects run through the co-operative generally and increased the equality of access within the mixed gender co-operative.

**‘Conscientisation’:**

The male *directivos*, in semi-structured and informal interviews, expressed positive attitudes towards the separate women’s groups, their productive projects and the increase in women’s participation in the mixed gender co-operative. *Socios* and *socias* both showed respect to the women that were in leadership positions, and heeded their authority as much as the male leaders’ authority.

**Participation:**

There has been increased involvement of *socias* in the mixed gender co-operative since the inception of the women’s organisation. For the WEF analysis with Tool 1 this indicates progress towards equality of participation between *socios* and *socias* at the *Federación ‘Zapata Vive’*. In the semi-standardised interviews with *socias* at the *Federación ‘Zapata Vive’* the women expressed that before joining the women’s groups they had been intimidated and felt excluded from their co-operative. After being involved in the women’s groups they gained knowledge about the co-operative and the confidence and motivation to participate. The male *directivos* and the female *presidenta* of the *Federación ‘Zapata Vive’* concurred that hardly any women used to attend meetings or go to the general assembly at the *Federación* before the creation of the women’s organisation. During the two months that I spent there observing at least one meeting a week (women’s group meetings, organic producers meetings, assembly meetings) on average women constituted 1/3 of the attendees at mixed gender meetings (the women’s group meetings, of course, being 100% women). Almost 50% of the producers in organic production are women meaning proportionally there is nearly equality of participation in

the organic programme at the *Federación*. Of the *socias* involved in organic production 42% are also involved in the women's groups indicating a correlation between their involvement in the well established women's groups and in the recently formed organic programme.

**Control:**

*Socias* not only participate in the organic production by cultivating organic coffee and selling it to the co-operative. They also have to attend many meetings and under-go agricultural training. Progress towards equality of participation in the organic programme contributes to equality of access between *socios* and *socias* at the *Federación* because an equal number of men and women are gaining access to the key resources to take advantage of the more lucrative organic production. There have also been a few *socias* certified as internal inspectors (*técnicas de orgánico*), which is a position of leadership and indicates some progression towards equality of control between men and women in the organic programme. Last but not least, the *Federación* is the only regional organisation with a female president indicating a significant step towards equality of control, having a *socia* in the highest position of control in the organisation.

At the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*, I have found some progress towards equality at each level in the WEF Tool 1 analysis, as was the case in the analysis of the primary level organisations at *CEPCO* generally. The analysis is summarised in the following table.

**Table 5.5. WEF analytic Tool 1: *Federación 'Zapata Vive'***

	<b>Levels of Equality</b>				
	<b>Welfare</b>	<b>Access</b>	<b>'Conscientisation'</b>	<b>Participation</b>	<b>Control</b>
<b>Extent of Equality</b>	-productive projects provide women with income and increase women's welfare and that of their families, and communities	-women's groups gain <i>socias</i> access to productive projects -increased participation of women in the mixed gender co-op has increased equality of access to factors of production	-male leaders support the involvement of women - <i>socios</i> and <i>socias</i> respect the leadership of women	-the involvement of <i>socias</i> in women's groups increased their participation in the mixed gender co-op to 1/3 women -organic programme has equality of participation	-female <i>técnicas</i> -woman president of the co-op, the highest position of control!

### 3.2. Factors in women's empowerment

As I explained in Chapter 1, when women's groups initially formed in Tenango in 1993, then under the *asociación agrícola*, they were successful in getting women involved in the producer organisation for the first time, albeit separately. However, the projects themselves were unsuccessful. The *socias* did not recuperate the costs of implementing the projects (let alone make a profit) and were thus unable to continue. Since the women's groups resumed in 1998 under the leadership of the current *presidenta* (of both the women's organisation and the co-operative) they have recuperated the costs of initiating the projects and have made personal earnings. They also save their collective income in group accounts in the local micro-bank that was started by the co-operative, so

that the existing women's projects are able to continue to run without outside funding year after year.

The initial motivation to organise the *socias* in Tenango and help with grant applications came from the advisors of the women's commission at *CEPCO*. However, the *socias* are encouraged to assess their own needs and determine what projects they want to do. There is no evidence that Fair Trade has a direct influence on women's empowerment at the secondary level organisation, nor is there evidence to that effect at this primary level organisation. However, Fair Trade indirectly supports women's empowerment through the organisational strengths that make the women's organisation possible. The *Federación 'Zapata Vive'* is one of the oldest and largest regional organisations in *CEPCO*, the *directivos* of which attribute their organisational strength to the influence of Fair Trade and organic regulations. The *Federación 'Zapata Vive'* also has the most participation of women and the strongest women's groups. Having a well-organised co-operative allows for other activities to take place, such as the women's organisation.

The women's groups at the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'* also participate in productive projects that the women's commission at *CEPCO* organises through Ita-Teku. They are currently in the middle of an organic chicken project, in which 50 *socias* from six of 'Zapata Vive's communities are involved. The *socias* were given the materials needed to start the project (the chicken coop materials and seed to plant feed), and are to pay back the expenses after three years. They were given ten little chicks and one rooster. The chickens were fattening up and hatching new chicks for a few months and then bad weather hit and most of the women had many chickens fall sick and die. When the women had healthy chickens again they were eager to sell while the chickens were fat but

because *CEPCO*'s buyer wasn't ready for them, *CEPCO* did not come to pick up the chickens. They got sick again and the women were very discouraged. There is risk in becoming involved in a productive project because it must be profitable enough to repay the initial investment and to earn income. In the focus groups at the women's congress (June 2005) the *socias* expressed that one of their biggest challenges in the productive projects was finding a market to sell to since they live in such small and poor villages. Having productive projects run through Ita-Teku addresses this challenge but also increases the risk for the *socias* as there are more external factors outside of their control.

Intra-household dynamics are a factor in permitting or prohibiting the involvement of women in the co-operative. One such dynamic would be who has title of the land and officially sells to the co-operative. Based on past research, women are most likely to have decision-making control over household finances when her earnings go directly into her hands, as they often do in this case (Williams, 2000). I found that often both the husband and wife would own separate plots of land and sell their coffee separately, indicating that money was going directly into the hands of women with land ownership. However, I do not have enough widespread or in-depth data to analyse how those resources were used within the household, and whether or not women maintained control over their own earnings.

A benefit for women involved in the productive projects of the women's groups that contributes to their personal empowerment is the sense of solidarity and the support that exists between the *socias*. There is sometimes jealousy and resentment from community members who are not involved in the co-operative when they see all the benefits that the *socios* and *socias* receive (women's meeting, March 31, 2005). For example, one woman believed that her neighbour had purposefully poisoned her organic

chickens because she caught her feeding them something and they died soon thereafter. However, there is a sense of solidarity among the *socias* within the women's groups. They will help each other out with the productive projects by lending a hand or sharing advice. The *presidenta*, who I stayed with, was always feeding the *socias* who stopped by her house for help or advice. One young *socia* would often show up at the *presidenta*'s house, at the break of dawn with her three-year-old son, looking for any chores to do to earn some money. The *presidenta* would never turn her away, even if she was busy and having the young *socia* and her son was really more of a nuisance than a helping hand. The women's groups not only function for productive projects but also create a social network between the *socias*.

### 3.3. Five *socias*' experiences of involvement and empowerment

I found that the more a *socia* gets involved in the co-operative, at higher levels of participation and leadership, the more she contributes to gender equality in the co-operative and achieving women's empowerment, according to the WEF parameters of empowerment and in terms of the grounded categories of personal empowerment. This is exemplified by examining the different experiences of involvement and empowerment of five *socias* at the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*. The data on the *socias* experiences was collected through observation, and semi-standardised and informal interviews.

#### ***Leonor***

The president of the regional organisation and the women's organisation at the *Federación*, Doña Leonor Fernandez, is proud of her hard work and accomplishments, and wished to have her real name used in this thesis (semi-standardised interview, March 12, 2005). Leonor is in her mid-fifties and is from Tenango originally but moved away with her husband to Mexico City in her thirties. She returned when her father died to take

care of her mother. Her husband left a few years later and now lives with their son in the United States. She says she is more *tranquila*, or relaxed, without him, and enjoys her freedom referring to the ability to work and travel as she pleases. When she returned to Tenango, fifteen years ago, she bought a *cafetal* (plot of land where coffee is grown) and joined the co-operative (informal interviews, March 9, 2005; June 4, 2005). At that time, 1991, the coffee co-operative was the newly formed *asociación agrícola* that was part of *CEPCO* and the Fair Trade network, but did not yet have the organic programme or the women's organisation.

When the women's advisors from *CEPCO* came in 1998 to encourage the women to organise, Leonor became involved in motivating the organisation and participation of the *socias* of the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*. Because she was from there and spoke the language, she could communicate well with the women, and because she had lived away she spoke Spanish well and could deal with the bureaucratic responsibilities of running the women's organisation (informal interview, March 30, 2005). Leonor is the main leader (and consecutively elected *presidenta*) of the women's organisation in Tenango, and was also elected as the *presidenta* of the women's commission at *CEPCO* in 2000, a position she held for two terms until the June 2005 congress (*Federación*, and *CEPCO* reports). Through her leadership in the women's groups Leonor gained the trust and confidence of the *socias* of the *Federación*, whose presence was growing in the general assembly. Due to the amount of support she had from the *socias* within the co-operative she was elected secretary of the *Federación* in 2000. In 2003 when it came time to elect a new board of directors at the *Fedearción*, the *socias* insisted Leonor run for president to better represent their interests in the general co-operative, and she was elected into this position as well (semi-standardised interview, March 12, 2005).

Leonor is very busy with her responsibilities and has to travel often causing her mother to complain of her absence and others to 'joke' that a woman shouldn't be off travelling with men (observation, March 12, 2005). Leonor's involvement and dedication to the co-operative and especially to the *socias* requires a great deal of time commitment, and participation in important decision-making. Through her participation and willingness to take on various responsibilities she gained decision-making power and control in organisational and production processes that had been dominated by men until then. This has not only increased gender equality in participation and control in the co-operative, which constitutes women's empowerment according to WEF, but it has also contributed to Leonor's increased sense of personal empowerment. Leonor's experience of personal empowerment fits into the grounded category of increased respect and status in the co-operative and community due to her position of authority. As Leonor gained more responsibility and decision-making power in her leadership positions within the co-operative, the more she gained respect and status in the wider community.

However, Leonor's own empowerment is not what motivates her hard work in the co-operative. Rather, through her efforts to organise the women's groups and because she is not afraid of the responsibilities, she has not only gained more control in decision-making but has also helped create a space for *socias* at the co-operative, which is her main motivation. She often says that she is tired from so much work but that the *socias* won't let her resign and she can't let them down. They tell her that under other leadership the women's groups fail and the *socias* are forgotten in the mixed gender co-operative. They feel they need her leadership to succeed (informal interview, March 29, 2005).

In addition to increased respect and status, there is a role modelling effect that arose as a grounded category in my empowerment analysis. Leonor is now seen as a

community elder, and has a constant stream of people coming in and out of her house or stopping her on the street to ask her advice. The town mayor even comes to her to ask for her help in difficult disputes (March 29, 2005). She felt especially vindicated when Norman (all names have been changed unless otherwise noted), the leader of a separate organic coffee union in Tenango, came to her for help (June 4, 2005). Norman had been a founding member of the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*. When Leonor was elected president, he said to her, "A woman can't run a coffee co-operative. It won't work. The *Federación* will go under!" And he decided to make a separate union and took 200 organic coffee producer members with him. Last year he was being audited, was in deep trouble and came to Leonor for help on how to run a co-operative more efficiently and transparently. Community members not only seek her advice on personal and business matters, they elected her as the town health minister, indicating that they have faith in her ability to take care of the greater good of the community.

Furthermore, this role modelling effect has translated into the co-operative having an influence on municipal politics. Leonor is not the only one who is well respected in her position in the co-operative and is considered a role model in the wider community. Santiago Fernández, who also wished to have his real name printed as he was proud of his work as a founding member of the *Federación*, after having been president of the co-operative was elected town mayor for a term (informal interview, March 16, 2005). Since coffee production has long been the principal livelihood in Tenango (now being replaced by transportation), many of the community members are also co-operative members. However, Santiago's election as town mayor, and Leonor's election as town health minister were not only due to the fact that the co-operative members constitute a fair share of the population of the town. It was also because the rest of the wider community

has faith in the leadership of those who can run the co-operative well to be good leaders for the town.

### *Maria*

There are other women whose participation and dedication help the women's groups succeed and help create a place for the *socias* within the co-operative. Maria is in her early thirties, and became involved in the co-operative when her father asked her to look into the organic coffee programme for him (semi-standardised interview, April 2, 2005). She does not own a *cafetal* herself, but helps her father. Maria underwent training and became the first female internal inspector of organic coffee production at the *Federación* (there is another one now). As a *técnica* of organic coffee, she had to travel to Tenango twice a week for meetings and often to Oaxaca City for training as well. She also had to travel all over the countryside visiting *socios'* fields and helping them gain and maintain organic certification. Additionally she is a *técnica* for the women's projects and must undergo training for that as well. Maria does not have a husband but her mother and son feel she should quit these positions of leadership and become less involved. She has spent almost all of her savings travelling around for these positions. The *Federación* cannot afford to absorb these expenses for the *técnicos* because it is in debt from previous corrupt board of directors, and can only afford to finance coffee related costs with grants and loans from the government and Fair Trade partners. I asked Maria what her motivation was to do so much hard work without financial remuneration. She said that she was motivated to participate extensively in the organic programme because she wanted to help her father and her community. She likes the satisfaction of helping people and despite the protests of her mother and son she continues to be a *técnica* for the women's groups. She says she won't abandon the women because they need her. Like

Leonor, Maria has an extraordinary level of participation, dedicating most of her time to the co-operative work. She holds positions within the co-operative that give her equal power with her male counterparts, for example, as a *técnica* of organic coffee. She was also elected president of their community committee, which makes her the official representative in the mixed gender general assembly of the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*. This is another example of the role model effect, as the *socios* and community members want those who show dedication to the co-operative to be their leaders.

Leonor and Maria are two examples of women who are very involved in the co-operative, particularly in positions of decision-making and control. Their levels of involvement and dedication are remarkable, as are their achievements towards empowerment both for themselves and for all the *socias* in the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*. The success of the women's groups organising and continuing is largely due to their hard work and they are positive role models for other *socias* to increase their participation in the co-operative. However, there were also many *socias* who were co-operative members in name, meaning they were approved to sell their coffee to the co-operative, but did not actively participate in the co-operative meetings or projects. The following two cases exemplify *socias* who were not very involved in the co-operative.

### ***Susana***

Susana is a 40-year old woman, and has been involved in the women's group in her community but the women's group doesn't currently have a project (semi-standardised interview, June 2, 2005). She was involved in a pig-raising project a few years ago but she sold them all and didn't continue. Now her women's group is not organised with productive projects because they don't have any funding to start one. They became discouraged and have essentially dissolved the group. She embroiders

shirts and tries to sell them on her own (but not very successfully because she does not have access to a very big market), and raises chickens to sell. These are her own individual initiatives, whereas they are collective projects in women's groups who were more successful in recuperating and continuing projects. In Susana's case, being a member of the women's group did not gain her access to resources, and therefore she had to work on her own to improve her family's welfare. She and her husband each inherited land from their parents (she has 1.5 hectares and he has 0.5 hectares) and they both cultivate organic coffee. They both speak Spanish well because they finished technical school (high school). He is heavily involved in the co-operative and is the leader of a local association of the political party in power in Tenango, the *PRD* (the leftist democratic revolutionary party). They are both involved in the organic programme. He is supportive of her involvement and encourages her to come to the co-operative assembly meetings and organic meetings but she stays at the back and is not vocal.

### ***Rosalía***

An example of a *socia* with even less involvement is the aforementioned Maria's mother, Rosalía, who is in her mid-seventies (semi-standardised interview, March 27, 2005). Her husband owns twelve hectares of land, six of which used to be dedicated to coffee but since the price dropped he only cultivates two hectares of coffee. They have sold to the *Federación* since the price dropped and joined the organic programme a few years ago when Maria organised the certification for the *socios* in the community. Her mother told me that there was no women's group. Maria informed me that the women's groups had organised and put forth applications for funding for the past three years but had never received any. The mother's name was indeed on the list of applicants of the women's group, which Maria must have done for her. Due to poor health, Rosalía never

travels the long hike into Tenango to go to the *Federación*'s general meetings or the organic meetings. Although technically a *socia* of the *Federación*, she has no interest in being involved, and is sceptical of how involvement could benefit her or her daughter. This indicates a negative level of 'conscientisation' about how *socias* can benefit from involvement in the co-operative or the need for gender equality in the co-operative. Perhaps her husband enforced this belief, however he did not express those opinions to me. Rosalia's internalised support of gender inequality in the coffee co-operative is likely due to generational differences, as Leonor's mother held similar views, and very few older women were very involved in the women's groups or in the co-operative in general.

### *Lupe*

I have presented two examples of women who are heavily involved and work towards gender equality in the co-operative, and of two women who are less involved, due to lack of interest or opportunity. Lupe, on the other hand, is a good example of the average experience of *socias* involved in the women's groups. Interestingly, Lupe's parents didn't speak a word of Spanish, which is fairly common, however because of their language barrier they never registered her birth (semi-standardised interview, March 25, 2005). Lupe's father gave her two hectares of land to grow organic coffee as he does, however because she needed identification to join the co-operative she had to move to Oaxaca City for a few months while she finally applied for a birth certificate and voter's card.

She is now in her late forties, and for the past six years she has been a member of the co-operative, and a part of the women's groups at the *Federación*, and for the past two years she has been in the organic programme. Lupe's husband is over ten years younger than she is and does not own his own land but helps Lupe with her coffee cultivation. He

follows Lupe to meetings at the *Federación* and even to Oaxaca City. He is involved and is a member as a husband of a *socia*, and seems to be very supportive of her work.

However, Lupe admits to me in private that sometimes he throws tantrums “like a small child” when he thinks she is too busy with her work in the co-operative.

Lupe is interested in any productive project, and is willing to work hard on her individual work and do her share of the organisational work for the project. Because she is known to be willing and able to work on collective projects she was permitted to partake in *CEPCO*'s pilot organic chicken project. Although that particular project was challenging due to the aforementioned problems, she has been successful in her portion of productive projects and able to recuperate her costs and deposit her share in the collective account. Lupe appreciates the productive projects for their financial benefits and for getting the *socias* involved. She says that now that she sees that the women can organise and work as well, she is more confident and capable of participating in the co-operative. She also notes that for herself and for other *socias*, involvement in the women's groups has increased participation in the co-operative.

I have presented two examples of *socias* who were very involved in the co-operative and in positions of leadership. I found that the more involved these *socias* became, with greater participation and in positions of leadership, the more they contributed to achieving gender equality in the co-operative, and their own personal empowerment. Beyond gaining status and respect, those in leadership in the co-operative became role models in the wider community. I also provided two examples of women whose lack of gender consciousness, and just mere circumstances, prohibited their involvement in the co-operative. There were also many women who were involved in the separate women's groups, the mixed gender organic programme, and attended the general

assemblies of the mixed gender co-operative. I provided an example of one such woman, who represented the average level of participation of a *socia* involved in the co-operative.

Many *socias* will occasionally put their names forward for the board of their community's women's group, but only a few are dedicated enough to want to be elected to the board of the women's organisation at the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'* because those positions require a lot more work. There are also many *socias* who still merely sell their coffee to the co-operative and never participate in meetings, assemblies or decision-making. Of the five women discussed above, the two who were most involved were single. As was the case overall in the regional organisations of *CEPCO*, support or discouragement from husbands and other family members can permit or prohibit the involvement of women in the co-operative, which is outside of the traditional gender role for women. However, the *socias* involved in the women's groups and in the organic programme, with support or despite social resistance, are breaking cultural barriers, and are making progress towards gender equality in the co-operative.

## Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusions

### 1. Influence of Fair Trade on women's empowerment

#### 1.1. Fair Trade regulations

I found the influence of Fair Trade on gender equality in coffee co-operatives to be indirect. "Fair Trade" is an ideological concept that theoretically promotes the empowerment of women. However, in my analysis of the Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) and *Comercio Justo* Standards, and through data collected at *CEPCO*, I found that these certification organisations that regulate Fair Trade in Mexico do not have secure mechanisms in place to ensure that the gender principles and objectives of the Fair Trade movement are implemented and achieved at the grassroots level. The FLO Standards showed a negative level of inclusion of standards towards gender equality in the WEF analysis, whereas the *Comercio Justo* Standards registered a neutral level according to the WEF analysis, but used more gender-sensitive language and showed more commitment to working towards gender objectives.

Perhaps the FLO Standards fail to include gender objectives because they are purposefully brief, and are only a guideline for national initiatives. The failure to include strong gender objectives at the FLO level did not inhibit the Mexican national initiative, *Comercio Justo*, from including stronger gender objectives. Likewise, although there doesn't seem to be a strong direct influence of the FLO or *Comercio Justo* Standards affecting the agenda for gender at *CEPCO*, *CEPCO* has created a strong programme to implement their own gender objectives to increase the organisation and participation of women. Therefore, I did not find a trickle-down effect of gender objectives being transferred and adapted from the Fair Trade principles of international partners to the

gender agenda of the co-operative, as expected from the literature review and theoretical framework of Fair Trade. Rather, it seems the gender objectives are stronger at the grassroots level and without a direct influence from the Fair Trade partners.

### 1.2. Social premium from Fair Trade sales

Another manner in which Fair Trade could have an impact on gender equality and women's empowerment in the coffee co-operative is through the social premium from the sale of coffee under a Fair Trade contract. Initially, the Fair Trade premium was being distributed equally among all participating producers in the regional organisations of *CEPCO*. However, under the recommendation of FLO, in 2001 it was decided in a monthly assembly meeting that the social premium should be used for development projects democratically decided upon in the regional assemblies. One regional organisation of *CEPCO* reportedly used the social premium towards the expenses of the women's groups' activities (Aranda & Morales, 2002). That was not the case in the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*, where the social premium has been used for infrastructure, installing lights in the warehouse last year, and buying a pick-up truck needed for the transportation of coffee with the savings from the social premium of past years.

Unfortunately, due to debt the co-operative cannot afford the electricity to run the newly installed lights. The social premium is a direct benefit of Fair Trade for the co-operative organisations, mostly being used for infrastructure development and small social development projects in the regional organisations of *CEPCO*. However, the social premium of Fair Trade has not largely been used to implement gender objectives, and therefore has not had a direct impact on the advancement of women's empowerment.

### 1.3. Indirect influence of Fair Trade

Although Fair Trade does not seem to *directly* impact gender equality, there are some indications that the fact that the co-operative belongs to a Fair Trade network is a key factor in women's empowerment. Past studies have found that Fair Trade is changing the traditional sexual division of labour, which excludes women from commercial farming, by providing opportunities for women to become involved in the co-operative in non-traditional roles (Murray *et al.*, 2003). Similarly in my research, I found that the success of the women's groups, productive projects, and women's increased participation in the co-operative were largely due to the fact that the co-operative was well-organised, had the support and guidance of the secondary level organisation and its social agenda. These strengths were developed through involvement in the Fair Trade network.

I also have some comparative perspective on the influence of Fair Trade from my interviews and observations. In Tenango, there was a coffee producer union that was not part of the Fair Trade network, and did not have women's organisations, productive projects, or any social programmes. Development and empowerment were not part of their agenda (informal interview, March 13, 2005). Comparatively, the Fair Trade coffee co-operative, the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'* showed greater gender equality than the non-Fair Trade union. Another example is that although *CEPCO* claims to not have been influenced directly by Fair Trade partners in creating the women's commission, time-wise the entry into the Fair Trade network and the beginning of the organisation of women coincided in the early 1990s. This may have coincided based on the perceived need to become more gender sensitive. An Oxfam America representative claimed that coffee co-operatives realise that Fair Trade partners expect them to be gender sensitive, and

therefore work to at least have a more gender sensitive image (Betsy Rakocy, representative of the Central America and Mexico programmes, February 6, 2004). This is an indication of how Fair Trade can indirectly influence gender issues in coffee co-operatives.

For my research, I treated the Fair Trade coffee co-operative as the Fair Trade entity, within which women's empowerment took place. I concentrated more on women's participation in coffee co-operatives that are structured by the Fair Trade requirements than on the impact of Fair Trade upon women, knowing that it was indirect, and also difficult to measure because of so many external and cultural variables. However, clearly more comparative research needs to be done to better understand the correlation between Fair Trade, and women's equality and empowerment, which I will expand upon below.

## **2. Factors in Women's Empowerment in Coffee Co-operatives**

### **2.1. 'Conscientisation'**

The women's commission at *CEPCO* began through a 'conscientisation' campaign, and through addressing issues of welfare in the productive projects of the women's groups. According to the Women's Empowerment Framework, because the five levels of equality are hierarchical it is not necessary to address the lower levels of equality to achieve the greatest extent of empowerment (March *et al.*, 1999). Nonetheless, 'conscientisation' seems to have been a key factor in initiating the organisation and participation of women, and could be a key factor in furthering the achievements at the higher levels of equality, since traditional gender norms remain a cultural barrier. Attitudes and opinions about women's involvement in the co-operative seem to be changing with time in the younger generations. This 'generational' difference

is congruent with past research that found that newer co-operatives seem more willing to provide opportunities for women to participate not only as producers, but also as co-operative leaders, than well-established co-operatives run by older generations (Murray *et al.*, 2003).

## 2.2. Separate women-only groups

Women first became involved in *CEPCO* and the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'* through the organisation of the separate women's commission and women's groups. Gender and Development theorists debate whether empowerment can be achieved in separate women's groups, or if gender issues need to be mainstreamed within mixed gender groups. In my research, I found that through organising in separate women-only groups, *socias* not only gained access to the co-operative, the productive resources therein, and gained self-confidence and knowledge, but also the participation of women in the co-operative's mixed gender programmes and meetings increased.

The *socias* involved in the women's groups at the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'* participated more in the general assemblies of the co-operative than *socias* not involved in women's groups, or any other special project. This is consistent with past research that has found that the *socios* involved in the organic programme, due to the level of commitment needed, also become more involved in the general assemblies (Aranada & Morales, 2002). Of the organic programme, 48% were women (93 women out of 192 organic producers), and 42% of them (39 out of the 93 organic *socias*) were also involved in the women's groups. The women that were involved in the organic programme and the women's groups were more active, attending and participating in decision-making, in the general assemblies, than women not committed to special projects. However, there were

also some *socias* in the women's groups, and some in the organic programme who did not attend co-operative meetings unless it had to do with their particular project.

Generally, involvement in a separate group led to increased involvement in the general co-operative activities and meetings. In this way, separate women-only groups contributed to empowerment by increasing equality of access, participation, and control, and increased the grounded category of self-confidence. I conclude from my research that a separate women's group can be useful in achieving empowerment particularly as a starting point for mainstreaming gender issues within the broader mixed gender group. Likewise, debates on the topic usually conclude that some mixture of the two approaches is often necessary (March *et al.*, 1999).

### 2.3. Intra-household factors

I focused more on women's productive labour within the sphere of the co-operative than within the household. However, as they are very much interrelated, I did find intra-household dynamics are a factor in permitting or prohibiting the involvement of women in the co-operative, as was presented in the analysis in Chapter 5. Likewise, past research has found that the increased number of female-headed households due to emigration is another contributing factor to the increase in women's participation directly in productive activities in the co-operative (Aranda, 2000). Both men and women are emigrating out of rural areas to urban centres. When it is a man that is absent from a household, the household labour cannot be divided along traditional lines, which allows for the change of traditional gender roles and women's entry into the co-operative. In my research, the two women who were the most involved in the co-operative, with the most participation and in the highest level of leadership and control, were single. Leonor's husband had left her, and her children were grown and had moved away. Maria was

never married, and she only had one son. Perhaps, not only does the traditional sexual division of labour change with the absence of a male head of household, but the women also face less resistance to dedicating the amount of time required to hold a position of control in the co-operative. Although the productive responsibilities increase for female-headed households, so does their power in those productive decisions.

I also noted that those in positions of leadership in the co-operative have the time, and particularly the financial resources, to spend on the co-op because they have diverse sources of income, and are less dependent on coffee production alone. For example, Leonor owned a restaurant run by her elderly mother, and the secretary of the *Federación* owned a pick-up truck for transport, which his sons drove. These alternate sources of income, not only made these co-operative leaders less dependent on coffee production but gave them the financial resources to travel for their position, and the free time to dedicate to the co-operative without remuneration. This indicates that those in positions of leadership at the *Federación* have a slight class advantage over the general membership. However, unlike other studies of governmental and non-governmental fieldworkers, I did not find that the leaders of the co-operative tried to distance themselves from the project participants, in this case co-operative members, through class and gender hierarchies (Goetz, 1997). As leaders of the co-operative they are in charge of overseeing the implementation of development projects and are thus comparable to fieldworkers in development agencies.

#### 2.4. Key individuals

Goetz argues that fieldworkers' discretion in the implementing of development projects affects the project outcomes, emphasising the key role of individuals in development organisations (1997). She also argues that fieldworkers are often stuck

between becoming 'local heroes' by being advocates of the people's needs, and the pressure to conform to the priorities of the project design. The leaders of Fair Trade coffee co-operatives are elected into the positions, and I found that the interest of their fellow members who elected them is their utmost concern, while adhering to Fair Trade regulations. I also found that leaders influenced the project design by using their own discretion when it came to including and excluding women from the productive projects of the women's groups. One elected president of a women's group committee told me that she would not allow certain women to join who she knew to be uncommitted to group work or "too lazy" to do her own share (interview, March 25, 2005).

Individuals played a key role in affecting development projects, particularly in the case of the women's organisation. Dra. Josefina Aranda is the key individual largely responsible for initiating and promoting the organisation of women in the coffee co-operatives, despite the lack of encouragement from Fair Trade partners. Aranda did not have an impact independent from the project design, but rather designed the project itself. She, along with other founding members of *CEPCO*, implemented an organisational process whereby the male and female directors of *CEPCO* spoke with the male and female directors of the regional organisations, using key individuals in leadership positions to disseminate the gender objectives to the entire membership. The initial implementation of women's groups was an organisational process from this key individual at *CEPCO* to the regional co-operatives, and its continuation is largely dependent on key individuals at the secondary and primary levels. At the secondary level, Aranda and the other advisors of the women's commission work to maintain funding and projects for the women's groups. At the primary level, the *socias* at the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'* claim that they could not continue to work successfully without

the leadership of Leonor, the director of the women's organisation (informal interviews). As I noted in my analysis, there was a role modelling effect whereby co-operative leaders gained respect and status, which is consistent with the local hero side of the fieldworkers' discretion argument that individuals influence project design and the implementation of development projects.

### **3. Fair Trade, Development and Empowerment**

#### **3.1. Suggestions to further women's equality and empowerment**

My analysis found that although advancements had been made towards women's equality and empowerment in the Fair Trade coffee co-operatives, equality had not been fully achieved at any of the five levels of the WEF analysis. Women's welfare was addressed by the productive projects of the women's groups, however not strategically in relation to the welfare of men. To improve equality of welfare, the women's groups, or the mixed gender co-operative, could focus on women's gender-specific needs. For example, I observed that there are very few supplies or caregivers to aid in childbirth resulting in maternal mortality.

The Fair Trade Standards state that there is to be no form of discrimination based on sex, or any other attribute. For there to be greater equality of access, this rule needs to be enforced in the co-operatives, which requires the 'conscientisation' of leaders and members to change ingrained beliefs about gender roles. To improve 'conscientisation', the third WEF level of equality, I suggest holding workshops with *socios* and *socias*, as was done at *CEPCO* to initiate the organisation and participation of women. However, now that the participation of women has increased, furthering gender awareness would facilitate the process of women gaining more equality in the co-operative. Another 'conscientisation' campaign through *CEPCO* could also be a means for mainstreaming

gender issues in its regional organisations. In other words, the 'conscientisation' efforts should not just raise awareness about gender issues, but should also seek to implement them by having gender criteria added to the internal regulations at each regional organisation.

Greater equality of access and participation at the secondary organisational level, in the general assembly of *CEPCO*, would require that there be greater equality of participation and control at the primary level, in the regional organisations. In other words, if more women were elected onto the board of directors in the regional assemblies than there would be more women representatives in the general assembly at *CEPCO*. Furthermore, the *socia* elected director of the women's commission at *CEPCO* is made a member of the board of directors of *CEPCO*. This should be implemented at the primary level as well. Making the director of the women's organisation at each regional organisation a board member would increase equality of control at the primary level of producer organisation.

In order for Fair Trade to have a greater impact on gender issues in coffee co-operatives, I suggest that FLO and national certification initiatives, such as *Comercio Justo* in Mexico, include the Fair Trade gender objectives in their membership requirements. This would make efforts towards gender equality mandatory and regulated. International Fair Trade partners could also use more informal mechanisms to inform secondary level organisations, that are less gender aware than *CEPCO*, about the Fair Trade gender principles. For example, there should be more verbal communication and exchange visits between Northern and Southern Fair Trade partners where the Fair Trade principles are discussed, since one of the basic premises of Fair Trade is that it shortens and humanises the commodity chain. From the perspective of cultural relativism, this

suggestion would mean partners from developed countries would be “imposing their views” upon partners in developing countries. However, the Fair Trade Standards, designed by Northern and Southern partners, explicitly state that all partners must share and uphold the Fair Trade principles, which include social principles that may contradict traditional gender norms (FLO, 2004). Fair Trade is indeed a moral movement seeking social and economic justice for disadvantaged Southern producers. For its ideals of justice to be achieved, all partners must share these ideals and be willing to implement them.

### 3.2. Possible further research

All Fair Trade coffee co-operatives have not had such concerted efforts towards women’s empowerment as *CEPCO*. In accordance with the Fair Trade principle of solidarity, *CEPCO* has held many conferences and workshops with women’s groups of other Fair Trade coffee co-operatives all over Mexico and Central America. An interesting area for further research would be to see what impact these ‘co-op to co-op’ solidarity networks have on the progress towards women’s equality and empowerment in Fair Trade coffee co-operatives.

In order to fully understand the impact of Fair Trade on gender equality and women’s empowerment in coffee co-operatives further research should be conducted. This research should be wider in scope, examining how Fair Trade directly and indirectly affects gender equality in numerous case studies, perhaps even over various countries. Furthermore, further research should include the comparative aspect between Fair Trade certified coffee co-operatives, and non-certified coffee co-operatives, which would elucidate what outcomes are attributable to membership in a Fair Trade network. One interesting case study would be of a coffee co-operative named La Selva, in Chiapas,

Mexico. This co-operative had been Fair Trade certified but lost its certification because it could no longer meet the Fair Trade regulations (Gonzalez Cabañas, 2002). It would be interesting to see how gender issues were affected before, during, and after participation in the Fair Trade network.

Further research on gender and Fair Trade could take into consideration other aspects, such as land ownership. In the case of the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'*, *socias* had bought or inherited their individual parcels of land, but the land in Tenango had never been under the *ejido* system of collective farming (Aranda, 2000). However, in the case of La Selva, there were disputes between the descendants of *ejido* members and their neighbours, who were also members of La Selva but had no rights in the *Unión de Ejidos*. In this case it would be interesting to examine how women's land rights under the *ejido* system affects their involvement in the coffee co-operative.

My research focused on how Fair Trade and other factors influence women's empowerment in coffee co-operatives. However, I did not investigate how women's involvement in Fair Trade coffee co-operatives could actually be counter-productive in the struggle towards women's empowerment. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Moser's theory (1993) of the triple role of women is that in addition to their productive and reproductive work women are often expected to contribute their free labour to the community in their "free time". The productive and community labour that women contribute to the co-operative benefits them, their families and communities with small remuneration and the service that development projects provide. However, often women's workloads at home are not compensated for the increased work outside of the home, meaning that their involvement in the co-operative can actually increase their burden rather than alleviate it. Women's empowerment versus the burden of increased

workload from involvement in the co-operative is another possible area for further research.

### 3.3. Conclusions

Fair Trade has had a beneficial impact on producer communities, empowering Southern producers. It is a viable development alternative in the context of the coffee crisis. However, neither Northern advocates nor Southern participants claim that Fair Trade is a panacea. In fact, *CEPCO* encourages producers who live in areas that are less than ideal for the cultivation of coffee (e.g. at too low of an altitude) to switch to another crop, and even provide the technical and educational support to do so. Fair Trade is not the only alternative, and may not be the alternative for everyone. Coffee producers need to diversify their income-generating activities to become less dependent on coffee. In the bigger picture, changes need to be made to the unjust, misdistribution of wealth and power in the structure of the international coffee industry. Meanwhile, Fair Trade remains, and continues to grow as, a viable development strategy, empowering disadvantaged Southern producers, and promoting sustainable development for coffee producing communities. As such, it must equally promote the empowerment and development of women to fulfil its social principles and objectives.

I found that Fair Trade indirectly impacts gender equality and women's empowerment in coffee co-operatives. Fair Trade networks provide organisational strengthening and provide opportunities for producer organisations to implement sustainable development strategies and work towards producer empowerment and women's empowerment, as well. *CEPCO* and the *Federación 'Zapata Vive'* showed remarkable progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment in a traditionally male sector, which was largely attributable to the initiative and dedication of

key individuals. Aranda and the other advisors of *CEPCO* initiated a ‘conscientisation’ campaign to raise awareness about gender issues by talking to the leaders of the regional organisations who in turn talked to their *socios*. The gender objectives to promote women’s separate organisation and participation in the mixed gender co-operatives were implemented, and were largely successful in increasing gender equality at the five levels of the WEF analysis, showing progress towards women’s empowerment.

The grounded analysis also showed achievements in personal empowerment. Women gained self-confidence in their productive capabilities through the projects of the separate women’s groups, which increased their ability and willingness to participate in the mixed-gender general assemblies, leadership and decision-making. They also gained respect and status, and leaders became role models within the wider community. I found that through their involvement in the Fair Trade coffee co-operatives women members gained personal empowerment, and contributed to achieving gender equality within the co-operative.

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