

FAIR TRADE REBELS

**COFFEE PRODUCTION
& STRUGGLES FOR
AUTONOMY IN CHIAPAS**

LINDSAY NAYLOR

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Diverse Economies and Livable Worlds

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Lindsay Naylor

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University of Minnesota Press
Minneapolis
London

Portions of chapter 3 were originally published as “Auditing the Subjects of Fair Trade: Coffee, Development, and Surveillance in Highland Chiapas,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 35, no. 5 (2017): 816–35, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775817694031>. Portions of chapter 4 were originally published as “Fair Trade Coffee Exchanges and Community Economies,” *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 50, no. 5 (2018): 1027–46, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X18768287>.

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Published by the University of Minnesota Press
111 Third Avenue South, Suite 290
Minneapolis, MN 55401-2520
<http://www.upress.umn.edu>

ISBN 978-1-4529-6247-4

A Cataloging-in-Publication record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

The University of Minnesota is an equal-opportunity educator and employer.

To all those who are struggling for a “world in which many worlds fit”

Quisieron enterrarnos, pero se les olvidó que somos semillas.

They wanted to bury us, but they forgot that we are seeds.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

EZLN Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation)

FLO Fairtrade Labeling Organization, now called Fairtrade International

FLO-CERT global certification body for Fairtrade

FTAO Fair Trade Advocacy Office

FTUSA Fair Trade USA, formerly Transfair USA

ICA International Coffee Agreement

INMECAFE Instituto Mexicano del Café (Mexican Coffee Institute)

MAREZ Municipios Autónomos Rebeldes Zapatistas (Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities)

MAYACERT Organic Certification Organization, Mexico

NAFTA North American Free Trade Agreement

PAN Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party)

PRD Partido Revolucionario Democrático (Democratic Revolutionary Party)

PRI Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party)

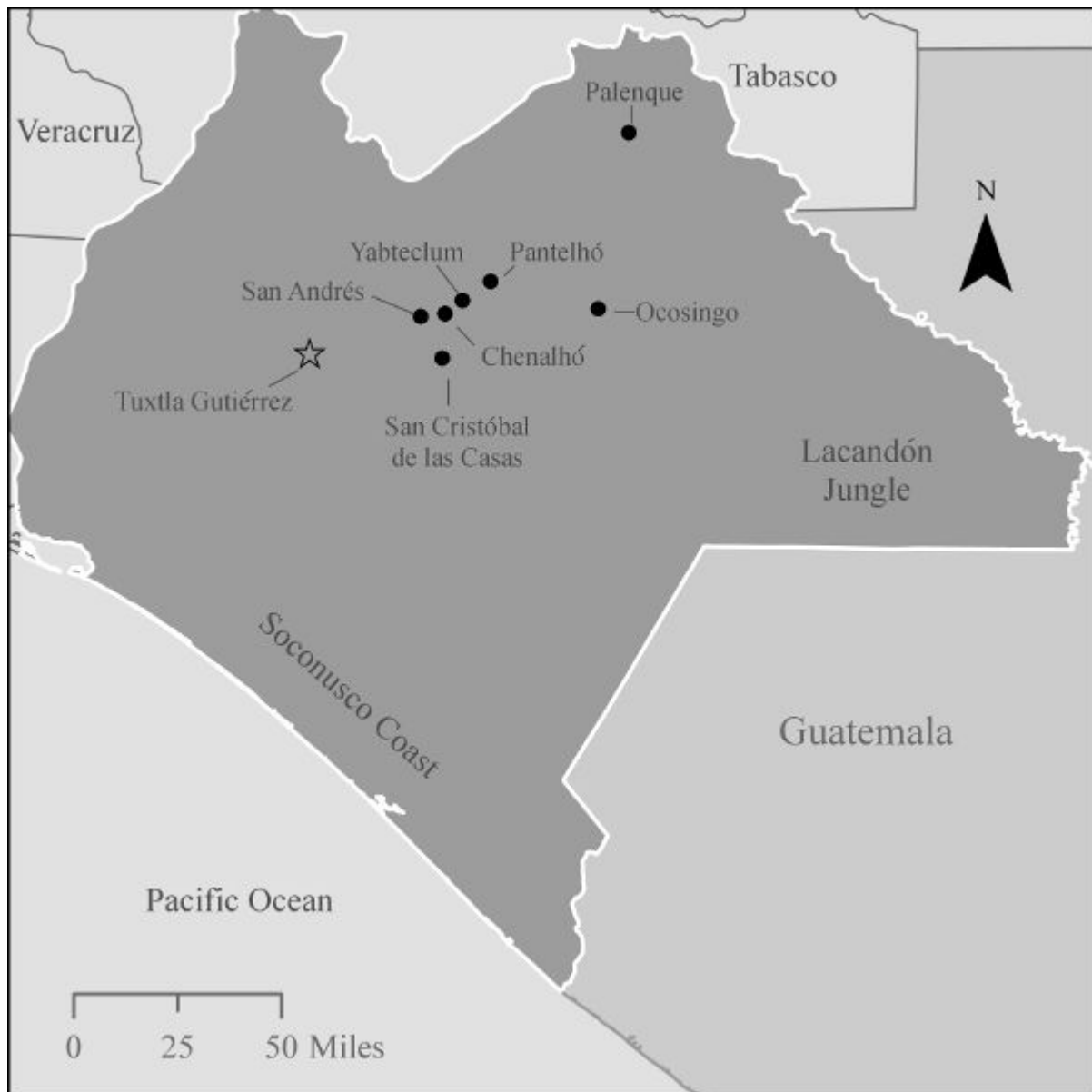
PROCAMPO Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo (Program for Direct Assistance in Agriculture)

PROCEDE Programa de Certificación de Derechos Ejidales y Titulación de Solares (Program for the Certification of Ejido Land Rights and the Titling of Urban House Plots)

Maps



Map 1. Map of Mexico, highlighting Chiapas state.
Cartography by Nathan Thayer.



Map 2. Chiapas state, with key cities and towns.
Cartography by Nathan Thayer.

Introduction

A “Window to Better Money”

From under the brim of a straw cowboy hat, a rebel *campesino* looked up at the delegation of students and teachers that had come to his community in the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico, to learn about rebel autonomy. “We are in resistance,” he declared. “We were obligated to rise up for liberty, democracy, dignity for the world. But the government doesn’t want to recognize the indigenous.” I sat on a wooden bench at the back, observing and making notes. His words echoing in my ears, I flipped back to my notes from a few days prior. I had spoken with another group of *campesinos/as* about rebel autonomous health promotion. Discussing efforts to maintain healthy communities required a conversation about resistance. The group explained to me that the official government (called the “bad government” by rebel *campesinos/as*) works to destabilize their endeavors. “This is the war of five hundred years, the attack on the indigenous peoples.”

Spoken days apart, these statements capture the daily vocabulary of indigenous Maya corn and coffee producers who strive to maintain their ways of life and their livelihoods in a local, regional, and global context that delegitimizes such practices and renders them invisible. In the highlands, daily agricultural acts of cultivating corn and coffee are acts of resistance. These are people who self-identify as peasants (*campesinos/as*) and have been fighting for land and access to resources for centuries.^[1] Agricultural production is part of larger autonomy struggles in the highlands. In attempting to maintain their livelihoods as subsistence cultivators, they undertake a number of strategies, and many of these producers cultivate coffee under fair trade certification.

These small producers are not unique, as many peasants worldwide deploy a range of activities beyond those of subsistence. Yet, the livelihood strategies put into practice by rebel *campesinos/as* differ from those of their contemporaries. Peasants around the world are increasingly drawn into state processes and capitalist relations, for example, receiving subsidies or other cash payment programs from the government, selling their labor, or relying

on cyclical migration and the substantial remittance economy. Rebel *campesinos/as*, on the other hand, mostly eschew these strategies and have renegotiated economic and state relations through cooperative production, global networking, and struggling for autonomy. While there are many sites of cooperative production, in the highlands, coffee cultivation for the fair trade marketplace represents a key site where local and global forces meet. It was this pivot point that first brought me to Chiapas, where I asked questions about how actors participating in social movements, who had declared autonomy from the state and deployed their production practices as sites of resistance, had harnessed the fair trade marketplace.

Fair Trade Rebels is a book about *campesinos/as* in the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico, attempting to create dignified livelihoods.^[2] It is about struggle, and difference, and recognition. At the center of this story are local struggles that are interceded by connections to global networks. A core function of these networks is providing spaces of knowledge exchange and solidarity. While fair trade certification is premised on creating commodity trading relations tied to a price floor, a premium for economic improvement, and standards for sustainable production and community development, its character is changed in this place.

The title *Fair Trade Rebels* speaks to a specific community of people—not bound by borders—and a set of autonomous agricultural practices that facilitate resistance to state processes and capitalist relations. The very existence of this community of people rebels against narratives that seek to explain peasant–state and/or peasant–capitalist relations. Indeed, pro-economic development discourses would describe fair trade certified production as providing better access to commodity markets and fair prices, yet this explanation is limiting when trying to understand the practices of *campesinos/as* in the highlands. Similar to their contemporaries, they do access fair trade as a market and relate to it as a price, yet for some, fair trade provides the possibility of telling a story, not just about capitalist relations, but about community relations and the ongoing struggle of indigenous peoples in their “five-hundred-year struggle.” To better understand this struggle and where fair trade fits (or not), I am not asking if fair trade works, but instead I ask how it is understood and practiced in the context of resistance. The findings detailed in this book demonstrate that the production of coffee for the fair trade marketplace both complements and complicates the diverse practices and struggles of indigenous rebel

campesinos/as. I highlight this crucial point here because this is not a struggle that pits subsistence against neoliberalism, or the so-called binary of traditional versus modern; it is a struggle to live well while making visible indigenous knowledges and practices.



Figure 1. Patchwork of coffee and corn fields in the highlands of Chiapas. Photograph by the author.

The Five-Hundred-Year Struggle

Although development interventions in the twentieth century highlighted the struggles of marginalized peoples worldwide, the struggles of indigenous peoples stretch across a long history of forced assimilation, otherization, and invisibilization. Indeed, as the end of the Mayan calendar approached in 2012, many popular accounts discussed the Mayan people in past tense, despite their continued existence across the Americas. It is impossible to understand the statement made by the indigenous Mayan *campesino* in resistance at the opening of this book regarding the “war of

five hundred years,” without establishing its basis in the *encubrimiento* of the Americas and the creation of “Indios.”

Prior to the arrival of the conquistadores in the Americas in 1492 and the 1500s, there were no “Indians” in Latin America (Mignolo 2002). Through the conquest, racial constructions were imposed on the indigenous population, simultaneously creating Europe’s “other” and distinguishing between the conqueror and the conquered. The creation of narratives of racialized/naturalized difference was utilized as a structure that tied people of diverse origins and belief systems to particular economic statuses that allowed for labor exploitation and dispossession (Quijano 2008). Such narratives of naturalized difference served to maintain the legitimacy of occupation and subjugation of the peoples of what became the Americas (Quijano 2008). The construction of race created new identities for these peoples—as “Indio”—and indigenous identities fell under European cultural, economic, and epistemological hegemony. The conquest also marked, not what has been long hailed as the *descubrimiento* (discovery) of the Americas, but the *encubrimiento* (covering over) or negation of the “dignity and identity of the other cultures” (Dussel 1995, 66). The elevation of the European and invisibilization of the non-European is the foundation of the five-hundred-year war on indigenous practices and ways of knowing and understanding the world.

In October 1992, the quincentennial anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the Americas was celebrated. At the same time, an indigenous-led protest against five hundred years of oppression was staged throughout Mexico (Stephen 2002, 136–41). Both events point to the underlying issue of the fundamental exclusion of indigenous identities, economies, and knowledges in Mexico and made public this long-standing exclusion and desires for recognition. These moments were climactic events that raised questions about the continued celebration of the *encubrimiento* of the Americas and violence against indigenous peoples and set the stage for a long-fomenting rebellion in Mexico.

On January 1, 1994, as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into force, the social movement and rebel group Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation, EZLN) staged a public uprising in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas. Armed and wearing masks, the indigenous Mayan rebels revealed themselves for the first time—on what became a world stage—through the

seizure of town centers and the occupation of land in the highlands and the eastern part of the state. Most visible was their seizure of city hall in the former colonial seat of San Cristóbal de las Casas. Their declaration of war, as announced in the “First Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle” (1993), was a proclamation of the continued existence and subjugation of indigenous peoples in the Americas:

We are a product of 500 years of struggle: first against slavery, then during the War of Independence against Spain led by insurgents, then to avoid being absorbed by North American imperialism, then to promulgate our constitution and expel the French empire from our soil, and later the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz denied us the just application of the Reform laws and the people rebelled and leaders like Villa and Zapata emerged, poor men just like us. We have been denied the most elemental preparation so they can use us as cannon fodder and pillage the wealth of our country. They don't care that we have nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a roof over our heads, no land, no work, no health care, no food nor education. Nor are we able to freely and democratically elect our political representatives, nor is there independence from foreigners, nor is there peace or justice for ourselves and our children.

But today, we say ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

The armed uprising lasted twelve days, but the struggle remains. This struggle is embodied by indigenous Maya, the so-called Indians in Mexico.

On November 7, 2016, the National Indigenous Congress in Mexico together with the EZLN agreed to put forth an indigenous woman candidate for the 2018 presidential race (Zibechi 2016). In a communiqué released by the EZLN, Subcomandante Insurgente Galeano stated that the purpose of running the candidate was not to seek power but to dismantle it from below: “we make a call to construct peace and justice reweaving ourselves from below, from where we are what we are” (Zibechi 2016). Part of the ongoing struggle of indigenous social movements in Chiapas is to retain their visibility not just as rebels seeking autonomy but also as agents of change.

In the two decades that have passed since the uprising of the Zapatistas, Chiapas has changed. It has also in many ways stayed the same. For example, paved roads facilitate the transfer of goods, people, and military supplies, connecting communities in the highlands to municipal seats and the city of San Cristóbal de las Casas. At the same time, the indigenous communities that populate the landscape continue to cultivate corn and coffee and struggle from their long-standing and present position in racialized hierarchies. Although the discourses and practices of resistance take many shapes for rebel *campesinos/as*, they remain sedimented in communities as the struggle continues (Naylor 2017a; see also Nelson 2003). This existence is the struggle of five hundred years, the struggle of indigenous peoples to be visible and to be met where they are.

***Campesinos/as* in Resistance**

Fair Trade Rebels focuses in on the mundane and everyday acts of the people who make up this struggle, the indigenous *campesinos/as* in resistance. It is not focused on the rebellion or the Zapatista movement but on the actors who embody the struggle set forth and who were propelled forward in the watershed moment of 1994 and continue today. The resistance is made up of actors who may support any number of movements, including the Zapatistas, and also solidarity movements within and beyond highland Chiapas; this group includes Zapatistas and their support base members who are adherents to the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle as well as members of Sociedad Civil Las Abejas, who are in solidarity with the Zapatistas but are a distinct pacifist group.^[3] Because my analysis focuses not on a social movement but instead on a community of people who embody the struggle, I collectively refer to these actors as “*campesinos/as* in resistance.” This moniker, along with “fair rebels,” allows me to discuss a heterogeneous group of people who have similar strategies but are not all part of the same mobilizations, place-based communities, or coffee cooperatives. I use the term resistance for two reasons: first and foremost because *campesinos/as* refer to themselves as being “in resistance,”^[4] and second, because, as *Fair Trade Rebels* will show, there are many ways of knowing and understanding resistance, and indigenous knowledges and practices help to shed light on this. *Campesinos/as* additionally refer to themselves as *socios*, which indicates

their membership in coffee cooperatives; I use this term to refer specifically to those participants who are producing coffee. In *Fair Trade Rebels*, the focus is on those *campesinos/as* (peasants, as they self-identify) who are struggling to put autonomous resistance as well as the political and rights discourses made visible by the Zapatista rebellion into practice through maintaining agricultural production for subsistence and also shade-grown coffee for the fair trade marketplace.

Over the past century, the re-formation of peasant identities and diverse livelihoods in Mexico has taken shape alongside demands for recognition, local autonomy, and efforts to build global solidarity networks. In Chiapas State, *campesinos/as* have long observed economic development practices, which are concentrated on “modernizing” rural areas. However, these investments are less concerned with improving resource access for the peasantry and have more to do with capturing rural resources for a wealthy rural minority and a growing urban populace. Hydroelectric projects that disrupted water and foodways were accompanied by electrical lines that ran, not to peasant homes, but over their communities, providing services to a distant urban population. Oil exploration and drilling, deforestation, cattle grazing, oil palm cultivation, and violence (to name a few) displaced peasants from their areas of production. State reorganization around neoliberal principles changed the mechanisms available to peasants for accessing land while also reducing price supports for basic commodities, which fundamentally changed their livelihoods. In these processes and practices, the state forgot who these peasants are.

Access to land and agricultural resources is a long-standing demand of indigenous people in the region and remains a key issue that shapes contemporary political identities in highland Chiapas. Even today, land (and agricultural support) remains unevenly distributed, with the vast majority of lands owned by wealthy individuals and corporations or through the consolidation of newly titled PROCEDE (Programa de Certificación de Derechos Ejidales y Titulación de Solares; Program for the Certification of Ejido Land Rights and the Titling of Urban House Plots) lands, which I will discuss in more depth in chapter 2. Historically, the cry of Emiliano Zapata for “Land and Liberty” in the Mexican Revolution (1910–20) very much represented the landless peasant population (Stephen 2002). In 1930, 4 percent of landowners controlled 67 percent of arable land in Chiapas, and only 3 percent of land was cultivated communally; by 2000, with land

reform and land redistribution, 33 percent was held privately and 57 percent was communal land holdings (with 10 percent allocated to national parks and urban areas) (Bobrow-Strain 2007, 136). Thus land reform became an important and hard-won feature of the 1917 Constitution, and although uneven, land redistribution midcentury had the effect of breaking down some large landholdings and redistributing them in Chiapas. Yet there were long delays in gaining access to land that could not be overcome by state-indigenous clientelism (see Bobrow-Strain 2004), and by the time of the Zapatista uprising in 1994, unmet land claims totaled more than one million hectares in Chiapas (Harvey 1998, 216). Indeed, the consolidation of power by the state in the post-Revolutionary period led to an estrangement between indigenous groups and the state (Rus 1994).

Another important event took place in 1992 that demonstrated the long-standing rupture of indigenous relations with the state: the decision of the government to amend Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution, ending land redistribution and calling for the titling/privatization of existing landholdings. An indigenous-led protest against Article 27 reform and the impending approval of NAFTA was held in Ocosingo, Chiapas, in January 1992. However, by the end of 1992, NAFTA was moving forward, and so was dissent in Chiapas. And here were the murmurings of resistance and rebellion that would later be shouted in January 1994.



Figure 2. Mural painted on the front of a communal meeting space in the Zapatista Caracol of Oventik. Photograph by the author.

The discourses of resistance that are embodied by *campesinos/as* and sedimented in communities in the highlands of Chiapas emerge from social movement foundations that can be traced back to indigenous organizing in the 1970s.^[5] Early efforts by indigenous groups were primarily focused on demanding access to government services (e.g., infrastructure, markets, controlled prices, land). The lack of government response to repeated demands led many to begin working with guerilla groups, and in 1980, the EZLN was formed (Stephen 2002, 134; on the origins and split from the FLN [Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional; National Liberation Forces], see Cedillo 2012). The organization of the EZLN and their members' military training were clandestine. EZLN campaigns for membership in the southeast and the highlands took on the more innocuous form of health and literacy programs (Stephen 2002, 134); as a result of this focus, young people, and women in particular, were recruited for armed training outside

of the highlands.[6] These campaigns in the 1980s were critical to the early success of the group. However, the collapse of coffee prices in 1989 was perhaps the most important moment of recruitment for the EZLN (Collier and Quaratiello 2005; Martínez-Torres 2006; Stephen 2002); as communities began to feel acutely the loss of income from coffee production, more and more *campesinos/as* started secretly to participate in the EZLN.

In the years of formation, recruitment, and training, the EZLN had as their base the southeastern rainforest. At the same time, other groups took shape elsewhere. In the highlands, indigenous groups continued to experience political and economic injustice, insecure land tenure, and conflicts over land. In 1992, in response to the imbalance of gendered land ownership and a particular incident of violence against women seeking land, representatives from a number of communities in the official highland municipality of Chenalhó formed a coalition to defend women's rights to land (Tavanti 2003, 4) and to protest the violence.[7] The group called themselves Las Abejas, and they quickly merged with Sociedad Civil, a pacifist group established as part of the Catholic dioceses' peace process. Together, they adopted a nonviolent approach to supporting the Zapatista rebellion and took the name Sociedad Civil Las Abejas (Civil Society of the Bees, which I will refer to as Las Abejas) to symbolize their collective work and spiritual identity (Moksnes 2012; see also Nash 2001; Tavanti 2003). Unlike the EZLN, Las Abejas were not clandestine in their struggle. Shortly after their formation in December 1992, the group participated in a nonviolent protest march from the highland town of Yabteclum to the valley city of San Cristóbal de las Casas.

These two groups—the Zapatistas and Las Abejas—are populated by indigenous peoples. In the highlands, these indigenous people are first and foremost corn and coffee producers. These social movement actors take on roles within the resistance alongside their everyday activities as subsistence and fair trade coffee producers. At the same time, these *campesinos/as* are the living, breathing embodiment of the struggle. *Fair Trade Rebels* is about how the struggle and resistance set in motion by social movements are written into the landscape and onto the bodies of the *campesinos/as* who support them. These are the *campesinos/as* in resistance. These are the fair rebels.

“A Window to Better Money”

Why *fair* rebels? *Campesinos/as* in resistance cultivate coffee for the fair trade market, but their identities and politics are not defined by fair trade certification. As noted earlier, *campesinos/as* who participate in social movements in the highlands refer to themselves as “in resistance,” and this resistance is a defining characteristic of their everyday lives as *campesinos/as*. As part of their struggle, they demand a fairer price for the goods that they sell in the marketplace. In the case of coffee, this is tied to production for certification. Certified coffee from Zapatista and Las Abejas cooperatives is branded and sold in U.S. markets as “peace” or “rebel” coffee. Yet, when asked about the benefits of fair trade certification, *campesinos/as* in resistance often shrug. Throughout the highlands, fair trade is considered *comercio más justo*, “more-fair trade” (as in more fair than free trade), but as one *campesino* explained, “it’s a window to better money.” This depiction is not necessarily tied to quantity (as in more money) but is qualitatively different, connected instead to a consistent buyer, their social movement practices, and their stories, which are shared through wide-ranging networks. It is these experiences and perspectives that form the foundation of the analysis in the chapters that follow. In this analysis, I demonstrate that the case of fair rebels provides an opening for thinking about fair trade differently.

Campesinos/as in the highlands have been growing coffee since the 1960s and 1970s, when it was introduced by the National Indigenous Institute as a solution to poverty in rural areas (Martínez-Torres 2006, 53), a history I will discuss in more depth in chapter 2. Prior to the collapse of the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) in 1989 and the dismantling of the state coffee agency, the Mexican Coffee Institute (INMECAFE), producers and cooperatives had a consistent buyer and price expectations. The collapse of the ICA coupled with neoliberal restructuring in Mexico had a significant impact on coffee producers in the highlands, who had to rely on the meager and fluctuating payments offered by intermediaries (*coyotes*) for their coffee beans. Following the 1994 uprising and the declaration that they would not interact with the Mexican state, a number of Zapatista-affiliated coffee producers in the highlands split off from existing cooperatives to form their own. Consistent with the requests of the Zapatista-aligned cooperatives with which I worked, I will not use the names, specific locations, or any other identifying details of these cooperatives. The

cooperative of Las Abejas, called Maya Vinic (Mayan Man), was also established through splitting from existing cooperatives and through forming economic relations based on solidarity. Consistent with the demands of Las Abejas for peace and justice, and at the request of the leadership of the cooperative, I use the name of their cooperative and make visible their places of production to create a new space for their stories. The formation of cooperatives and, later, the introduction of fair trade certification created opportunities for producer cooperatives to partner with buyers, lock in a stable price each season, and activate their politics in new ways.

Fair trade, put simply, is simultaneously constituted by movements and a market that are designed to provide secure market access and commodity prices for marginalized producers. It has been hailed by scholars and practitioners as a panacea for impoverished rural populations and damned within the same groups as a neoliberal solution to a neoliberal problem. Fair trade is evaluated as a development fix in impoverished communities and assessed as to whether it is working for producers. The purpose of this book is not to test the successes and failures of the fair trade market but to look at fair trade differently as a site of exchange and to examine how it is practiced by *campesinos/as* in resistance as part of a broader and diverse political-economic approach in their struggle. In the highlands, the harnessing of the fair trade market is just one of many strategies used by *campesinos/as* in resistance in their efforts to maintain their lives and livelihoods while building livable worlds.

If we read fair trade as a “window” for *campesinos/as* in resistance, we can begin to imagine multiple vantage points. Certification is a “window to better money,” yet it is also a window on the world, which allows us to ask questions about who opens and/or closes this window and how the view differs looking from the inside out and the outside in. The sale of coffee on the fair trade market is not just about selling coffee; it is about creating connections beyond the highlands and building new nodes in the network of resistance that flows through the highlands. *Fair Trade Rebels* tells the story of a place, but it is not a static, local account of the highlands and *campesinos/as* in resistance. Investigating fair trade certification in the highlands provides an entry point for considering diverse localized political and economic initiatives that are practiced by *campesinos/as* in resistance and how they channel political and economic practices that are global in

scale. Indeed, the engagement with the fair trade marketplace by *campesinos/as* in resistance is an example of the local working with and against the global. However, the focus here is not on an isolated local “alternative” that makes a difference only in the lives of the immediate actors. This story is about the transformative possibilities of power “from below.” Moreover, this power is not contained within a hierarchy that stretches from local to global but instead trespasses scale, creating, and threading through, communities of people.

Situating Fair Rebels

As Mora (2008, 2017) notes, research in Chiapas is politically charged, a situation that creates particular possibilities and constraints that must be negotiated by researchers and research participants alike:

During the last fifteen years in Chiapas, scientific research has been forced to reformulate how studies are conducted. Debates on autonomy and self-determination, as part of *zapatismo* [*sic*] and prior to the uprising, have generated concrete effects in the ways in which members of indigenous communities accept or do not accept how research is implemented. (Mora 2008, 56)

Chiapas was and remains an area that receives intensive scholarly attention. In an investigation of ethnographies conducted in indigenous communities in Chiapas, Rus (2004) argues that the dominant narrative of Chiapas was driven by a particular group of scholars (the Harvard Chiapas Project begun by Evon Vogt in 1957) and, until the 1970s, was propelled by desire to understand the origins and descent of the contemporary Maya from their ancestors.^[8] Moreover, the vast majority of these anthropological studies used one location, Zinacantán, an atypical, closed indigenous community, as the focal point of research; Rus notes that it was the Zapatista rebellion that forced a change in the way people produced knowledge about indigenous peasant populations in Chiapas.

There is a long intellectual history of (mostly white) outsiders debating the extent to which Chiapaneco livelihoods are capitalist—in this case, *Fair Trade Rebels* is an intervention in not conducting a litmus test for capitalist imaginaries but instead examining economic diversity. Much of the analysis

presented throughout the book seeks to account for the complex political and economic terrains that *campesinos/as* in the highlands have to navigate on a day-to-day basis to build livable worlds while earning a livelihood in a society structured around neoliberal principles that discourage such practices. Elaborating the philosophical, ethical, and practical dimensions of the methodology employed in this work turns our awareness to these power-laden social terrains and considers the production of knowledge more deeply. Research is performative, and seeing knowledges as multiple and diverse is one possibility for changing our thinking about the world, which in itself can be world changing (see Gibson-Graham 2008). Beyond conducting research and analysis, a diverse economies framing (such as the one used in this book, described more in chapter 1) is invested in constructing (and performing) livable worlds (Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2009). These knowledges and practices are not uncovered by research but are performed relationally and in place.

It is essential to state going forward in this book that I am not only privileged to be writing it and making attempts to perform livable worlds but to have been able to conduct the research that is at its foundation. As Faria and Mollett (2016) argue, there is a particular mobility of whiteness in the field. They also identify a structural advantage in the production of knowledge, where its workings are normalized and less visible yet continuously privileged (Faria and Mollett 2016, 81; see also Kobayashi and Peake 1994). This privilege, among other important considerations, made it critical for me to evaluate my position in this research. Consistent with the argument of Lugones and Spelman (1983) that providing an autobiography does not serve to fully acknowledge my position or provide me with a disclaimer, I attempt instead to analyze the system within which I am conducting research (see also Alcoff 1992, 25).^[9] Since the late 1980s, feminist and poststructural epistemologies have assisted with decentering the positivist tradition in research and the so-called unbiased researcher through the promotion of reflexive and self-critical examination (cf. England 1994). Feminist geopolitical scholars in particular have attempted to move away from “disembodied” geopolitical analyses by resituating knowledge and a relational ethics in research (Hyndman 2004, 309; see also Routledge 2002; Sparke 2000), and decolonial feminist scholars work to move beyond collaborative and participatory knowledge production to co-production of knowledge, something Hernández Castillo (2016, 38)

articulates as epistemic dialogues. As Walsh recognizes, producing knowledge remains a struggle; quoting Anzaldúa (2015), Walsh writes, “How to write (produce) without being inscribed (reproduced) in the dominant white structure and how to write without reinscribing and reproducing what we rebel against” is a dilemma in showing how “decoloniality happens” (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 20–21).

Research is decidedly not a neutral practice (Alcoff 1992; see also Stephen 2013). As such, I attempt here not only to recognize my positionality but to put into practice self-reflexivity (see Rose 1997; Routledge 2002). However, I am wary of falling into the trap of simply locating myself and exposing my bias so that I can “discover truths” (Pratt 2000). Instead, in positioning and representing myself and others within this research, I recognize that there are many truths and that what is recorded in *Fair Trade Rebels* is not a version of truth but a situated knowledge (see Haraway 1988, 1991), a pluralistic interpretation of something that can be understood in many different ways and that does not fully escape the myriad relations of power at work. It is not only my position as researcher and participant in the research that is at stake, however; there is also the issue of representation, which has been long contested (cf. Ortnner 1995; Spivak 1988).^[10]

Within and beyond the research period, I attempted to create a measure of accountability to both participants and their ways of knowing and understanding the ideas under discussion (cf. Alcoff 1992; Newdick 2012; Stephen 2013) through a dialogic cycle of sharing ideas, questions, and hopes about the research with participants. As Newdick (2012, 27) pointed out in her work with Zapatista women, working through collective processes creates a space for accountability even as the tensions and contradictions in everyday life and practice are considered. Consistent with the effort toward collective process, a number of my interviews took place with groups of *campesinos/as*, where instead of having a list of questions to be answered, we discussed the broader questions of my research, which participants questioned and dissected and, in many cases, collectively answered. As an example, on one day, I met with four *socios* (members of a fair trade cooperative) to discuss their production for the fair trade marketplace. I started by asking if they had any questions for me or about my research, which led to a lengthy discussion in Tzotzil that was then translated into Spanish by one *socio*. There was a question of what I

thought about their coffee production and the price. As a result, we discussed different perceptions of price—for the cooperative, for the *socios*, for the buyer, and especially for the people purchasing coffee in the United States. In this conversation, the participants were less interested in my questions about fair trade (as they noted *comercio más justo*) than in discussing the changes in price and what a good price would be for them. Their desires to talk about price changed the way I asked questions about their participation in fair trade. Having entered the highlands with questions about resistance and market-based production as they related to autonomy and fair trade, the focus on price forced me to start from a place where fair trade exists not just as an intervention but as an income. It was not enough to theorize participation in just one way—as an income-earning strategy, or a form of resistance, or a network of actors, for example; fair trade participation had to be theorized as multiple. The research stage of this project provided opportunities for dialogue and for consistently rethinking and reframing fair trade, the questions I asked, and the considerations I was making.

Dialogue is a task not as easily accomplished at my desk in the United States as I attempt to write “in” (Mansvelt and Berg 2016), in a way that provides some transparency regarding who I am and how I am trying to present the knowledges built in and through this project.^[11] Part of this process is reading the geopolitics of knowledge onto my own efforts to produce knowledge in an effort to decolonize it (see Castro-Gómez and Mendieta 1998). Race is a powerful force in the (geo)politics of knowledge production, and it profoundly shapes the lived experience of research.^[12] It is not enough to explain racialization; we must also discuss how it is continuously enacted (Faria and Mollett 2016). It is critical to recognize these relations of power and also to adopt perspectives that not only acknowledge power dynamics but, as Hernández Castillo (2016, 39) argues, “demand the rights of indigenous peoples to their own culture and to self-determination.” My efforts to develop and enact this research in collaboration with a variety of actors in the highlands of Chiapas do not absolve my ongoing privilege rooted in my ability to move in and out of communities and the region more broadly at will and to take with me the stories and interpretations of autonomy, resistance, fair trade, and so on, of the participants in my research. It does, however, represent an effort to destabilize “normalized” perspectives and knowledge (see Faria and Mollett

2016). In these acknowledgments of my professional and embodied privilege, I seek not simply to reflect on my position but to mobilize it as a way toward a deeper understanding of power imbalances in research and activism and to use this book as a platform to vocalize a deconstruction (and decolonization) of the geopolitics of knowledge and visibilize indigenous knowledges, rights, and futurities.

The analysis presented in this book is drawn from a larger research study centered on fair trade production and autonomous resistance (Naylor 2017a, 2017c). In the process of documenting, observing, and conducting interviews about autonomy and agricultural production, I found that the narratives of fair trade did not map onto self-declared autonomous communities nor *campesinos/as* in resistance very easily. As *campesinos/as* in resistance seek multiple strategies to build livable worlds, I argue that fair trade production both fits into and complicates their efforts. The exchange of coffee in the fair trade marketplace and participating in movements to make trade fairer allow *campesinos/as* in resistance to expand their community to transnational scales, bring in cash income, build solidarity and knowledge-exchange networks, diversify their livelihood strategies, maintain a crop (coffee) in which they have invested for decades, and retain the visibility of their social movement politics and demands for rights and recognition. However, through their participation in the fair trade certification process, *campesinos/as* in resistance are additionally exposed to a project of development that seeks to enfold them into capitalist logics and make them into “rational economic actors”—producers and cooperatives are subject to standards for production and community development that do not fit into their broader struggles and livelihood strategies. The interaction of fair rebels with the transnational fair trade marketplace adds another dimension to these struggles. Here I offer a place-based approach to thinking about fair trade, autonomy, and economic development, asking, what is fair trade, who is it for, and who gets to decide?^[13]

Fair Trade Rebels provides an empirically grounded analysis of the diverse economic and agricultural practices of indigenous *campesinos/as* as they play out in self-declared autonomous communities in highland Chiapas; such practices are enacted by *campesinos/as* in resistance who are struggling for dignified livelihoods. This introduction is intended to provide context and a background for understanding fair trade in rebel Chiapas.

Although the book draws on stories and experiences coming from the highlands of Chiapas, it is also grounded in a discussion of the nodes of the fair trade network, which necessitates a more zoomed-out approach. In chapter 1, I delve more deeply into the theoretical foundations for the book, drawing out how fair trade is understood in the broader context of economic development and creating a space for a more nuanced analysis of how fair trade is harnessed by fair rebels. Chapter 2 provides the historical backdrop for the cultivation of coffee and is an investigation of the standards for certification and their impact on the lives and livelihoods of *campesinos/as* in resistance. To understand how fair trade certification functions, the dominant narratives of fair trade are discussed in chapter 3. In this discussion, I examine the broader fair trade system, underscoring the divergence of movements for fairer trade and the so-called alternative certified market. This apolitical framing of an alternative economy is taken up and addressed in the context of the struggle of *campesinos/as* in resistance.

Standards for certification and development that are tied to fair trade coffee production are only one side of the coin; on the other side is the social justice activism that is concerned with breaking down the structural conditions that create and maintain unequal trading relations in the world. The activism and solidarity tied to movements for fairer trade are the basis for the analysis in chapter 4, in which I discuss the network that extends from the highlands and into the United States. A specific emphasis on the connections between the producer cooperatives and the roasting cooperatives assists with illuminating different sites of solidarity along the nodes of the fair trade network and possibilities of being in common. While the network in fair trade coffee production extends from the homes of coffee growers in the highlands to the homes of coffee drinkers in the United States, an important part of this discussion is questioning such narrowed economic identities and rethinking, how are we to live well? In chapter 5, I address the practices and processes of making livable worlds through a deeper discussion of economic difference in the highlands. Specifically, I investigate how *campesinos/as* in resistance are cultivating actually existing food sovereignty as part of a diverse livelihood strategy that is at all times based in maintaining autonomy. Here a deeper look at the performance of diverse economies grounds the discussion. Finally, in the conclusion, I come back to the questions around fair trade coffee in the

highlands and how it functions as part of diverse and changing economies being enacted by fair rebels, economies that stand apart from the universalizing tendencies of capitalist-style economic development.

I was fortunate to visit the highlands of Chiapas on multiple occasions to be a part of the broader community cultivated by fair rebels. Over many cups of coffee, the multiple and competing experiences of *campesinos/as* in resistance became more visible to me. I offer here a situated knowledge from a snapshot in time and place of the ongoing struggle of fair rebels to create dignified livelihoods and livable worlds.

Fair Trade: The “Monster” with a Heart?

I took the photograph in Figure 3 toward the end of July 2010, in the rebel autonomous territory of Oventik, which is administered by the Zapatistas. It was a warm and sunny day in the highlands, and while waiting for a meeting to begin, I sat under the shade of a staircase. Looking up, the staircase revealed to me its message. There are a number of murals in the rebel territories of Chiapas, which are populated by fair rebels. They are evidence of the solidarity relations in which the Zapatistas (in particular) participate, as many murals are painted by outsiders. There are murals about education, about the violence of the state, about resistance, about creating new worlds, and about corn. This one was about capitalism and may have been painted by students, by supporters of the Zapatistas living in Mexico, or even by activists from Europe or the United States.



Figure 3. “Unidos estamos rompiendo el monstruo del capitalismo” (United we are breaking the monster of capitalism). In this mural, the monster’s heads are *(left to right)* exploitation, discrimination, dispossession, neoliberalism, repression, patriarchy, and egoism. The protectors at the left foot of the monster are the “federal police,” depicted in riot gear. Photograph by the author.

I was in Oventik to meet with the leadership of a fair trade coffee cooperative. While I sat and thought about the monster of capitalism and its many heads, I tried to understand where fair trade fit. Was it a way to slay the monster? Or was it just a different beast (or a new little head on the

existing monster)? What did the farmers think? How did it fit with their self-declared alter-capitalist politics and autonomy?

In our meeting that afternoon, we did talk about capitalism. We also talked about economies, and about the price of coffee. Fair trade is part of a multipronged strategy for cultivating dignified livelihoods in the highlands, but it is not able to be simplified to the growing and sale of coffee for farmers in resistance. Instead, it is a messy and entangled site of negotiation and contestation tied to broader social, political, and economic identities.

I realized much later that capitalism portrayed as a monster means so much more than the violence of profit. Trying to think about where fair trade fit was not really part of the project of “breaking the monster.” How then to think about both the monster and fair trade economic interactions?

For in this mural, at the very center of the monster is a heart.

Fair Rebels, Fair Coffee?

Challenging Capitalist Narratives

We are living in an era that has produced rapidly increasing global inequality. The multiscalar stratification of people by gender and sexual identity, race and ethnicity, and wealth has created a hierarchy that privileges a very small group of people as global citizens. Through our political, social, and economic practices, many of us are implicated in this stratification. Our actions from the grand to the mundane exist within this hierarchy of people and our earth (nonhuman) others. Indeed, we are so deeply embedded in it that the seemingly simple act of producing or consuming a cup of coffee does not register as a critical political-economic undertaking.

Coffee is a tropical commodity and is a product of colonial and postcolonial relations. On a global scale, economic stratification stemming from colonial and imperial production and consumption practices profoundly divides the world. This division is expressed in discourses of the “Global North/Global South,” the “developed and underdeveloped/developing world,” and the “First World/Third World,” to name a few.^[1] The development project of the past several decades is articulated as an attempted transfer of wealth from the global core (dominated by the United States and Canada, Western Europe, and Japan, and by imperial-style accumulation by dispossession) to the global periphery (a vast category that brings together previously colonized states that largely serve as sites of resource extraction) through trade. However, in a global economic system that prioritizes profit over people, this stated project has failed—and not only has it failed but it has failed to such a spectacular degree that in many cases, from the scale of the global to the individual, the economic gap has widened. This failure signals that the system is working in the way it was intended: to concentrate wealth. The redistribution of wealth was a goal in name only.

This chapter provides the framing and foundational context for *Fair Trade Rebels*. To understand why cultivating and/or drinking coffee might register as a critical political-economic act, it is important to consider how theories of economic exchange and development are framed through a capitalist lens. To accomplish this task, I first situate the intervention of fair trade certification in coffee commodity exchanges. Yet, such exchanges are not singular or universal, and as a result, it is crucial to examine economic diversity. Drawing on the body of work produced by diverse economies scholars, I argue that other economies are happening and that in identifying economic difference, multiple economic identities and exchanges are made visible. One of the projects of articulating economic difference is in considering the broader project of economic development that is based in universalizing, capitalist ideas of how to live well rather than in place-based experiences and livelihood strategies. Here I examine fair trade certification as a universalizing project of development and begin the project of deconstructing development, which I will take up again in chapter 2.

A core piece that links the project of deconstructing development and identifying economic difference is decolonizing knowledge. As such, I build on the work of decolonial scholars to demonstrate the pervasive geopolitics of knowledge—which privilege white, hetero-patriarchal, and Western ways of knowing and being in the world—and advocate for a rereading of the struggles to build dignified livelihoods through indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. *Campesinos/as* in resistance seek to build knowledge “from below”; put differently, they are putting power over knowledge production in the hands of people who are otherwise considered marginalized. In the penultimate section of this chapter, I discuss ways of thinking about resistance from theoretical approaches to articulations “from below” to better understand how resistance shapes the ability to build livable worlds. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how we can (re)read fair trade as one strategy and how it can be mapped onto the struggles of fair rebels.

The discourses of fair trade certification, the exchange of coffee through fair trade certification networks, and the production and consumption of coffee provide the foundation for the discussion of multiplying knowledges and experiences of *campesinos/as* in resistance. It is their everyday lived experiences that thread through a deeper discussion of what fair trade is, who is it for, and who gets to decide. A cup of coffee is a starting point;

however, coffee is not produced in isolation. While coffee production happens in place, it is also linked through networks that connect localized production and small-scale producers to transnational networks and markets. For many coffee producers, the sale of their beans may be their only cash income for the year. The participation in the cultivation of coffee in a colonial–imperial context places coffee commodity producers in a precarious position on a global scale.

“Lifting Farmers Out of Poverty”

Small-scale producers in the global periphery are among those most impacted by the widening of the global economic chasm. Effectively shut out of international markets, many producers rely on intermediaries to sell their products and in return receive very low prices. In an effort to address the impact of low prices and inaccessible markets, some small-scale producers sought to create direct trading relationships with retailers across the globe. Beginning in the 1960s, these initial efforts, between small producers in partnership with alternative trade organizations centered on political and economic solidarity. These partnerships were the foundation for social justice activism, which was directed at breaking down the barriers to market access, creating direct relations between producers and consumers, establishing more equal terms of trade, and facilitating economic growth and development in producer communities through better prices. The purchase of coffee in solidarity with political movements, such as the Central American Peace and Solidarity Movement (in the 1980s), and handmade crafts by ecumenical organizations, such as Ten-Thousand Villages, in the United States, Canada, and Western Europe transformed into labeling and certification initiatives designed to codify and regulate these trades and create public awareness (Bacon 2013). In 1988, the first fair trade certification label was created by coffee producers and the Dutch economic development organization Max Havelaar.

Since the late 1980s, economic exchanges under fair trade certifications have increased dramatically. In 2017, the international third-party certifier Fairtrade International reported that 1.6 million producers were certified across seventy-five countries. Fair trade certification is hailed by third-party certifiers as an economic success story and as a strategy for producers to close the ever-widening global wealth gap. This model is called by certifiers

trade not aid, signaling that the sale of commodities through global trade rather than injecting funds into communities through development aid is a better way to eradicate poverty. Indeed, U.S.-based third-party certifier Fair Trade USA (2016) proposes certification as a “market-based tool that allows farmers to lift themselves out of poverty.” There are some assumptions implicit in this statement. It is part of the project of this book to expose these simplistic assumptions—foremost of which is that producing for profit is the primary way that people participate in economies and build secure livelihoods—and complicate them.

Other Economies Are Happening

Across space, people do not experience fair trade in the same way. If fair trade is considered by *campesinos/as* in Chiapas as *comercio más justo* (“more-fair trade,” as *socios* often refer to it, meaning slightly more fair than free trade), why has it been harnessed by *campesinos/as* as an economic practice over other possible livelihood strategies? If selling under fair trade certification is not “lifting them out of poverty,” if it is not “working” (Naylor 2014, 282) to reduce the wealth gap and mitigate the problems stemming from political-economic stratification, what purpose does it serve? These are questions about how to live well, based in a narrow reading of how people participate in economies—they are embedded in a “capitalocentric” framing that situates all economic activities as within and/or against capitalism (see Gibson-Graham [1996] 2006a, 6). Considering the economy and capitalism as one and the same has become a totalizing narrative that positions all economic activity on the same (and linear) path, placing some activities as “modern,” “formal,” and/or “cosmopolitan” and others as “backward,” “informal,” and/or “provincial.” Yet, economic practices the world over are multiple and varied. Over the last few decades, scholars in geography and beyond have cultivated an anti-essentialist frame (Gibson-Graham [1996] 2006a, 11) for viewing economic activity—disrupting the synonymous relationship between capitalism and economy—which has fundamentally changed how we produce knowledge about economic activity. Operating within a theory of economic difference, scholars seek to reframe the way we think about economies (plural) by advancing a diverse economies framework.

The exchange of food and agricultural products through fair trade certification networks is often touted as an alternative to the contemporary neoliberal–capitalist marketplace, which facilitates a more direct connection between economic actors. A diverse economies approach assists with unpacking alternatives to the capitalist marketplace and taking into account multiple and competing economic identities. However, at the outset, we must consider the framing of fair trade as alternative. I argue that this framing is problematic, as it raises the question, alternative to what? Healy (2009) argues that setting up economic exchanges as alternative does a service to capitalism by reinforcing its discursive hegemony. Holding up fair trade commodity exchanges as alternative both supports capitalist ideologies and practices and, as Dolan (2010) argues, makes less visible those services it does in maintaining capitalist relations. Taken as a site of commodity exchange alone, fair trade certified coffee networks appear to be embedded in capitalist-style trade relations.

In calling fair trade alternative, it becomes a referent for capitalist exchanges. It is not viewed as an economic exchange in its own right but as capitalism's other. Fair trade exchanges are just one example of so-called alternatives to capitalism, which sit alongside informal economies, barter exchanges, social reproduction, and otherwise noncounted/incalculable labor and economic practice. In the mid-1990s, writing from a feminist, poststructuralist perspective, Gibson-Graham ([1996] 2006a) put forward an anti-essentialist theory of economies that attempted to recognize this othering through retheorizing economies. This retheorizing rejects a capitalist economy as the main referent for all economic activity. Such “capitalocentrism” (Gibson-Graham [1996] 2006a, 6, 40–43) privileges a particular performance of economy that invisibilizes actually existing economies that are happening within, alongside, and outside capitalism. A critical component of this framework is, drawing on feminist thinking (especially as it relates to undervalued labor), to deconstruct representations of the economy that erase or trivialize difference. The theory of economic difference put forward in 1996 threads through the body of Gibson-Graham's work (cf. Gibson-Graham [1996] 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008) and through that of a growing group of scholars focused on making visible economic identities, practices, and exchanges happening worldwide that do not fit into the waged-labor, formal-marketplace, for-profit arena.

In investigating sites of economic difference, economic practices, identities, and exchanges are multiplied. These “diverse economies” (Gibson-Graham 2006b, 60) signal a reclaiming of economic spaces—out of the clutches of capitalism—so they can be examined as economies in their own right. Particular attention is paid to economic activities that are contextualized as “market or capitalist,” “nonmarket or noncapitalist,” and “alternative market or alternative capitalist” and labor that may be unpaid or receive nonmonetary compensation (Gibson-Graham 2006b, 60–65; see also Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013). I do note, however, that the framing of alternatives within diverse economies is an ongoing project—one that considers of fair trade exchanges as multiple and diverse assist with building upon. However, crucial to the project of diverse economies and the wider network of scholars contributing to the research network established by the Community Economies Collective is a commitment to not only retheorizing economies (as alternative or otherwise) but also imagining and creating spaces for livable worlds (see Roelvink, St. Martin, and Gibson-Graham 2015).

Diverse economic theory is consistently being advanced through the work of dozens of scholars who have adopted, expanded, and pushed on the reframing presented by Gibson-Graham ([1996] 2006a, 2006b). In this book, I adopt a diverse economies framing and put it in conversation with decolonial theory to break down the geopolitics of knowledge production related to economic development and how to live well. In this way, I expand on diverse economies theory, first through challenging the premise that fair trade is an “alternative” to capitalism, suggesting instead that the fair trade market is an apparatus of capitalism. I note that a closer examination of exchanges in fair trade demonstrates that social justice activism to make trade fairer creates possibilities for being in common and for diverse economic exchanges. Second, through considering the way fair trade is mobilized as part of the political, economic, social, and material practices of *campesinos/as* in resistance, I offer a place-based context that reaches beyond a localized site of community economy and into a transnational space, revealing the messy character of diverse economic exchanges. The new economic ontology offered by Gibson-Graham (2008, 615) provides a mechanism to move away from focusing on or against capitalism to produce work concerned with economic heterogeneity. Reframing economies creates a space for thinking about how, collectively,

“humans and nonhuman actants” can live well (Gibson-Graham and Roelvink 2011). It also allows for asking questions that put people and our earth others at the center of exchanges instead of profit, such as, how can we create new forms of economic being? In parallel, scholars are examining forms of social and economic organization that exist or are being developed around community economies. Community economies are spaces of collective action where, in striving to create livable worlds, groups are actively reshaping their economic practices, identities, and exchanges. These economic groupings are not bound by geographical location or particular social groupings (Snyder and St. Martin 2015) but are sites of care, interdependence, and being in common. In this resocializing (e.g., economic exchange as a social relation), Gibson-Graham (2006b, 87–88) envision reintegrating the political and thus making the economy a site of ethical decision-making. The reframing of economies in this way renders visible new and existing social formations around exchange. It is also posited as a way of “reclaiming” the economy as something that is not external to us but transformative and on which we have influence (cf. Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013).

As part of deconstructing and reframing economies, theorists ask questions about the ethical practice of economy and the performance of different economic identities. Scholars use a community economies framing to examine food exchanges and gardening, time banks and community currency, commoning, the Anthropocene, green economies, fisheries, mothering, and care among other topics.^[2] There is no clearly defined meaning or single strategy for creating community economies. It is foremost a theory of difference that, through action research and teaching, attempts to make more visible myriad economic activities, identities, and performances at multiple nonhierarchical scales. As part of this project, there is a continuum of reflexivity whereby economic identities are everywhere and always undergoing a process of becoming (both within and independent of the research process). Economic actors may claim any number of economic identities and practices, while also participating in multiple sites of exchange.

One of the core critiques raised in retheorizing economic difference is that it tends toward a Pollyanna-style view of the economy (see Gibson-Graham 2002, 2003), in which scholars are “desperately” searching for spaces not “overwhelmed” by the powers of capitalism (Watts 2003, 28).

Moreover, Samers (2005, 883) cautions against a romanticizing of diverse economies, arguing that not all sites of diverse exchange (such as the informal economy) are “progressive” and calling for a more “analytical politics of diverse economies.” The idea of an all-powerful global capital and the discursive framing that houses it makes little space for difference, hope, or belonging. A hegemonic capitalism pitted against hope is a vacuum to be filled with criticism. However, even scholars who are actively theorizing economic difference articulate a challenge in locating power in diverse economic exchange. Indeed, it is argued that localized studies of diverse and community economies do not link back up with scalar processes, practices, and politics, thereby neglecting the influence they (may) have (Reynolds and Cohen 2016; see also Glassman 2003; Gritzas and Kavoulakos 2016; Kelly 2005; Laurie 2005; Lawson 2005). Although Gibson-Graham (2006b) argue that relations of power are not deterministic, scholars point out the privilege of researching (cf. Dean 2015) and participating in diverse economies (cf. Miller 2015). Simultaneously, some argue that case studies using diverse and community economic framings often elide possible relations of power (domination and resistance) that emerge alongside diverse economic practice (Miller et al. 2017).^[3]

In *Fair Trade Rebels*, I mobilize a diverse and community economies framing not only to elucidate economic difference in fair trade exchanges but also to work toward developing an apparatus for understanding different articulations of power as diverse economic identities, practices, and exchanges occur. Here I extend work that builds an “analytical politics” that is attentive to the more hopeful and positive performance of community economies while also differentiating them from those more mundane livelihood struggles (Samers 2005, 883; see also Naylor 2018). Additionally, here I offer a discussion of a potential community that is networked across space and systems of power that are transnational. To do this, I examine exchanges in fair trade certified coffee chains, which have been identified in the broader diverse economies framework as an “alternative market” (cf. Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013). Returning to Healy’s (2009) critique, I want to suggest that fair trade exchanges are in practice not “alternative” at all. I do this for two reasons: first, to reassert the critique that in naming something as alternative, we are essentializing these economic practices by reducing them to a site of “other than capitalism,” rather than as economic activities in their own right,

which stand outside of a hierarchy that places capitalism at the apex. I make such a suggestion, secondly, to disrupt the idea that coffee consumers (e.g., those individuals who are purchasing and drinking certified coffee) are participating in a nominally different exchange as fair trade certified purchases relate to their daily economic practices. However, dismissing the idea of “alternative” does not thereby reject economic difference. Instead, it multiplies the possibilities for how we produce knowledge about economic exchanges and power relations within them.

To engage a diverse economies framing is not simply to add other economic activities and stir; it is instead an opening up of economic discourse that includes capitalism as one of many types of economic activity that are being performed in multiple places and at multiple scales. An anti-essentialist approach to economic practices is based in recognizing economic difference. In rereading economic practice for diversity, a range of practices are made visible. Worldwide, people interact through different forms of labor activity, value production, and consumption, yet these practices are often viewed through a capitalist lens and theorized in a universal way. If we view fair trade production only as a capitalist endeavor toward economic growth, a host of activities, social and economic relations, and politics are obscured. Economic practices do not all look the same, and the recognition of difference (and the power relations embedded within) can help propel us into less deterministic and unequal futures.

Many studies of fair trade coffee production emphasize its effectiveness as a market-based tool or an alternative to neoliberal trade. Such studies assess the cultivation of producer–consumer relations, barriers to market entry, whether certified production leads to economic and community development, and what labor relations exist in fair trade markets. However, critical readings of fair trade expose it as a tool of neoliberal economic development that masks rather than challenges uneven power relations in trade (cf. Dolan 2010; Lyon 2011). This body of work is important in determining whether fair trade is working the way proponents say it should; nonetheless, it is read through a capitalocentric lens, which significantly limits how we can theorize economic activity.

Fair trade is a market, but it is also tied to social justice movements, and this bifurcation provides an entry point for considering how we might think about it differently and how it features as part of diverse livelihood strategies for small producers. Here I wish to point out something that may

seem fairly obvious but is often overlooked: fair trade producers are not solely involved in the production of fair trade certified goods; their identities are not bound to the exploitation of their labor for the creation of surplus value in a world market. Other economies are happening. Hence I paint a different portrait of fair trade. Here I am not asking whether fair trade certification is “working” for *campesinos/as* within and against the global capitalist economy; instead, I ask how *campesinos/as* in resistance are mobilizing fair trade as part of building livable worlds. Pursuing this avenue allows for breaking away from universalizing narratives of what fair trade and development are.

Development and Fair Trade

Since its inception, fair trade *certification* has been tied to economic development targeted at marginalized communities. Chiapas has long been cast as a stagnant and impoverished but resource-rich state in Mexico. The southernmost state and the last incorporated into independent Mexico (annexed from Guatemala in 1824), Chiapas is an ethnically diverse state (with twelve official ethnic groups) and is considered in official records the second most “marginalized” state in Mexico (Consejo Nacional de Población 2011). The vast majority of inhabitants are indigenous subsistence producers who have been petitioning the state for access to resources for decades. Indeed, coffee was introduced into the highlands of Chiapas in the 1960s and 1970s as a way to draw subsistence producers away from household corn production and into the marketplace (Martínez-Torres 2006, 53). As the Mexican state undertook the project of economic “modernization,” which followed the Revolution (1910–20) and accelerated through the end of World War II, the promotion of coffee production was viewed as a way to “develop” rural areas in Mexico.

I use the word “develop” in quotes here to signal the competing narratives and practices of development. As Essex (2013, 10) noted, it is apparent that “development is a contested terrain, with no consensus on its meaning, and certainly not on how best to achieve or maintain it.” In attempting to explain and understand changes in discourse and practice, genealogies of development tend toward a march through periods of varying (and universalizing) theorization drawing on capitalist narratives. There are two important points here: first, that development theory and

practice are bound up in a Western capitalist imaginary, which a diverse economies framing rejects, and second, that development theory and practice produce the periphery (see Escobar 1995 on the “Third World”) and subjects of development (Naylor 2014). Development narratives are necessarily focused on the “other” effectively writing impoverishment onto places and bodies. They are bound up in debates about poverty and calculable measurements of progress, they make possible claims to knowledge about lives and livelihoods, and they normalize a capitalist economic imaginary and desires for growth. In many cases, development agendas and discourses are deployed while simultaneously ignoring the intentionally uneven processes of capital accumulation and violent histories and present moments of conquest and imperialism.

Escobar (1995, 3) argues that in his 1949 inaugural address, U.S. president Harry Truman effectively created the so-called developing world, restructuring the discourse with which to manage and “fix” what were viewed as the “miserable” parts of the world. Situating development in the context of post–World War II global relations provides a foundation for telling a particular story about it. As Hart (2001) notes, this more formal period of capital-*D* development locates development as a product of a new wave of independence and Cold War politics, which is largely institutional. Yet, lowercase-*d* development describes the ongoing and geographically uneven processes of capitalist growth.

Institutionalized development begins with the apparatus of the state at its center. The establishment of formal economic bodies in the Bretton Woods Agreement normalized a hegemonic core (with the United States at its center) and effectively divided the globe into the “developed” and “underdeveloped.” This bifurcation justified state-led intervention following the loss of *de jure* colonial power. Intervention in the periphery as “development” then becomes, as Rist (2008, 77) notes, “impossible to question. . . . One was quite free to debate its forms, the ways of accelerating growth or distributing its effects more equitably, but the transitive character of ‘development’—that is, the intervention it represented into the internal affairs of a nation [state]—was not to be challenged.” State-led institutionalization of international development takes many forms, from direct aid to structural adjustment. Many actors participate in doing development; it is not limited to the state or supranational institutions (such as the World Bank). Concurrently (and increasingly with

the neoliberal retreat of the state), nonstate actors take on statelike development roles. Among these actors, capitalist-style development is normalized as a positive and necessary intervention. A core component of universalizing capitalism and growth as the path of development is the “subordination of ‘precapitalist’ forms” of economic engagement (Gibson-Graham 2006b, 193), which are mapped onto peoples and places that are pejoratively labeled as un- or underdeveloped.

Efforts to decrease poverty in the global periphery tend to be embedded in capitalist imaginaries of economic growth. Infrastructure projects, microfinance, increasing access to global markets, for example—industrialization and urbanization continue to be guiding forces for economic development. Although external aid was and continues to be a key feature of international economic development, a focus on markets and trade (under the mantra of “trade not aid”) emerged as part of the development paradigm. This particular narrative is uncritically adopted in emphasizing poverty reduction through economic exchange and is taken up as part of the discourses of fair trade (a point to which I return in chapter 3). In continuing efforts to reduce poverty and increase economic growth, trade is deemed an important feature by supranational organizations, such as the United Nations, and development agencies, such as the World Bank. However, attempts to more evenly distribute wealth at a global scale operate within systems that require the uneven distribution of wealth and access to resources. Proponents of fair trade rely on the discourse of “trade not aid” as a way to more evenly distribute wealth and resources, arguing that fair trade certification provides a basis to increase access to the marketplace for the most marginalized producers, while making relations of trade fairer.

As Mutersbaugh (2016) notes, geographers are interested in the way that certification (including organic and fair trade, among others) mirrors existing neocolonial relations of trade and development. From a development perspective, the introduction of fair trade certification is a new intervention and fix in marginalized areas (Naylor 2017c). The emphasis of many studies on fair trade coffee production is focused on the benefits accrued by producers and communities through the fair trade price floor and the injection of funds via the fair trade premium that is designated for community development projects and product improvement. The emphasis on whether fair trade certification is “working” for producers stems from

scholarly interest in investigating the claims made by fair trade proponents, which point to significantly improving the lives and livelihoods of producer constituents and their communities. However, a rereading of fair trade reveals that situating it as an alternative to free trade and a locus of development in producer communities is rather narrow. We have learned that fair trade producers are better off than their non-fair trade counterparts but that they are not able to improve their economic situations significantly (cf. Bacon et al. 2014; Jaffee 2014; Lyon 2011). Additionally, entry into the fair trade market is restrictive, and the most marginalized small producers are often not reached by certification (Dolan 2010; Lyon 2015a; Smith 2007). Yet these findings are grounded in a perspective that emphasizes outcomes that are considered desirable by outsiders and shaped by neoliberal-capitalist goals (e.g., profit, economic growth).

We desperately need new theoretical approaches to fair trade (and development more broadly). If, as I have argued before, we only ask if fair trade is “working” for producers, our findings can be predicted with some certainty.^[4] Yet, if we decide that fair trade does not “work” for producers much better than free trade, why should we continue to investigate and ask questions about it? Investigations of fair trade have allowed scholars and practitioners alike to ask questions about how economic exchange functions in a neoliberal-capitalist system. Nonetheless, this universal perspective has limits, even as fair trade is viewed as an alternative that works “within and against” capitalism. I argue that it is essential to break away from framing fair trade as a project of development. Such a reductionist framing creates producer-subjects whose varied identities and livelihoods become singularly tied to an identity as a fair trade producer and delegitimizes their heterogeneous economic activities and knowledges of how to live well. Producers become a project of economic development that is intended as an intervention to “fix” agricultural systems, individual producers, and whole communities. This “fixing” of producers normalizes them as impoverished producers “needing” to be “lifted out of poverty” and renders their specific and dynamic lives and multiple economic practices invisible. As discussed in the introduction, fair trade both fits into and complicates struggles to build dignified livelihoods. A core piece of this argument is based on considering a geopolitics of knowledge that privileges a singular and particular idea of how certain groups of people should live.

Fair trade is mobilized differently across space (from local to global), and Chiapas is no different. It is not singular or universal. In the highlands of Chiapas, certified coffee is grown in the context of resistance. It is grown by rebels against the state and capitalist marketplace, rebels who participate in self-declared “anticapitalist” social movements. *Campesinos/as* in resistance have been growing coffee for decades: first for the state, then for the neoliberal marketplace (in the wake of the dismantling of INMECAFE in 1989).[5] A major difference has been the creation of coffee cooperatives (which then became fair trade certified) that grew out of social movements in the context of the rebellion of *campesinos/as*. How, then, are we to think about the sale of fair trade coffee in the neoliberal marketplace in the context of resistance? If we consider it only as a (neoliberal) capitalist activity, the actions of fair rebels stand out as contradictory. The challenge is to reread the understandings and practices of fair trade as multiple and varied and to decolonize the way we think about production and certification, as well as who benefits from them.

Decolonizing and Multiplying Knowledge

Decolonizing the ways we think about what fair trade is is essential for seeing and creating other possible worlds. If fair trade is part of the larger project of top-down, capitalist-style economic development, which seeks to intervene and “fix” producer communities, then a decolonial reading creates a different engagement, from below. Decolonizing knowledge is the primary concern of decolonial scholars, who critique contemporary power-knowledge dynamics to confront modernity. For decolonial thinkers, there is no end or after to the colonial period; rather, it is a longer epistemic and ontological project of coloniality-modernity (Quijano 1997) that privileges Western ways of knowing and understanding the world. A decolonized knowledge production—that which attempts to document social injustices and recover subjugated knowledges while challenging paradigmatic racism, sexism, and colonialism—allows for a dismantling of coloniality (Tuhiwai-Smith 1999). It is an attempt to multiply knowledges and move away from universalizing, normalizing, and exclusionary tendencies in knowledge production.

At the core of the decolonial project is the decentering and multiplying of knowledge and power. It is a critique of past and present colonialism and

coloniality that attempts to step outside of Eurocentric discourses to untangle colonial modernity. Race, place, and, increasingly, nature, gender, and sexual identity form key sites of examination for decolonial theorists. At the forefront of the decolonial project is the modernity–coloniality research paradigm originating in Latin American thought and driven by the possibility of creating “worlds and knowledges otherwise.” The main thread that is pulled through decolonial theory (and that distinguishes it from postcolonial thinking) is that modernity commenced with colonialism. Moreover, there is no end or after to the colonial (Grosfoguel 2011) but a de facto coloniality that continues despite de jure independence. As Alcoff (2007, 83) explains, for decolonial thinkers, such as Mignolo, there is no modernity outside of coloniality:

Colonialism is constitutive of modernity, of its teleological macronarratives of human progress, and of the material base necessary to provide both the surplus and the self-representation required to imagine Europe as the vanguard of the human race. To put this another way, colonialism is constitutive of both the base and the superstructure of modernity.

What a narrative of coloniality suggests is that a Eurocentric modernity made and continues to make invisible the non-“Western.” Knowledge production is generated from particular spaces; for Mignolo (2009b, 160), the imperial and “knowing subject” writes the earth; identifies and classifies people and problems; and makes decisions and designs projects to fix these people and places. Thus universalizing narratives are generated from a particular spatial position, in this case, a Western one, which claims hegemony.

In mobilizing the modernity–coloniality research paradigm, scholars point to a “coloniality of power” and the “colonial difference.” The coloniality of power (Quijano 1997) is a global model of power (Escobar 2007) that details the construction of knowledge, identity, and place through hegemonic structures. These structures were emplaced during the period of the conquest of the Americas, and they have been continuously remade alongside the advance of capitalism (Mignolo 2000). Classifying peoples, defining spaces, establishing structures/institutions, and creating (or

rendering invisible) knowledge are all ways in which the coloniality of power is reified. For Quijano (2008), the coloniality of power is bound up, first, in the emergence of modernity; second, in the classification of people by race; and finally, in the production of knowledge, which is then imposed via institutional structures. Within this framing, the coloniality of power becomes the organizing principle for ordering the world. Escobar (2007, 185) notes that this model of power, which has been in place since the conquest, “articulates race and labor, space and peoples, according to the needs of capital and to the benefit of white European peoples.” Feminist scholars expanded this more narrow reading of hegemony additionally to read gender and sexual identity inequalities as an apparatus of coloniality (cf. Anzaldúa 1987; Gómez-Barris 2017; Lugones 2007, 2010, 2013; Mendoza 2015; Naylor et al. 2018; Schiwy 2007; Zaragocin 2017, 2018).

Parallel to the construction of the coloniality of power is the colonial difference, which Mignolo (2000) argues is what has been erased from social memory through the subjugation of knowledge and displacement of alternate modernities. This subjugation and displacement is inherently geographical, as both Castro-Gómez (2007) and Mignolo (2009b) argue. The colonial difference recognizes the subjugation of knowledge from exteriority and uncovers alterity (Grosfoguel 2008; see also Dussel 1976; Vallega 2014). The modern colonial world system is the legacy of the European encounter with the Americas. The coloniality of power as articulated by Mignolo (2002, 252) “was enacted and continues to rule out everything that did not conform to the principles under which modernity was being conceived,” for example, economic exchanges and subsistence practices that are not imagined as aligning with a capitalist model. Yet a reframing through the colonial difference exposes the “forgetting” that happens in and through the project of modernity. In recognizing the artificial differences and othering that were created via the conquest, the structures of power that underlie coloniality can be unearthed. As Walsh notes, “the production of knowledge and theory through embodied practice and from the ground up—that is by subjects, identified or not as women and men, who live the colonial difference—turns the dominant precept of reason and its geography and geopolitics on its head” (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 28). By locating forms of knowledge via exteriority, or from the “exploited side of the colonial difference” (Grosfoguel 2008, 16), decolonial theorists posit that the modern colonial world system can be

resisted. In thinking from the colonial difference, knowledges, practices, identities, spaces, and natures are multiplied.

Out of such deconstruction emerged a number of strategies for constructive dialogue, thinking, seeing, and allying. These approaches include (but are not limited to) relational ontologies, which attempt to erase nature–culture divides (Escobar 2008); transmodernity, which liberates subjugated knowledges (Dussel and Mendieta 1996; Grosfoguel 2011); border thinking, which implores a rethinking from multiple “sides” (Anzaldúa 1987; Mignolo 2000); and those that theorize a geopolitics of knowledge that (re)considers spaces of knowledge production (Mignolo 2002; Naylor 2017a; Tuck and Yang 2012; Tuhiwai-Smith 1999; Walsh 2007). These interdisciplinary perspectives offer opportunities to reframe examinations of multiscalar and multisited processes and interstitial spaces from the global to the body. Decolonial analyses make visible the cracks in universals while simultaneously opening up pluriversal spaces.

Although useful for advancing multiple and diverse knowledges, decolonial theory is rarely deployed to engage gender, sexual identity, nature, or economic difference (Asher 2013; Escobar 2007; Lugones 2007). Such encounters in feminist, postcolonial, and political ecology scholarship are being drawn into these discussions and debates in addressing this glaring omission (Anzaldúa 1987; Gómez-Barris 2017; Escobar 2008; Mendoza 2015; Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Naylor 2017a; Naylor et al. 2018; Schiwy 2007; Zaragocin 2018; Zaragocin, Moreano Venegas, and Álvarez Velasco 2018). In addition to drawing attention to the missing intersectional approaches in decolonial theory, Asher (2013) advances a two-pronged critique, pushing scholars to participate in more critical and nuanced examinations. Asher argues that many decolonial approaches tend to equate the theoretical with the political, rendering it impossible to meet the stated goals of decolonial thinking—in essence bringing tensions to light, but not addressing them. This assessment is expounded by a critique of the silence on representation in decolonial theory. Drawing on postcolonial theory (and arguing that it should be in conversation with the decolonial), Asher deploys Spivak’s (1999, 2012) deconstructive work on the messiness of representing the subaltern. Asher (2013, 839) cautions scholars against a romanticization of subaltern knowledges, in which scholarly desires for a “just world for humans and non-humans” are fulfilled. Theorizing knowledges “otherwise,” “from below,” or at the

“underside” risks reproducing oppressive power–knowledge dynamics (or reinstating hierarchies) that decolonial thinking seeks to deconstruct (Naylor et al., 2018).

The decolonial is another way that we can reread economic practice and performance for difference. In work on decolonial feminism, Lugones (2010, 748) articulates this project: “instead of thinking of the global, capitalist, colonial system as in every way successful in its destruction of peoples, knowledges, and economies, I want to think of the process as continually resisted and being resisted today.” A core decolonial question Mignolo (2009b, 178) posed is not “how to save capitalism” but “why would you want to save capitalism and not human beings?” What, then, is the practice of decoloniality? How do the struggle and resistance from exteriority push against coloniality? These are questions taken up by Walsh and Mignolo as they examine a decolonial praxis. Walsh (2018, 17) argues,

With colonialism and coloniality came resistance and refusal. Decoloniality necessarily follows, derives from and responds to coloniality and the ongoing colonial process and condition. It is a form of struggle and survival, and epistemic and existence-based response and practice—most especially by colonized and racialized subjects—*against* the colonial matrix of power in all of its dimensions, and for the possibilities otherwise.

This argument points to a dynamic and place-based decoloniality, which makes visible other ways of knowing and understanding the world that decenter a Western perspective. The project of decolonizing knowledge production must be informed by the geopolitics of knowledge—the why and how of where it is produced. As Gibson-Graham (2006a [1996, 41]) pointed out early on with regard to global economic development, the noncapitalist–capitalist binary forecloses heterogeneity alongside capitalism—instead pitting “islands of localized resistance” within a “capitalist sea.” Capitalist-style development and market interaction as a universal pervades knowledge about how to live well. As Escobar (2018, 6) notes, the design of development must be “liberated” from the imagination of the “Global North” and “relocated” within the “multiple onto-epistemic formations of the South, so as to redefine questions, problems, and practices in ways more

appropriate to the South's contexts." To decolonize development is to break the hold on a global imagination and create anew in place-based contexts that step outside of universals. Here I assert a decoloniality that is plural and part of the possible.

In identifying fair trade as a tool of economic development that works within and against the market, fair trade scholarship relies on a singular and universalizing narrative of what fair trade is and whom it is for. This book does not. Instead, while I am interested in engaging the questions of what fair trade is and whom it is for, this is tempered too by asking, who gets to decide? Moreover, this question is spatial, considering from where is it decided and how the imaginary of "other" places is projected via that decision-making process. Fair trade is predicated on a development model that universalizes and obscures, and it does this from a particular spatial position—the zero point—erasing other possibilities. The idea of "capitalism's excluded others" (Gibson-Graham 2007, 3) takes on multiple meanings in the context of the practices of *campesinos/as* in resistance. As indigenous peoples, they have struggled against five hundred years of exploitation and marginalization. Their knowledges, practices, and economies were subverted to white, Western, hetero-patriarchal universals. But in considering how to think about economies and economic identities outside of a capitalocentric lens, the pluriversal is opened up and made visible. Fair rebels are engaging in a radical process of place making that comes not from universal imaginaries of development but from a space that puts the politics of place at the center, making visible multiple modernities. Beyond breaking down universals, this approach makes a space for hope.

I aim to retheorize and challenge the way scholars and practitioners think about economic development and resilience by showing that not everyone understands and builds secure livelihoods with profit and growth at the center, and while hopeful, these efforts are part of difficult daily struggles. *Fair Trade Rebels* is an empirically grounded analysis of localized economic practices that mobilize global networks to build wide-ranging networks that are not tied to any one place but to social and economic relations between people. A key contribution is putting decolonial and diverse economies theories into conversation, not only to illuminate the struggles of *campesinos/as* in resistance but also to multiply our understandings of fair trade, development, resistance, and efforts to build dignified livelihoods and livable worlds.

Rebel Coffee

Stepping back from reading fair trade as only a market-based tool for development requires a consideration of movements to make trade fairer and how fair trade is situated in rebel Chiapas (those spaces where *campesinos/as* in resistance have declared autonomy from the state). The production of rebel coffee (coffee produced by *campesinos/as* in resistance for cooperatives that are certified fair trade) forms part of the resistance that is being practiced in the highlands. Yet, fair trade certification is part of the neoliberal apparatus as an ever-expanding, profit-based market, nevertheless the movements to make trade fairer remain. Rather than thinking about fair trade only as “lifting farmers out of poverty,” we can also consider fair trade “in movement.” Under the larger umbrella of fair trade is a movement and a market—and within each of these may be many different understandings being generated by even more groups about what fair trade is and whom it is for (a discussion to which I return in chapters 3 and 4). The movement and market for fairer trade are entangled and messy spaces that are negotiated by *campesinos/as* in resistance.

In 2011, following the split of the two largest third-party fair trade certifiers, there was an uproar in the larger fair trade community. As part of the response to the split, cartoonist John Klossner produced an image for longtime fair trade organization Equal Exchange (Figure 4).



Figure 4. *Who Speaks for Fair Trade?* Copyright 2013 John Klossner, <http://www.jklossner.com/>.

Considering the question of who owns fair trade is one way we can begin to think about what fair trade is and whom it is for; moreover, the depiction by Klossner (2013) says much about the question of who gets to decide. The departure of Fair Trade USA (previously Transfair) from the larger Fairtrade Labeling Organization (now Fairtrade International) is not the site of the rupture between movements and the market for fairer trade; however, it was a turning point for many actors within the broader fair trade apparatus as Fair Trade USA sought to redefine and in essence “own” fair trade. The 2012 “Fair Trade for All” campaign, which was launched by Fair Trade USA following the split, was squarely focused on expanding the fair trade label and market to extend the so-called benefits of economic development to more people (Fair Trade USA 2012). As the fair trade label adorns more products and is extended to more organizations and companies, its meaning changes, creating a distinct path toward answering the question of whom it is for. The discourses of the fair trade movement and social justice activism focused on fairer trade became embedded in the expansion of the market, muddying the different desires, outcomes, and practices of a large group of people.

The expansion of the market at the expense of the movement led Matt Earley (2012), social activist and cofounder of the Just Coffee Cooperative in the United States, to declare Fair Trade™ dead. This declaration effectively drew a line in the sand between the movement and the market. Movements to make trade fairer are populated by a diverse set of stakeholders worldwide. Taken at its most basic premise, making trade fairer is about valuing people over profit. Making trade fairer crafts coffee production and consumption as political acts. Yet, this simplified understanding masks the different desires and outcomes of mobilizing for better conditions in global trade. Some stakeholders are concerned with making trade “work” for small producers, others with creating more direct trade networks and reducing labor exploitation. Many activists focus on solidarity and awareness raising. Producers also fall in this mix, yet they are also consumers, which adds to the layers of complexity that make up the broader and varied aims of social movements. Movements to make trade fairer are not singular and static but multiple and dynamic. So, we must also consider fair trade in movement. Thinking about fair trade in movement implies a process that has momentum and is moving toward change. Additionally, analyzing the movement versus the market sets up a potentially unhelpful binary. Fair trade reflects not just two realities (market or movement) but many, which are experienced by people in multiple and competing ways. To grasp the nuances of fair trade, we must situate it in place and examine how it is understood and practiced.

For fair rebels, the sale of coffee in the fair trade marketplace is one of many strategies for building dignified livelihoods and livable worlds, even as they resist political and economic violence. In an interview I conducted with the leadership of a coffee-producing cooperative in the highlands early in my research, this point was made very clear: “Our coffee, it sells, and it sends the message that we are still here.” For *campesinos/as* in resistance, fair trade is a possibility. It is not *the* possibility but one of many in the pursuit of creating livelihoods with dignity. It is not a means to an end (profit) but something to make them visible, while also gaining cash income for the purchase of items that cannot be produced in their communities. When discussed as a possibility, our thinking on fair trade is opened up and avenues for seeing difference are provided. The cooperatives were begun as a site of resistance, not as a site of capital accumulation. Taking on the fair

trade label assists with cultivating a broader community in solidarity with their resistance that is centered, not on coffee and profit, but on people.

Here I discuss local economic practices that harness the global to create a larger network that shapes the pursuit of dignified livelihoods. This discussion is a story about diverse economic practice and resistance. It is about the local and global talking back to each other. Local to global networks and practice are flattened out in this context, disrupting hierarchies that confine local initiatives to their place of origin and put them under the thumb of larger global processes. The localized economies created by fair rebels are more than simply locally shared appropriations of surplus. These community economies are also a form of resistance. Within this resistance lies the possibility of forging relations between local practices and larger outside networks. In many cases, local initiatives are seen as being in response to or undermined by larger-scale practices and processes, yet, in this case, as part of the process of flattening, the local is harnessing (and in some cases manipulating) the global. This flattening is an important theme that threads through the book, and here I seek to understand how fair rebels use local economic practices to extend global solidarity networks and build wide-ranging community economies, which are not tied to any one place but rather are tied to social relations between people.

Here let us briefly consider the questions of what fair trade is and whom it is for in the context of the highlands. Rather than relying on a singular definition, defining it against the capitalist marketplace, or taking up the understandings embedded in movements for fairer trade, I seek here to identify many ways of thinking about fair trade. Multiplying our understandings of fair trade allows for a diversity of perspectives, including those from movements and markets (and beyond). Examining fair trade outside of universal framings opens up opportunities to consider economic practices as a form of resistance. To understand rebel coffee, we must step away from questions rooted in economic development discourses that focus on asking if fair trade is “working” and move toward questions of how it is mobilized and deployed; in the case of fair rebels, we must consider it as part of a broader form of struggle and resistance.

Stzi’kel Vocol: Withstanding Suffering

Resistance is often romanticized, but there is nothing romantic about being hungry. For within each performance of resistance is a membership: people, bodies, practices, and everyday actions that make possible the politics and mobilizations of resistance. In considering the resistance in the highlands, I am not asking about how *campesinos/as* in resistance perform as actors in social movements or originators of subversive acts; rather, I am asking about how they maintain themselves while simultaneously negotiating the politics of their struggle and the creation of dignified livelihoods and livable worlds. Yet, how are we to understand resistance? Resistance is a term that presents many obstacles to scholars and that has been in vogue and fallen from grace in critical geography in the span of a few decades. If we are to examine power–knowledge dynamics and give due attention to the articulations by *campesinos/as* living in rebel Chiapas as a people “in resistance,” then revisiting the term is a necessary step in laying the foundation for the book.

As Abu-Lughod (1990, 41) noted, academic interest in resistance was for a very long time tied to emancipation or revolution and an attention to particular global-historical moments. Over the past few decades, geographers have reworked conceptualizations of resistance, moving from a period of examining structural power relationships (Cresswell 1996; Pile and Keith 1997) that tended to mask potential spaces of resistance toward one of analyzing the interactions between intentioned and unintentional acts as well as domination and resistance. These broadened academic conceptualizations of resistance, stemming from work in anthropology by Scott (1985), focused on less visible and more localized resistances. Yet, scholarship on resistance, as Rose (2002) argues, rather than establishing a robust theoretical base, instead created a crisis, which revealed the limits of categorizing resistance and challenged scholars to reconceptualize the relational character of power and space. Critical thinking on resistance opened up the ways that we consider power, yet in many cases, such framings are dichotomous and neglect the interaction between peoples and places.

Although some scholars argue that resistance does not always form in the shadow of hegemonic power (cf. Pile 1997), Sharp et al. (2000) state that power/domination cannot be separated from resistance, or vice versa, arguing that because domination and resistance cannot be delinked, they necessarily produce “entanglements of power.” Drawing extensively from

Foucauldian notions of power, Sharp et al. attempt to position resistance in relation to power as it plays out in society and space through the “dyad” of domination–resistance (20). As Rose (2002) points out, both working within the “entanglements” of power as well as attempting to conceptualize resistance outside of domination can have the impact of masking the very power structures, discourses, and actors they seek to make visible. This difficulty brought geographers to an impasse on resistance, to the extent that it became an empty signifier, capturing any and all transgressive acts and characterizing power as necessarily and negatively hegemonic.

Owing to the theoretical stickiness of attempting to capture acts of transgression and resistance (see Naylor 2012b; Spinney 2010), many scholars draw from social movement activism to examine and theorize resistance (cf. Ayres and Bosia 2011; Chatterton and Heynen 2011; Featherstone 2003, 2007, 2008; Routledge 2009). In the more than two decades since the 1994 uprising of the Zapatistas, a range of scholarship has been produced that draws from experiences in Chiapas: some examining the resistances of the Zapatista Movement and others, which use interpretations of Zapatista forms of indigenous, autonomous resistance to understand resistance elsewhere.^[6] I draw attention to this use here not to restate or reexamine Zapatista resistances but instead to point to a geopolitics of knowledge production, where resistance and struggle in one place are readily mapped onto other places to explain divergent contexts. In many cases, the performances and practices of Zapatistas are drawn on to explain vastly different forms of struggle, even being levied to explain resistance in core–imperial contexts, which tends to universalize struggle in a particularly Western way.

The very definition of resistance takes on different meanings in the highlands, stemming not from universal notions of freedom, liberty, or counterhegemony but from struggle, suffering, resilience, identity, and material practice. The analytical and methodological starting point for this examination of resistance is a geographically specific place and a set of actors who engage a range of practices but who are not reducible to any one category of resistance. Moreover, the practices examined in this context are not the everyday resistances consisting of “foot dragging” and “sabotage,” which lie at the heart of Scott’s (1985) theorizations, or linked to particular subversive action or mobilization. Instead, resistance is based in daily struggles, agricultural practices in place, and solidarity network support that

is used to materially enact livable worlds. The moniker “*campesinos/as* in resistance” assists with reframing the approach taken and unpacking the power relations and struggles in place. For fair rebels, resistance is not a theory but a reality. Being *campesinos/as* in resistance forms a part of their identities, struggles, and daily lives.

Although coffee makes up an important part of everyday activities and transnational solidarity networking, *campesinos/as* in resistance identify most strongly as *peasants* who cultivate the *milpa* (the three sisters: corn, beans, and squash) for subsistence. As a result, the cultivation, maintenance, and protection of their native corn are paramount; coffee is a solidarity and income relation, but corn is life. The increased threat of transgenic corn spurred some autonomous communities to work with international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to create safeguards. One such effort is a seed bank project that I learned about during fieldwork in 2010 from NGO director Peter Brown, who works closely with rebel autonomous Zapatista schools in Chiapas (and who has since published this account; see Brown 2013, 158–60; see also Aguila-Way 2014; Brandt 2014). He described the first meetings of the *campesinos/as* as one where the discussion of safeguarding corn was the focal point of maintaining resistance. In the group conversation about naming the seed bank project, the *campesinos/as* decided on the name Mother Seeds in Resistance, Semillas Madre en Resistencia in Spanish, and Sme’ Tzu’nubil Stzi’kel Vocol in Tzotzil (one of the more common Mayan languages spoken in the highlands, along with Tzeltal). He was curious why the word for resistance was two Tzotzil words, *stzi’kel vocol*, and learned through translation and interpretation that it meant “to withstand suffering.” Learning this translation was a revelation for Brown (2013, 159). Moksnes (2012, 35–36) also discusses Tzotzil knowledges of suffering, noting that *vocol* (also spelled *vokol*), “suffering,” makes up a key part of indigenous identity in the highlands. Indeed, this form and understanding of resistance as a way to withstand the violence of the five-hundred-year war against indigenous peoples stand outside binary understandings of resistance as protest or resistance as a “weapon of the weak,” cutting across to reveal everyday, sedimented practices (see Nelson 2003) of resistance tied to agricultural production (Naylor 2017a).

A key way in which *campesinos/as* in resistance are making more visible their subjectivities—not as a project of development and state intervention

—is through this narrative of resistance. Not only does this narrative signal a need to expand how, as scholars, we think about resistance; it also provides a signpost for how understanding and theorizing resistance have been monopolized. It is here that we see, not new definitions or understandings of resistance, but a way of knowing and understanding resistance from exteriority. That fair rebels understand and know resistance as withstanding suffering grows out of their experience as exploited indigenous peoples (cf. Escobar 2007; Grosfoguel 2008; Stahler-Sholk 2015).

When *campesinos/as* refer to themselves as “in resistance,” it is a way to describe themselves not only as social movement actors but as indigenous peasant producers who are maintaining agricultural practices and cultivating international networks as part of their struggle against the many forces that seek to undermine them. It is a component of building a counterhegemony and an identity, not as powerless, marginalized peasants dominated by state and other neoliberal forces but as powerful *campesinos/as* seeking dignified livelihoods outside the machinations of state-led development. In some ways, this fundamentally disrupts how scholars theorize resistance. Considering highland communities that have declared autonomy from the state as sites of resistance requires expanding geographical epistemologies of resistance.

Ultimately, retheorizing resistance presents a tricky landscape to negotiate. At the same time, however, the moniker “*campesinos/as* in resistance” assists with reframing the approach taken and unpacking the power relations and struggle in place. One *campesino* alluded to the communal ability to withstand the everyday struggle: “we are a people in resistance. There is no other way forward.” For it is everyday things and the struggle of daily life that are and become resistance, and fair rebels are resisting cooptation and assimilation through their daily practice(s). Such a practical theory of resistance may not directly address the potentially problematic power/domination dynamic, yet it signals *campesinos/as* as agents of change, which at the very least disrupts it, giving us additional avenues to think through resistance.

A key piece of withstanding suffering is the reframing of identities through striving to create dignified livelihoods as peasants—disrupting the narrative of peasants being subsumed under capitalism. In many ways, fair rebels are redefining and multiplying what it means to be a peasant. One of

the key ways that this disrupts the geopolitics of knowledge is through siting the struggle in agricultural production practices. Agricultural production is the leading way that resistance is written into the landscape and onto the bodies of *campesinos/as* in the highlands. It is important to consider how fair rebels make this possible. In many cases, peasant agriculture is viewed as a self-exploiting, noncapitalist practice. Yet, if we are to consider what it means to produce in resistance, viewing these practices as diverse and multiple is necessary. Taken at face value, fair rebels are exercising power over their productive practice and networks. However, these practices are not without their messiness, and they may be in tension as they work within, outside, and alongside capitalist networks. A core component of the diverse livelihood strategies is the building of larger networks within and between rebel territories populated by *campesinos/as* in resistance (and also those who are not aligned with the Zapatistas and Las Abejas), as well as transnational networks to foster solidarity relations. Fair trade certified exchanges in the context of resistance are a “window to better money,” as discussed in the previous chapter, yet viewed outside the narrow and universalizing ideas of capitalist development, they open and (fore)close other possibilities.

A Window on the World

Given the framing by *campesinos/as* in resistance of fair trade as a “window to better money,” we can ponder the other windows that fair trade opens and closes. This consideration is a piece of the question of “who gets to decide” what fair trade is and whom it is for. There are various decision makers, from coffee producers and their cooperatives to coffee roasters and third-party labeling organizations. As each seeks to “own” fair trade, different viewpoints and openness emerge. As a window to better money within a capitalocentric framing, fair trade certification is reduced to price. As a window on the world, fair trade is part of a larger community. This window is framed by both the market, which is based in profit, successful economic development outcomes, and product improvement, and social justice movements, which are attempting to move toward solidarity, more direct forms of trade, and community building, and also by the networks of resistance, which strike through this binary and demonstrate that the “better” in this phrase might have more to do with building knowledge from

below than determining whether fair trade is working for *campesinos/as* in resistance. In the next chapter, I provide a historical context for building livelihoods in the highlands as part of the five-hundred-year struggle of indigenous peoples.

The Shape of Struggle, So It Is . . .

As I had done many times over the past two years, I walked with a member of the coffee cooperative to visit their home and family. Heading out from the bodega of Maya Vinic, we walked down the center of the road, jumping to the right or left every time a pickup truck or taxi raced by. The trucks you could hear from a distance, bumping down the paved but poorly maintained road that connects Yabteclum to Pantelhó. One truck pulled to a stop as we walked, and I watched as a mother and her two young children descended from the back of the truck, laden with packaged goods from town. We talked about the road and the trucks and the community as we walked. “Here our community has changed very much,” he remarked as we walked past an old hacienda dwelling that was now in use as a community meeting and Sunday worship space.



Figure 5. Husband and wife, members of Las Abejas and the Maya Vinic Coffee Cooperative, stand in front of drying beans and coffee beans at their home within the boundaries of the official municipality of Chenalhó. Photograph by the author.

It is a community populated by subsistence farmers of varying political affiliations. No matter the affiliation, though, almost everyone works the land in corn or coffee, and as we walk along the road, there is evidence of this. In the foreground is coffee drying on any (and every) available space. Coffee dries on concrete slabs adjacent to households or on tarps that have been laid on the ground, in the margins of the road, on rooftops and other available flat spaces. In the background, a sweeping vista of cornfields and shade coffee plots extends across the hilly terrain.

Not many in this community are members of Las Abejas or the Zapatistas; they are outnumbered almost three to one by community members who are affiliated with other groups (or unaffiliated). We talk about how this divergence between the numbers of farmers in resistance

and those who are not impacts the struggle for autonomy. I ask, “How will you maintain your land and *ejido*?” This question is met with a long sigh. The community has met to discuss PROCEDURE. PROCEDURE is a government land-titling program that began in the 1990s as land redistribution was halted in the lead-up to the signing of NAFTA. Effectively, it takes communally held land (which before PROCEDURE could not be sold) and grants individual titles, allowing for private investment in previously communally held land. For the first time, this land could be titled, bought, sold, rented, or used as collateral. The government has already come and gone, the land has been surveyed, and the community has agreed that their claims to land are not secure without title.

The community has decided that they will accept PROCEDURE and receive titles to their land. “We all agreed that we are going to get title and that we would not sell our plots. So it is.” Another long sigh. *Así es*, or “so it is,” is an oft-heard refrain in Chiapas. It reminded me of Vonnegut’s “so it goes.” And it still rings in my ears as acceptance of struggle. Being outnumbered in their community adds another dynamic to their resistance and to how they interact with the state, or not. It forms another key part of daily struggle as they negotiate how their struggle should be shaped.

Notes

Introduction

1. For the purposes of this narrative, I use the terms *campesino/a* rather than *campesin@* or *campesinx* to recognize gender difference. I made this choice based on the use of *campesino/a* by the social movement actors who participated in this research.
2. This is not a diagnostic text; therefore I do not seek to define what it means to live well or build dignified livelihoods.
3. It should be noted that the Zapatista support bases are free of weapons (as well as drugs and alcohol); only the military arm of the EZLN, sequestered in the southeast of the state, maintains weapons. Additionally, there is a well-established body of literature that engages the broader groups of indigenous peoples in Chiapas who are part of, or directly impacted by, the Zapatista rebellion; see, for example, monographs or edited volumes by Baronnet, Mora, and Stahler-Sholk (2011), Collier and Quaratiello (2005), Eber and Kovic (2003), Harvey (1998), Hernández Castillo (2016), Mattiace (2003), Mora (2017), Moksnes (2012), Nash (2001), Pérez Ruiz (2004), Rus, Hernández Castillo, and Mattiace (2003), Speed (2005, 2008), Speed and Reyes (2002, 2005), Stephen (2002), and Tavanti (2003).
4. It should be made clear at the outset that although this is not a book about the Zapatista movement, there are very pragmatic reasons for the use of *in resistance* for Zapatistas and their support base members. For these groups, it takes on a political character to refer to their declaration of rebel autonomy and official policy of refusal of government aid or programming. Additionally, the use of *in resistance* by non-Zapatistas who are in solidarity takes on a distinct, but similar character.
5. In 1974, in collaboration with Catholic bishop Samuel Ruiz García, the First National Indigenous Congress in Mexico was convened. Held in the city of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, the Congress marked the five hundredth birthday of Bartolomé de las Casas, and thousands of indigenous delegates (Tzotziles, Tzeltales, Ch'oles, and Tojolabales) representing 327 communities attended (Harvey 1998, 77–78). The meetings were focused on four areas of appeal to the state, specifically, land, commerce, education, and health (Stephen 2002, 117). Many have identified the Congress as a turning point (cf. Collier and Quaratiello 2005; Harvey 1998; Mattiace 1998; Stephen 2002), as it brought together representatives of the four major linguistic groups and called for unity among the indigenous groups in the state. Stephen (2002, 118) argues that this pointed to “the possibility of a new concept of ethnicity that does not focus on individual ethnic traits but is rooted in a common sense of struggle.”
6. Much training was done in the Lacandón Jungle and also in the northern areas adjacent to Agua Azul and the ruins of Palenque.
7. Additionally, as Nash (2001) argued, the state has never fully addressed gender inequities, especially in the cases of landownership and voting rights (see also Speed 2006).
8. While the official Chiapas Project ended in 1980, its legacy remains through other research labs on Harvard’s campus, which as recently as 2015 still described their work as “the quest for the causes underlying Chiapas’ backwardness” (CID, n.p.).
9. When I arrived in the highlands in 2010, I was acutely aware of social, political, and economic differences in my daily interactions. My race, gender identity (cis-woman), educational attainment, economic status, and U.S. citizenship (settler-colonial) influenced the way that I was able to interact with people and the way they interacted with me.
10. In discussing the politics of representation, I am referring to the problem of “speaking for others and the practice of speaking about others,” critical issues that Alcoff (1992) suggests reinforce hierarchies in research. Alcoff notes that “where one speaks from affects the meaning and truth of what one says” and critically that “the practice of privileged persons speaking for or on behalf of

less privileged persons has actually resulted (in many cases) in increasing or reinforcing the oppression of the group spoken for” (6–7). Throughout the researching and writing of this book, I have participated in an interpretation of my needs, goals, and situation as well as those of others, which creates the potential for exploitation and ownership over translation and interpretation. One of the ways I sought to ameliorate the problem of “speaking for/about others” in practice is through cultivating a dialogue and attempting to “speak with others” (Alcoff 1992; Spivak 1988) as the research process unfolded; this approach, however, does not obviate the processes of writing and analyzing, and I fully acknowledge the difficulties of speaking “with others” while writing. Similar to Walsh, I do not see myself as “studying or reporting on social movements and actors, but thinking with and theorizing from” the events and daily activities in which I engaged (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 85).

11. One of my attempts is to maintain my connections with the cooperatives through their extended networks in the United States, and I continue to be in contact with the coffee-roasting cooperatives that purchase coffee from the producer cooperatives with which I worked in the highlands.
12. I would also add gender to this, as my experience as a woman and female-bodied person in the field differs greatly from those experiences reported by my male-bodied colleagues.
13. This idea of “what it is and who it is for” is drawn directly from work by Leslie McLees (2012), who asked these questions in conducting research on urban agriculture in Dar es Salaam as they related to who and what the city is for.

1. Fair Rebels, Fair Coffee?

1. I use a variation on world systems theory advanced by Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) because it allows for examining core–peripheral relations at multiple scales (and simultaneously). I reject the idea that there is a “developed/undeveloped” or “developing” world, as there are cores and peripheries from the scale of the household—where reproductive labor is extracted—to the global. I also eschew the common bifurcation of the globe into the less derogatory “Global North–Global South” because of its association with the Brandt Line (Brandt 1980), which unhelpfully generalizes an “industrialized North” and “impoverished South” (see Naylor 2014; see also on grand narratives Murphy 2013).
2. For example, see the work of Buttle (2008), Cameron, Gibson, and Hill (2014), Cameron and Wright (2014), Diprose (2016), Dixon (2011), Dombroski (2016), Dombroski, Mckinnon, and Healy (2016), Foley and Mather (2016), Gibson-Graham and Roelvink (2011), Healy (2014), Hill (2011), Hosking and Palomino-Schalscha (2016), Krueger, Schulz, and Gibbs (2018), Lepofsky (2007), Little, Maye, and Ilbery (2010), Morrow and Dombroski (2015), Naylor (2018), North (2015), Oberhauser (2005), Roelvink, St. Martin, and Gibson-Graham (2015), Shear (2010), Smith (2004, 2007), and St. Martin (2007).
3. This discussion of power was part of the conversation between panel and audience at the 2017 American Association of Geographers conference.
4. Although I would argue that fair trade does “work” for some (largely consumers in the United States and Western Europe), a point to which I return in chapter 3, when I discuss “who benefits” from fair trade.
5. In the heyday of the ICA, INMECAFE provided technical assistance, research findings, and export permits and purchased and processed coffee grown by small producers.
6. It is important to note that no new empirical research on the Zapatista movement has been approved by its members since 2003 (see Giovanni 2014, 95; Mora 2008, 2017; Newdick 2012).