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Cross-Sector Collaboration, Institutional Gaps, and Fragility: The Role of Social Innovation Partnerships in a Conflict-Affected Region

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Cross-Sector Collaboration, Institutional Gaps, and Fragility: The Role of Social Innovation Partnerships in a Conflict-Affected Region

Ans Kolk and François Lenfant

The authors aim to contribute to the literature on subsistence marketplaces and the marketing field in general by exploring social innovation partnerships in a fragile country characterized by institutional gaps—specifically, by considering the role of cross-sector collaboration in conflict-affected areas. The empirical setting consists of coffee partnerships in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the authors collected data from and about companies, nongovernmental organizations, and cooperatives using both primary and secondary sources, including a field trip, interviews, and group discussions with farmers and their families. They show results at the organizational level (i.e., buildup of managerial capacities, transfer of financial-administrative skills, and improved functioning of cooperatives), the farmer level (i.e., better prices, livelihoods, and access to markets as well as increased revenues), and the community level (i.e., reduced tensions and collaboration between previously hostile groups as well as the creation of new governance modalities). The study suggests that partnerships may offer a systemic approach to addressing institutional gaps, which is necessary in such "extreme" contexts. The authors close with a discussion of further implications for research and public policy.

Keywords: development, fragile states, institutions, poverty, voids

I n the past decade, poverty, development, and subsistence in relation to marketing have received substantial attention, largely owing to agendas set through a series of conferences and accompanying collections of publications, including comprehensive special issues in *Journal of Business Research* (Nakata and Viswanathan 2012; Viswanathan and Rosa 2010) and *Journal of Macromarketing* (Viswanathan, Shultz, and Sridharan 2014). By emphasizing the importance of the micro level in relation to meso and macro phenomena, this stream of research has provided a solid foundation to comparable concerns raised in business and management more broadly on the bottom of the pyramid (Arnould and Mohr 2005; Kolk, Rivera-Santos, and Rufín 2014; London, Anupindi, and Sheth 2010; Praha-

lad and Hart 1999). Still, the importance of preexisting marketplaces and local traditions has been underexposed in the bottom-of-the-pyramid approach compared with the subsistence literature (Kolk, Rivera-Santos, and Rufín 2014; Viswanathan and Sridharan 2009).

Despite a decade of valuable research and publications on subsistence markets, however, Hill and Martin (2014) argue that marketing research overall has insufficiently considered the fate of the poor and those who are less well off, with negative effects for the field's (policy) relevance. This resonates with previous calls for marketing literature to pay more attention to issues pertaining to poverty and development (Achrol and Kotler 2012; Hosley and Wee 1988; Shultz et al. 2012; Wilkie and Moore 2012), peace and conflict, and institution building (Layton and Grossbart 2006; Shultz et al. 2005). This article directly relates both to the important research themes these authors identified and to specific topics mentioned in the call for papers. We contribute to this special section by (1) exploring how social innovation alliances consisting of different actors may help address (post)conflict tensions and development problems in a fragile institutional setting and (2) considering the implications for policy. Our empirical setting consists of multistakeholder coffee collaborations in the eastern Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC]), linking microentrepreneurial activities of small farmers to the meso and macro levels, given that coffee requires inclusion in global marketing systems to reach distant customers.

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We build on an emerging body of literature that examines the long-standing interest in marketing systems (e.g., Hunt 1981; Layton 2007, 2009) in developing countries (recent examples include Hounhouigan et al. 2014; Kolk 2014) while explicitly considering the fragile context of a conflict-affected region. Our research thus also adds specific dimensions in answering marketing scholars' repeated calls to pay more attention to the institutional environment (e.g., Grewal and Dharwadkar 2002; Handelman and Arnold 1999)—particularly in emerging and developing countries, where it "is arguably the most important aspect" of difference from developed countries (Burgess and Steenkamp 2006, p. 339)—in relation to wider debates about the existence of so-called institutional voids or gaps (Khanna and Palepu 1997; Kolk 2014; Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos 2015). In taking these starting points, we follow a more top-down, macro-midrange approach (as suggested by Ingenbleek [2014]) that complements and links to bottom-up studies that have emerged in the subsistence markets literature (Viswanathan, Shultz, and Sridharan 2014). Our exploratory study suggests that partnerships may offer a more systemic approach to addressing institutional gaps, which seems necessary in such "extreme" contexts of fragility; we close with a discussion of implications for research and policy.

Although our analysis is exploratory and "stems from immersion in this phenomenon of interest" (MacInnes 2011, p. 152), the findings from our fieldwork in this conflict-affected region illuminate research gaps in the aforementioned bodies of literature. Moreover, this study helps shed light on marketing "as constructive engagement" (Shultz 2007) in general and as related to collaborative innovations for subsistence in particular. Finally, it has direct relevance for public policy because the question of how to address peace, reconciliation, and economic recovery (Shultz et al. 2005) is an area of concern among practitioners and policy makers. This has come to the fore in the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding and its 2011 New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States (e.g., Kolk and Lenfant 2015; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2012), which aim to improve the situation in (post)conflict countries, emphasizing the potential role of partnerships.

In the next section, we first indicate current insights into social innovation partnerships and explain how they may offer compensatory structures and help address institutional gaps, especially in contexts of fragility, drawing on the most recent literature. This is followed by an explanation of the research approach, a presentation of the findings, and a discussion of research and public policy implications and limitations of the exploratory study.

Cross-Sector Collaboration in Fragile Institutional Settings

The (Potential) Role of Partnerships

Partnerships (or social alliances, as they are frequently called in the marketing literature) have received increasing academic and practitioner interest as innovative arrangements to deal with complex social problems that a single

actor cannot solve. To help address specific issues or conglomerates of sustainable development issues, collaboration between business and (non)governmental organizations has been welcomed as the potentially most effective route. Publications have examined a range of dimensions of cross-sector partnerships in the past 15 years. In addition to early articles by Waddock (1991) and Austin (2000); overviews by Berger, Cunningham, and Drumwright (2004), Horton, Prain, and Thiele (2009), Selsky and Parker (2005); and, most recently, publications by Gray and Stites (2013), Kolk and Lenfant (2015), and Seitanidi and Crane (2014) provide a state of the field. Some coffee sector–specific analyses involving cooperation have also been published (e.g., Arnould, Plastina, and Ball 2009; Bitzer, Francken, and Glasbergen 2008; Linton 2005).

A recent review of publications on partnerships in various (sub)disciplines, including marketing, public policy, management and political science, shows that business scholars have focused on value creation for and within organizations whereas those in nonbusiness fields have typically examined (external) governance processes and generic societal implications of collaborative arrangements (Kolk and Lenfant 2015). Viewed from a public policy and marketing angle, it may be concluded that partnership researchers have tended to overlook the more external, societal consequences of social alliances and possible impacts at various levels from individuals to organizations and communities. There are opportunities to explore linkages to more specific program evaluation and assessment studies performed in the field of international development (e.g., Bamberger and White 2007; OECD-Development Assistance Committee [DAC] 2002; Ravaillon 2009; see the next section). Furthermore, most of the partnership literature has examined developed-country actors, frequently considering their activities in developing countries but much less often investigating the local (entrepreneurial) dimensions and connections with other actors embedded in a marketing system. Likewise, they tend to cover alliances with a limited number of partners and not the ones encompassing innovative multifaceted forms of collaboration, also characterized as tripartite or quadripartite, that seem essential in subsistence contexts (Rivera-Santos, Rufín, and Kolk 2012).

In addition, relatively few publications have focused on partnerships in the most complex institutional settings. Because these settings are characterized by weak or missing formal institutions (Khanna and Palepu 1997), partnerships may offer compensatory structures by helping shape new/different networks and/or intermediary entities (Kolk 2014; Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos 2015). These aspects directly relate to the call in the marketing literature for research on institutions in developing countries. Multiple partners, ideally from different backgrounds, are needed because no single type of actor(s) is likely to be able to provide the whole range of missing institutions. This is most notable in so-called fragile states, which are marked by a history of conflict, a lack of trust, and a weak government in addition to issues related to poverty, human rights violations, and environmental degradation (Brück, Naudé, and Verwimp 2011; Naudé, Santos-Paulino, and McGillivray 2011). Innovative cross-sector social collaboration seems to

be a precondition to help address this confluence of issues and foster good governance, reconstruction, and peace (e.g., Abramov 2009; Fort and Schipani 2004; Kolk and Lenfant 2012; Oetzel et al. 2009; World Bank 2011), but empirical research in these contexts has been limited thus far.

## Fragility and Institutional Gaps

In conflict-affected regions and unstable countries with weak/missing institutions, collecting reliable data is very complex, which might explain the underexposure in empirical studies (Kolk and Lenfant 2015). In addition to situations of direct violent conflict, which lead to specific challenges (Getz and Oetzel 2010), there are also "in-between" situations in which bouts of violence, hostility, and lack of trust intersect with formal cessation of fighting or even peace agreements. The DRC has found itself in this situation in recent years, with fragile, weak, and partly missing institutions. Note that although such "voids" (the commonly used term) are sometimes perceived as referring to a total lack of institutions, the reality often differs because a plurality of rules and arrangements is likely to be in place. There may be a complex mix of formal and particularly locally shaped informal institutions, with differences in recentness and degrees of centralization of (traditional) "authority" structures (e.g., "acephalous" communities without permanent leadership; simple and more complex chiefdoms, tribes, or caste-clan systems; centralized, hierarchical communities; e.g., Grinin and Korotayev 2011; Kaye and Béland 2009). To account for local peculiarities, combinations/types of institutions, and varying degrees to which they are present, we use the term "gaps" rather than "voids" (unless when used in the original).

In a recent article on the more formal institutions, Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos (2015) elaborate on the five types of voids as originally distinguished by Khanna and Palepu (1997) (see Figure 1). They focus on multinational enterprises (MNEs) operating in subsistence markets in various stages of the supply chain (from procurement to production, distribution, and sales), which is a rather different perspective from ours. Still, we can build on their insights to some extent because their voids comprise contextual factors that are also relevant for our study. For example, gaps related to quality ascertainment of produce, shortages in technical and organizational skills and knowledge, and limited access to finance are pertinent to coffee production (Kolk 2014). At the same time, the fragile, conflict-affected nature of the region adds other crucial characteristics. These especially relate to hostilities; lack of trust, security, and good governance; (occasional) fighting and frequent human rights violations; and the broader informal, sometimes clan-based structures that are (re)shaped during the conflict period.

Figure 1 indicates the formal voids derived from Khanna and Palepu (1997) and applied specifically to MNEs by Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos (2015). We clustered them somewhat differently, embedding them in the fragility context with which all actors are confronted. The fragility elements that we included are inspired by recent work from international organizations, government agencies, societal actors, and scholars, published in academic and practitioner publications, focusing on subdimensions relevant in such settings (Grossmann et al. 2009; Mata and Ziaja 2009; OECD 2012; World Bank 2011; see also Fort and Schiphani 2004; Naudé, Santos-Paulino, and McGillivray 2011).

We argue that fragility puts the five gaps into a different context, one in which gaps are likely to be more extreme, and

Figure 1. Institutional Gaps in Fragile States
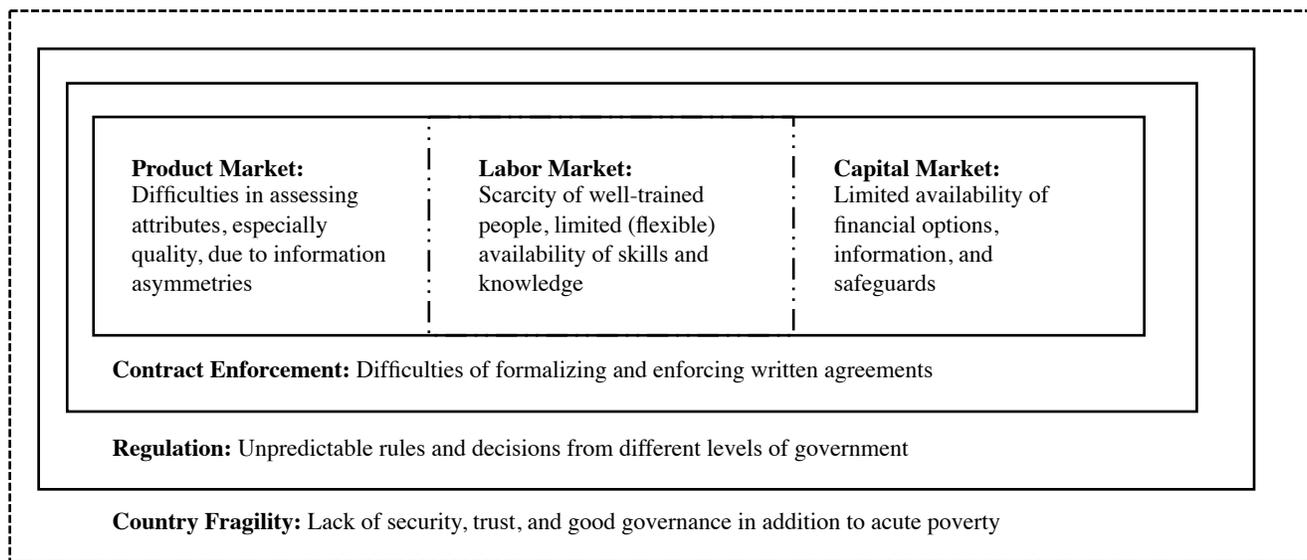
Notes: We drew from Khanna and Palepu (1997) and Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos (2015) for the five "inner" and formal or institutional voids (i.e., product market, labor market, capital market, contract enforcement, and regulation). We added country fragility dimensions inspired by key components in Grossmann et al. (2009); Mata and Ziaja (2009); and World Bank (2011).

traditional mechanisms to help fill them are likely to be less effective. Partnerships might offer a more systemic approach to address the specifics of the institutional environment and the social matrix. To do so, they would, for example, need to not only target the finance gap (through a microfinance scheme) or the labor gap (through a training program) but also focus on the connections between the gaps by developing trust between communities as well as diminishing insecurity. Our study aims to consider how these factors come to the fore in the coffee partnerships set up in the eastern DRC (we discuss them in detail in the "Findings" section). We explore the more generic relation with elements of marketing systems and, more specifically, interactions with the conflict-affected institutional environment. This approach is inspired by Layton's perspective on the mutual influence between marketing systems and their institutional environment, which we placed in a fragility context as a specification of his observation that each location or region is characterized by a "distinctive social matrix" (Layton 2009, p. 354).

Research Approach

The Case and Its Context

We adopted a case study methodology focused on coffee partnerships in the eastern DRC (the Kivu region), which have emerged in recent years to help rejuvenate agricultural activity and increase farmers' income. The case study approach enabled us to examine "a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Yin 1984, p. 23), focusing on a limited number of partnerships as study objects in the specific geographical area selected for its fragility. In the DRC, where agricultural opportunities are strongly underexploited (with only 10% of arable land being farmed), there are several regions that (used to) produce coffee, mostly on old and small plantations (World Bank 2010). Rehabilitation efforts have been hampered by rampant insecurity, which has led to abandoned fields and lack of up-to-date trading, technical, and agronomical facilities, resulting in low-quality input and output and low prices (Schluter 2010). However, the DRC's eastern provinces have fertile volcanic soils that do not require fertilizer and offer exceptional conditions for the production of high-quality Arabica coffee (Schluter 2010). At the same time, communities in this region have also suffered greatly from the vicious cycle of conflict, poverty, and poor governance, characteristics typical of fragile states (World Bank 2010). Although various formal peace agreements have been signed in the past few years (the last two in 2008 and 2009), bouts of violence continue to affect the population, especially in the eastern provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu, which border Rwanda. As Table 1 shows, the DRC as a whole scores very high on the "failed state index" and very low on international rankings that assess peace, democracy, governance, transparency, human development, and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. The region selected for the study thus exemplifies an "extreme" context suitable for unconventional research that can help shed light on unexplored phenomena, as recent articles have called for (Bamberger 2008; Bamberger and Pratt 2010; see also Mair, Martí, and Ventresca 2012). It is also a truly "natural laboratory"

(Burgess and Steenkamp 2006, p. 340) for research on marketing and institutions.

Data Collection

We collected information for the three partnerships through desk research; semistructured interviews with experts and those directly or indirectly involved in the partnerships, both inside and outside the eastern DRC region (for a full overview of contacts and interviews, see the Appendix); and a field trip that involved group discussions and observations (as we explain next) through immersion in this phenomenon of interest. These latter aspects of data collection provided us with micro-level insights into ground-level realities. Because conducting research and obtaining reliable data are significant challenges in conflict-affected settings such as the DRC, our approach seemed appropriate because it involved a range of methods for engagement and data collection (see also Shultz et al. 2005). We drew inspiration from previous studies (e.g., Ingenbleek, Tessema, and Van Trijp 2013; Shultz et al. 2012) that called for different research methodologies to suit a developing-/emerging-market context. To "enter" the communities, we benefited from proper introduction by the cooperatives, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and community leaders who were closely involved and trusted (Ingenbleek, Tessema, and Van Trijp 2013; Viswanathan, Gau, and Chaturvedi 2008) and with whom one of the researchers has close ties because he had conducted many field trips in the region in the past decade while working for another NGO. Our "immersion" took the form of engagement with partnership leaders through regular contacts, both in the country/region and through e-mail.

We used these existing contacts to carry out an inventory and obtain information on all relevant coffee partnerships in the region from informants, supplemented with a thorough search in various databases and on the Internet. This resulted in the identification of four larger-scale cross-sector collaborations in the eastern DRC, one of which was oriented at discussing issues affecting the coffee sector in the DRC broadly and thus represented engagement and dialogue rather than the more strategic, innovative types of activities we pursue in this article (which encompass what has been called "transformative" partnerships; see Kolk and Lenfant 2015). We therefore focused on the other three cross-sector collaborations for further analysis (discussed in more detail in subsequent sections and summarized in Table 2). In the later stage of our empirical study, we carried out additional checks through our contacts, which confirmed our assessment regarding these three partnerships. The partnerships are located (1) in Butembo (North Kivu), with Soprocopiv (cooperative), Solidaridad (NGO), Schluter (business), and DGIS as an international governmental donor (Netherlands); (2) in Minova (on the border between North and South Kivu), with Sainsbury (business), Sopacdi (cooperative), Twin (an NGO that also owns a trading company), and DFID as an international governmental donor (United Kingdom); and (3) in Lemera, Bikokoboko, and Mutamabala (South Kivu), with Twin (and Twin Trading, the NGOs' trading branch), UGEAFI (nonprofit cooperative), and Oxfam Novib (NGO). Although there are some differences between the partnerships, mostly regarding their setup, their origin,

Table 1. General Information About the DRC

Basic Information[a]	
Conflict period	1996/1997–present
Area in square kilometers	2.345,000
Population	66 million
Natural resources	Copper, cobalt, diamonds, gold, and other minerals; oil; wood; hydroelectric potential
Main export products	Diamonds (45%), copper, and cobalt
GDP/capita[b]	US$231 (ranked 212 out of 212 countries)
Ethnic groups	More than 200 African ethnic groups; the Luba, Kongo, and Anamongo are some of the larger groupings of tribes in the DRC; in the Kivus, the largest tribe groupings are the Bafulero, Babembe, Banyamulenge, Bashi, Bahunde, Batembo, Banande, and Banyanga

Rankings	
Fragile States Index[c]	2 (for comparison, Somalia is at position 1); includes aspects related to governance, justice, security, delegitimization of the state, public services, criminality, uneven development, and human rights
Worldwide Governance Indicators[d]	155 (out of 167); includes voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulation quality, rule of law, and corruption
Open Budget Index[e]	83 (out of 94); related to transparency
Democracy Index[f]	155 (out of 167); related to functioning of government, electoral processes, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties
Global Peace Index[g]	154 (out of 158); related to human rights, military expenditures, security, safety, and criminality
Human Development Index[h]	187 (out of 187); related to human development

[a]Sources: http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm; http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2861.htm, the International Monetary Fund, the World Economic Outlook Database.
[b]Source: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD.
[c]Source: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/failed_states_index_2012_interactive.
[d]Source: http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp 2011.
[e]Source: http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/2010_Data_Tables.pdf 2010.
[f]Source: http://graphics.eiu.com/PDF/Democracy_Index_2010_web.pdf 2010.
[g]Sources: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AonYZs4MzlZbdGVUUEE1UVpFX1dkLVgtZ2RLeVJzV3c#gid=1 and http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2012/jun/12/global-peace-index-2012#data 2012.
[h]Source: http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/.
Notes: This table contains information relevant at the time of the empirical study. Since then, there have been some (mostly minor) changes in the DRC's rankings, sometimes representing a slight improvement, sometimes a further deterioration. The latest information does not change the overall picture and fundamentally fragile nature of the DRC, but the authors can supply it on request.

and the ethnic composition of the communities, similarities prevail when considered from the perspective and focus of this study. Following Eisenhardt (1989), we thus grouped and analyzed the partnerships as one phenomenon (case) focusing on cross-sector collaboration and involving a range of different actors in the conflict-affected Kivu region in a fragile country characterized by institutional gaps.

To collect additional information about the various dimensions of the partnerships, we took the following subsequent steps. We first approached 18 people in our network (from 11 organizations) by e-mail with questions about the partnerships and actors, the (post)conflict context in which they operate, and their impact (see the Appendix). Their responses contained answers to the questions or an invitation for a phone interview and/or a reference to another person we could (also) contact in view of their specific expertise. This led to a series of semistructured interviews (mostly by long-distance calls) with ten experts who were involved in the three partnerships or had specific

knowledge about the coffee sector and/or the region. Finally, the second author made a field trip to the region to obtain more in-depth information about the partnerships, their effectiveness/impact, and the institutional context. During the field research, he conducted 14 semistructured interviews and held ten group discussions with approximately 150 "beneficiaries" (coffee farmers and their families, who participated on a voluntary basis) in the three communities in the eastern DRC. Nongovernmental organization representatives and leaders of the cooperatives explained the purpose of the researcher's visit and asked interested farmers to give two hours of their time to answer a few questions in smaller groups of approximately 15 people. It was stressed that the research was not connected to (NGO) program funding, to avoid development evaluations suffering from a "positive response" bias due to participants' interest in continuation of the program.

The group discussions took place in Swahili, the language spoken in the eastern DRC, which was translated into

Table 2. Overview of the Three Coffee Partnerships in the DRC

	Partnerships		
Characteristics	**Schluter (B)–Solidaridad (N)–Soprocopiv (C)–DGIS (G)**	**Sainsbury (B)–Twin (N/B)–Sopacdi (C)–DFID (G)**	**Twin (B/N)–Oxfam Novib (N)–UGEAFI (N/C)**
Goal	To revitalize the coffee sector in DRC	To rejuvenate the coffee sector by releasing, for Red Nose Day in the United Kingdom, a limited first edition of high-quality (Fair Trade) coffee from war-torn DRC in the mainstream market since 1960s	To improve farmers' livelihoods
Activities per partner	• Schluter: Buys coffee, builds relationships • Solidaridad: Provides technical support, project management • DGIS: Provides funding	• Sainsbury: Buys high-quality coffee; provides marketing support, staff, and time • DFID: Covers risks and provides funding • Twin: Provides training, technical, and marketing support; prepares for certification • Sopacdi: Supervises daily activities	• Twin: Buys coffee, provides marketing support and training • UGEAFI: Organizes, supports, and represents farmers • Oxfam Novib: Provides funding, creates linkages between farmers and companies
First year of partnership	2007	2008	2011
Location	Butembo (North Kivu)	Minova (on the border between North and South Kivu)	Lemera, Bikokoboko and Mutambala (South Kivu)
Membership of cooperative in first year/2011/2014[a]	• 2007: 1,200 • 2011: 3,500 • 2014: 5,540	• 2008: 280 • 2011: 3,503 • 2014: 5,600	• 2011 (first year): 2,473 • 2014: 2,037
Coffee trees in first year/2011	• 2007/2008: 866,450 • 2011: 2,118,361	• 2008: N.A.[b] • 2011: 2,542,366	• 2007/2008: 280,000[c] • 2011: 2,542,366
Price in 2007–2009/2011 (in US$ per kg)	• 2007–2009: .9 • 2011: 2.5	• 2007–2009: .5–.7 • 2011: 2.5	• 2007–2009: .6–.8 • 2011: 2[d]
Price increase (%)	177	316	185
Change in interethnic social cohesion	N.A.	Yes	Yes
Reintegration of soldiers	No	No	Yes
Alternative to mining	No	No	Yes

[a]See footnote 2.

[b]No information was available for the first year of partnership because the cooperative was relatively weak, with too little capacity to collect and analyze data at the time. The number of trees is likely to have been very low given the small membership base.

[c]The estimated number of coffee trees owned by coffee farmers before UGEAFI (NGO) moved toward a more cooperative form in 2011, with farmers becoming members.

[d]In 2014, the price was 1.08. Unlike Sopacdi and Soprocopiv, UGEAFI was not able to acquire a certification (organic, UTZ, or Fair Trade) for the coffee its members produced, which led to overproduction of "regular" coffee and a downward price pressure. The slight decrease in "cooperative" members in UGEAFI in recent years is linked to the fact that its members were encouraged to diversify their agricultural activities, which resulted in fewer coffee farmers.

Notes: N.A. = not applicable. B = business; N = NGO; C = cooperative; G = government (donor). When multiple organization types are listed, this refers to more hybrid organizations in operations, links, and/or ambitions.

French (the researcher's native language). The groups were mixed in gender and age, and the researcher ensured that both men and women[1] of all ages answered the questions raised. After each group discussion, preliminary findings were reviewed with (male and female) members of the cooperative staff to check whether answers seemed representative of the communities. The field visit also included a

review of contracts to obtain insight into quantities, prices, and conditions as well as the collection and subsequent analysis of external documentation (evaluations, field reports, annual reports, and project reports).[2] In interviews,

[1]In the specific eastern DRC context, women are not only victims (of rape and plunder) but also the primary income providers for their family, which gives them status and confidence to speak in group meetings.

[2]The initial field research was performed in 2011. When finalizing the article for submission, the second author checked and updated some of the data gathered at the time, especially on the local cooperatives. Note that we were not aiming for a more longitudinal study, which was not possible for reasons indicated in the "Limitations and Further Research" subsection. Rather, our objective is to shed more light on the role of social innovation partnerships in conflict-affected regions characterized by institutional gaps.

we took every opportunity to cross-check statements and facts as presented by other interviewees to verify the available data. The context had obvious limitations, because ongoing tensions, occasional fighting, insecurity, and bouts of violence were noticeable during the study and intensified after the field trip (see the "Findings" and "Conclusions and Implications" sections).

Analysis

In our interviews and examination of primary and secondary materials, we paid specific attention to the aforementioned aspects. We categorized the answers per relevant dimension (partnership activities, effects and characteristics, marketing systems, and institutional context) and compiled Tables 2 and 3 through close collaboration in the analysis of the materials. As we discuss in more detail in the next section, we consider both the direct objectives of the collaborative efforts and their wider institutional implications in relation to peace and reconciliation. This was inspired by policy assessment and evaluation studies in the field of international development (e.g., Bamberger and White 2007; Donor Committee for Enterprise Development 2010; OECD-DAC 2002; Ravaillon 2009) that distinguished between output, outcome, and impact dimensions to judge "the merit or worth of an activity" (OECD-DAC 2002, p. 21).

Output refers to the first or immediate result of an intervention or activity; outcome refers to changes in behavior of those targeted or in the application/implementation of services, knowledge, or standards; and impact refers to the most far-reaching of the three, which relates to bringing sustainable and structural solutions to the problem(s) at stake and addressing possible negative side effects (Liese and Beisheim 2011; OECD-DAC 2002; Schäferhoff, Campe, and Kaan 2009). When we applied these dimensions to the DRC coffee partnerships, we found the following categories: we approached (1) output as the equivalent of organizational achievements regarding the creation and strengthening of cooperatives for small farmers; (2) outcome as the effects on coffee prices, beneficiary income, and beneficiary living conditions; and (3) impact as the broader institutional implications regarding a reduction of conflict or tensions, inter alia, that result from increased intercommunity and village contacts through reconciliation programs and joint cultivation. Note that we view changes as part of the broader set of activities resulting from the collaboration and not as results in the sense of establishing (causal) links with marketing systems; this is difficult to assess in general, let alone in a (post)conflict context (as acknowledged by, e.g., CARE 2012a, b; Gitsham 2007; OECD 2008).

Findings

Table 2 gives an overview of the three coffee partnerships, the only such partnerships in the region. The partnerships include multiple actors (local and international NGOs, farmer cooperatives, international companies, and government agencies as donors) from various geographical settings (local villages, African cities, and European countries). These peculiarities partly stem from the specific nature of a coffee supply chain, which covers the spectrum from an initial commodity in Africa to a product for other (generally Western) markets through business participation. It is also in line with literature indicating that a multitude of partners from different (local and international) backgrounds are needed to help fill institutional gaps and that

Table 3. Key Activities and "Results" of the Partnerships

Activities	• Organizational-technical training (e.g., bookkeeping, financial skills) • Organizational-governance training (e.g., collaboration, forming and participating in cooperatives) • Organization sensitization sessions (on the importance of working together) • Training of farmers on how to select, pick, cut, and wash coffee beans in a sustainable and profitable way • Training of farmers on organizational issues related to certification of coffee according to specific standards • Exchange visits between farmers and company visits to farmers and cooperatives
Output	• Cooperatives are formed/improved, better positioned, better able to attract funding, and growing • Cooperatives have better governance (e.g., clear rules, democratic structures) and can better serve their constituents • Farmers have been trained, have increased technical know-how, and can implement agricultural skills • Working methods of farmers/cooperatives are UTZ/Fair Trade compliant, with steps toward obtaining certification • Farmers/cooperatives are directly linked to buyers and are in touch with those in other villages and with other views
Outcome	• Higher production and productivity, better quality of coffee • Farmers benefit from prefinancing, have better access to markets, and are in a better negotiation position • Higher prices, increased incomes, and improved livelihoods • Farmers gain more confidence from joining forces, and contracts are negotiated fairly • Farmers' views of other ethnic groups change
Impact	• Alternatives to artisanal mining and rebellion are provided • Security is improved (less smuggling across the lake) • Local peace climate is improved through intensified contacts, fostering a culture of exchange, and tensions decrease • Relationships are (re)established and social capital is built • Overall governance climate (e.g., accountability, transparency) improved, and trust increases

partnerships should serve as compensatory structures. Next, we discuss more details, following Layton's (2009) indication of elements of marketing systems, the actors, their roles, and their activities, as Tables 2 and 3 summarize. After a more general analysis of the partnerships on these aspects in the first subsection, the next subsection addresses some specifics from an institutional perspective, although the conflict-affected nature of the environment "filters through" the analysis.

Partnerships' Characteristics in Relation to Marketing Systems

All actors perceived value in collaborating and in providing their own specific expertise and experiences. In Table 2, two of the three partnerships were set up as part of broader framework agreements spurred by European governments to provide incentives for the private sector to invest in fragile countries, incentives ranging from covering risks to providing matching funds to participants as part of an overall objective to rejuvenate the coffee sector. One interviewee indicated that "beyond risk sharing," the funding mechanism offered by European governments "facilitated the partnering process and had a snowball effect on other actors."

Another common feature of the partnerships is the involvement of "hybrid" organizations, such as NGOs that also have a trading branch (e.g., Twin, with Twin Trading), aim to transform into a cooperative (e.g., UGEAFI), or engage in consultancy; cooperatives that may be partly commercial in addition to the nonprofit services they offer to members; and companies that mention social and economic goals. Notably, most companies present themselves in a way that could be characterized as mission driven (Raynolds 2009). They frequently emphasize the importance of self-sufficiency, creating a decent livelihood for farmers, improving the situation for communities, and contributing to sustainable development through empowerment and higher incomes. This is not very different from the social purposes of NGOs, which most often also operate in the economic realm (focused on providing sustained livelihoods). Although actors' strategic objectives exhibit differences (i.e., commercial for companies and empowerment and/or capacity-building for NGOs), the overlap of perspectives and the inclusion of hybrid organizations facilitated partnering.

The case of Twin is notable in this regard, as an NGO that owns a trading company (and is involved in two of the three partnerships) and has a strong business sense combined with a social focus. Twin saw great potential in the DRC to improve livelihoods through coffee and stated an interest in "restoring supply chains in fragile environments." The firm clearly indicated economic aspects such as "the potential for high-quality Arabica coffee with Fair Trade and organic certification, as well as the prospects for linking the producers to Twin's high-value long-term market partners" as motivation to collaborate. An interviewee from Twin also emphasized that the firm would not act as "gatekeeper" for the farmers but rather would be "eager to play a catalyst role" by assisting them in finding other buyers. In the coffee partnerships, NGOs aim to make the supply chain more responsive to farmers' needs, cut out inter-

mediaries, and engender further sustainability, broadly defined in economic, environmental, and social terms.

Moving to company roles, an interviewee from Sainsbury states the goal of improving access to markets or "expanding consumer demand for African produce" as the firm strives to "promote the DRC coffee to encourage customers to recognize the Congo as origins of gourmet coffee in their own right." The company places clear value on collaboration: "By creating partnerships and sharing expertise, an NGO can empower a retailer to make a difference and vice versa. All parties can better understand each other's challenges and work together to find the most suitable and feasible solution." Schluter considers itself a hybrid organization because it works to combine profitability with humanitarian values—that is, making money and contributing to economic development by ensuring that local farmers benefit from selling their product. Schluter also views partnerships in relation to market presence and competitiveness. The company admits that it is unable to compete with larger coffee companies already operating in Kenya or Uganda; in this respect, the DRC is viewed as a niche market where Schluter has a comparative advantage because of its long-standing presence, experience, network, and track record. Concurrently, Schluter explicitly claims to show patience if farmers experience problems and to assist them in multiple ways, such as providing market information, offering opportunities for interaction, and establishing links with market and nonmarket partners. These business contributions are key to the partnerships, in addition to buying coffee.

Cooperatives see value in partnerships by helping them serve their members better. To be able to negotiate higher prices with companies on behalf of their members, cooperatives need organizational and bargaining skills as well as support to improve coffee quality across the board. An interviewee from the hybrid organization UGEAFI also mentioned that the NGO decided to enter the partnership after its constituents realized that its traditional peace education and reconciliation programs were "necessary but not sufficient to address conflict issues in the region." Sopacdi's main motivation to partner with Twin was to improve coffee quality, improve producers' livelihoods, and obtain certification to be able to charge higher prices. The cooperative indicated that, although it always strives to obtain a higher price, contractual agreements were the result of "fair negotiations."

Table 3 summarizes the key elements that characterize the three coffee partnerships. The partnerships have a clear capacity-building component and aim to aid in the development of skills and the acquisition and application of knowledge at the level of both individual farmers and cooperatives, covering everything from production to supply. This is combined with a strong focus on relationship building, organization, marketing, and exposing markets to coffee that is certified according to external standards. Whereas NGOs are typically involved in capacity building (i.e., financial, managerial, organizational, and technical capacity building specifically geared toward cultivating, farming, and producing high-quality/certified coffee) and cooperatives often focus on direct project implementation and providing ser-

vices to their members, companies also engage in activities that, in other settings, might be considered outside the realm of their core business. For example, they visit farmers regularly from Europe, and in a few cases even organize trips for producers (Twin and Sainsbury). They are committed not only to buying coffee at a fair price but also to spreading the story of the Congolese coffee (e.g., through targeted marketing campaigns to raise awareness). The partnerships thus link farmers directly to their potential market. As an interviewee from Schluter noted in relation to the (UTZ) certification component of the partnership, this does "not only trace the coffee origin and establish a quality guarantee, it also helps get to know the farmer and establish strong links."

Interactions with the Institutional Environment

As we have explained previously and show in Table 1, the DRC exemplifies a fragile state characterized by institutional gaps (see Figure 1). Although national elections have taken place, governance structures remain largely dysfunctional. The Congolese state has very limited capacity to control its territory, enforce decisions, or even pay its police force. The situation in the eastern provinces has been difficult for decades, with numerous conflicts, lawlessness, and chronic poverty. In addition, there is a lack of enforcement of formal rules and respect for property rights, with transactions being hampered by a problematic financial system with little access to credit for small farmers as well as local markets that are difficult to penetrate. A Twin Trading field report notes that "roads are almost impassable and there are no other services and infrastructure whatsoever. Most of the people have only recently re-settled the land, after years living in the forests or in refugee camps in Tanzania. The region remains tense, with the Congolese army only partially in control." Furthermore, although the M23 rebellion erupted after we carried out our empirical research, insecurity and bouts of violence also prevailed at the time. North and South Kivu are marked by extremely weak formal state structures; especially in rural areas, the state is basically absent. Changing alliances of various armed groups govern large parts of the eastern provinces and control resources, with rebels exerting influence through patronage-based clientelistic networks. Traditional authorities, such as the Mwami (village chiefs), continue to play a significant role in the judicial system as well as in other matters such as land redistribution and the construction of infrastructure.

The institutional context is thus characterized by a complex mix of "formal" and "informal" and "legal" and "illegal" spheres, in which customary, state, and "practical" norms may be applied. Taxes are, for example, levied by the state (usually one of the only tasks undertaken by the provincial governor); by the traditional authorities (the Mwami), often in kind; and by rebel groups (through illegal toll). The army as an institution fails to protect the population in eastern DRC and is often the source of insecurity due to fragmentation between composing "units," which often lack discipline. Although government authorities have tried to disarm or integrate ex-rebel groups into the army, with support of the international community, these attempts have not been very successful. Cases of disobedience and/or plundering have been reported among those former

rebels who were "integrated." These examples illustrate blurring boundaries between formal and informal and legal and illegal practices in a setting marked by fragility.

At the same time, as noted by Vlassenroot (2008, p. 2), "withering state capacity did not lead to a governance void but has rather opened up some space for other actors, including traditional chiefs, civil society groups, churches and aid agencies, to assume services previously delivered by the state." Although this "withering state capacity" also triggered criminality, corruption, and arbitrariness, the Kivu case showed increasing opportunity for actors to intervene in the social sphere (e.g., health, education), although our findings indicated that partnerships also addressed governance and security issues. This confirms Trefon's (2004, p. 2) observation in his book on the "reinvention of order" in Kinshasa (the capital of the DRC) regarding the emergence of "dynamic new forms of social organization that are constantly taking shape to compensate for the overwhelming failures of the post-colonial nation state." In the rural context of the Kivus, where there is even less order and more institutional gaps, partnerships seem to have supported similar processes.

For the three coffee partnerships that we studied, we found similarities in how they addressed fragility dimensions, although degrees of preexisting interethnic tensions differed somewhat (see Table 2). All the evidence points to the crucial importance of trust, mutual appreciation, and respect. These relational dimensions are highly important in regions with a fragile social fabric, such as the eastern DRC, especially when embedded in longer-term strategic forms of collaboration. In all cases, relationships between companies, NGOs, and farmers (organizations) were based on trust and a supportive mindset, which was translated into the concern to provide a fair price, credit (prefinancing), and long-term buying agreements. Partnerships not only help provide stability of income but also contribute to the creation of a culture of democracy and trust; furthermore, they foster social capital (Elder, Zereffi, and Le Billon 2011). Farmers as well as cooperative and local NGO staff showed appreciation for the company representatives' efforts to visit farmers despite difficult circumstances. Table 3 illustrates that several activities focused on organizational issues for both farmers and cooperatives. Cooperatives provide important resources to small farmers not only in the form of technical assistance for crop and harvest improvement but also in the realm of social services such as health care and credit. Farmers benefited from prefinancing (of up to 60% of the value of the contract), a useful component in (post)conflict areas where financial access is limited and most companies are reluctant to invest up front because of the risks involved. From a governance standpoint, partnership members had to learn to work with a contract, respect its terms, sit at the table, and negotiate with companies on conditions in a context in which recourse to violence is more the norm than the exception.

The three partnerships either strengthened (Soprocopiv and Sopacdi) or created (UGEAFI) democratic structures within the cooperatives to ensure accountability and transparency. Although Soprocopiv was already registered as a cooperative at the beginning of the partnership, it benefited

greatly from Solidaridad's expertise, particularly related to management, financial/bookkeeping skills, and technical agronomical know-how concerning the best ways to produce high-quality coffee (e.g., how to work the land; when to renew the orchard; how to avoid pesticide use to obtain organic certification and minimize environmental impact; how to select, wash, dry, and sort coffee cherries). These improvements also occurred in the other two partnerships. Sopacdi systems and documentation improved in complying with the requirements for Fair Trade certification (as the first and only cooperative in eastern DRC at the time). The cooperative stated that Twin basically facilitated its professionalization. Twin, for example, assisted Sopacdi in securing funds for the rehabilitation of its Coffee Washing Station (the only one in eastern DRC). UGEAFI, though not a formal cooperative, acts as an intermediary between its members and the buyer (Twin Trading). UGEAFI and Sopacdi also benefit from the technical expertise facilitated by Twin: the partnerships pay experts to visit both cooperatives to supervise progress and give on-the-job training.

The entire process of participating in the partnership and the collaboration led the local farmers to (implicitly) learn a whole range of (new) skills. Interviewees also mentioned that transferring the passion for coffee back to children, thus perpetuating the tradition, "gives farmers a sense of purpose and togetherness" (UGEAFI). The culture of coffee was in the process of "disappearing due to low prices and the difficulty to work the fields in an unstable environment" (Sopacdi interviewee). In the Kivus, coffee is considered part of the ancestors' heritage, which they previously proudly cultivated as so-called "green gold" (Sopacdi interviewee). A story from a Twin Trading field report noted, "In eastern Congo in the 1970s children were taught that there are four kinds of gold: yellow gold (the metal), brown gold (oil), white gold (cotton) and green gold (coffee); in the current situation in the Kivu green gold really does have the potential to let farmers start to rebuild lives and communities. Unlike the mineral wealth, coffee money can stay in the hands of the people." In addition, well-being also seemed to have improved, as is evident in indicators such as an increase in marriages, better housing (verified through observation and comparison between villages where farmers produce versus do not produce coffee), higher school enrollment, and better health. Female respondents mentioned that they would use the additional revenue to ensure that girls could (continue to) attend school.

Overall, the partnerships helped create "rules of the game" in a legal vacuum, as they de facto represent new governance modalities in a fragile institutional setting. Although none of the partnerships aimed to rehabilitate the formal judicial system, they nonetheless contributed to reconciliation by bringing people from different ethnic groups together, who began to "walk hand in hand" (Sopacdi) by pursuing joint economic activities. Referring to its membership, an interviewee from Sopacdi stated, "We are more than 3,000 farmers from different ethnic groups, we speak Kirundi, Kihavo, or Kinyarwanda, yet we are united in one vision: to improve our families' lives and our communities through coffee." All respondents mentioned the common purpose shared by coffee farmers. When it comes to negotiating prices or terms of contract, "it does not matter if one is Banyamulenge or Babembe. What matters is the successful negotiation of a price, for which we need to be united" (UGEAFI). The partnerships also facilitated "visits between coffee producers from different communities—Babembe, Banyamulenge, and Bafulero—and other producers from other countries, which created a culture of exchange. Coming back from the visits, it was common practice to have Banyamulenge share their experience in a Babembe village" (UGEAFI interviewee). Farmers from different villages gather to discuss issues directly related to their livelihoods and therefore share a common interest (coffee) and a common purpose (producing high-quality coffee at the best/highest possible price), fostering a greater sense of community.

Regarding violence and security, Sopacdi reported that the partnership resulted in less smuggling across Lake Kivu to Rwanda and fewer lives lost. An interviewee stated that, previously, "there was no market; we had to resort to smuggling our coffee across Lake Kivu to Rwanda at great risk." In the eastern DRC, fewer cases of thefts and petty crime were reported in coffee-producing villages since they started rehabilitating their coffee plantation. The partnerships have helped farmers who were marginalized because prevailing insecurity had prevented them from taking advantage of the fertile soils highly suitable for coffee production in the absence of essential assets, infrastructure, inputs, and institutions. Cases of rebels dropping their arms to cultivate coffee were also reported. According to UGEAFI, in one community approximately 56 ex–Mai-Mai laid down arms to become coffee producers. In a discussion in Lemera (related to the same Twin–Oxfam Novib–UGEAFI partnership), 14 participants were relatively young ex-militia members who had recently ceased fighting. When asked whether they would take up the arms again if their commanders would pay them more than the revenues gained from cultivating coffee, they reported having no interest in returning to the militias because they were "tired of the war" and had "finally found a sense of purpose." The partnership, through its rehabilitation of the coffee sector, had facilitated the reinsertion of these men into the social life of the villages and reunited them with their families, leading to increased social cohesion.

Conclusions and Implications

Responding to the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* special section call for papers, we aimed to contribute to the literature on subsistence marketplaces and the marketing field in general by exploring social innovation partnerships in a fragile country characterized by institutional gaps, specifically by considering the role of cross-sector collaboration in a conflict-affected region. The empirical setting was the eastern DRC, comprising two provinces (North and South Kivu) bordering Rwanda, where tensions have been palpable in past decades, resulting in regular bouts of violence. This embodies a fragile context marked by lack of trust, security, and good governance as well as situations of acute poverty. Inspired by Layton (e.g., 2007, 2009), we analyzed the partnerships' characteristics in relation to marketing systems and their interactions with the institutional

environment, thus providing more insight into the specific social matrix in this context. Table 4 explores how the partnerships address institutional gaps, considering the various fragility dimensions. It illustrates that they not only help fill "traditional" formal voids identified in the literature (Khanna and Palepu 1997; Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos 2015)—especially in relation to skills, quality of produce, financing, and contractual arrangements—but also seem to do so in a more systematic way by providing interconnections addressing the fragile context.

With this study, we also respond to repeated pleas for a greater focus on people suffering from poverty and to the role of marketing in helping reduce social problems (e.g., conflict) and promoting peace and stability (Shultz et al. 2005), thus furthering the relevance of the field (see also the "Implications for Public Policy" subsection). Although marketing was crucial in shaping our research, we also used insights from other literature streams, thus responding to Ingenbleek's (2014) call for cross-fertilization. Various research perspectives (e.g., management, public policy, development) have investigated partnerships as well as issues related to (post)conflict, peace, and reconciliation in relation to different actors, and we drew from this research in our study.

Through the partnerships, small-scale farmers gained access to resources not only in the form of technical assistance for improving crops and harvests but also in the realm of social services (e.g., health care, credit). In addition, they learned about organizational forms that ensure accountability and transparency. Results were achieved at the organizational level (output—buildup of managerial capacities, transfer of financial-administrative skills, and improved functioning of cooperatives), at the farmer level (outcome—better prices and livelihoods as well as increased revenues and access to markets), and more widely in (coffee) communities in terms of enhanced social cohesion (ethnic groups that were previously hostile are now working together for a common purpose) and the creation of new governance modalities in a fragile institution setting (impact). The coffee partnerships in this region seemed to have offered a window of opportunity to create relationships between different actors. Being able to lead by example and enhance the rule of law in line with Fort and Schipani (2004), both nonprofit organizations and companies have taken initiatives to help fill a governance void in a conflict context while also promoting sustainable development.

Our findings are in line with Shultz (2007, p. 298), who suggests that a new "macromarketing orientation toward constructive engagement can render adversarial relationships more cooperative, beneficial and sustainable." However, central to our approach is to allow micro-level insights to inform the macromarketing perspective, reflecting the bottom-up nature of the subsistence marketplaces stream of literature. A view of marketing as a mechanism through which seeds of cooperative relationships are planted is congruent with the peace-through-commerce literature, in which relationship building plays a central role as mutual benefits derived from trading deter potential conflicts (Abramov 2009; Tobias and Boudreaux 2011). Intercommunity and intervillage contacts fostered by activities undertaken in the realm of the partnerships led different groups to change their

Table 4. The Role of Partnerships in Fragile Settings

Fragility Dimensions	Role of Partnerships
Lack of security	• Help improve human security • Induce young rebels to drop arms and reintegrate into communities • Lead to fewer smuggling activities
Lack of trust	• Help promote reconciliation through joint activities • Promote a sense of togetherness and trust between and within communities
Lack of good governance	• Help set "rules of the game" for interactions between the partners • Promote respect for legal and contractual (partnership) agreements
Acute poverty	• Help improve skills of farmers (through training) • Promote better access to finance (through prefinancing of contracts) • Contribute to higher prices through quality checks and assurance practicies • Create better livelihoods for farmers and communities

perceptions of one another. One of the reasons for this phenomenon is the labor-intensive nature of coffee processing, which requires many activities that no farmer can do on his or her own, thus requiring collaboration.

The importance of trust and relationships in this study links to broader observations on the importance of social interactions in marketing and in marketing systems, especially in the context of subsistence (e.g., Ingenbleek, Tessema, and Van Trijp 2013). Our research offers insights in the development and conflict transformation/reconciliation potential of providing and improving access to markets through collaboration in a specific value chain. As Shultz et al. (2005, p. 29) indicate, repairing value chains, such as in the case of coffee production in the eastern DRC region, is important not only "for rebuilding communities" but also to help "provide a sense of normalcy." In their article, the authors contend that "market-oriented, integrative food-marketing systems indeed help mitigate and even transcend ethnic hostilities" (Shultz et al. 2005, p. 35), which is in line with our results.

In this way, marketing "can help entrepreneurs succeed in the marketplace" and be "part of the solution" instead of the problem (Ingenbleek 2014, p. 199). Marketing can thus influence actors' behavior by providing incentives (Hosley and Wee 1988), which is a pattern we also observed from the support offered by Western governments. Our study augments that body of knowledge by examining changes induced by cross-sector collaboration arrangements in the relational sphere among and between communities and across organization types. This is relevant to a broad range of activities and sectors, though it also extends prior research on coffee, which has most often focused on individual-level effects resulting from fair trade in Latin America (Arnould, Plastina, and Ball 2009; Geiger-Oneto and Arnould 2011) or from

postgenocide reconciliation in Rwanda (Tobias and Boudreaux 2011; Tobias, Mair, and Barbosa-Leiker 2013).

In addition, because most coffee farmers can be viewed as microentrepreneurs, our findings indicate that cross-sector collaboration schemes involving microenterprises not only provide income and employment but also address issues such as lack of governance and security in extreme subsistence markets contexts marked by institutional gaps. A study examining subsistence consumer merchants in India has also identified relationship building with different sets of actors and "commitment to develop, preserve, and strengthen those relationships" (Viswanathan, Rosa, and Ruth 2010, p. 2) as an important theoretical insight on subsistence markets. Our research reveals that partnerships, and the marketing activities they enable, have the potential to build relationships and create new institutions, including both normative (new organizational forms that induce different behavioral patterns through working together) and cognitive (new insights into how "the other" is perceived) dimensions.

Implications for Public Policy

Our findings are relevant for public, nonprofit, and private actors involved in contexts characterized by institutional gaps beyond the coffee sector. We provide case study insights on how business activities, channeled through social innovation partnerships, can help lift farmers out of poverty in fragile (post)conflict contexts. By doing so, cross-sector collaboration has the potential to promote harmony among communities by reducing tension and resentment and uniting former enemies through joint economic activities. Some of the rebels have dropped arms and switched to coffee production and processing, and we noticed a snowball effect as neighboring villages and communities expressed interest in moving in the same direction. In (post)conflict situations, cross-sector collaboration may be even more important for building trust, which in turn is crucial for creating a climate conducive to peace. We show in practice that setting up partnerships in such a context is possible and can be fruitful, provided that the difficult context is explicitly taken into account in carefully building relationships. Our findings resonate with other research on subsistence marketplaces that has encouraged governments to engage the informal economy, help build linkages with formal economies (Viswanathan et al. 2012), and develop consumer and entrepreneurial literacy programs (Viswanathan, Gajendiran, and Venkatesan 2008). Coffee farmers often operate (partly) in the informal sector but do build relationships with formal-economy actors through cooperatives and partnerships; these farmers could also benefit from entrepreneurial and marketplace literacy programs.

Another aspect that deserves attention is the role of the government, because its absence in collaborative arrangements in eastern DRC is noteworthy. Scholars have discussed the danger that partnerships may "crowd out" an already weak state even further if they do not involve domestic government agencies and instead rely on external/other actors (Eweje 2006; Idemudia and Ite 2006; Kolk and Lenfant 2015). However, the DRC seems to be a special case, as interviewees noted that it may take a generation or more before the government can take up its proper role

again. They pointed to the absence of "civic sense" in all segments of society and referred to institutions being "rotten." From that perspective, partnerships may not only fill a governance void but also form a response to an immense need for promoting civic action in a way that local/national government agencies cannot. This is a clear illustration of situations in which nongovernmental and private actors jointly take roles and responsibilities that the government is unable to do, with support from multilateral donors and/or Western governments.

At the same time, and as implied by the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, which involves aid donor countries, international organizations, and some conflict-affected states and NGOs, it is important to find ways to (gradually) involve local government agencies and thus help (re)build local institutions. The International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding explicitly mentions partnerships in this regard. Multiple partners from a variety of backgrounds and expertise are helpful because they contribute their specific skills and resources to a "messy" context that presents significant challenges. Our study provides information regarding the types of incentives that Western governments may give to specific actors to promote the emergence of partnerships. Companies are more inclined to become active in fragile areas when governments are willing to share the inherent risks of doing business in such settings and when there are possibilities to partner with NGOs. Nongovernmental organizations often help companies proceed cautiously in developing relationships with local communities in an effective and accountable manner and in marketing and communicating these activities. In the case of coffee, NGOs were also viewed as credible actors knowledgeable about the communities from which companies wanted to buy the coffee.

Multilateral agencies involved in Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration programs, which often face difficulties in successfully implementing programs, may also learn from our findings indicating the potential of market-based solutions. The DRC is marked by constant insecurity and experiences chronic problems with properly integrating ex-rebels in the army and finding sustainable livelihoods for those who do not join the regular army. In this regard, partnerships such as the ones discussed in our study are examples of inclusive venues offering economic opportunities for at-risk groups such as ex-rebels. There are signs that local authorities also find inspiration from these successes. During a recent trip to eastern DRC, the second author met a provincial minister who, with self-financed microprojects, encouraged young ex-rebels to cultivate coffee within their communities, comparable to the cases that we examined. The minister also indicated that girls who had been physically molested by rebels began to regain trust and were even considering fraternizing with these ex-rebels. Thus far, however, it has apparently been difficult to convince local and national authorities in the DRC to invest more in coffee due to a lack of funds and interest, most likely in relation to poor governance. European governments and multilateral agencies might support such initiatives and help encourage the DRC government to invest more in its coffee fields together with businesses, NGOs, and international donors.

Limitations and Further Research

We note that this exploratory study has been only an initial step to obtain more insight, and follow-up research is needed to assess impact in more detail. Because of the difficult context, including local security circumstances and constraints of time and resources, we could not collect data more longitudinally to cover a longer period of time. Furthermore, although we relied on multiple respondents and sources of information and thus were able to reconstruct processes and pathways of change from different perspectives, our approach also had clear limitations. This included the fact that almost all data came from those involved in the partnership or the specific (post)conflict context, thus posing a risk to reliability (Gitsham 2007).

More generally, ongoing tensions, occasional fighting, insecurity, and bouts of violence were noticeable during the study and intensified after the field trip. The limitations during data collection were thus more profound than discussed, for example, by Ingenbleek, Tessema, and Van Trijp (2013) in terms of biases researchers face in subsistence markets, due to the extreme context of our study. Concurrently, we hope our approach will inspire future studies in conflict-affected regions because it shows that it is still possible to conduct research under these circumstances, research that can provide exploratory insights rarely encountered in publications precisely because of all the problems faced. Important enabling factors seem to have been preexisting contacts, a cautious approach involving a careful buildup of communication, good introductions to communities and potential interviewees, and "immersion" in the phenomenon of interest in such a way that respondents are convinced of true commitment without preconditions or relationships to further (program) funding.

In future studies, it might also be worthwhile to pay attention to potential side effects of (rapid) economic development. These effects may include disruption between and within communities as a result of higher purchasing power, which can lead to envy or increased inequalities, and the (re-)emergence of certain practices that may be viewed as undesirable (e.g., in one of the group discussions, we met a man who expressed his happiness about a greater income because this would enable him to marry a second wife, even though this practice is forbidden by law and religion in the DRC). Partnerships might also play a role in addressing such issues.

Moreover, follow-up research on partnerships in other fragile regions (inside or outside Africa) drawing comparisons and assessing the extent to which partnerships are suitable and potentially effective in other contexts would be valuable. This also applies to investigations of other value chains or economic activities to determine whether similar dynamics could be found beyond our exploratory setting and specific context. Furthermore, there may be options to link insights from cross-sector collaboration, given the multiactor involvement in partnerships, to the literature on stakeholders as it has developed in the management and marketing fields. Finally, in investigating the issues from a micro to macro perspective, our work opens avenues for further research on the ways marketing helps create new institutions and further develops existing ones that are characterized by gaps, thus adding a unique perspective to a more traditional approach in which institutions are needed for transactions to occur.

Appendix. Overview of Contacts and Interviews

A: Contacts

Organization	Type	Name of Person(s) Contacted	E-mail Sent On	Response Received On	Remarks (If Any)
DFID	G	Louise Horner[a], Lindsey Napier, Richard Mugabo	April 18, 2011	May 6, 2011	
Nathaneme[b]	B (G)	Mark Thomas	April 18, 2011	April 19, 2011	
Schluter	B	Joel Martin	April 4, 2011	April 27, 2011	
Sainsbury	B	Liz Jarman, Eleanor Taylor	April 14 and 20, 2011	May 6, 2011	
Solidaridad	N	Karugu Macharia	April 14, 2011	May 5, 2011	
Twin	N/B	Ian Barney, Andy Carlton, Richard Hide, Andrea Olivar, Chris Penrose	April 14 and 20, 2011	May 5, 2011	
Sopacdi	C	Joachim Munganga	April 14, 2011	May 18 2011	We made initial contact in 2011 and have had multiple interactions in 2012, 2013, and 2014
Comequi	N	Michel Verwilghen	April 14, 2011	April 19, 2011	
Café Africa	N	John Schluter[b]	April 14, 2011	April 18, 2011	
Oxfam Novib	N	Rudolf Scheffer	April 14, 2011	April 28, 2011	
UGEAFI	N/C	Butoto Naum	April 26, 2011	May 12, 2011	We made initial contact in 2011 and have had multiple interactions in 2012, 2013, and 2014

Appendix. Continued

				B: Interviews		
Organization	Type	Interviewee	Function	Partnership	Interview Location	Date
Nathaneme[b]	B (G)	Mark Thomas	Director	Twin–Sainsbury–Sopacdi–DFID	Long-distance telephone call	April 19, 2011
Twin	N/B	Andrea Olivar	Project manager	Twin–Sainsbury–Sopacdi–DFID	Long-distance telephone call	May 17, 2011
Twin	N/B	Chris Penrose	Head of partner-ship program	Twin–Sainsbury–Sopacdi–DFID	Long-distance telephone call	May 4, 2011
Comequi	N	Michel Verwilghen	Director	Twin–Sainsbury–Sopacdi–DFID	Long-distance telephone call	April 22, 2011
Café Africa	N	John Schluter[c]	Director	Schluter–Solidaridad–Soprocopiv–DGIS	Long-distance telephone call	April 20, 2011
Schluter	B	Joel Martin	Director	Schluter–Solidaridad–Soprocopiv–DGIS	Long-distance telephone call	April 28, 2011
Oxfam Novib	N	François van Lierde	DRC country representative	Twin–Oxfam Novib–UGEAFI	The Hague, Netherlands	May 19, 2011
Oxfam Novib	N	Rudolf Scheffer	Project manager, coffee	Twin–Oxfam Novib–UGEAFI	The Hague, Netherlands	May 19, 2011
Oxfam Novib	N	Brigitte Obertop	DRC project manager	Twin–Oxfam Novib–UGEAFI	The Hague, Netherlands	May 19, 2011
International Alert	N	Marie Lange	Director	Assesses the overall situation in the region	Long-distance telephone call	May 18, 2011
FLO-Twin	N/B	Pascasie Nyirandege	Consultant (capacity-building expert)	All partnerships	Kigali, Rwanda	June 2, 2011
Twin	N/B	Jean Claude Muzima	Accountant/con-sultant	All partnerships	Kigali, Rwanda	June 2, 2011
UGEAFI	N/C	Naum Butoto	Director	Twin–Oxfam Novib–UGEAFI	Bukavu, DRC	May 30, 2011
UGEAFI	N/C	Nyongolo Luwawa	Financial direc-tor	Twin–Oxfam Novib–UGEAFI	Lemera, DRC	May 31, 2011
UGEAFI	N/C	Djesse Samuel	Program coordi-nator	Twin–Oxfam Novib–UGEAFI	Bukavu, DRC	May 30, 2011
UGEAFI	N/C	Kalimba Kangeta	Agronomist	Twin–Oxfam Novib–UGEAFI	Lemera, DRC	May 31, 2011
Soprocopiv	C	Denis Kasereka Katsomibwa	Director	Schluter–Solidaridad–Soprocopiv–DGIS	Butembo, DRC	May 24, 2011
Solidaridad	N	Tony Saiba	Consultant	Schluter–Solidaridad–Soprocopiv–DGIS	Butembo, DRC	May 24, 2011
Solidaridad	N	Charles Sabuni	Consultant	Schluter–Solidaridad–Soprocopiv–DGIS	Butembo, DRC	May 25, 2011
Solidaridad	N	Palata Adelard	Consultant	Schluter–Solidaridad–Soprocopiv–DGIS	Butembo, DRC	May 25, 2011
Sopacdi	C	Joel Bahati Fazila	Accountant	Twin–Sainsbury–Sopacdi–DFID	Minova, DRC	May 26, 2011
Sopacdi	C	Joachim Munganga	Director	Twin–Sainsbury–Sopacdi–DFID	Minova, DRC	May 27, 2011
Provincial government	G	Marie Shematsi Baeni	Minister	All partnerships/overall situation	Goma, DRC	2013, 2014
Pearl[d]	P	Jean-Claude Kayisinga	Manager	All partnerships	Kigali, Rwanda	June 1, 2011

Appendix. Continued

B: Interviews

Organization	Type	Interviewee	Function	Partnership	Interview Location	Date
Schluter–Solidaridad–Soprocopiv–DGIS	P	46 participants (divided into three groups)	Coffee producers	Own coffee activities that are part of partnership	Kiruba, DRC	May 25, 2011
Twin–Oxfam Novib–UGEAFI	P	Approximately 60 participants (divided into four groups)	Coffee producers	Own coffee activities part of partnership	Lemera, DRC	May 31, 2011
Twin–Sainsbury–Sopacdi–DFID	P	44 participants (divided into three groups)	Coffee producers	Own coffee activities part of partnership	In and around Minova, DRC	May 28, 2011

[a]Contact from Food Retail Industry Challenge Fund of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development.
[b]Private contractor managing projects of the Food Retail Industry Challenge Fund.
[c]Son of the founder of Schluter company.
[d]Itself a partnership consisting of multiple companies, NGOs, and cooperatives that helped boost the coffee sector in Rwanda.
Notes: B = business; N = NGO; C = cooperative; G = government (donor). When multiple organization types are listed, this refers to more hybrid organizations in operations, links, and/or ambitions.

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