

Report Summary:

“We’re part of something huge!”

How Fairtrade Towns in Europe are a uniquely powerful movement for local change and global sustainable development

*An Evaluation of Impact of the European Fairtrade Towns Movement
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This document provides a summary of the key points of the report, as explored under the following main headings:

- The Annual European Conferences
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- The Future of European Fairtrade Towns

The Annual European Conferences

- Clearly the conferences have succeeded in meeting their original aims extremely well, (please see main body of the report for a full discussion on this.)
- Overwhelmingly, when asked about the annual conferences, respondents felt they were incredibly valuable.
- Having the conferences early on in the European Fairtrade Towns initiative has formed an invaluable foundation for the movement going forwards, more rapidly that could have been achieved without the conferences.
- Learning from the UK model was commonly cited as a highly valuable output of the conferences, especially earlier in the international movement. However, learning between all countries at the conferences has increased dramatically since the first one.
- Conference attendees took specific learning and ideas back from the conferences and applied them to their own localities. Learning from the conferences has also been amplified online, inspiring and informing many campaigns who did not send representatives.
- The conferences made attendees feel part of a truly global movement and this was highly motivating.

Recommendations

- It would be highly valuable to continue the annual European conferences.
- The conferences may be most suitable in the future primarily as a means for new campaigns to learn from experienced ones, as longer running campaigns are networking well and establishing other means of communicating and learning from each other
- Attempts underway to overcome specific practical challenges in order to maximise the opportunity of the conferences should continue; especially with regard to resources, co-ordinating capacity, and consultation within the movement ahead of the conferences to shape the agenda

Awareness and Action on Fairtrade and Development

- Fairtrade Towns campaigns are, undoubtedly having a very profound impact on awareness and understanding of Fairtrade locally, often increasing it well above the national average.
- Fairtrade Towns campaigns have a unique and exceptionally strong power to spark action on development issues because they:

-Make local activists feel like part of a connected global movement, and this is very empowering.

-Allow people to act on Fairtrade and global development concerns within their own sphere and time constraints, and where they might otherwise feel too removed to make a difference.

Have given rise to a host of other Fairtrade based campaigns, including Fairtrade churches, schools and universities, sparking local campaigning in a range of contexts.

*Fairtrade Towns campaigns are uniquely placed to have an exceptionally strong positive impact on **development awareness at the local level** for several key reasons:*

- Fairtrade Towns can ensure a local physical presence for the Fairtrade Mark and Fairtrade materials to a higher degree that would be seen elsewhere.
- Fairtrade Towns give local citizens the opportunity to tell and hear human stories face to face. This gives Fairtrade an immediacy which has a profound impact on people's engagement.
- Fairtrade Towns campaigns have been able to capitalise effectively on Fairtrade as a highly accessible development issue, and engage people who might otherwise be disinterested or skeptical. The fact that they are approached by local people plays a huge role in this and opens up a trust and willingness to listen.
- Fairtrade Towns campaigns are engaging a broad spectrum of citizens with Fairtrade and development issues, with a reach that nationally targeted campaigns cannot attain. They can also learn a great deal from each other about how to target hard to reach audiences.
- A Fairtrade Town campaign brings together all sections of the community to tackle a development issue.
- Through building local networks and partnerships and holding local fundraising events Fairtrade Towns campaigns have been able to secure resources locally to expand their work and keep their Fairtrade awareness raising activities sustainable.
- Fairtrade Towns increase awareness and understanding of development issues beyond their own locale for example, through influencing neighbouring towns or through tourism.
- Visits from Fairtrade producers to Fairtrade active Towns have a profound impact on increasing the awareness and understanding of local people on Fairtrade and the challenges affecting developing world communities. This can move them to thinking and acting on what they have heard in an unprecedented way.

Fairtrade as a Towns gateway into development Issues

Fairtrade Towns campaigns act as a very important gateway into other development issues, for example, broader ethical trade issues and food sustainability and local sourcing:

- Fairtrade Towns campaigns often extend into other ethical trade issues and increase awareness, understanding and action on these.
- The Fairtrade Towns has been and will continue to be adapted to suit the national and local context. Far from making the European Fairtrade Towns movement fragmented, this is a strength if it can be well accommodated; ensuring the movement will be most effective at securing lasting social change and increased availability and sales of Fairtrade and ethical goods.
- Some national Fairtrade Towns programmes have agreed to remain firmly and almost exclusively connected to connected to the Fairtrade Mark, for example, in the UK.
- Other national Fairtrade Towns programmes, for example, the Netherlands and Flanders, have added explicit goals around broader issues of ethical trade and sustainable development. Other emerging initiatives may choose to follow either model as appropriate. Far from diluting the Fairtrade message or focus, this approach can actually strengthen the proposition and encourage engagement of different actors in the community.
- Even where the Fairtrade Mark is the primary focus of a national Fairtrade Towns initiative, many Fairtrade Towns campaigns have chosen to integrate broader ethical trade and trade justice issues into their activities and campaigning, making these issues accessible to the public.
- Even where the focus of the national Fairtrade Towns programme does not include local sourcing, some campaigns have incorporated local produce into their messaging. In some cases, this has been essential to ensure that the community can be engaged with Fairtrade.
- Fairtrade Towns have precipitated other significant initiatives to promote global sustainable development at the local level.
- Fairtrade Towns campaigning is most powerful as a gateway into other development issues when it is combined with other relevant initiatives, such as effective, well-managed North-South towns linking. Connecting these types of activities can be mutually beneficial for both.

*Fairtrade Towns campaigns have had a hugely positive impact on the **Fairtrade awareness and understanding of local and national government.***

- The Fairtrade Towns movement has, in some cases, lead to significant step change in the ethical procurement policy of local authorities, creating lasting impact and opening up the way for further policy and procurement changes.
- Fairtrade Towns campaigns have often succeeded in gaining support for Fairtrade from previously disinterested or actively unsupportive local authorities and even leverage financial support for development awareness raising.
- In some cases, Fairtrade Towns campaigns have actually helped local councils better engage with existing support for Fairtrade, putting them in touch with what' going on in the ground and encouraging them to question assumptions.
- Fairtrade Towns campaigns have succeeded in securing, not only resolutions and policies of support for Fairtrade by local councils but have actually penetrated the machinery of local authorities to work with and influence decision makers, for example, holding regular meetings with officers and involving them in Fairtrade Town steering committees.
- Fairtrade Towns campaigns have succeeded in securing local and regional political support which builds up its own momentum and spreads. Local political leaders who have come on board for Fairtrade go on to influence others in their region to make a commitment and take action.
- The Fairtrade Towns movement has inspired serious interest in Fairtrade at national and international political level.

*Fairtrade Towns campaigns have undertaken a high degree of activity to **engage the media** on Fairtrade and development issues, with enormous success and impact.*

- The Fairtrade Towns movement has had unprecedented success at motivating local media to cover global development issues in a way that might not otherwise have happened with significant positive impact on both development awareness and the attitudes of the media.
- Fairtrade Town activists become known local spokespeople for global development issues.
- Media content on local Fairtrade Towns campaigns is amplified online globally and inspires action across the world.

Fairtrade Product Sales and Availability

The impact of Fairtrade Towns campaigns on the sales and availability of Fairtrade products across Europe has, so far, been huge, with more and more outlets selling a wider and wider range of Fairtrade goods to consumers, as well as many local authorities, businesses, schools, universities and countless other organisations changing their procurement policies to replace conventional goods with Fairtrade ones. Fairtrade Towns campaigns are also increasing engagement of all kinds of retailers, including large supermarkets, with Fairtrade, not only in terms of what they put on their shelves but getting them involved in the local campaign.

Fairtrade Towns have had a **positively reinforcing triple effect** on availability and sales of Fairtrade products:

1. Persuading retailers, catering outlets, businesses and organisations to make Fairtrade products available to their staff, visitors and customers
 2. Making information about where to buy Fairtrade products easily accessible to local people, through directories in print and online as well as publicizing their availability by providing outlets with stickers, posters and so on.
 3. Convincing local people to take action by buying Fairtrade products locally, thus in turn convincing local stockists to keep offering them in the long term.
- As well as having a huge impact on increasing the availability and sales of Fairtrade products locally, many Fairtrade Towns campaigns have developed their own directories, making it very easy for people to know where to go locally to buy Fairtrade.
 - The increase in procurement of Fairtrade goods by local authorities influenced by Fairtrade Towns campaigns has been extremely significant.
 - Fairtrade Towns have had mixed success with being able to measure or quantify the impact of their activities on retailing and catering outlets, sometimes facing challenges in getting data. However, several campaigns are making good progress on this issue, and there is a lot of opportunity for knowledge exchange and improving this situation in the future.
 - Local successes can have national impact. Local Fairtrade Towns campaigns are making a vital contribution to building national supply chains for Fairtrade products.

Networking and Partnerships

The European Fairtrade Towns movement has initiated effective networking and partnerships in many forms with enormous positive impact on opportunities for

development awareness and action. This impact has been felt across different types of networks, for example:

- **Within Fairtrade Towns**, between different interest groups and organisations in the community.
- **Town to town**, exchanging knowledge and experience, both within countries and across national borders
- **Regional** networks within countries
- **International** networks in several forms; pan-European, in regional groupings, bilateral partnerships and in the form of constant informal exchange between many countries
- **NGOs**: Collaboration between Fairtrade Towns campaign networks and NGO networks
- **Community interest groups within Fairtrade Towns**, (This is discussed extensively in the section above on the impact of Fairtrade Towns on development awareness and action).

Networking within Fairtrade Towns

The impact of Fairtrade Towns is repeatedly shown in the less quantifiable but incredibly pivotal changes that take place within a Fairtrade Town community. Fora and networks for dialogue and change are built, events such as Fairtrade Fortnight becomes embedded in the local calendar, leverage for mutual benefit is created between all sections of the community and celebrations of success precipitate the expectation of greater things to come, spurring people on to the next initiative. Fairtrade Towns have developed as a powerful form of social capital, around which different interest groups have found common ground to invest energy and resources into a shared set of goals, (to increase awareness, understanding, availability and sales of Fairtrade products) as well as identifying the advantages and potential return on investment of this for their own organisations and businesses and for the social and economic wealth of their community.

Town to Town collaboration and Regional Networks

- Several respondents described how they were collaborating with other towns in their area and had supported other towns to get started with their campaigns.
- In some areas this kind of town to town support has led to the formation of regional networks.
- Within countries, regional networks of Fairtrade Towns have emerged organically out of the movement as well as begin encouraged by national labeling initiatives. This spontaneous regional grouping highlights the power of Fairtrade Towns to bring citizens together around common concerns and goals for development awareness and action.
- These networks have hugely accelerated the pace of Fairtrade activity in the region, allowing gains which would be difficult to achieve if towns worked in isolation, for example, regional Fairtrade producer tours and regional level government engagement, (for example, County Councils in the UK)
- Regional networks have worked together to produce material such as websites and printed directories, making information about Fairtrade and its impact available to the regional population through channels which they are likely to come across. Crucially, these materials include information about where to buy Fairtrade locally.
- Within countries, 'friendly competition' between areas has inspired people to start and accelerate Fairtrade Towns campaigns.

International Networks and Co-operation

- The European Fairtrade Towns movement is a truly international one with a very high level of international cooperation and exchange of knowledge embedded into its activities and ethos.
- Countries with more experience of Fairtrade Towns are supporting new entrants to the movement to develop their campaigns.
- Thanks to strong networking and the annual conferences, learning between European Fairtrade Towns has been effectively captured and shared so far, meaning that newer campaigns have been able to learn from both the successes and mistakes of previous ones.
- Fairtrade Towns are forming links over common challenges and sharing crucial specific knowledge with each other. Effective specialist knowledge sharing has been facilitated by fora such as the UK Fairtrade Towns Yahoo discussion group.
- Several countries, including the UK and Sweden, have an annual national conference for Fairtrade Towns activists and numerous people described how there are now regional meetings within their countries.

Fairtrade Towns and how they Encourage Collaboration between NGOs

- Fairtrade Towns have clearly made a very positive and significant contribution to collaboration between NGOs across Europe. Indeed, some Fairtrade Town initiatives have come about as the direct result of a formal collaboration between NGOs, who have combined resources to start the movement in their country.
- Some national campaigns show extremely strong and pro-active co-ordination of NGO activity, especially in efforts to influence local authority policy.
- Fairtrade Towns campaigns are also taking part in collaboration between NGOs at the national and regional level, boosting opportunities to incorporate the Fairtrade message into a broad range of local activities.
- Collaborative and effective relationships and networks have developed between Fairtrade Towns campaigns and the national labeling initiatives, which have strengthened the work of both.
- Of course, there are tensions inherent in mass campaigning and the inevitably differing views over how and how much this should be directed from the central organisation. In the case of Fairtrade Towns, these issues are being resolved effectively, opening up space for local campaigning on Fairtrade and development awareness raising to develop in a way that's appropriate locally but supported from the centre.

The Future of European Fairtrade Towns

The European Fairtrade Towns movement has clearly galvanised an incredibly powerful movement for social change on a local and global scale. This movement has already had a huge impact on increasing the sales and availability of Fairtrade products and clearly has infinitely more capacity to continue to do this, directly benefiting more and more producers in developing countries and improving their livelihoods. Not only this, but Fairtrade Towns are massively increasing awareness, understanding and action on development issues and, crucially, are doing so in a way that brings global issues firmly into the local context. They do this in a way that is uniquely effective and incredibly human, often prompting interest and action among

the most unexposed or skeptical individuals or organisations. As well as these crucial intangible benefits, the practical long term legacy of European Fairtrade Towns so far is comprehensive indeed; with structures, networks, action guides and other materials in place, continuous learning going on at and following up from conferences and also the development of several websites; at the local, regional and national level as well as at the European Fairtrade Towns online platform, which is eagerly awaited by activists and national co-ordinators as an opportunity to even further enhance international networking and collaboration.

The full report considers some key development questions facing the European Fairtrade Towns movement that emerged out of this research, namely:

Fairtrade Towns in the South

Strong interest in creating Fairtrade Towns is already emerging in communities in the South, for example in Ecuador, Brazil and Ghana. There is, therefore, a need for continued collaboration with these emerging Fairtrade Towns campaigns in the South and continued discussion across the Fairtrade Towns movement globally about how this development could be fostered for the benefit of everyone involved and for sustainable development awareness and action everywhere.

The 'what next?' question for Fairtrade Towns

The 'What Next?' question is clearly sometimes challenging, but local campaigns are finding locally appropriate solutions that ensure continued interest and energy Fairtrade and development issues. While ideas, guidelines and direction on where to go and what to do after Fairtrade Town status has been achieved is welcomed by most activists, locally appropriate solutions should be encouraged and celebrated. Such solutions allow citizens to direct their energies and enthusiasm in a way that will yield local interest and results concerning Fairtrade and related development issues.

Securing Resources

Local Fairtrade Towns campaigns are taking the initiative to secure resources for their ongoing work from various channels, such as the local council, membership fees, fundraising events and grant funding. No doubt much knowledge and experience gained by local campaigns who have been successful in securing funding and resources has already been shared within the movement, but the more of this sharing that can be done going forwards the better if the movement is to become as self-sustaining as possible.

Further Understanding and Publicising the Impact of Fairtrade Towns

While much progress on this has been made and future local and international collaboration will assure it continues, there is clearly an opportunity to develop stronger strategies and actions to a further understand the impact of Fairtrade Towns with a view to making them even more effective; both as a means of increasing awareness and action on sustainable development and of increasing sales and availability of Fairtrade products. This research has suggested there is a need to:

- Explore further how local campaigns can canvass 'before and after' data on sales and availability of Fairtrade products and what support activists need from co-ordinating bodies to do this.
- Continue to ensure as much specific feedback as possible to local and regional campaigns on the impact of Fairtrade Towns activity on commercial decision making. This positive feedback loop will go a long way to boost the ongoing energy and motivation of activists.
- Increase co-ordination of Fairtrade campaigns targeted at retailers and companies on a regional and national basis.

European Fairtrade Towns: Continued International Co- operation and Co-ordination

- The positive response to the annual European conferences and the desire to see them continue is explored in the early section of this report on the conferences.
- Continued development of additional for means for national co-ordinators to collaborate outside of the annual European conferences has been very welcomed, for example, the upcoming national co-ordinators meeting in Brussels, (due to take place in April 2009).

The Question of Ownership

As the Fairtrade Towns phenomenon spreads and more and more localities get involved in more and more countries, the question persists of who 'owns' or 'runs' this international movement. In discussing this with respondents concern with this issue did not seem to be born in any way out of a sense of propriety or control, but rather a sentiment that everyone who has been part of the European movement wants to see it continue to flourish and to deliver an even more incredible impact in the future. To do this, and to get the best out of the opportunity, several people felt there is a need for some structures to be out in place or refined. The main challenges to this are those of resources and that of reaching a consensus on the best way forwards. People made various practical suggestions as to the potential form and structures of the international European network going forwards including:

- An independent organisation in the form of an umbrella, membership based body.
- A two-part structure
- An international co-ordinator

These are explored in the full report.