Investigating governance systems in the coffee global production network to assess how they affect small farmers.

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own, except where work which has formed part of jointly authored publications has been included. The contribution of the candidate and the other authors to this work has been explicitly indicated below. The candidate confirms that appropriate credit has been given within the thesis where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Small coffee producers typically occupy a disadvantageous position within the coffee global production network (GPN) despite their crucial role in growing and trading coffee. The purpose of this PhD is to investigate how the position of small farmers in the global coffee production system could be improved. This PhD investigates the coffee production governance landscape, the ongoing power dynamics, and the possibilities of altering governance systems, thus challenging the power dynamics that are locking small farmers into such a disadvantageous position.

A conceptual framework with four components was devised to address these issues drawing on: (1) the Global Production Network (GPN) approach, developed to investigate the complexity of production systems in the context of the global economy; (2) the “power cube”, a framework that enables the nuanced study of power relations; (3) a set of governance dimensions to classify voluntary standard certification schemes concerning the capacities of actors involved and, (4) the concept of empowerment to organise the alternatives that can be designed to alter existing power dynamics.

This study uses multiple qualitative methods, including a systematic research review of 87 academic and grey literature documents and the completion of 21 semi-structured interviews. It provides insights into the complexity of approaches to governance in the coffee GPN by developing a typology of governance systems and unveiling interactions that keep small farmers in a disadvantageous position. It offers a nuanced analysis of the power dynamics, drawing on the type of capacities held (or not) by small farmers in these governance systems and relating this to different types of power. Lastly, this thesis identifies empowering mechanisms for redesigning governance systems so the power dynamics locking small farmers in a disadvantageous position in the coffee GPN can be addressed.

Therefore, the contribution of this thesis can be unfolded in the following directions: Economic Geography literature by expanding the knowledge regarding the concept of production networks; Governance literature with the knowledge expansion of coffee governance systems under a comparative context, power theory with the use of the power cube in the context of the GPN approach and, development studies: with the knowledge expansion “of the concept of “durable empowerment”.

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Acronyms

- AO Appellation of origin
- BM Business model
- CSO Civil society organization
- 4C Common Code for Coffee Community.
- CI Conservation International
- ECF European Coffee Federation
- EU European Union
- FO Farmers organization
- FT Fair Trade
- FTSE Fair Trade Social Enterprise
- GCC Global commodity chain
- GCA Green Coffee Association of New York
- GCP Global Coffee Platform
- GI Geographical Indication
- GPN Global production network
- GPS Global production systems
- GVC Global value chain
- ICO International Coffee Organization
- ICA International Coffee Agreement
- IFAD International Fund for Agricultural Development
- 4Ps Private-Public-Producer Partnership
- SPG Socially and Politically generated (process)
- SCA Speciality Coffee Association
- TNC Transnational corporations
- TRIPS Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
- SC Supply chain
- SPP Small Producer Symbol
- VC Value chain

- VSS Voluntary sustainability standard

Dedication

To Mamá, Papá, Marta, María & Daniel

Chapter one: Setting the Context

This PhD focuses on the interactions of small-scale coffee farmers with other coffee actors within the global coffee production system. It addresses the perception that the coffee GPN disadvantages small-scale farmers and puts them in a vulnerable position.

Chapter One introduces the purpose of the research and the context of this thesis. The research context corresponds to the global production system of coffee, and the problem addressed by this research refers to the weak position that small coffee farmers have within the coffee GPN. The chapter is divided into six sections. It starts with the thesis statement of purpose, followed by an analysis of the global production system of coffee and the thesis problem statement. The chapter continues with the research aim, objectives, and questions, and it concludes with a summary of the thesis structure.

1.1 Statement of Purpose

This thesis investigates power dynamics across the governance systems operating within the global production system of coffee to understand how these governance systems affect the position of small-scale farmers. The motivation to investigate coffee power dynamics across governance systems is to understand how governance systems could be changed to alter the power dynamics responsible for hindering small-scale farmers' position in the coffee GPN. The notion of “farmers’ position” refers to the status of farmers within the global production system regarding the distribution of benefits and burdens among coffee producers.

The global coffee production system is characterised by multiple governance systems that simultaneously steer it (Bray and Neilson, 2017; Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005). The abundance of coexisting governance systems complicates the study of power dynamics hindering farmers’ position. Nonetheless, understanding the types of power

held by small farmers in the coffee GPN emerges as a key factor in identifying the causes hindering their position.

1.2 Characterizing the Global Production System of Coffee.

Coffee is, nowadays, the second most consumed beverage in the world after water, and it is one of the most globally traded commodities worldwide (Vargas-Hernández, 2020; Samper and Quiñones-Ruiz, 2017; Borrella et al., 2015; and Lambert and Cooper, 2000). Its production and consumption[1] have increased steadily during the last two decades (ICO, 2023). However, the coffee market is going through challenging times due to the power and governance dynamics currently operating at its core.

1.2.1 The Persistence of the "Coffee Paradox"

The current coffee production system is characterised by the geographical disconnection between production and consumption locations, with producing countries spread out across the Global South, and consuming countries concentrated in the Global North (Daviron and Ponte, 2005). This geographical disconnection between producing and consuming countries has influenced the development of market dynamics affecting the transmission of information across the production system and small farmers' access to the coffee market (ICO, 2021a). These hindering effects have intensified with globalisation affecting the coffee production system (Talbot, 2004).

In terms of governance, the global production system of coffee has gone through a progressive deregulation process that has fostered the power of international corporate actors at the expense of the governing power of national states. Indeed, before 1989, national governments used to have a strong influence on the way coffee was marketed (Ponte, 2002c).

[1] The worldwide coffee consumption increased from 172 .2 million 60-kg bags in 2018/2019 to 177 million 60-kg bags in 2023/2024 (ICO, 2023).

The dynamics described above are crucial to understanding what some authors call the **“coffee paradox” (**Daviron and Ponte, 2005). This term embraces the disparate financial outcomes that being part of the coffee production system has for small farmers and other types of actors. On one side, small-scale farmers and their communities struggle to obtain enough income to cover the expenses generated due to coffee cultivation (Vargas-Hernandez, 2020). The challenges experienced by millions of small farmers contrast starkly with the prosperous times experienced by coffee traders, roasters and retailers located across consuming countries. Sustained growth in consuming countries materialises in multiple ways, including high profits, increasing openings of coffee bars, and the development of specific coffee products, such as speciality and sustainable coffees with high market prices (Daviron and Ponte, 2005).

Along with the disparate outcomes highlighted by the “coffee paradox”, small farmers bear the environmental degradation of the biophysical systems where they live (Panhuysen and Pierrot, 2014), which is getting more accentuated by the impact of climate change on coffee cultivation (Ovalle-Rivera *et al.*, 2015).

1.2.2 The Structural Disparities of the Global Production System of Coffee

The persistence of the ”coffee paradox” has been accentuated by a range of structural disparities such as (1) the geographical disconnection between production and consumption regions, (2) the high globalisation affecting the coffee production system, and (3) the high environmental vulnerability of coffee. All the above have contributed to enhancing the formation of disparities shaping different positions within the global coffee production system.

The range of disparities, in turn, is influenced by (1) the structure of the coffee production system, (2) the consolidation of opaque market dynamics, (3) the undervaluing of small coffee farmers’ voices in the formation of governance systems and (4) the dubious flow of information across the global production system of coffee.

The structure of the global production system of coffee has resulted in the formation of disparate coordination capabilities among coffee actors (Pelupessy, 2007). The high concentration at the roasting and retailing stages - illustrated by the reduced number of large roasters and retailers - coexists with a high number of smallholders at the cultivation stage (Borrella et al., 2015). Indeed, the five largest coffee traders have a combined global market share greater than 25%, and the top 10 roasting companies process 35% of global coffee output (Talbot, 2004). Meanwhile, 80% of the coffee produced worldwide is produced by 17.7 million small-scale coffee farmers (Vincent et al., 2017).

Regarding the market dynamics of the global coffee production system, small farmers have always had limited opportunities for upgrading. Most of the opportunities for upgrading usually take place across the blending, roasting, packaging, and branding stages in the consuming countries, which are the stages of the coffee value chain impacting retail coffee prices (Samper and Quiñones-Ruiz, 2017). Therefore, small farmers have few opportunities to upgrade their coffee production management practices.

Furthermore, market dynamics have been continuously influenced by the interference of public and private actors. Public actors' interventions embrace the setting of taxes and tariffs in consuming countries. They usually vary from one importing country to another. For instance, the VAT rate goes from 19% in Slovakia to 25% in Sweden or Denmark (Pelupessy, 2007). A second type of public intervention includes the collusion of states, producers, associations, and other coffee actors in international markets. The most representative example of good practice is the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) that collapsed in 1989 (see section 1.3). During the time it was in force, its quota system provided market stability and maintained coffee prices at a high level, securing small farmers' livelihoods (Gabriele and Vanzetti, 2008).

1.2.3 The "Cup Value" and its Relevance in the Coffee Governance

The governance of the global coffee production system has always been characterised by the uneven relevance of coffee actors in shaping governance processes. Such processes, in which farmers are not often involved, embrace the standardisation and normalisation of market transactions, the coordination of different segments from the

coffee value chain, and the rules, practices, conditions, and terminology of the international coffee trade.

For example, coffee grading and classification criteria to identify speciality coffee are based on a botanical variety, bean features, coffee bean quality and processing practices (Boot, 2002). This system was set by The Speciality Coffee Association (SCA) to assess the cup value[2] of coffee beans and establish their access to the speciality coffee niche at higher selling prices. Other actors with a dominant voice within the global coffee production system are the European Coffee Federation (ECF) and the Green Coffee Association of New York (GCA), under whose leadership standardised coffee practices have been developed.

Other processes beyond small farmers' initiatives under multinational roasters' control refer to the flow of information. Roasters control the transmission of material, value, and information streams across the global production system of coffee. By managing all the above, roasters can take advantage of market and extra-market coordination tools (Pelupessy, 2007). Farmers have no control over the setting process of coffee quality criteria, and they have limited know-how to demand any information about how to satisfy coffee market trends. Such trends typically emerge from the coffee attributes[3] instrumentalised by roasters and retailers to secure their position within the coffee market and to retain customers (Lundy et al., 2012). These attributes can be exploited by coffee retailers who can decide about the coffee attributes associated with quality, which facilitates the introduction of market-sought attributes into roasters' blends.

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[2] The value of a given coffee is measured using a set of flavour attributes that, in the current version of the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) protocol, are "fragrance/aroma," "flavour," "aftertaste," "acidity," "body," "balance," "uniformity," "clean cup," "sweetness," "defects," and "overall" (Giacalone *et al.*, 2020). For a given coffee to be considered speciality or gourmet, it needs to score 80 points or more on the 100-point standardised scale set by the SCA.

[3] There are three different types of coffee attributes: Material attributes are used to assess the quality of a given type of coffee. Examples of material attributes are those used and set by coffee roasters to determine the cup value of a given coffee. Symbolic attributes are set by roasters and traders to sell the origin of a given coffee to consumers or to attract attention to the development challenges faced by a particular origin (Rosenberg et al., 2018). Lastly, in-person attributes are related to the atmosphere and feeling linked to coffee consumption.

In many cases, these attributes influence the preferences of traders, roasters, and retailers, who aim to satisfy consumers by securing blending flavours elaborated, in many cases, using cheaper varieties. Information regarding the process of setting coffee attributes is generally unknown to coffee farmers. The possibility for roasters and retailers to influence coffee market trends and organise their production accordingly portrays the dominant and comfortable position that traders, roasters, and retailers enjoy in coffee.

The lack of transparency in the information flow within the coffee production system also causes mismatches between what producers communicate to coffee traders, roasters, and retailers and what the latter actors communicate to consumers (Daviron and Ponte, 2005). Resulting information mismatches refer to the communication gaps identified when consumers do not receive transparent information about the sustainability practices implemented by farmers due to the filter and repackaging done by roasters, traders, and retailers. Furthermore, consumers have almost no access to information regarding the investments needed by farmers to compete with the material quality sought by consumers (Wilson and Wilson, 2014).

In conclusion, aspects such as market access, sustainability, and the definition of quality standards are beyond farmers' control. These features, therefore, represent some of the factors that have contributed to shaping the position of coffee actors: on the one hand, the position of subjugation of small farmers and, on the other hand, the position of dominance enjoyed by the rest of the coffee actors mentioned above.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Considering the features of the coffee production system examined in the previous section, it becomes apparent that coffee farmers are sometimes forced to deal with specific outcomes, hindering their position within the coffee production system.

The range of consequences resulting from farmers' weak position in the global production system of coffee has attracted great attention from the literature focused on improving farmers' welfare (i.e. access to the market, training, low market prices, etc.…). However,

this study focuses on understanding the causes responsible for compromising small farmers' position and find alternatives to improve it.

A significant event with profound consequences for the configuration of the global coffee production system was the collapse of the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) in 1989 (Talbot, 2004; Ponte, 2002a). One of the leading causes of the ICA collapse was the market flooding with coffee reserves coming from new production regions, such as Vietnam (Samper and Quiñones-Ruiz, 2017). This market flooding provoked a decline in coffee prices that the ICA could not endure (Akiyama and Varangis, 1990). It also caused significant changes in the market dynamics and major impacts on coffee-producing regions and their farmers.

Some of these changes refer to the liberalisation process experienced across coffee-producing regions that gave prominent corporate actors the possibility of determining prices and conditions of production (Ponte, 2001). For some coffee-producing regions, the ICA collapse affected the profitability of the coffee they were producing (Johnson, 2010). Additionally, the collapse of the ICA resulted in adverse effects for millions of small farmers (Mosheim, 2008), such as low benefits and low productivity. To mitigate these adverse results, the global coffee production system witnessed the proliferation of a plethora of governance systems to grant sustainable coffee production, environmentally and socially.

However, despite these multiple efforts, coffee farmers are still experiencing many of the adverse outcomes that started following the ICA collapse (Kihoro and Gathungu, 2020). Current governance systems have shown limited efficacy in providing the same market stability and security under the ICA (Ponte, 2001; Bacon, 2005; Daviron and Ponte, 2005).

The novelty of this study is its focus on governance systems as a forum for exerting power. Indeed, there is a significant knowledge gap regarding the potential of the governance systems currently operating in coffee to alter power dynamics within the coffee GPN.

The limited benefit to small farmers from the multitude of interventions in the coffee market raises the question of how power has been exercised to maintain the current status quo. Studies of power dynamics examining the distributional effects in the context of coffee have concluded that power inequities between Northern buyers and Southern producers have stayed essentially unchanged (Grabs and Ponte, 2019). For this reason, this study has focused on exploring the potential for changing power dynamics, especially concerning governance systems. The study of power undertaken by this research considers coffee as a global production network (GPN) within which a plethora of governance systems operate with different possibilities for altering power dynamics for the benefit of small farmers.

The notion of GPN refers to the interconnected and geographically dispersed activities involved in producing goods and services, often controlled by multinational corporations (Coe, et al., 2008). Governance systems refer to the structures, institutions, processes, and mechanisms through which decisions are made, authority is exercised, and control is maintained within a given sector (Blackmore, et al., 2015)

Therefore, this study investigates coffee farmers' position within coffee governance systems by considering four activities required to control the normal functioning of any governance system. As part of the research, this study investigates the coffee governance systems operating in the coffee GPN, with an initial focus on East Africa. Next, this work explores the power dynamics operating within them and, finally, with a broader focus due to the COVID-19 outbreak, it identifies the alternatives to change power dynamics responsible for hindering farmers' position across the coffee GPN.

To conduct the comprehensive study of power dynamics described above, this study has devised two analytical tools: a governance landscape typology and a theoretical framework. These analytical tools provide the resources to conduct a comparative analysis of multiple categories of coffee governance systems, which have not been compared in depth to date.

1.4 Research Aim, Objectives, and Research Questions

This thesis examines power dynamics across governance systems operating in the coffee GPN. This is addressed through three research objectives (ROs) and six research questions (RQs) framed within a multi-level analysis and conducted using a mixed-method study design.

Research objectives and questions

1. To investigate operating **governance systems** in coffee in East Africa

1.1 What governance systems coexist in coffee in East Africa?

1.2 Who are the main actors within the coffee GPN?

2. To **study** the **power dynamics** operating within governance systems

2.1 What types of power do farmers have within each governance system?

2.2 Which governance systems are better endowed to challenge the status quo of power dynamics?

3. To investigate the existence of **actions capable** of **altering** existing **power dynamics** within governance systems

3.1 What type of actions can be implemented to alter power dynamics?

3.2 What are the hindering and/or easing circumstances that the implementation of such actions might encounter?

1.5 Thesis Structure

The rest of this thesis is organised as follows.

Chapter Two includes the literature review. The chapter situates the study within the broader debates about how the political economy has addressed power dynamics approaches in the context of the global production system of coffee. Lastly, it refers to the option to undertake part of the research illustrated with the conceptual framework devised for this research and the four main academic streams on which it is built.

Chapter Three draws on the research design and methodology. It introduces the research design and deepens into the data collection and analysis methods employed to undertake this research, including the type of data collected and analysed. Finally, it includes additional research aspects, such as ethical considerations, positionality, and study limitations.

Chapter Four is the first of the three empirical chapters and focuses on the myriads of governance systems operating in East Africa and the groups of coffee actors identified within the coffee GPN. It introduces a new level of analysis: the coffee governance landscape and includes a governance system typology used to investigate the power dynamics on which Chapter Five focuses.

Chapter Five examines the power dynamics operating across coffee governance systems, distinguishing between the allocation of three different types of power: visible, invisible, and hidden power (Gaventa, 2006). Based on a nuanced study of power dynamics, it identifies the potential of governance systems to alter power dynamics-based types of power that fall in farmers' hands.

Chapter Six is the final empirical chapter and expands on the alternatives to change the power dynamics identified across coffee governance systems, including mechanisms and factors, to improve the position of small farmers.

Chapter seven discusses existing literature in the context of the understanding emerging from the findings of chapters Four, Five, and Six, referring to the relevance of the research, the summary of all findings, and the novelty of this thesis.

Chapter eight, the final chapter, presents key knowledge contributions and policy implications from the study findings. It concludes with some recommendations and suggestions for future research and a brief reference to certain limitations of the findings.

Chapter Two: Power, Governance, and Empowerment in the Context of Global Production Networks

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the academic background of the thesis. The chapter situates the research at the intersection of multiple literatures: political economy, economic geography, and development studies. It also expands on the conceptual approach used to devise the conceptual framework that guided the analysis of empirical data.

Firstly, Chapter Two draws on the literature on global production systems to analyse three concepts affecting the position of small coffee farmers in global production systems: power, governance, and empowerment. Secondly, the chapter situates the former concepts in the context of the global coffee production system. Thirdly, it focuses on the devise of the theoretical framework, drawing on the knowledge gaps identified across the literature on power, governance, and empowerment so far. The analysis of such concepts contributes to explaining the position that small coffee farmers have within the global production system of coffee.

In terms of the structure, Chapter Two is divided into four more sections. Firstly, it examines the main elements of the theoretical approach. Secondly, Chapter Two analyses such elements from the perspective of the global coffee production system. Thirdly, it expands on the utilisation of the conceptual framework to conduct part of the empirical research. Finally, it finishes with a section including some concluding remarks.

2.2 Theoretical Approach

2.2.1 The Global Production Systems Perspective

Small farmers[4] have been involuntarily drawn to globalisation. Globalisation has transformed the global economy by making national economies more integrated and interdependent and enabling global forces to influence local economic conditions (Bordo et al., 2007). Global production systems have formed an intricate web of financial activities, including manufacturing goods and delivering services. Such production systems coordinate resources, labour, and capital across borders (Kaplinsky and Morris, 2001). Resource coordination happens amid interactions, leading to relationships and interdependencies at multiple levels among nations, groups, and individuals.

The interconnectedness and complexity of global production systems deeply affect its investigation. Global production systems rest on the interconnection among actors, processes, and resources (Buckley and Ghauri, 2004). Their complexity emerges from numerous factors influencing the production process and decision-making outcomes (Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002). Both features complicate the provision of responses referring to who controls, benefits, and bears the costs. Many academics and practitioners have responded to the above-mentioned questions by focusing on the power dynamics and governance structures shaping the functioning of global production systems (Grabs and Ponte, 2019; Gereffi, 2014). This thesis explores how power relations and governance structures affect small farmers' position in coffee and what changes (empowerment) can be implemented for their benefit if necessary. Farmers' position embraces the roles, challenges, and power dynamics affecting small farmers within the coffee GPN.

This study has considered power dynamics, governance structures, and empowerment alternatives in investigating the position of small-scale coffee farmers. The relevance of investigating farmers' position rests on (1) its significance in understanding the share of value farmers receive (Talbot, 1997) and (2) its centrality in explaining farmers' restricted

[4] **Small farmers** are those with landholdings less than 5 hectares (Jaffee, 2007) or 10 hectares (Raynolds et al., 2007). Regardless of the size of the land, these farmers operate within a family-based labor system; they are highly dependent on coffee as their primary source of income and vulnerable due to their limited access to financial resources, the coffee market and technical support (Bacon, 2005).

access to resources and farmers' dependency on intermediaries (Bacon, 2005). (3) Lastly, investigating farmers' position eases the understanding of their limited access to the coffee markets.

Global production systems embrace multiple activities. According to Ericksen (2008), food[5] systems include the interactions between the biophysical and human environments, which determine a range of activities (production, processing, distribution, and consumption) and their outcomes.

This thesis focuses on investigating the outcomes of the interactions happening among actors from within the global coffee production systems (power), the ways such interactions are steered (governance), and the alternatives to change the outcomes of such interactions (empowerment). The reason to focus on the aforementioned issues rests on the impact they all three have in shaping the small farmers' position in the global coffee production system. As a result, this thesis focuses on aspects related to governance, power, and empowerment in the context of the global coffee production system to build the theoretical justification and devise the conceptual framework of this thesis.

Over time, multiple approaches have emerged to investigate global production systems. The first theoretical developments that emerged from within the political economy domain were the Global Commodity Chain (GCC) (Gereffi and Korzeniewicz, 1994) and the Global Value Chain (GVC) analysis (Gereffi, et a., 2005). Later, the Global Production Network (GPN) approach emerged, addressing all the theoretical limitations of the two previous approaches (Coe, et al., 2008).

[5] The choice of food systems over agri-food systems has been made based on the wider scope of food systems in terms of the activities considered to be part of the system. Agrifood systems are concerned with activities such as growth, harvesting, processing, packaging, and distribution of food products, but consumption. (Ericksen, 2008). Consumers have a significant impact on the coffee GPN.

The GCC and GVC approaches have been developed from the business management literature, and both employ the metaphor of “chain” to investigate the global economy. GPN theorists identified a few limitations with this approach as I explain below, and instead, evolved within an economic-developmental framework and adopted a “network” perspective. The understanding of the global economy as a conglomerate of ‘networks” instead of “chains”, obeys to the multiple advantages of using networks as the core element of the global economy. Such advantages are listed in Table 1. As I show below, some of the theoretical advantages that Henderson, et al. (2002) identified also served to justify my choice in using the GPN approach to frame the theoretical approach of this thesis.

In the following sections, this chapter expands on the analysis of the GVC, GCC, and GPN about power, governance, and empowerment. The first two concepts have been explored within the global governance systems literature on global and intermediary levels (Said-Allsopp and Tallontire, 2015). However, empowerment has limited engagement with the literature on global governance systems; hence, it emerges mainly from development literature and is frequently associated with gender.

2.2.2 Power Dynamics in the Context of Global Production Systems

“*That some people have more power than others is one of the most palpable facts of human existence; because of that, the concept of power is ancient and ubiquitous.”* (Dahl, 2007, p.201).

- **<u>The notion of power in global production systems</u>**

Power has been widely investigated from within multiple academic backgrounds, such as political science (Dahl, 2007, and Bachrach and Baratz, 1962) political economy (Dallas and Ponte, 2017), business ethics (Smith, 2010), and management studies (Thorlakson, et al., 2018).

The study of power dynamics has always attracted great interest among political economists. Such interest also becomes apparent in the study of global production systems. The study of power in the context of global production systems is required to understand the outcomes of the interactions among production system actors. According to Dallas and Ponte (2017), power is a foundational concept for understanding global production systems, whose usage and meaning have become overstretched with time.

In a broader sense, power has been generally understood as coercive, as in the ability of one actor to compel another actor to act according to their wishes (Gereffi, 1994). This thesis is interested in situations where small farmers are forced into actions with outcomes that are not beneficial for their position. However, coercion is not always essential for that to happen since not-beneficial outcomes can also occur without obligation.

The issue of power plays a central role in global production systems. Power dynamics rise as a critical concept for political economists in the context of agrifood chains (Dallas and Ponte, 2017; Appelbaum and Gereffi, 1994), since this discipline focuses on the intersection of the interactions between corporate, non-corporate, and governmental actors that happen to be involved with the creation of a given product (Mayer et al., 2017).

From a pragmatic stance, development studies scholars have also studied power (Currie-Alder, 2016; Gaventa, 2006) to develop an applied framework to challenge power dynamics. Gaventa's "power cube", from development studies, posed a more accessible alternative and less normative approach that facilitated the study of power. However, the study of power from within the global production systems literature, focusing on interactions affecting small farmers' position, is still scarce, particularly at an intermediary level. This is one of the conclusions with which Bennett (2015) concluded her research on International Fairtrade Governance. The focus on power has been instrumental in understanding how global value chains are governed and can be changed (Gereffi et al., 2005) thanks to the multiple approaches that, over time, have focused on explaining power dynamics within global production systems.

- **The contribution of global production systems literature to the notion of power.**

The first two approaches to power from within the global political economy literature are the Global Commodity Chain framework[6] (GCC) (Gereffi and Korzeniewicz, 1994) and the global value chain (GVC) analysis (Gereffi et al., 2005). The GCC approach primarily focuses on tracing the production and distribution of specific commodities, often overlooking broader systemic interconnections and power dynamics (Gereffi, 1994). Similarly, the GVC approach emphasises value creation and distribution along supply chains but may neglect broader socio-political contexts and the role of non-economic actors (Kaplinsky and Morris, 2001).

GCC's contribution to the notion of power served to operationalize the empirical study of new forms of industrial organisation operating across borders, firm-based transactions and development-related (Gereffi,1995). The GCC explained how lead firms leverage their position to dominate supply chains at the expense of smaller suppliers and workers in multiple locations (Blair, 2005). The GCC also explained the influence of institutional and regulatory frameworks, trade agreements, and technological advancements in shaping global supply chains.

Thus, the GCC approach helped to distinguish between buyer-driven and supplier-driven chains (Gereffi and Korzeniewicz, 1994). Whereas in buyer-driven chains, downstream actors (retailers and brand marketers) control the value chain and decide how and when a product will be manufactured, in producer-driven chains, the upstream actors (manufacturers) are in control of the value chain at the point of production. By showing such asymmetry the GCC approach pointed out the existence of new forms of "dependent development" and the alternatives of transcending those constraints (Henderson et al., 2002). Indeed, the empirical work that was conducted across multiple sectors (footwear, garments, electronics, auto-components) served to transcend existing limitations of state-centered forms of analysis.

Despite the theoretical and empirical advancements delivered by the GCC framework in the study of global trade systems, such an approach also attracted prominent critics. They

[6] Annex 7 includes a list of definitions of relevant terms referring to the multiple approaches of global studies to investigate global production systems.

referred to the narrow focus of the GCC framework, only suitable for understanding the connections between global commodity chains and the international economy (Bair, 2009). The GCC framework's focus was also criticized for not being adequate in capturing networks of different natures, due to its structural focus on the entire commodity chain, preventing it from capturing the role of actors embedded in a network (Arce and Marsden, 1993). The narrow and structural focus of the GCC framework made of it an inappropriate approach to investigate farmers' position in coffee.

The following approach developed to investigate power in the context of global production systems was the Global Value Chain (GVC) framework (Sturgeon, 2001). This new model drew on some of the formulations of the GCC, but it was also influenced by transaction economics costs and the economics of organisation (Sturgeon, 2001) and the rise of standards as norms, and self-regulation processes.

Despite addressing some of the limitations of the GCC, the GVC was unable to differentiate the nature of the networks, making it impossible for the researcher to capture the diversity of inter-firm relationships (Gereffi et al., 2005).

Under such influence Dallas et al., (2017) used the GVC approach to expand and qualify the concept of power. According to them, the concept of power had been left under-theorized under the GCC theory since it only embraced coercive and confrontational relations among lead-firms and their peripherical partners.

With the rise of self-regulation processes and the relevance of standards, firstly it became apparent that power can be also exerted in non-confrontational and non-coercive ways. Secondly, it became clear that firms are not the only actors capable of holding power within global production systems. There are actors, such as multistakeholder initiatives, standards and certifications setters or even Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and social movements that can also exert power. For instance, the research of Nadvi (2008), regarding the relevance of standards within Nike's supply chain, showed the influence that standards' implementation have for global governance and the impact that such standards have for the governance of value chain ties.

Indeed, under the GVC, a more nuanced distinction of power was achieved. Dallas et al. (2017) used two dimensions to identify five types of power in the context of GVC from the wine and apparel sector. One dimension referred to how power can be exerted (transmission mechanisms: direct or diffuse); the other dimension referred to the actors wielding power (arena of actors: dyads and collective). As a result, four types of power capable of coexisting and transforming over time were identified: bargaining (dyadic and direct), demonstrative (dyadic and diffuse), institutional (collective and direct), and constitutive power (collective and diffuse).

The resulting types of power meant a significant contribution study of power within global production systems since such classification allowed researchers to identify how several types of power "coexist, evolve, consolidate and diffuse through distinct mechanisms and trajectories "(Dallas et al., 2017, p. 28 over time). This approach permitted to identify that different types of power are also relevant from an empirical perspective, since each type of power may require distinct research methods and data collection techniques, e.g. archival research or content analysis to identify constitutive power or tracing techniques of company and other stakeholders' organizations records or contracts to research institutional power.

Despite the possibilities that GVC approach offered to understand how GVCs operate, including who benefits and who does not, it was found incapable of differentiating the nature of networks, making it impossible for the researcher to capture the diversity of relationships among non-corporate actors. (Ponte, 2019).

The GPN approach focuses on production networks. These networks are intersections of functions, processes, and operations that can be found across all stages: production, distribution, and consumption of a given product or service (Coe et al., 2008). Networks can be also intra-related and inter-related to other sets of networks that might not be at the same level. Lazzarini et al. (2001) argue that those networks together form a "net chain," a multidimensional analysis unit that facilitates the investigation of power dynamics within a given production network. Table 1 summarises the advantages of using GPN below, focusing on its inclusivity, flexibility, nuance, social and territorial

embeddedness, capacity to detect value and the challenging potential of the status quo within production networks.

***Table 1**: Advantages of using GPN analysis.*

Advantages of using GPN analysis	
1. Inclusive consideration of actors	The GPN offers insights into any corporate and non-corporate coffee actors as constituent parts of the coffee production system. However, it has not yet been used from the perspective of small farmers (Coe et al., 2015).
2. Geographical flexibility	The GPN goes beyond the linear progression of a given product or service, revealing the complex circulations of capital, knowledge, and people that underlie the production of all goods and services, as well as the various service firms of different kinds involved in those circulatory processes (Coe et al., 2008).
3. Nuanced articulation of power	GPN distinguishes between corporate power and institutional and collective power. It captures connections and synergies that emerge between value-creation processes in different production networks, enabling the identification of power interdependencies between production networks (Hess and Yeung, 2006).
4. Awareness of the socio-spatial context	GPNs are strongly influenced by the concrete socio-spatial contexts in which they are embedded. This allows the GPN approach to be used across geographical borders and different governance contexts (Coe et al.,2008).
5. Distinction between network and territorial embeddedness	The GPN approach forces us to distinguish connections between network members regardless of the country of origin or location in specific places, putting production networks at the centre (Henderson et al., 2002).
6. Localization and capture of spot value	The GPN approach allows researchers to spot where value is created (and for whom) and captured and how much value might be enhanced. They understand how benefits and costs are allocated to production (Kano et al., 2020).
7. Possibility for the action of challenging the status quo within networks	The GPN approach may challenge existing power dynamics within a production network (Coe and Yeung, 2019).

Source: compiled by author.

However, the GPN approach has also received several criticisms. A stream of critics refers to its contradictory and excessive focus on transnational companies (TNCs). In this regard, Coe et al. (2008) highlighted the limited amount of literature focusing on the role of GPN actors other than TNCs. This critique was regained more than a decade later when Vicol et al. (2019) referred - in the context of a reformulation of the GPN approach (GPN 2.0) - to the limited engagement of the GPN approach with the agricultural sector in the Global South, particularly from the perspective of smallholders. The limited engagement of the GPN literature with small farmers becomes apparent due to its

restricted ability to capture the interactions between small farmers themselves and between small farmers and other actors in the network (Vicol et al., 2019).

The GPN framework has also received several critiques from power-related scholars. The first one concerns intra-interactions among small farmers. Fold (2014) suggested that the GPN approach was not designed to investigate global production systems and could not capture the distinctive characteristics of smallholder agricultural production landscapes, particularly the aspects generating uneven social and spatial developments. Secondly, the GPN approach was also criticised for its excessive focus on direct and confrontational ways of transmitting power, missing ways in which a collective of actors exert power where the membership boundaries are permeable (Yeung, 2014).

Former arguments justify the scarcity of the GPN literature focusing on power dynamics from farmers' perspectives. Despite the limited use of the GPN approach to investigate power dynamics focusing on small farmers, such an approach can be used to fill this knowledge gap. The limitations that the GPN shows in capturing small farmers' interactions among them and with other GPN actors explain my use of the "Power cube" developed by Gaventa (2006), which allowed me to surpass some of the limitations of the GPN approach to investigate power (see section 2.4). Nelson et al. (2014) investigated some of the limitations of the GPN approach in investigating power. They identified the focus of the GPN approach on structural and relational power while the normative and ethical dimensions of power were frequently underemphasized. Indeed, they introduced the term "ethical space" to highlight power's normative and moral dimensions. Their research was built on the GPN approach, but it went beyond economic relationships to consider ethical standards, labor struggles, and the socio-political embeddedness of production networks.

2.2.3 Governance Structures in the Context of Global Production Systems

Governance is also a foundational concept within the study of global production systems, intersecting with power. Power determines the capability of individuals or groups to

influence or control governance processes. Therefore, governance embraces processes, mechanisms, and institutions by which authority is exercised.

The GCC and GVC approaches significantly contributed to governance literature with the conceptualization of governance structures. Initially, Gereffi (1994) drew on the organization of global industries using the GCC framework. Subsequently, Gereffi, et al. (2005) provided a typology of governance structures (market, modular, relational, captive, and hierarchical) explaining the interactions among corporate actors based on transaction complexity, codificability of information, and supplier capability. Both approaches highlighted power asymmetries within chains, distinguishing between the capacity that leading firms have to impose standards, terms of trade and prices. All these three aspects are central to the study of power since they shape the opportunities and constraints of chain participants (Ponte and Gibbon, 2005) beyond leading firms.

Lastly, the contribution of the GVC framework to the governance literature also includes the link between activities enhancing value within the chains (economic upgrading) and the impact that such activities have within the chains in terms of labour conditions and rights. Barrientos et al. (2011) underscored the role that governance has in mediating the tensions between profitability and equity within global industries. They found out that economic upgrading is not always accompanied of social upgrading and therefore the need for designing interventions that can deliver both.

For that reason, some efforts focusing on the social implications of global production trades became apparent. The GVC approach was instrumental in the investigation that global industries had on local communities. Thus, the GVC scholars started to examine governance for sustainability and inclusive development. Nadvi's research (2008) focused on the implementation of environmental and labour standards. In this regard, the GVC framework considered the multiscale nature of sustainability and inclusive development with the recognition of the impact that institutional frameworks, at national and regional, have in shaping the participation of small actors within global value chains (Coe et al., 2008). The consideration of social and environmental sustainability alongside economic goals addressed a critical gap in the GCC and GVC frameworks which tended to concentrate more in economic efficiency (Ponte and Gibbon, 2005).

The contribution of the GPN approach materialized with the deepening of the complex and dynamic nature of governance in global production systems. The GPN approach has gone beyond the assumed linearity of relationships focusing on firm-centric mechanisms and highlighted the fluid and relational nature of governance across multiple actors, including not only firms, but also states, labour and civil society organisations (Coe et al. 2008). As result, the GPN, expanded the scope of governance by considering a richer understanding of how multiple actors and scales influence governance outcomes, particularly in issues like labour rights, sustainability and regional development (Henderson et a., 2002). This holistic perspective allows for a more comprehensive understanding of governance systems at play (Coe, et al., 2004).

The GPN approach also emphasised the territorial embeddedness of production networks, giving local, regional and global interrelations a crucial role that the GVC/GCC had not dispensed. The relevance that spatial dimension has for analysing governance structures had been overlooked by GCC and GVC approaches since they do not sufficiently consider local factors affecting governance (Bair, 2009).

The multi and inter dimensional, dynamic and geographical context-aware perspective of the GPN approach on global production process makes it the appropriate approach to investigate the multiple governance systems co-functioning within the coffee GPN.

Governance systems are among the ways in which power can be exercised, and hence, this study is interested in investigating the range of systems steering the coffee GPN. Young (2013) argued that governance has the social function of steering human actions toward fulfilling desired ends and away from adverse outcomes. Investigating coffee governance systems can identify how adverse outcomes impact small farmers' position. Kooiman (1993) also stressed the relevance of governance in managing the consequences emerging from the interactions among social groups, including the consequences on the properties, resources, and well-being of interacting groups. The management of the interactions that farmers have within coffee governance systems has impacts on their position (Nag, 2018). Therefore, the relevance of governance systems is

to understand whether the interactions occurring within them have desired or adverse effects for farmers.

Since the actions to manage societies can be developed and enforced within markets, hierarchies, or networks (Kjær, 2004), the flexibility of GPN approach to investigating intra-interactions across the aforementioned structures grants the possibility of examining power dynamics across a varied range of governance systems.

Focusing on the concept of governance facilitates the investigation of the claims made by actors willing to pursue their welfare to perform effectively at an economic and political level (Putnam et al., 1993). Such claims are associated with the “social economy” domain formed by a range of third-sector agencies between the public sector and the market economy. The emergence of this “social economy” has become apparent in the context of coffee, with the coexistence of multiple governance systems currently steering the coffee production system.

Furthermore, governance embraces theoretical elements that overlap with the theoretical foundations of the GPN approach. For instance, governance also recognises the formation of autonomous networks that could take over government business (Stoker, 1998). Governance also admits the possibility of getting things done without the need for imposing (coercive) power.

Lastly, governance can deal with the complexity of the interactions among social groups, including the consequences of such interactions (Stoker, 1998). Such interactions can have transnational consequences, evolve very slowly, emerge very quickly, and/or occur within or across scales and levels (Cash et al., 2006).

Scales refer to the dimensions employed by experts to measure and study a phenomenon (Gibson, et al., 2000). These dimensions include spatial, temporal, jurisdictional, institutional, networks, management, and knowledge (Cash et al., 2016). Levels, instead, refer to the units of analysis within the scales. They are often organised hierarchically

(Gibson et al., 2000). Therefore, the concept of governance links well with the GPN approach, and both are suitable components for the theoretical framework. Section 2.4.1 provides further detail about the specific dimensions of governance theory used in the theoretical framework.

2.2.4 Empowerment Alternatives in the Context of Global Production Systems

The concept of empowerment is central to investigating other options to reduce power asymmetries resulting from the interactions among the actors of worldwide production systems. According to Rowlands (1995), there is an increasing understanding of empowerment as a tool to change the situation of poor and marginalised people. In coffee, empowerment has also been investigated across the governance systems coexisting within the GPN. Bacon (2005) determined that the participation of women's cooperatives in the Fairtrade (FT) scheme has contributed to the highest levels of individual and collective[7] empowerment. In the context of public-private partnerships, Technoserve, an American NGO, has led numerous projects across coffee-producing regions promoting gender equality and empowerment by increasing the number of women who can be trained as farmers (Technoserve, 2016).

The concept of empowerment has been widely used across multiple disciplines such as social work, community work, adult education, gender studies (Sell and Minot, 2018), and development studies (Rowlands, 1995). This thesis is not primarily concerned with the origins of this concept, due to its known conceptual wideness and uncritical application (Rowlands,1995). However, it is aware of the appropriateness of discussing a couple of debates around the concept. Choosing a definition of empowerment carries operational

[7] Collective and individual empowerment are two out of the three dimensions of the empowerment approach developed by Rowlands (1995). She proposes an approach embracing three dimensions of empowerment: personal empowerment refers to the ability to meet basic material and nonmaterial needs; Collective empowerment draws on the ability to participate in collective action and reflection; and Relational empowerment refers to the ability to shape and influence relationships and avoid exploitation.

implications that could weaken its value as an agent for change or tool for analysis (Luttrell et al., 2009).

The first debate relating to empowerment concerns its meaning. Some authors with an instrumentalist view focus on the relevance of empowerment as a process (Luttrell et al., 2009). Indeed, in her attempt to guide development practitioners, Rowlands (1995, p.89) refers to empowerment as "*the process that allows moving from insight to action."* Authors like Drydyk, (2013) argue that understanding empowerment as a process is insufficient to know if it really happens. He claims, instead, that empowerment should be understood as an outcome; a change must occur as a result, generating a (new) situation (of empowerment) in which those individuals who had been empowered would enjoy a new range of capacities (Drydyk, 2008).

The" process vs outcome" debate matters in deciding the focus of what is understood as empowerment. Empowerment understood as an "outcome" would focus on providing economic enhancement and increasing access to financial resources. In contrast, empowerment, understood as a "process", would focus instead on building organisational capacity, guaranteeing access to assets and resources, and securing farmers' capacity to decide and control issues they value as relevant (Luttrell, et al., 2009).

The second debate on empowerment concerns the level at which it takes place. For this study, the level at which empowerment can happen becomes a crucial aspect due to the multi-level nature of the GPN approach, with production networks interacting across levels (farm, local, farmers' organisation, regional, national, and international). Considering the levels at which empowerment happens is critical to understanding whether empowerment must occur at multiple levels simultaneously to state that it has happened. Authors like Drydyk (2008) defend this stance to secure durable empowerment.

From within the field of social work, Parsons (1991) identifies that people are empowered locally through self-help groups, associations, and networks or at a larger scale in more

extensive community campaigns. Hennink et al. (2012) speak of three levels of empowerment in the context of international development organisations. Firstly, they recognise that empowerment happens at an individual level, referring to it as a process of transformation that allows the individual to make free decisions and act independently, i.e., agency. They also recognise the existence of empowerment at a collective level and distinguish between community and organisational empowerment. The former refers to *the "process of enabling communities towards change" (*Hennink et al., 2012, p. 206). The latter focuses on empowering a local organisation by collaborating with it or as an additional outcome of collaborative activities. Rowlands (1995), from the field of development, rather than levels, speaks of empowerment dimensions: i) personal, where empowerment revolves around the development of individual and self-confidence; ii) collective focuses on coordinating efforts of individuals; and iii) relational empowerment focuses on influencing relationships and decisions made within them.

Both debates (process vs outcome and levels) are crucial to determine when and how empowerment happens. Regarding the first debate, as Hennink et al. (2012) observed, the understanding of empowerment within this study embraces both approaches, empowerment as a process and an outcome, since the latter refers to the consequences generated by the occurrence of the former. An example of empowerment at an individual level would refer to the actions (processes) that led to the inclusion of farmers in the governing bodies of certification schemes when decisions (outcomes) are taken under farmers' control.

Regarding the debate about empowerment levels, this study considers the multi-nature of empowerment that Dydryk (2008) also supports when referring to the need for empowerment to happen across levels simultaneously to be durable.

2. 3 The Global Production System of Coffee: An Unbalanced Example

This section examines the power asymmetries that define the coffee GPN and the relevance of its governance structure in forming the dissimilar positions that coffee actors have within it.

2.3.1 Power Asymmetries in the Global Coffee Production System.

As introduced in Chapter One, coffee is one of the most traded agricultural commodities in terms of volume and value in the world (Samper and Quiñones-Ruiz, 2017; Lambert and Cooper, 2000). It represents an important part of the overall economy in many producing countries (Borrella et al., 2015), playing a crucial role in the livelihood of 25 million small coffee farmers and their families, who rely on it as their first source of income (FTAO, 2014).

The coffee sector represents an important part of the overall economy of many producing countries (Borrella et al., 2015). Indeed, coffee's trade and financial significance is expected to keep on growing due to its increasing supply and rising demand (ICO, 2019). Along with the coffee sector's global market relevance, the worrying exposure of small farmers to coffee market volatility across the Global South (ICO, 2019) becomes apparent.

As established by Talbot (2004) and Pelupessy (2007), the coffee GPN displays a funnel structure since it is formed by millions of small farmers on the cultivation end and a reduced number of corporate actors across the trading, roasting and retail segments. More than 80% of the green coffee bean is traded internationally; half of that volume is controlled by six coffee retailers, and the control of the roasting segment is in the hands of ten companies (Lima and Lee, 2023). Due to this structure, the uneven allocation of outcomes, such as economic value and profit generation among coffee actors, has become a defining feature of the coffee GPN.

The asymmetry of the global coffee industry has also become apparent at a country level. Developed countries control the trade of processed coffee, whereas emerging countries oversee green bean production. Both processed and not-roasted coffee productions are highly concentrated. Meanwhile, Brazil, Colombia, and Vietnam produce 62.3% of the coffee production, while Switzerland, Germany, and Italy control 53.1% of the processed coffee exports (UN Comtrade Database, in Lima and Lee, 2023). The figure below shows the geographical worldwide distribution of coffee production and consumption.

On the producing side, Figure 1 shows the coffee belt formed by all producing countries (in brown) located between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn (Vargas-Hernández, 2020). On the consumption side (in green), Figure 1 shows the leading consuming countries distributed across the Global North. The different shades of colour refer to the volume of coffee bags traded between October 2016 and February 2017. The more intense the colour is, the higher the volume of (exported and imported) coffee.

***Figure 1**: Main exporting and importing coffee countries*

Source: Shipley, 2018

Evidence suggests that asymmetrical power dynamics and unbalanced governance structures of the coffee GPN are responsible, among others, (1) for compromising the organisational capacity of small farmers (Talbot, 2004), (2) the asymmetric distribution of the value along the product value chain (Oxfam international, 2002), (3) the commodification of coffee in the benefit of transnational corporations (TNCs) (Jaffee, 2007), and (4) the limitation of small farmers' access to the coffee market (Ponte, 2002b) All the above has contributed to an imbalance within the global production system, accentuated by the fallout of the ICA in 1989.

The investigation of power distribution among coffee actors has gained much traction within the global studies literature (Samoggia and Fantini, 2023). The existence of all the above-mentioned outcomes raised questions about the distribution of power among the coffee actors. Below, I analyse the fragile position of small farmers as opposed to the dominant role of transnational corporations (TNCs).

2.3.2 The Fragile Position of Small Farmers

The coffee sector represents an integral part of the overall economy of many producing countries (Borrella et al., 2015). Indeed, coffee's trade and financial significance are expected to grow due to its increasing supply and rising demand (ICO, 2019). Amid the global market relevance of the coffee production system, farmers' exposure to price volatility has contributed to the fragility that small farmers experience across the Global South (ICO, 2019).

Such fragility is accentuated in the case of small African farmers, who remain particularly exposed to the coffee GPN instability due to their financial restraints, such as their limited access to financial resources and their reliance on foreign buyers. Coffee is the primary livelihood source for more than 10 million coffee farmers in Africa (UNCTAD, 2018). Furthermore, the overproduction that started with the incorporation of new producing countries, such as Vietnam, affects African farmers more intensively (ICO, 2019; Murray et al., 2006). For African coffee-producing countries, this overproduction has meant a loss of relevance as a producing origin. The overall production of African coffee decreased from 18-19% in 1995 to 15-16% in later years (Ponte, 2002b).

In terms of power, the market liberalisation and regulation of trading and process and quality control practices that happened in coffee-producing regions have also impacted farmers' position in the coffee GPN. For instance, in East Africa, market liberalisation led to an institutional system where farmers have "no voice" (Ponte, 2002a). Market practices such as supplier-managed inventory, corporate consolidation, greater relevance of branding and the diversification and fragmentation of coffee consumption transformed power relations within the African coffee market at the expense of coffee farmers (Ponte, 2002b).

In contrast to the vulnerable position of coffee farmers, several groups of coffee actors enjoy the benefits of having a dominant position in coffee. These are considered the

winners of the coffee production system in comparison to farmers, who are considered the losers (Grabs and Ponte, 2019). In Chapter Four, I draw on these concepts.

2.3.3 The Dominant Role of Corporate Actors in Coffee Global Production Network

The study of the coffee GPN has been depicted by the constant dominance of corporate actors. The hegemony of corporate actors (TNCs) has influenced the emergence and evolution of coffee governance systems. Humphrey and Schmitz (2001) noticed that access to corporate production networks based in developed countries has always been crucial to small producers. In their view, TNCs usually have managed to set parameters under which other companies in the chain are pushed to operate. The capacity of TNCs to set parameters defining the governance of the coffee GPN has also contributed to hindering small farmers' position. The consolidation of the dominant position of corporate actors in coffee has even continued in the face of the rise of speciality coffees and the peak of single-origin coffees. Grabs and Ponte referred to the potential of speciality coffee to balance the allocation of power in the coffee GPN when they referred to:

"The heterogeneity and polycentric nature of the "speciality coffee" also opened avenues for Southern actors to co-define novel coffee products that may appeal to Northern consumers, lending them some degree of constitutive power". (Grabs and Ponte 2019, p.819).

However, the constitutive power of speciality coffee ended up being captured by local elites who consolidated their social position and reproduced local patterns of inequalities (Vicol *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, thanks to their capacity to influence consumers' preferences, roasters have been able to prioritise specific origins over others. Their privileged position allowed them to choose what coffee would be rewarded with premium prices (based on their corporate needs). In the context of single-origin coffees, roasters also controlled the criteria to define coffee quality. Using chemical profiling, sensory evaluation, and geographical origin differentiation, roasters ensured the uniformity and

superiority of their single-origin coffee selections. The aforementioned factors also justified the higher prices consumers are willing to pay for speciality coffee. However, the inclusion of small farmers into single-origin markets does not always translate into advantageous socioeconomic terms for farmers (Bolwig et al., 2009).

The dominance of TNCs in the coffee GPN has been widely studied for trade purposes (Grabs and Ponte, 2019; Gereffi, 2014). However, in the context of governance, the dominance of corporate actors to the detriment of farmers' position has been limitedly explored, hindering the research regarding the limited relevance of small coffee farmers in the development of governance systems.

2.3.4 Governance Structures: before and after the International Coffee Agreement Regime

As introduced in Chapter One, until 1989, the coffee sector was steered by the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) (Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005). During this period, the coffee sector was characterised by a stable institutional environment of high transparency, with clear rules that only changed by political negotiations among producing countries (Ponte, 2004).

Such negotiations materialised in agreements linking prices to produced volume which secured price stability (Ponte, 2002a), despite the uneven capacity of involved parties to influence such negotiations.

During the ICA regime, the global production system of coffee was driven by the interaction of multiple coffee actors (Ponte 2004). The ICA uniquely regulated it, and any regulatory change affecting the coffee sector happened through political negotiations (Daviron, 1996). Such a stable institutional framework stopped when the ICA collapsed in 1989. As a result, the homogeneity that existed in the coffee sector in terms of power distribution among actors disappeared. During the ICA period, producing countries, through their national governments, agreed upon the global production of coffee using

the mechanisms foreseen within the ICA. Indeed, under the ICA regime, only producing countries were regarded as coffee actors, who, with similar voices[8], participated in the political negotiations about key aspects shaping the steering of the coffee sector.

Unfortunately, when the ICA collapsed caused a significant institutional disruption within the coffee GPN. The post-ICA regime witnessed the emergence of prevailing actors from a geographical perspective (i.e., consuming vs producing regions or among producing countries) and from a supply chain function perspective (e.g., roasters vs farmers) (Gereffi, 1994). The multiple asymmetries that emerged became apparent with the formation of two different groups within the coffee sector -losers and winners- (Grabs and Ponte, 2019), and the emergence of a plethora of governance systems that have progressively and disorderly appeared with the attempt to fill the governance vacuum left by the ICA collapse (Ponte, 2002a).

By governance systems, I refer to the institutions and structures governing markets and entire sectors (Blackmore, et al., 2015). Institutions refer to the rights, rules, and decision-making processes that shape social practices, distribute roles, and define interaction patterns among actors of relevant governance nodes (Clapp and Fuchs, 2013). Structures refer to how institutions are organised, including hierarchical arrangements, formal and informal rules, and communication networks. Structures determine how authority is distributed within an organisation (Mintzberg, 1979).

2.3.5 The Post-ICA Regime and its Impact on Coffee Governance.

With the collapse of the ICA, corporate actors became key players in the coffee sector and led political negotiations. Such negotiations during the ICA regime relied on mechanisms foreseen within the ICA and shifted towards reliance on market interactions (Ponte, 2004). That shift had significant consequences for the evolution of coffee

[8] There were countries such as Brazil and USA that had a bigger capacity to influence the content of the ICA. Indeed, part of the collapse of the ICA was the failure of those countries to agree.

governance due to its impact on coffee farmers (Grabs and Ponte, 2019). The formation of two different types of coffee actors, losers and winners, became more evident with the emergence of a plethora of governance systems.

- **The consolidation of two groups of coffee actors: losers and winners**

The quota system established by the ICA regime meant that production volumes were controlled and served to stabilise prices for small farmers, often at a high level (Ponte, 2002b). However, during the post-ICA regime, the position of coffee farmers was progressively limited by the strategic choices made by other coffee actors, such as roasters and distributors (Raynolds et al., 2007). Through the settlement of new market requirements, these actors created entry barriers that did not exist before. For instance, thanks to their faculty deciding the origins and quantities of coffee varieties, roasters and retailers started determining what coffee was to be included in blends. Roasters' decisions were previously based on prioritising low-price coffees at the expense of lower quality. This type of market decisions reduced the stability of coffee farmers and explained the consolidation of the difference in the outcomes deriving from small farmers and the rest of the coffee actors' participation in the coffee GPN (Grabs and Ponte, 2019).

The corporate actors with a dominant position in the coffee GPN are mainly TNCs, generally associated with roasters and retailers who dominate coffee (FAO, 2004). For political and geographic economists, the formation of global production systems has generated environmental and economic changes, leading to an uneven allocation of benefits and costs (O'Brien and Leichenko, 2003; Boyce, 2002). Political economy literature associates TNCs with the winners of global production systems based on their authority to decide who produces what, where and at what price (Mayer et al., 2017). Such authority enables TNCs to determine who wins or loses in the global economy (Mayer, et al., 2017). Ponte (2002b) identified roasters with the coffee GPN winners due to the gross margins and high profits they obtained. O'Brien and Leichenko, (2003) partially attributed the existence of winners and losers to global change. The progressive globalisation of the coffee GPN (Redden, 2022) coexisted with the ICA collapse in 1989.

In some of the literature, there is an appreciation that significant changes in governance, institutions, and markets have led to an unequal and cumulative distribution of gains and losses to the detriment of certain actors. In the context of the coffee GPN, those actors are associated with small farmers (Utrilla-Catalan et al., 2022).

For specific authors, the existence of losers and winners is linked to the process of globalisation, which has been interpreted in the governance literature in two different ways. O'Brien and Leichenko (2003) highlighted that the ICA collapse and the process of globalisation can be understood in two different ways. According to environmental determinists and neoclassical economists, the ICA collapse can be understood as a natural, inevitable, and evolutionary outcome of the free market. For political ecologists, instead, the ICA collapse happened due to human action, taking advantage of a context of unequal, social, and political structures to benefit one group of actors at the expense of others.

Given the circumstances surrounding the coffee GPN, the stance of political ecologists can explain the existence of losers and winners. Such a position represents a socially and politically generated (SPG) process that hindered small farmers' position. Almost twenty years later, the SPG process has evolved to include other groups of actors joining the winner's category in the coffee GPN. Thanks to their high revenues, roasters have always held an advantageous position in coffee (Görlich et al., 2020). However, a new range of actors, such as civil society organisations (CSO) or formal governmental institutions, are part of the winners' group of the coffee GPN since they also tend to prioritise their position to the detriment of small farmers (Ponte, 2001).

The privileged position of all the actors mentioned above is underpinned by the obtaining of high revenues and the possibility of deciding how to deal with social and environmental issues at the production nods and how to enforce the uniqueness of given types of coffee (speciality coffee markets). The fact that, nowadays, the category of winners is formed by a broader range of actors, exerting a position of dominance over small farmers, reveals the need to look for innovative responses addressing the uneven position of certain coffee

actors, even though such responses might require significant changes in the functioning of existing governance systems.

In the coffee context, many interactions among coffee actors are shaped by the type of governance systems small farmers are part of. Hence, it is meaningful to investigate the impact of governance systems on farmers' position.

- **The emergence of a plethora of governance systems**

The emergence of a plethora of governance systems that started to appear after the ICA collapse happened unsystematically due to a convoluted context defined by market volatility (Ponte, 2002), an increasing process of trade globalisation (Daviron and Ponte, 2005), and the rising awareness of environmental and social issues associated with coffee production (Raynolds et al., 2004).

As a result of this convoluted situation, the governance void left by the ICA originated different governance responses during the liberalisation phase of the coffee sector between 1989 and 2008 (Grabs and Ponte, 2019).

The immediate response provided by certain coffee-producing regions was to maintain or introduce state-led governance systems to bring stability and protect small farmers. Hence, some governments intervened to ensure fair prices and stable incomes to mitigate farmers' vulnerability to price fluctuations and market uncertainties (Daviron and Ponte, 2005). Notable examples include the setting of the Brazilian Coffee Institute, which continued managing production quotas and controlling exports to stabilise prices, and the National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia, with a crucial role in marketing and selling coffee.

However, the disappearance of the ICA did not always mean strengthening national coffee institutions. In the case of Tanzania, the liberalisation of the coffee sector meant the end of (1) the national mechanisms maintaining coffee prices stable (Mhando et al., 2013); (2) the regulations limiting the proprietorship of key coffee chain segments to

foreign companies (e.g., processing, domestic trade and even production stages) (Ponte, 2002b), and (3) the existence of a meaningful auction system that guaranteed competitive bidding (Ponte, 2002b).

The liberalisation of the coffee sector facilitated the growing influence of TNCs and private traders, who shaped the global coffee trade using market-driven governance systems. These mechanisms sought to optimise their supply chains, reduce costs, and maximise profits, which corporate actors managed to achieve more efficiently in a deregulated market environment (Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005).

Shortly after the state-led and market-driven governance systems consolidated, private governance systems emerged in the 1990s and 2000s. These new systems involved corporate actors first and CSOs and national governments in a later stage (Ponte, 2001). These “hybrid systems” emerged in response to the growing awareness of sustainability issues, including natural resources management, and the goal of enhancing the socio-economic conditions of small coffee producers (Panhuysen and Pierrot, 2020).

Some of the main governance systems[9] that started to appear, especially in the 90s, after the liberalisation of the coffee sector were: (1) Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS), including first, second, third, and fourth party schemes and meta-standards –schemes, depending on the responsible actor for the standards compliance; (2) Intellectual Property Rights schemes, also known as geographic labels (Samoggia and Fantini, 2023) associated with the protection of the provenance of the coffee in attention to its soil, climate or elevation; (3) social enterprises and microcredit schemes, both led by CSOs after the improvement of the financial sustainability of small farmers (Nakabugo et al., 2021).

[9] Chapter Four addresses in detail the range of governance systems operating in East Africa at the time of the undertaking of this study.

After 2008, it took place a phase over which the “hybridity” of governance schemes consolidated since schemes from the collaboration among CSOs, corporate actors and governments started to appear, for example, (4) Public-Private-producers’ partnerships (4Ps). Grabs and Ponte (2019) referred to this period as a phase of power diversification in which alternative governance systems were also developed despite the dominance of roasters, retailers, and multinational traders. (Wright et al., 2024). These novel and emerging initiatives to improve coffee's sustainability were (5) agroecology transitions led by farmers and community and cultural initiatives. Agroecology[10] transition initiatives are represented by the relationship coffee model programs, which are initiated by producers themselves to address environmental issues, such as pollution from agrochemicals or soil erosion (Le et al., 2020). The relationship model, - closely associated with the direct trade model-, seeks to shorten the supply chain by removing the intermediate stages between production and consumption (Hernandez-Aguilera et al., 2018). Meanwhile, community and cultural initiatives focus on community-based agritourism and forest management as pathways to sustainability (Candelo et al., 2018).

Amid this plethora of governance systems, debates about the effectiveness of coffee governance systems have gradually gained more traction. Conclusions about their efficacy are mixed (Bray and Neilson, 2017).

The coffee literature provides many examples questioning the effectiveness of governance systems. Some examples questioning the efficacy of existing governance systems are included below. Jena et al. (2012) identified the low impact of certification schemes on reducing poverty amongst the cooperative members. Bray and Neilson (2017) reviewed the effects of certification programs on farmers, identifying abundant uncertainties regarding the impact of these schemes on farmers' livelihoods. They agreed on the need to consider local factors, such as local institutions, market structure, education, and skill levels, in assessing the impact of certification schemes. The necessity

[10] Agroecology is a practice which applies ecological principles in the design of sustainable agricultural systems which also support the resilience and empowerment of smallholder farmers .

of considering local socio-political contexts illustrates the extreme complexity of devising governance systems that can significantly change the position of small coffee farmers.

Muradian and Pelupessy (2005) investigated the emergence of several voluntary regulatory systems in the coffee GPN. They concluded that although farmers' participation might not ensure better economic performance, it could favour upgrading opportunities. At the same time, evidence about the financial benefits generated by certification schemes remained inconclusive. Dietz et al. (2020) stated the limited extrapolation of their positive results regarding certification programs implemented in the South American context.

In a nutshell, the collapse of the ICA meant an essential milestone for both processes: the formation of two groups of coffee actors with an increasing gap between them in terms of power and the disordered emergence of a plethora of governance systems to fill the governance vacuum left by the ICA (Raynolds, et al., 2007).

2.3.6 The Impact of Governance in Power Distribution

The differentiation between "*losers and winners"* intensified with the globalisation of the coffee sector, along with further circumstances such as (1) the introduction of standards to grade products (Bacon, 2005), (2) the coffee worldwide overproduction (ICO, 2019; FTAO, 2014) ; (3) the funnel structure of the coffee production system (Talbot, 2004), and (4) the geographical disconnection between the production and consumption stages (Candelo et al., 2018). All the above circumstances contributed to significant imbalances in allocating power and resources among coffee actors, reinforcing the differentiation of coffee actors' positions. The gap between both groups increased with the coffee sector transforming into a global production system operating beyond the boundaries of nations (Baldwin, 2016). Chapter Four investigates the type of actors and the features that explain the differences between the positions of each group of actors.

In parallel, as examined in previous sections, a plethora of governance systems (Bernstein and Cashore, 2007) started to be set after the governance vacuum left by ICA

in 1989 (Ponte, 2002c). These governance systems emerged to mitigate the shocking effects of the ICA collapse on the livelihoods of millions of coffee farmers (Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005).

The disparity in the relevance of coffee actors' voices and the disorganised emergence and development of multiple governance systems led to a significant governance complexity that would become inherent to the coffee GPN. Such governance complexity has hindered the task of finding effective ways of helping small farmers improve their position within the coffee GPN (Bitzer et al., 2012). Despite the existence of multiple governance systems aimed at assisting coffee farmers, it has become apparent that many of them have shown limited potential to do so (Candelo et al., 2018).

The delicate position that many coffee farmers have across the global coffee production system requires further and urgent attention to secure the long-term position of small coffee farmers in the context of fulfilling worldwide coffee demand.

This research focuses on power dynamics in the context of coffee governance to improve small farmers' position. As a result, it seeks to contribute to the debate around power dynamics in the context of coffee governance systems by investigating ways to alter power dynamics in favour of coffee farmers (Chapter Six). Additionally, this thesis PhD also focuses on two aspects that also emerge as essential: a deeper understanding of the range of actors and the outcomes of their interactions in the context of the coffee GPN (Chapter Four) and a nuanced knowledge of the power dynamics operating at the core of such governance systems (Chapter Five).

2.3.7 Empowerment in the Context of Coffee

As examined previously in this chapter, power asymmetries have been constant in the context of the coffee GPN (Grabs and Ponte, 2019). Indeed, the study of power dynamics has attracted significant attention from multiple understandings of global production systems: the GCC with the buyer and producer-driven commodity chains (Gereffi and

Korzeniewicz, 1994), the GVC with its typology of power developed by Dallas et al., (2017) and Tallontire et al., (2011) with their nuanced articulation of power dynamics.

The concepts of power and governance have been well investigated in global production systems through the development of the GCC, GVC, and the GPN approach. Coe et al. (2008; 2004) assessed the GPN's potential to investigate power asymmetries and governance systems, highlighting the relevance of non-firm actors in the functioning of production networks. However, the usage of the GPN approach to study power dynamics, governance structures and empowerment alternatives has not been fully explored yet.

The concept of empowerment has been studied from within global studies literature. Said-Allsopp and Tallontire, (2015) provided a nuanced analysis of female workers' empowerment in tea and flower GVCs. The GCC has also been used to investigate empowerment. Nakazibwe and Pelupessy (2014) investigated the relevance of the GCC in considering gendered impacts to improve gender equity in agro-commodity chains. However, from the GPN approach, academic and empirical evidence are still scarce.

Typically, the investigation of empowerment within global production systems has had a strong gender focus that has become apparent across multiple sectors, such as coffee (Civera, et al., 2019), tea and flowers (Said-Allsopp and Tallontire, 2015). Civera et al. (2019) investigated how organisations can use stakeholder engagement to design empowerment strategies that engage low-power stakeholders and transform them into active business partners within the coffee GPN. Said-Allsopp and Tallontire (2015) investigated empowerment from the perspective of female workers and their use of fair-trade premiums in the tea and flower GVCs.

This thesis, instead, intends to use empowerment in the context of the coffee GPN to investigate alternatives to modify governance systems so they can be better equipped to improve the position of small coffee farmers.

The following section expands the conceptual framework of this thesis, drawing its main components from the literature on power, governance, and empowerment.

2.4 A Novel Approach to examine Power Dynamics

This section sets out the conceptual framework for this thesis. It is framed by four components: (1) the Global Production Network (GPN) approach, developed by Coe et al. (2008) from within economic geography; (2) a power framework known as the Power Cube, developed by Gaventa (2006); (3) a set of governance dimensions to classify voluntary standards schemes (VSS) in the context of the increasing traction gained by certification schemes, devised by Alvarez's (2010), and (4) the notion of durable empowerment, examined by Drydyk (2008) from within the development literature. Each component is examined below in individual subsections and jointly in a subsection focused on the theoretical advantages of combining them.

Table 2 introduces the four elements of the conceptual framework, which is used as a tool to focus and organise the research process (see 3.4).

***Table 2**: the four components of the conceptual framework*

Components of conceptual framework			
The GPN approach	**The Power Cube**	**Governance dimensions**	**Durable Empowerment**

Depicts the physical structure of the global production system of coffee as a GPN. Captures the complexity of the interactions that simultaneously happen at different levels inter/intra network actors.	This provides the lens for examining the coffee GPN. One dimension of the power cube — spaces for engagement — was identified with governance systems.	They highlight the aspects considered across identified governance systems: leading institution, motivation, scope, and enforcement.	It refers to the conditions under which empowerment really happens and lasts over time.

2.4.1 The Understanding of the Coffee Global Production System as a Global Production Network

The GPN approach provides the physical underpinning that situates the conceptual framework around understanding the coffee production system as a GPN.

The GPN approach was built from within the terrain of economic geography and developed around the concept of production networks, investigated by Ernst and Kim, (2002). They concluded that GPNs provide new opportunities for disseminating knowledge to developing countries' local firms and industrial districts. Such firms can maximise the opportunities and pressures that result from network participation.

Production networks are represented by the intersection of functions, processes and operations around a given product or service's production, distribution, and consumption (Coe, et al., 2008). These networks encompass a full range of actors that interact beyond national boundaries (Kelly, 2013).

The decision to use the GPN approach to investigate power dynamics in the context of coffee was made based on the advantages of using the concept of networks (table 2). Furthermore, the concept of networks permits the researcher to focus on specific actors, i.e., small farmers, in the case of this thesis. This group of actors has not brought as much attention as corporate actors have managed to attract from within multiple academic backgrounds, such as political economy (Dallas, et al., 2017; Appelbaum and Gereffi,

1994), business ethics (Smith, 2010) and management studies (Thorlakson, et al., 2018). All of them have been influenced by the perspective of corporate actors at the top end of the production systems.

This study is interested in the interactions happening between coffee farmers and other coffee actors who operate in the intermediate stages of the production system of coffee and thus address the knowledge gap identified in the GPN literature regarding the hidden middle (Reardon, 2015). The hidden middle embraces the middle segments (processing, logistics, wholesale) neglected in the mainstream debates regarding changing food markets in developing countries. Reardon's work highlighted these midstream segments' rapid growth and transformation. He highlighted the relevance of “enabling conditions,” such as infrastructure improvement, for transforming the midstream segment. The midstream segment in coffee has not gained much traction so far, despite how crucial farmers’ organisations are for the coffee GPN and how little we know about the enabling conditions that would benefit their position. This is one of the research gaps this thesis intends to contribute to.

The focus of management studies on corporate actors rests on its priority for investigating the efficiency and effectiveness of corporate supply chains and the implications of their continuous expansion (Venkatachalam, 2004). Political economy approaches such as the Global Value Chain analysis (GVC) (Gereffi and Korzeniewicz, 1994) and Global Commodity Chain (GCC) framworke (Gereffi, et al., 2005) have focused on the significant socio-economic influence that corporate actors have played in the evolution of global production systems (Gibbon, 2001). The problem with concentrating systematically on corporate actors is overlooking the cases in which corporate actors’ growing influence has happened at the expense of southern discourses, local knowledge, and farmer preferences (Cheyns, 2011). The attention set on corporate actors facilitated overlooking farmers' position in global production systems (Ponte, 2002b).

The need to go beyond the perspective of corporate actors to investigate power in the context of global production systems requires the examination of interactions among

small farmers and other members of production networks. Within the GPN approach, small farmers can be given the same relevance as corporate actors; insofar as small farmers are members of GPNs. The GPN approach and its unit of analysis -network- focus on the interactions that coffee farmers have as part of the coffee production nods located, in many cases, in the hidden middle[11] of GPNs.

The GPN approach's ability to focus on specific groups of actors permits investigating how such interactions affect the position of coffee farmers within the coffee GPN. Furthermore, the GPN approach can capture small farmers' voices, frequently underappreciated within global production systems literature (Cheyns, 2011).

Unlike the limitations that other approaches, such as GCC and GVC have to deal with the governance complexity of global production systems (Coe and Yeung, 2019), the GPN approach can break into pieces global production systems and focus, if necessary, on just one part of them and one type of actors. The possibility of breaking into pieces global production systems opens the door to investigating the diversity of production networks in terms of their levels, range of actors, type of interactions and institutional contexts (Coe et al., 2008). Instead, the GVC and GCC approaches were designed around linear structures (Coe et al., 2008), limiting their flexibility to identify the diversity of production nodes and actors and their fitness to acknowledge the heterogeneity of interactions happening in the context of global production systems.

The flexibility that the GPN approach becomes apparent with the possibility to focus on a given actor, which in turn recognises the theoretical solvency of the GPN approach to investigate the diversity and autonomy of each network in terms of size (length and width), density and location (Lambert and Cooper, 2000).

[11] The hidden middle is a term coined by Deardon (2015) to refer to the often overlooked and underappreciated segment of agricultural value chains comprising small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that critically link smallholder farmers with larger markets. In the case of this thesis, farmers' organizations are also part of the intermediate segment of agricultural value chains.

The size of the network depends on the number of actors that form it. The density of a network refers to the number of interactions and range of actors interacting with small farmers. The fitness of the GPN approach to acknowledge the interaction heterogeneity related to network multi-dimensionality permits the investigation of intra and inter-network interactions. Such interactions might not be at the same level or territory (Coe et al., 2008).

The GPN approach's flexibility and heterogeneity allow the researcher to focus on networks of actors different from corporate actors, such as workers, consumers, and civil society organisations (Coe et al., 2008). Therefore, it is possible to conduct a nuanced analysis of the outcomes emerging from the interactions among a given group of actors.

The recognition of the GPN approach regarding the multidimensional nature of GPNs significantly contributes to the study of power dynamics within food chains because it allows one to recognise the type of actors exerting power over others.

Nevertheless, this study aims to exploit the flexibility of the GPN approach to focus on small farmers interacting at different levels from within different geographical locations and production nodes. The GPN approach permits moving across scales, zooming in and out production networks, enabling: (1) the investigation of different types of production networks and actors, capturing many of their particularities, (2) the identification of network actors' powers and (3) the identification of the different type of interactions happening within a given production network.

To overcome some of the critics highlighting the limited applicability of the GPN approach to the study of power (see section 2.2.2 regarding the critics made to the GPN approach), the GPN approach was used in conjunction with a power approach known as the "Power Cube" developed by Gaventa (2006). By combining both frameworks, it is possible to expand on the applicability of the GPN approach to investigate power and conduct a nuanced analysis of power in the context of coffee. In the case of coffee, the governance

complexity becomes apparent through the co-existence of governance systems (Ponte, 2004). These governance systems simultaneously steer - at multiple levels – coffee production nodes.

2.4.2 The Power Cube

The GVC unveiled different types of power dynamics happening in the context of GVCs. Gereffi et al., (2005) delved into the power dynamics steering the relationships among value chain firms and identified types of power dynamics used to define types of governance (market, hierarchical, modular, relational, and captive governance). This classification facilitated the identification and explanation of how power operates to shape value distribution, marginalization and labour practices.

The GPN approach went beyond intra-firms' dynamics and considered power dynamics across spaces, institutions and geographies identifying structural inequalities and uneven development. The power cube offers the possibility of zooming in on the power that certain GPN actors can exert over others depending on the scales and levels where actors exert their power.

However, despite the advancements of the GPN approach, significant gaps remain in understanding how power affects the position of certain global chain actors. Firstly, the study of how the position of marginalized actors is shaped by power dynamics within global networks is still underexplored (Samoggia and Fantini, 2023). Secondly, further research is needed to understand how corporate lobbying, consumer behaviour or normative standards, imposed by international bodies, influence the position of those actors abided by them. In the coffee GPN, the relevance of how governance systems impact small farmers' position has gained uneven traction, being certification systems attracting most of it. Lastly, the study of the extent to which power dynamics, operating across governance systems benefit small farmers' position has been largely bypassed and requires further investigation (Ortiz-Miranda and Moragues-Faus, 2015).

More research is needed to advance the study of power within GPNs. The power cube offers a robust framework to unfold “power over” by studying the multiple types of power (visible, hidden, and invisible) within the coffee GPN. Using the “power cube”, allowed me to examine specific power dynamics affecting the position of marginalized groups and their role within the coffee GPN, beyond the focus on lead firms. The use of the “power cube”, makes it possible to analyse how national, and local actors interact and contest within the coffee GPN. Such analysis will illuminate the levels and spaces (governance systems) where smallholder farmers are excluded from decision-making in the coffee GPN, based on the power dynamics shaping the marginalised position small farmers have in the coffee GPN.

The “power cube” centres the investigation of power in the context of the coffee GPN. Such a framework was designed to investigate the ‘spaces’ in which power intersects with processes of engagement in governance at local, regional, national, and global levels (Gaventa, 2006). Gaventa used the three dimensions of power theory developed by Lukes, (2005) to formulate his approach. Gaventa (2006) concluded that power refers to the capacity to control or influence others, i.e., “power over”. Such control includes (1) decision-making capacity, exerted through political action; (2) non-decision-making capacity, identified with the ability to set the agenda of political debates; and (3) an ideological component related to the existence of the mismatches between the interests of those exercising power and the genuine interest of those excluded, i.e., latent conflicts.

Gaventa’s “power cube” was developed under the author’s interest in the intersection of power with the process of citizen engagement. Such interest justified his argument in favour of acknowledging the relevance of creating spaces for the engagement of citizens. Spaces for engagement refer to the opportunities, moments, and channels citizens can use to potentially affect the policies, discourses, decisions, and relationships affecting their lives and interests and the levels at which they occur for the study of power. Places represent the second dimension of the cube and refer to the levels in which spaces, from local to global, occur (Gaventa, 2006).

In this study, spaces for engagement are associated with coffee governance systems (Chapter Four). Places (levels) refer to the arenas where critical social, political, and economic power resides, e.g., local, regional, national, and international. Gaventa (2006) claimed a strong interconnection between spaces for engagement and places. As a result, he argued that a deep understanding of power relied on knowing the vertical links between spaces for engagement and places. The multiple intersections between them form the third dimension of the “Power Cube”, power.

Power embraces three types of power: (1) visible power refers to definable aspects of political power, e.g. formal rules, structures, authorities, institutions, and procedures of decision-making; (2) Hidden power is concerned with the people or institutions that manage to be in control, by deciding who participates in the decision-making processor or sets the agenda and; (3) invisible power is concerned with the capacity to influence how individuals see their place in the world. Processes of socialisation, culture and ideology can perpetuate exclusion and inequality by defining what is expected, acceptable, and safe. This type of power highlights the relevance of establishing participation preconditions to induce a change in the status quo. The capacity of the power cube to differentiate different kinds of power is the reason to use it as part of my framework. The differentiation of the types of power comprises an excellent potential to conduct a nuanced study of power dynamics.

The coffee GPN is formed by multiple spaces (governance systems) and places (levels), resulting in shapes of power that determine the interactions among actors and resulting outcomes in favour of or against coffee farmers.

The following section refers to the interactions among coffee actors to study the kinds of power identified by the power cube in the context of coffee governance systems.

2.4.3 Governance Dimensions

The study of governance in the context of GVCs has historically focused on the mechanisms through which power is exerted within and across global production systems. Hence, the academic focus on investigating the governance features of GVCs and GPNs that explain different types of exerting power.

As mentioned above, Gereffi et al., (2005) identified several types of GVCs based on their type of governance (market, hierarchical, modular, relational, and captive). In this classification, they used the distribution of value, the influence of firms in upgrading trajectories, and how the dynamics of inter-firm relationships are shaped (Gereffi and Lee, 2016) to identify the multiple types of GVCs. This classification has been central to understanding the role of lead firms in shaping governance, particularly through their capacity to set standards and enforce compliance within chains (Ponte and Sturgeon, 2014). Such a classification also explained how different types of governance shape the participation and performance of firms in developing countries, as well as the distribution of power benefits. (Dallas et al., 2019).

The notion of governance has also been extensively studied under the domain of the GPN approach, and unlike the GVC approach, the GPN approach has considered the relevance of non-firm actors such as states and civil society (Coe et al., 2008). Thus, it facilitated to researchers investigating how power is also exerted by non-firm actors. The new categories of power that shaped the governance structures of GPNs were institutional, and network power (Coe and Young, 2015). With its recognition in addition to corporate power, the GPN approach showed its theoretical solvency in explaining (1) how lead firms, mainly from Global North countries, shape production networks, (2) how states influence the shape of production networks with the implementation of regulatory frameworks within the socio-political contexts in which networks are embedded in, and (3) how relational aspects between actors influence governance structures and power dynamics, e.g. compliance with standards.

Despite the governance insights provided by the GVC and GPN approaches, key gaps persist in understanding the governance of GVCs and GPNs, especially about the integration of marginalised actors into decision-making processes of governance systems, raising questions about the influence that such systems have in small farmers' position.

The utilisation of Alvarez's (2010) governance dimensions as a part of the conceptual framework of this thesis, offers an opportunity to delve into the governance aspects that contribute to understanding how governance systems impact the position of small coffee farmers. Alvarez's governance dimensions served to introduce in this thesis several governance dimensions that were used by Alvarez to classify governance systems, attending to the academic traction gained by sustainability across the governance of global production systems literature.

What Alvarez used to address the social and environmental sustainability concerns of global production and trade (e.g. coffee) risen among consumers (Alvarez, 2010), served me to investigate specific governance features across coffee governance systems.

Specific consideration of the multiple governance systems operating in the coffee GPN is needed to understand, in detail, the governance landscape of such GPN. Alvarez's (2010) framework of governance dimensions of sustainability provides a valuable lens to analyse power dynamics across governance systems, facilitating the comparison among them to identify the one benefiting small farmers' position the most. Overall, Alvarez's work offers an alternative to investigating coffee governance systems using specific governance dimensions that have the potential to reveal the functioning of certain power dynamics affecting small farmers' position.

The third part of my conceptual framework refers to governance dimensions, which refer to tasks demanding a given type of power to perform them. This study utilised four governance dimensions that Alvarez (2010) employed. Her research investigated the social and environmental implications of modern production and trading systems. Alvarez

(2010) also examined how voluntary standards schemes (VSS) play a role in engaging corporations in environmental and social sustainability. Alvarez's research is framed in the context of the increasing relevance VSSs are gaining in influencing the supply chain strategy of many corporate actors. This study uses four dimensions to investigate fundamental capacities that portray the position of small coffee farmers. I associated these four governance dimensions with possibilities for action. Having the chance to control the undertaking of the activities described within the governance dimensions demonstrates the presence of a given type of power.

The governance dimensions considered for this study are leading actor, motivation, scope, and enforcement. The reasons for using them as part of the conceptual framework rest on (1) the type of power these activities require to be undertaken, which facilitates their connection with the three types of power forming the “power cube”; (2) Their extended use across VSS literature to classify certification schemes; and (3) Their versatility to be used with other governance systems (see Chapter Four). Indeed, using these four dimensions across governance systems facilitates a comparative study of governance systems from the power perspective. By undertaking such a comparative study, I contribute to the limited traction that comparative studies focusing on governance systems have gained within the governance literature (Ruben and Zuniga, 2011).

The four possibilities for action that are derived from Alvarez’s research (2010) and are relevant to this study are (1) leading actor, (2) motivation, (3) scope, and (4) enforcement. Each activity requires a given type of power to be undertaken. The Power Cube embraces all the types of power needed to undertake the activities to which each of the four possibilities for action refers:

(1) “Leading actor refers to the parties involved in defining the requirements of a given governance system. The type of power associated with having the possibility of setting a new scheme is visible power, which refers to rules, structures, authorities, institutions, and procedures of decision-making (Gaventa, 2006). I am interested

in knowing whether small farmers have such a possibility or not and, therefore, if they can exert the visible power to set up a new scheme.

(2) "Motivation" refers to the rationale for creating or adopting a particular governance system. A VSS can be designed to manage reputational risks and mitigate food safety concerns or schemes that seek to differentiate their products to compete in quality-defined markets (Jaffee et al., 2005). The type of power needed to decide the rationale of a given scheme is hidden power. Actors with hidden power are in control of determining who participates in the decision-making process or decides about the rationale for setting a new scheme (Gaventa, 2006). I am interested in knowing whether small farmers can decide about the reasons behind setting up a new scheme.

(3) "Scope" refers to the scheme's emphasis, e.g., food security, environmental, social, or economic sustainability. The scope is usually chosen by those with the possibility to determine the scheme's focus (e.g., environmental, social sustainability or food security). The possibility of deciding about the scheme's scope also corresponds to actors with hidden power. These actors can influence decision-making by choosing the scheme's priorities (agenda-setting). I am interested in knowing if small farmers can control the decisions about the priorities of a given scheme.

(4) "Enforcement" refers to how the compliance of a given scheme is granted. The types of power required to grant compliance with the requirements of a given scheme are visible and invisible power. The compliance could be secured through formal procedures controlled by certain actors (visible power) (Gaventa, 2006) or through non-material or direct influence about what was expected, acceptable, and safe (invisible power) (Gaventa, 2006). Invisible power embraces multiple types of subtle manifestations embedded in socialisation processes, such as the culture and ideology of communities. I am interested in knowing whether small farmers can enforce compliance through the requirements set within governance systems.

The relationship between governance dimensions and types of power is central to investigating power dynamics across governance systems (Chapter Five). The following section expands on this relationship to clarify the structure of the theoretical framework.

2.4.4 The Conceptual Link between Governance Dimensions and Types of Power

Within the conceptual framework of the thesis, I identified a conceptual link between the governance dimensions used by Alvarez (2010) to classify VSS and the types of power contained in Gaventa's (2006) "power cube". The conceptual link between both framework components lies in conceptual overlapping between the activities specified by the governance dimensions and the types of power required to conduct each of them. Therefore, the activities described by governance dimensions were paired with the corresponding type of power, evidencing the control that a given actor needs to perform them. The following paragraphs expand on the conceptual connection between the governance dimensions and the types of powers included in the "power cube".

The governance dimension "leading actor" refers to the actors capable of determining the requirements to set a governance system. Actors with visible power control formal rules, authorities, institutions, and decision-making procedures required to set a governance system. Holding control over such formal structures (partially) allows for defining the requirements for setting a governance system. To investigate whether small farmers hold visible power, it is necessary to know if they can determine the criteria to set or initiate a governance system.

The governance dimension "motivation" refers to the opportunity to decide about a governance system's rationale (Alvarez, 2010). In the context of the" power cube," actors with hidden power are positioned to set the agenda of a governance system. Control over setting the agenda rests on the possibility of deciding the rationale of the scheme. To investigate whether small farmers hold hidden power, it is necessary to know who has the possibility to decide about the rationale of the governance system.

The governance dimension “scope” refers to decisions about governance systems’ priorities (e.g., environmental, or social sustainability, food security or protection) (Alvarez, 2010). This feature is also linked to the possibility of setting the agenda of a governance system (hidden power) insofar as this power rests on the decisions taken to prioritise the scheme's emphasis (Gaventa, 2008). Therefore, to investigate whether small farmers hold this type of power, it is necessary to know if farmers have the possibility of making decisions about the priorities of the governance systems.

Lastly, the governance dimension of “enforcement” refers to the ways in which the compliance of a governance system is granted (Alvarez, 2010). Compliance with the requirements of a governance system can be enforced through formal procedures (enforcement_1) controlled by certain actors or through informal rules (enforcement_2) (Alvarez, 2010). The control through formal rules (visible power), among other responsibilities, rests on the possibility of enforcing compliance with the requirements of a governance system. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate whether the possibility of setting formal requirements corresponds to small farmers. The control through informal rules is linked to invisible power, which embraces multiple types of subtle power manifestations embedded in local communities' socialisation, culture, and ideology (Gaventa, 2006). The notion that small farmers have about their own place in the world partly rests on the possibility that they might have to enforce compliance by asserting their knowledge and experience. To research whether small farmers hold invisible power, it is necessary to know whether farmers have the possibility of influencing the enforcement of compliance under their knowledge, experience, and culture.

2.4.5 The Context for Empowerment

The last component of the conceptual framework draws on the concept of empowerment. Drydyk (2008), a development ethicist, challenges Narayan’s (2005) definition of empowerment as part of his reasoning to provide a definition. The core idea of

empowerment is to support people in shaping their lives. In coffee, farmers do not always have control over the issues affecting their lives and, therefore, cannot improve them.

Investigating power asymmetries and governance structures without pursuing alternatives that allow farmers to correct such power asymmetries and do not allow them to influence governance structures limits the impact of such research. Due to the close relationship that empowerment maintains with the fundamental, but essentially contested, concept of power and the frequency with which empowerment is operationalised through governance structures, the consideration of empowerment rises as the appropriate path to seek mechanisms to address power asymmetries and influence the design of governance systems in the context of the coffee GPN.

This section about empowerment expands on the aspects granting its occurrence. To grant the happening and the durability of empowerment, Drydyck (2008) argues that empowerment relies on measures enabling the active engagement of people in practical reasoning over strategic choices affecting their lives. Empowerment also embraces enhancing such decisions' influence on their own life. Life-choice decisions are those that shape one's life. Kabeer (1999, p.3) refers to "*the choice of livelihood",* which embraces decisions relevant for the people to live the lives they want. According to her, empowerment gives the ability to make strategic choices to people who have been denied the ability to do so (Kabeer, 1999).

In junction with the measures, Drydyk (2008) also refers to contextual aspects whose presence hinders peoples' decision-making capacity and influence over their life choices. These are the barriers limiting (1) the agency, which refers to the scope of actions that a person could be involved in achieving, and (2) the well-being freedom, which includes the combinations of functioning a person can accomplish. Well-being freedom means having the substantive freedom to live a life that is meaningful to the individual, which involves having the necessary capabilities, opportunities, and resources to pursue their goals and aspirations (Sen, 1994).

Drydyk also argues that capabilities, resources, and assets controlled by the individual and the institutional, social, and political structures grant the retention of the changes achieved by the former measures. Therefore, empowerment relies on the process of empowerment achieving outcomes and appropriate contexts, enhancing such processes to last (Kabeer, 1999).

Figure 2 represents this study's conceptual framework and shows the relationships between its components and their connection to farmers' positions.

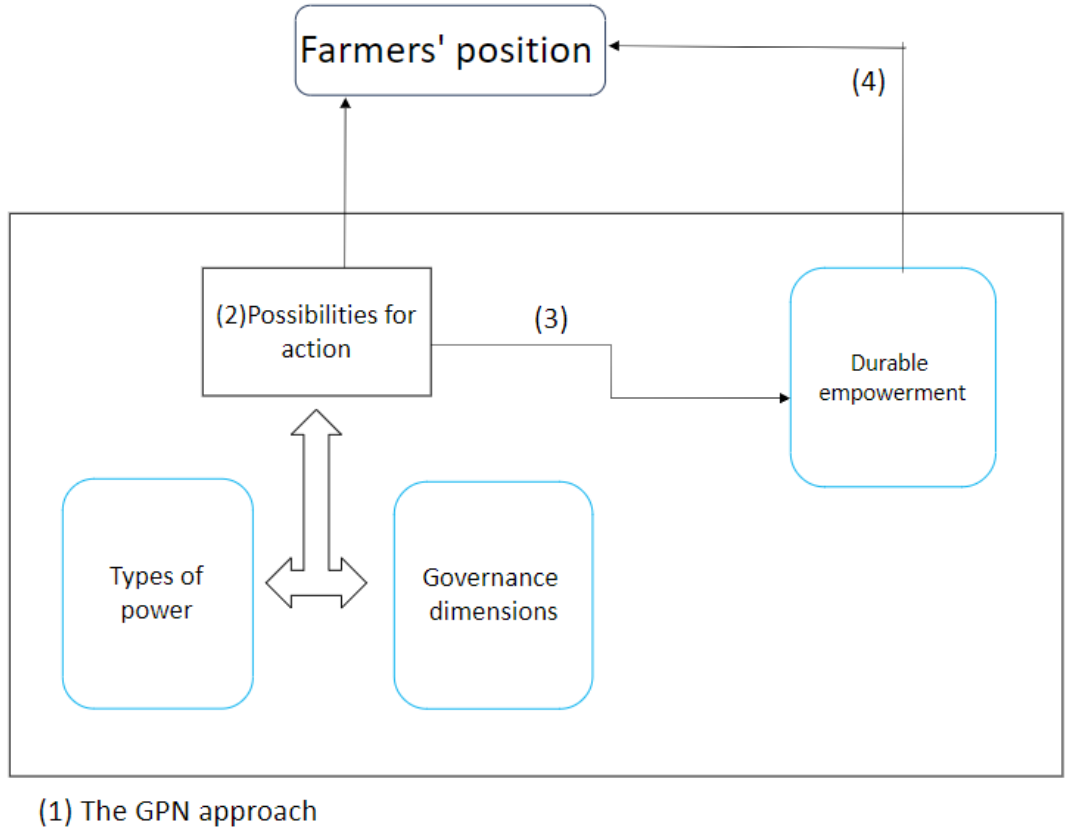


***Figure 2**: Conceptual framework of the thesis*

(1) The GPN approach sets the conceptual domain from which the other components' connections must be understood. Within the GPN, multiple structures, i.e.,

governance systems, are steering the coffee GPN, which will be investigated in Chapter Four.

(2) From the conceptual link between the types of power (visible, hidden, and invisible) and the governance dimensions (leading actor, rationale, and enforcement) emerge the possibilities for action that will be used to deepen the power dynamics across governance systems to investigate which ones have the most significant potential to positively impact farmers' position in the coffee GPN (Chapter Five).

(3) These possibilities for action also impact the empowerment alternatives, which will be modulated considering the implications of such possibilities for action.

(4) Lastly, empowerment alternatives will be investigated to find mechanisms that boost farmers' power and positively impact farmers' position. Within the investigation of empowerment alternatives, enabling and blocking empowerment factors will also be investigated (Chapter Six).

2.4.6 Conceptual Application

The advantages of combining the GPN approach, the "power cube", the four governance dimensions, and the concept of durable empowerment serve to build a comprehensive framework (1) for the investigation of power across several governance systems, (2) for addressing the power asymmetries compromising farmers' position through the identification of governance systems with the most significant potential to benefit farmers' position; and (3) for finding empowerment alternatives that grant a type of empowerment that benefits farmers' position and lasts in time.

The joint use of the four components permits addressing the knowledge gaps identified in examining power conducted in the context of the coffee GPN. Firstly, the use of Gaventa's power cube opens the opportunity to perform a nuanced analysis of power focusing on small farmers, going beyond the power analysis made by Gereffi and Korzeniewicz (1994) from the GCC analysis, and the typology of power devised by Gereffi

et al., (2005). Both power analyses would be relevant for this thesis if corporate actors lay at the core of the power analysis. Using the power cube allows me to tailor a power analysis around small farmers, using the theoretical advantages of the GPN approach (see Table 2 about the advantages of using the GPN analysis).

On the other hand, using possibilities for action in conjunction with the types of power opens the door to examining the power held by small actors within the coffee GPN using publicly available information. Knowing the possibilities for action of small farmers could unveil the reasons behind their marginal position across coffee governance systems. Knowing the causes of the power asymmetries facilitates investigating empowerment strategies to improve small farmers' positions across governance systems.

In terms of governance, the framework can be used to identify which governance systems are better equipped to empower small coffee farmers. Knowing which governance systems are better designed can guide the implementation of empowerment alternatives that effectively mitigate the power asymmetries currently existing in the coffee GPN.

2.5 Conclusion

Firstly. this chapter sets out the theoretical approach of this thesis by drawing on the concepts of governance structures, power dynamics and empowerment alternatives from within the context of global production systems. Through the analysis of the ways these three concepts can be investigated from the lens of global studies, this chapter has demonstrated that such concepts form a coherent approach to situate the investigation of small farmers' position at the core of the global production systems literature.

Secondly, Chapter Two contextualises the investigation of power, governance, and empowerment within the domain of the coffee GPN. This section has analysed the impacts that power asymmetries have had on small farmers, deepening the fragile position of small farmers and the dominant role of corporate actors. Furthermore, this chapter includes an analysis of the evolution of coffee governance and how it has shaped

farmers' position, as well as an analysis of the limited attention given to the study of empowerment, which poses a significant knowledge gap within the GPN literature.

Thirdly, Chapter Two has portrayed the conceptual framework of this thesis, drawing on the limitations and knowledge gaps identified across the governance, power, and empowerment literature. By illustrating the theoretical framework, the chapter has demonstrated the advantages of combining the GPN approach, the “power cube,” governance dimensions, and empowerment alternatives to devise a conceptual framework that will be used to guide the research across the three empirical chapters (Four, Five, and Six).

After reviewing the literature and the conceptual framework of the thesis, the next chapter analyses the research design and methodology used to conduct this study.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to deepen the research design of this study, and the range of qualitative methods used to collect and analyse data.

Chapter Three is divided into nine sections. It first sets out the research design, including a reflection on the study's philosophical approach and the rationale for choosing multiple qualitative methods. Second, it expands on the data source needed to fulfil the ROs, including the study participants' selection process. Thirdly, Chapter Three examines the methods used for data collection, followed by an examination of the data analysis methods. After explaining the research methods, the chapter reflects on the multi-geographical focus of the study, the ethical considerations, positionality, and limitations. Chapter Three concludes with a brief section with some overall reflections of Chapter Three.

3.2 Research Design

This section draws on the philosophical and methods approaches underpinning the use of multiple qualitative methods.

3.2.1 Philosophical Approach

"Major dimensions of research practice are the *ontology, epistemology, and the methodology and methods"* (Smith and Sparkes, 2016, p.4).

This section expands and clarifies the choices made regarding the first two aspects shaping the research design of this work before getting into the details of the methods used.

The research paradigm of this work is based on an interpretivist-constructivist approach. Such an approach is usually suggested for social research methods when the nature of the enquiry relies on the experience of certain actors and seeks to understand a particular phenomenon (Fekede, 2010). In the case of this study, the phenomenon refers to understanding how power dynamics, governance structures and empowerment alternatives. All three concepts result from social constructs of reality and emerge from interactions between multiple actors, admitting various interpretations. The use of the GPN approach permits contextualising the study and navigating across the interactions among coffee actors and their perceptions regarding the coffee GPN. Since face-to-face interviews were not possible when the data were to be collected, this research has used various methods to understand farmers' positions most accurately without interviewing them directly.

My interpretive-constructivist approach is appropriate for bringing together an analysis that draws on the multiple perspectives of the various actors working with small farmers. Although the perspective of these numerous actors is not the voice of the farmers, I was able to research a set of perspectives that shape the reality of farmers, especially regarding the concept of durable empowerment. I managed to engage with the voices of actors whose actions directly impinge on the possibilities for small farmers.

- **Ontology**

The first aspect of the research paradigm is ontology, which refers to how the nature of reality is understood (Fekede, 2010). In the case of this research, reality is understood as a human construct (Forbes, 2015). Farmers' position in coffee has been socially constructed due to the interactions among coffee actors in the context of coffee GPN. The coffee GPN is a complex system of interconnected social structures. Understanding farmers' position requires exploring the formation of governance structures, the functioning of power dynamics and the development of empowerment alternatives. Adopting a constructivist approach enabled me to fill some knowledge gaps regarding the farmers' position by drawing in multiple perspectives and interpretations influenced by historical and socio-cultural aspects affecting the design and evolution of governance

structures. In the case of this study, obtaining a deep-contextual understanding of multiple coffee actors was essential to understanding small farmers' realities operating across the coffee GPN with varied historical, social, and political backgrounds.

- **Epistemology**

The second element of the research paradigm refers to the epistemology concerned with the ways of obtaining knowledge (Fekede, 2010). The existence of different contexts in which farmers operate across the coffee production networks demanded a flexible approach that permitted me to adapt to the diverse circumstances in which coffee farmers operate. The interpretive-constructivist approach offers the flexibility to adjust to the context of data collection and analysis. Indeed, for this researcher, the outbreak of COVID-19 had a significant impact on involving potential study participants and the methods to collect data. Adopting an interpretive-constructivist approach allowed me to adapt my research paradigm to the new context of investigation. I passed from focusing on capturing farmers' voices directly to capturing farmers' voices based on the perspectives of other coffee actors.

One limitation of the interpretive-constructivist approach is its openness to the researcher's positionality due to the impact that such positionality can have on the interpretations of the results (Smith and Osborn, 2003). Section 3.7 below expands on this issue.

The following sections draw on the necessity of using a multiple qualitative approach to address the complexity of analysing a GPN. The interpretive-constructivist approach deals with such complexity by using various methods to capture the breadth and depth of the varied voices coexisting within the coffee GPN.

3.2.2 The Need for Combining Multiple Qualitative Methods.

A methodology is a system of methods to study a given phenomenon (Smith and Sparkes, 2016). The interpretive-constructivist approach offers space for exploration and the capacity to uncover hidden features because it focuses on understanding social

phenomena through the lens of subjective meanings and interpretations. In exchange, the methods chosen must also offer reliability to deliver the study's research objectives. Investigating small coffee farmers' position - from the perspective of the multiple actors interacting with them -demands flexibility to capture the nuances of multiple actors' views. Therefore, I chose to use a range of qualitative methods with the potential to holistically understand human experiences in specific settings and the freedom to construct and reconstruct as needed (Rahman, 2016).

The advantages offered by qualitative methods permit the utilisation of the comprehensiveness sought with the election of an interpretive-constructivist approach and the reliability required to deliver trustworthy results due to the identification of potential overlapping of collected data. Furthermore, using multiple qualitative methods makes capturing a more comprehensive range of insights and perspectives possible than when fewer methods are used. Morse (2009) referred to the complementarity of the data as the potential overlapping of collected data.

The research process follows a logical order based on the sequence set by the ROs (see Table 3). RO1 focuses on investigating the governance systems operating in East Africa. The systematic literature review draws on the range of actors interacting with farmers at multiple levels and across scales and a set of co-existing governance systems. Initially, my focus on investigating governance systems was restricted to East Africa due to the priority of the Whiterose Network (my founder) on such a region. Conducting a documentary analysis permitted me to answer RO1, including the categories of critical stakeholders, gatekeepers, institutions, and relevant documents. However, due to the Covid-19 outbreak, significant adaptions had to be made to continue the study. Travelling to East Africa was no longer possible, so I opened the geographical focus of the study. The advantage of using the GPN approach enabled me to explore different levels, moving from focusing on one geographic locality, panning back and out to look at a different level, the level of (intermediary) actors in the GPN. This is the hidden middle mentioned in Reardon's (2015) investigation, which I have already referred to in Chapter Two.

***Table 3**: Summary of research objectives, questions, data requirements methods, interviewed stakeholders and considered levels.*

Research objectives (1)	Research questions (2)	Data required (3)	Data collection methods (4)	Data analysis methods (5)
1. To investigate governance systems operating within Eastern Africa.	What governance systems coexist in coffee in East Africa?	Range of governance systems operating in the coffee production nodes	Systematic research review	Documentary analysis
	Who are the main actors within the coffee GPN?	Range and role of actors interacting within coffee production networks.	Systematic research review	Documentary analysis
2. To study the power dynamics operating within governance systems	What types of power are farmers entailed within the context of governance systems?	The possibilities for action farmers have under governance systems	Systematic research review guided by the theoretical framework	Documentary analysis
	Which governance systems are better endowed to challenge the status quo of power dynamics?	Comparative analysis of the governance systems from the perspective of power	Systematic research review guided by the theoretical framework	Documentary analysis
3. To investigate the existence of actions capable of altering existing power dynamics within governance systems	What type of actions can be implemented to alter power dynamics?	Existence of specific mechanisms with the potential impact of altering power dynamics.	Semi-structured interviews	Thematic analysis
	What are the hindering and/or easing circumstances that the implementation of such actions might encounter?	Factors that facilitate/constrain the implementation of such actions.	Semi-structured Interviews	Thematic analysis

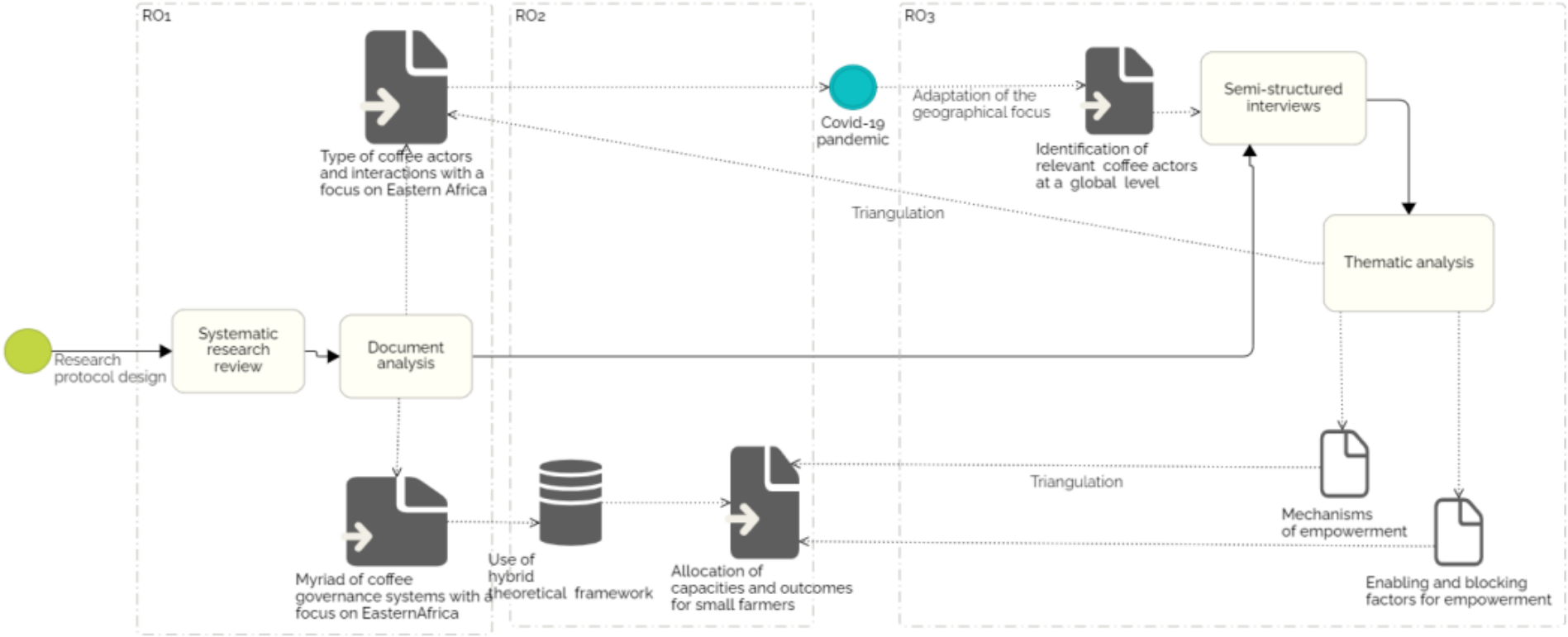
As a result, the focus on East Africa expanded to include, for RO2 and RO3, all regions involved in the trade in coffee from all origins but from the perspective of actors involved in marketing, trade processing, roasting, and supporting smallholder coffee farmers. Therefore, perspectives of coffee actors from the entire GPN of coffee were considered. The COVID-19 outbreak also provoked a shift from the views of farmers themselves to others' perceptions of smallholders and their view of what the needs of farmers might be, as well as on the spaces in which they can exercise power. The outcome of considering multiple coffee regions led to a varied range of coffee actors participating in the study.

To fulfil RO2, I investigated the possibilities for action farmers have across governance systems by examining various documents (institutional reports, books, academic papers, and grey literature) to build on the documentary analysis I conducted in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, I drew on the conceptual framework devised for this thesis, which firmly guided the collection and analysis of data on governance systems.

For RO3, I interviewed a range of coffee actors identified through my supervisors' professional networks, snowball techniques, and international coffee events. I used a semi-structured interview protocol (included in Appendix 3). Thanks to my previous position at the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) as part of the research global commodities group, I identified potential interviewees. To analyse their responses, I undertook a thematic analysis. This analysis fulfilled RO3 by identifying the mechanisms of empowerment and blocking and enabling factors for farmers' empowerment.

Focusing on multiple geographical areas allowed me to exploit coffee's multi-level nature using the GPN approach's theoretical resources. As a result, I had the opportunity to connect findings referring to different levels of analysis with a diverse geographical focus. In Chapter Seven, I connected the conclusions of each empirical chapter (Four, Five and Six) in a cross-cutting discussion.

***Figure 3**: Research process flow*



3.3 Data

This section links the type of data required to answer the RQs with its source and the method used to collect it. The analysis of collected data generated the findings used to answer each research question.

This study required data from different levels: local level (in relation to the interactions that farmers have with other coffee actors directly, such as neighbouring farmers or cooperatives of which they are members), regional level (FOs), national level (in relation to the national policies and process in the context of coffee), industry level at national and global level (with regard to the situation of national coffee markets and global production system of coffee) and across levels (to explore the power dynamics happening at the core of the normal functioning of coffee governance systems across the levels formerly mentioned).

3.3.1 Data Collection

This section covers all stages of the data flow: identifying required data, the data sources used to collect it, and the data sets generated after analysing them. Table 4 also includes the research objectives associated with all data stages.

RO1 focuses on investigating coffee governance systems that are steering the coffee GPN. The data required to address RO1 refer to the production networks where coffee farmers interact, and coffee governance systems of which farmers are part. I used the body of literature from the systematic literature review to obtain such data.

The documentary analysis conducted over the literature body generated a typology of governance systems and an insight into the coffee actors with whom coffee farmers interact. I considered four criteria suggested by Flick (2022) to select the documents forming the literature body: authenticity (of the document), credibility (absence of errors and distortion), representativeness (typicality of the document), and meaning (clarity and understandability).

RO2 refers to the study of power dynamics in governance systems. The data required to investigate RO2 refer to the types of power needed to undertake certain activities, showing who controls the normal functioning of a given scheme. The data source used to explore power dynamics was the body of literature obtained within the systematic literature review organised around the typology of governance systems. Data were analysed using a documentary analysis showing the type of power held by small farmers across each governance system.

RO3 focuses on investigating the existence of actions capable of altering existing power dynamics within governance systems. The type of information required to conduct the research referred to mechanisms for empowerment and the existence of enabling or blocking factors that could boost or hinder the impact of such mechanisms. The data source was the interview transcripts obtained after the semi-structured interviews. I included the interview protocol I used in the interviews in Appendix 3. Transcripts were analysed, and a thematic analysis was conducted to answer the research questions posed by the RO3. A vital aspect of the interviews was the selection of the participants, which I will address in the next section.

***Table 4**: Data required, data sources and data produced.*

Research objective	**Data required to conduct the research**	**Sources used in the collection of the data**	**Sets of data produced after the analysis of the data**
1. To investigate operating **governance systems** in coffee in East Africa	Network structure, in particular coffee actors and their interactions. Governance systems operating in Eastern Africa	Body of literature (77 sources)	Typology of governance systems Range of coffee actors interacting within coffee production networks
2. To **study** the **power dynamics** operating within governance systems.	Types of power and outcomes.	Body of literature (77 sources).	A range of possibilities for action is required for the normal functioning of governance systems in the control of farmers and the types of power held by farmers when they control such possibilities for action.
3. To investigate the existence of **actions capable of altering existing power dynamics** within governance systems	Actions and factors that can alter the governance systems' status quo in terms of power.	Interview transcripts	Set of empowering mechanisms Range of blocking/enabling factors for empowerment

3.3.2 Selection of Participants

In addressing RO3, I used semi-structured interviews since they can be used to enquire about issues that were important to the study participants, and by doing that, I got a good understanding of the research question. I interviewed actors across the GPN who had worked with small farmers or engaged with them in the coffee GPN to capture their knowledge about the best alternatives farmers had to be empowered with. Given the diversity of interviewees, semi-structured interviews are flexible enough to collect information from such a diverse range of interviewees. Semi-structured interviews also provide the possibility for comparing independent thoughts about the same issue, with the possibility of adapting the questions to each interviewee (Adams, 2015).

Firstly, interviewees were identified after conducting purposive desk research that allowed the identification of potential and plausible participants. Some of them belonged to the network of my supervisors and my professional networks. The initial list of study participants was expanded after my virtual participation in The Specialty Coffee Symposium. Once some of the travel restrictions were lifted, I could attend two in-person events where I managed to identify additional study participants. These two events in London were the 30th Anniversary Party of Cafedirect in September 2021 and the Caffe Culture Show in October 2021. At this event, I recruited several traders and roasters to work directly with farmers to obtain high-quality coffee. I also managed to contact coffee farmers who have opened sales offices in the UK to increase their access to the UK coffee market.

The snowballing technique was used to increase the number of potential study participants. This technique allowed the identification of certain actors that were previously unknown. Moreover, those candidates identified using this technique showed an initial trust that I had to build with the participants contacted directly. This initial trust also helped obtain responses of enhanced quality (Cohen and Arieli, 2011).

In the end, I secured the participation of 22 interviewees from various geographical regions, roles within the institutions to which they belong, and types of stakeholders within the global value system of coffee.

The 22 interviewees are coffee producers, civil society actors and coffee buyers. Regarding the first group, I interviewed six coffee producers. Three of them represent a cooperative/association of small farmers. The other three are medium and big producers from Africa and Latin America. Despite not being (most of them) representatives of small farmers, their contribution to this study was beneficial due to their knowledge about the coffee cultivation stage, hence their understanding of the struggles small farmers face when they intend to sell their coffee. Furthermore, the interviewed farmers contributed with their knowledge about stages of the value chain going beyond the farm gate. Some coffee farmers have integrated into their business downstream stages, such as roasting and blending. In different capacities, all interviewed farmers aspired to add more value, so they did not only sell green coffee beans.

The second group of interviewees is formed of 8 CSOs. All of them but two represent institutions linked to certification schemes, mainly FT. The other two are a charity and an independent coffee consultant. Those Interviewees linked to certification schemes provided detailed insights about how being part of a governance system influences the position of the farmers-members from the lens of the given certification. The charity representative and the independent consultant offered a holistic and distant perspective regarding the main struggles of coffee farmers based on power dynamics and governance structures. The fact of being established across the Global South and North allowed me to interpret some of the findings by incorporating nuances and trends impacting farmers' position differently.

The third group of interviewees consists of eight coffee buyers, mainly roasters. However, two roasters also sell their blends through the coffee shops they own. Due to the close contact they all claimed to have with their coffee suppliers, they can tell alternatives to empower farmers. They all know farmers' disadvantageous position in coffee; some

buyers offer extra support to farmers through second payments that intend to cover the cost of production. All roasters only operate on the speciality sub-sector. This could be why they are so aware of the low prices farmers get for their coffee. Two of the roasters stressed the need to make consumers aware of the characteristics of the farmers. All roasters showed their preference for dealing directly with small farmers and supporting them in improving the quality of the coffee they sell. Hence, farmers are less vulnerable to the volatility of the coffee market and can obtain a fair price. All roasters showed their preference for quality over any type of coffee certification. The tensions between interviewees' perspectives regarding coffee certification and direct trade issues became apparent. While roasters advocated for the advantages of direct trade, representatives of certification bodies criticised it for not being appropriate for small farmers. In this case, the disagreement referred to the irrelevance of certification schemes in direct trade.

3.4. Methods and Data Collection

This section contains the steps taken to collect and analyse data. Data collection started with a systematic research review (OCT 2019 - JAN 2020), whose body of literature was also used to investigate power dynamics across governance systems (MAY 2020 - NOV 2020). The data collection process continued with nineteen online semi-structured interviews (MAY 2021- SEPT 2021) and a couple of face-to-face semi-structured interviews conducted in May 2022.

3.4.1 Data Collection Approach

This section includes a detailed insight into the qualitative methods used: systematic research review and semi-structured interviews.

- **Systematic research review**

This method was used to identify sources regarding operating governance systems and the leading coffee actors who interact within them. A systematic research review is usually used to collect multiple research studies and summarise them to answer a specific question using rigorous methods (Gough et al., 2012). The reason for conducting a

systematic review was the scarce literature focusing on coffee governance systems that critically and simultaneously compared them from the perspective of power. The systematic research review answered RQ1.1 (to investigate governance systems operating within East Africa) and the leading coffee actors interacting within them, including the outcomes, clarifying the difference between winners and losers regarding benefits and costs (RQ1.2).

I decided to conduct a systematic literature review due to the conceptual and procedural advantages that it offers, including 1) its potential to minimise and make any bias visible when it comes to collecting articles (Petticrew and Roberts, 2006); (2) its high transparency due to the opportunity to use clear criteria to select literature (Candel, 2014), (3) its clarity in explaining the steps taken to conduct the research and (4) its potential to increase the trustworthiness of the conducted research and, therefore, the legitimacy of claims made (Gough et al., 2012).

Firstly, I developed a search protocol for designing a query utilised in WoS, Scopus and Google Scholar (see Appendix 3). The query was designed and adapted depending on each database's filters. It was developed using a Boolean search selecting the years 2001-2020. After reading the article titles, I noticed that all those not related to the coffee sector and not focused on East Africa were removed, passing from 427 to 39. Some articles were not discarded despite focusing on other geographical regions due to their relevance to the governance systems they concentrate on.

Table five includes the set of filters used to develop the query, the number of articles found using the query, and the number of articles left after checking whether the articles focused on coffee and East Africa.

***Table 5**: Search filters used to query the database.*

	WoS	Scopus	Google Scholar

Query design	**Boolean search**: coffee AND governance AND power **Boolean flag**: ALL Articles in **English only** **Document type**: article	**Areas**: soci, env and AFRI, **Keywords**: sustainable development, governance approach, agriculture, coffee, globalisation, GPN, fairtrade smallholder, environmental management, global economy, power supply chains, agricultural trade, commodity environmental governance, environmental impact. **Only open-source articles**	**Boolean search:** power AND governance, AND Africa, AND East AND model NO words included in the entire article cocoa, America, Asia, corn, tea, south, north, west, INDIA, Colombia, Brazil, Mexico.
Number of articles	31	44	352
Number of articles' after checking focus on coffee and area of study	17	14	8

All articles were merged into a unique database to avoid duplicates. Empirical, theoretical, or conceptual articles were all included. This first body of literature (39) was uploaded to Mendeley and stored in thematic folders for further management, using the focus of each article. The folders created were named with the following labels: coffee sector, governance, power, and governance models.

The number of articles considered for the study increased due to some backward and forward snowball reading, having as a result the addition of further sources, which added up to 62. On top of the 62 academic articles, the backward and forward reading allowed me to consider three books, grey literature (7 reports), and five reports taken from several websites (UNTACD, ICO, FAO, IFAD, and ITC). All sources (77) included in the second body of literature were fully read and used in the document analysis to analyse the data generated through the systematic research review. Conducting the systematic research

review provided some preliminary results regarding the uneven and fragmented attention given to governance systems within the coffee governance literature. Figure 4 illustrates the entire data collection process that yielded 77 articles. I included the whole body of the literature in Annexe 2.

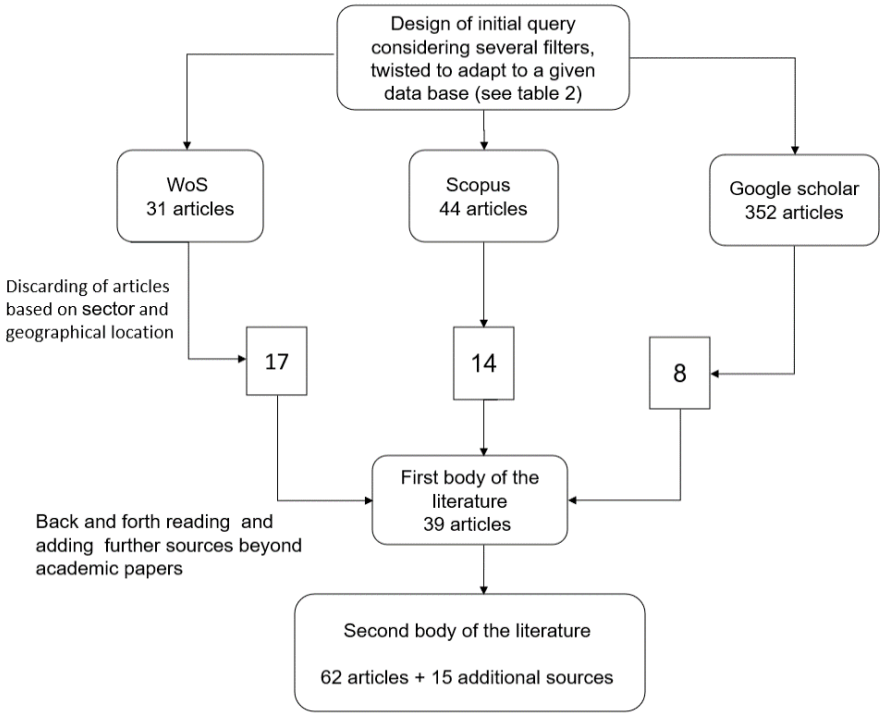


***Figure 4**: Data collection process*

- **Semi-structured interviews**

I used semi-structured interviews to obtain data regarding the power dynamics within the coffee GPN, including the types of power held (or not) by small farmers and the implications that power allocations had for the small farmers' livelihoods (Chapter Five). They were also used to collect data regarding the mechanisms that could be implemented to alter existing coffee power dynamics (Chapter Six). Lastly, semi-structured interviews were also used to identify potential constraints and enhancing factors impacting the implementation of the empowerment mechanisms (Chapter Six).

Their perspectives on some of the interviewees above are rarely interrogated. They are part of the hidden middle (Reardon, 2015), and different perspectives on this deserve better appreciation. This is despite their positionality, which emerged through their interests, even if they claimed to be speaking in the interests of small farmers.

Despite the varied representation of the interviewees, I wish I could have spoken to representatives of national coffee boards, international coffee platforms, or coffee farmers members of first and second-tier coffee cooperatives. Their perspectives would have contributed to insightful approaches about how farmers could be better empowered to change their current position in the coffee GPN. Nonetheless, I am satisfied with the varied profiles I captured in my study. It is particularly relevant to the ways interviewees directly interact with coffee farmers. Direct contact with farmers was the main requirement for inviting them to participate in this study.

Table Six below includes a summary of the interviews, including significant aspects of the interviewees such as the type of stakeholder they are, the stakeholder group they belong to, their position within the company, the interview day, and the number of each interview given based on the order in which they were conducted.

***Table 6**: Summary of interviews, according to geographical area and stakeholder group*

Geographical region/country		Type of stakeholder	Position	Stakeholder Group			Interview date	Interview number
				Coffee buyers	Coffee producers	CSO		
Asia	Philippines	Third-party certification body	Middle management			x	10/08/2021 online	7
America	USA	Roaster/retailer	Middle management	x			30/09/2021 Online	17
		Producer/exporter	High ranking official	x	x		1/10/2021 Online	18
	El Salvador	Third-party certification body	High ranking official			x	22/06/2021 Online	4
	Brazil/UK	Coffee farmer	High ranking official		x		29/09/2021 Online	14
	Brazil	Third-party certification body	High ranking official			x	19/082021 Online	8
		Coffee farmer	Middle management		x		23/09/2021 Online	20
	Mexico	Coffee farmers' organization: network	High-ranking official		x		7/06/2021 Online	1
Africa	Ruanda	Third-party certification body	High ranking official			x	8/06/2021 Online	2
	Uganda	Coffee farmers' organization: association	High ranking official		x		23/06/2021 Online	3
	Uganda/UK	Coffee farmer/roaster	High ranking official		x		23/09/2021 Online	13
	Burundi	Cooperative	High ranking official		x		13/07/2021 Online	5
	Kenya	Third-party certification body	Middle management			x	28/09/2021 Online	12
Europe	UK	Roaster	High ranking official	x			30/06/2021 In Person	6
		Roaster	High ranking official	x			17/08/2021 Online	10
		Trader	Middle management	x			26/08/2021 Online	11
		Trader/Roaster	High ranking official	x			30/09/2021 Online	15
			Middle management				11/10/2021 In person	16
		Trader	Middle management	x			04/10/2021 Online	19
		Roaster	High ranking official	x			11/10/2021 Online	21
		Charity	Middle management			x	13/06/2022 Online	22
	The Netherlands	Independent Consultant				x	09/08/2021 Online	9
TOTAL				**8**	**7**	**7**		

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3.4.2 Data Analysis Methods

I used two different qualitative methods to analyse the data previously collected with the systematic research review and the semi-structured interviews. I used a documentary analysis to investigate the governance structure of the coffee GPN (Chapter Four), power dynamics (Chapter Five), and a thematic analysis to examine empowerment alternatives (Chapter Six).

- **Documentary analysis**

The method involves analysing various documents, including books, newspaper articles, academic journals, and institutional reports.

"Any document containing text is a potential source for qualitative analysis" (Morgan, 2022, p.64).

A. Governance systems and actors

I conducted a documentary analysis of the documents obtained through the systematic research review. I chose it due to its capacity to be applied to textual data from multiple documents (Mackieson, et al., 2019).

Within the second body of literature, I investigated the types of coffee governance systems operating in East Africa. I understood that I had found a governance system when I identified a structure or framework embracing the governing aspects of the coffee GPN stages (cultivation, packaging, distribution, and retail). To organise the analysis, I created an Excel spreadsheet where I collected the different types of governance systems as I progressed with the analysis of the other documents of the body of literature. Rows represented the set of governance systems I identified, and columns included a brief description of the governance system, the setting actors, the focus of the governance system and examples of each type of governance system. Once governance systems had been identified, I grouped them based on two criteria: their purpose and their setting actor. As a result, a typology of five categories of governance systems emerged. Such

typology of governance systems operating in East Africa provided the response to RQ1.1 about the type of coffee governance systems operating in East Africa.

Once the typology of the governance system was defined, I deepened my understanding of each system's functioning, which led to a brief analysis of each governance system's functioning.

Secondly, I focused on the types of actors interacting (directly or indirectly) with coffee farmers within the governance systems previously identified based on the role they played within the coffee GPN. I briefly described each actor I identified (see Annex 1). For each governance system, I identified the range of actors interacting with small farmers (Table ten).

Within the second body of literature, I also looked for evidence regarding the outcome of the interactions with each group of the coffee actors I had previously identified, looking for evidence that underpins the disadvantageous position of small farmers. The findings of this analysis responded to RQ.1.2 regarding the type of coffee actors involved in setting coffee governance systems.

B. Power dynamics across governance systems

I also conducted a documentary analysis to deepen the power dynamics across governance systems, taking advantage of the body of literature developed with the systematic research review. Having already the body of literature speeded up the stages of data collection and initial reading and familiarisation recommended by Bowen (2009). The coding and categorisation process was guided by the conceptual link between governance schemes' features and types of power.

Therefore, documents were coded with segments of texts that referred to whether or not farmers controlled the possibilities (1) to define the requirements to set or initiate a governance system, (2) the chance to decide about the rationale of the governance system, (3) the possibility of taking decisions regarding the priorities of a given

governance system and, (4) the possibilities of influencing the enforcement of compliance, in virtue of their knowledge, experience, and culture.

To organise the data analysis, I designed an Excel spreadsheet where columns referred to possibilities for action and rows referred to the types of governance systems. I screened the body of literature for passages or segments of text that referred to whether farmers controlled the possibilities for action.

Each cell was filled with extracts of the readings, including to whom corresponded the control and performance of the possibility for a given type of action. When it could be understood from the extract that the possibility for action corresponded to small farmers, I concluded that the farmers held that power (in green) and when the control and performance were attributed to other actors, I understood that small farmers did not have the type of power to conduct the corresponding action (in red). However, there were many cases in which, although the possibility for actions did not fall under the control of farmers, they were involved in undertaking the action. For these cases, I concluded that farmers have a limited possibility of participating in the undertaking of the activity and, therefore, held limited power (in yellow).

I found evidence to determine whether farmers have the possibility of undertaking any of the four activities foreseen by the governance dimensions within the body of literature I identified. However, the contrasting attention received among governance systems provoked that for some governance systems was easier to conclude the presence or absence of power that it was for others. The abundance of literature available for specific governance systems, e.g., certification schemes, made it easier to understand what types of power farmers were entitled to. For other governance systems, conclusions are based on less evidence, e.g., the farmer ownership model. Lastly, when I did not have the evidence to claim that farmers were in control of a particular possibility for action, I used sources that were not within the second body of literature.

When farmers were responsible for a given activity, I interpreted that those small farmers also held the corresponding type of power. When small farmers were not in control of the possibility of action, the absence of power was understood. A table with a summary of the results was included in Chapter Five (Table 11).

The analysis of whether the possibilities for action lay with small farmers or not provided responses to RQ2.1 regarding the types of power held by small farmers and RQ2 regarding the governance systems that are better equipped to improve their position in coffee.

- **Thematic analysis**

This qualitative method refers to the identification, interpretation, and extraction of patterns or meanings of data (Connolly, 2003). I chose it because it allows the researcher to go beyond the data description and add their personal contribution. (Staller, 2015).

The diversity of coffee actors and insights required a method allowing the identification of patterns across a diversity of perspectives (Mackieson, et al., 2019) and collating them into common themes. To conduct the analysis, I investigated the resulting themes and linked them to RO3 (Bazeley, 2009).

Braun and Clarke (2006) divide the thematic analysis process into six phases. In this section, I focus on the four central ones because the initial phase, referring to familiarisation with the data, has been addressed in section 3.3.1, and the final phase, regarding the production of a report, will be discussed in Chapter Six.

Therefore, this section delves into phases from two to five. Phase two refers to the generation of initial codes. As I started to read and get familiar with the transcripts, I identified ten initial codes and associated each with a colour. The codes are theory-driven since I did the initial coding process with specific questions in mind. The interview protocol (Appendix 3) has three sections, each focused on a different research objective. I coded

the interview transcripts by marking the corresponding colour and writing a comment on each extract with the name of the code. Table seven below includes the codes I identified in phase two.

Table 7: *Phase two of the content analysis is regarding generating initial codes.*

Codes	**Colour**
Coffee actors' purpose.	Yellow
Reference to governance models, including the rationale to get certified.	Dark Green
Perceptions of others about how they think coffee farmers see themselves regarding their role in the coffee value system.	Pink
Perceptions of others about coffee farmers.	Maroon
Power dynamics in coffee	Red
Enabling factors for empowerment	Grey
Blocking factors for empowerment	Purple
Benefits that being part of a governance system has for farmers	Light green
Problems that being part of a governance system has for farmers	Red
Training	Blue

Once all the transcripts had been coded and collated by code, I sorted the codes into themes. I collated all extracts corresponding to the same code in an Excel spreadsheet. In a further step, I grouped the related codes to combine them into overarching themes.

Figure 5 shows a screenshot of a phase of the coding process once the codes had been grouped into preliminary themes (right column). At this stage, I had 104 codes and 20 themes.

***Figure 5**: Extract of phase 3 of the thematic analysis: searching for themes.*

In phase 4, I reviewed the preliminary themes, merging, collapsing, or separating them as appropriate. I reviewed the themes by checking if the codded data extracts formed a coherent pattern (Braun and Clarke, 2008), eliminating irrelevant information and merging those that were not distinct enough. I did some recording in this phase to identify potential themes I could have missed. At this point, I had eight themes and two sub-themes.

In phase five, I worked on defining and naming the themes, making sure that all extracts contained within a theme were organised into a consistent account with an accompanying narrative (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Refining the themes led to a more transparent

structure of the themes and subthemes. At this final stage, I had eleven themes and four sub-themes. Figure 6 includes a screenshot with a sample of the themes and subthemes obtained at the end of phase five.

Codes	Subthemes	Themes
Disconnection between costumers demands and consumers capacity to meet them		Information flow gaps
Coffee farmers physically moving to consuming countries		
Coffee production costs unawareness		
Relevance of organic certification in the coffee speciality market	Certifications in the context of specialty subsector	Specialty coffee subsector
Emergence of new type of certifications in the coffee speciality market		
Growing number of coffee farmers selling their coffee in the speciality coffee	Trends in the speciality coffee subsector	
Decommodification of coffee		
Generational farmers/workers gap		Demographic aspects of coffee farmers
Gender gap		
Supporting mechanisms for farmers		Increase the resilience of farmers
Livelihoods diversification		
Alternative governance models		Governance systems related issues
Purpose to get certified		
Multi-certification		
Product networks (could be included in the expansion of farmers network)		
Government support		
Legal environment		
Business models and governance system overlapping		

***Figure 6**: Sample of the themes and subthemes obtained in phase 5*

Finally, I wrote up a document with the results, focussing on their cohesiveness and coherence, making sure I identified the interview from which such extract had been taken. To do so, I used a specific nomenclature. Each extract was determined by a code with

two parts added at the end of each interview extract. The first part of the code contains a capital “I“(for interview) followed by the number given to each interviewee based on the chronological order of the interviews (1-22). The second part of the code contains the symbol “#” followed by the interview question number. For example, (I3, #5) would mean that such extract was from interview number 3, question 5. This system facilitated the contextualisation, interpretation, and search of the data.

3.5 The Multi-geographical Focus of the Study

The coffee sector is a fundamental part of the overall economy of many producing countries (Borrella et al., 2015). Due to the increasing supply and rising coffee demand, its trade and financial significance are expected to continue growing, accentuating the importance of this research in understanding, and managing such growth. (ICO, 2019). Besides the coffee sector's global market relevance, small producers are experiencing growing exposure to coffee's market volatility across the Global South (ICO, 2019).

Before the pandemic, I intended to focus on East Africa - the central African coffee-producing region – partly encouraged by my founder’s studentship (The White Rose ESRC Doctoral Training network) interest in agrifood systems in East Africa. However, due to the pandemic, I had to redesign the study and broaden its geographical area. Meanwhile, East Africa remained the focus of the study in terms of the governance systems identified in Chapter Four and used in the analysis of power dynamics in Chapter Five. However, the impossibility of conducting interviews with producers’ organisation's representatives from East Africa required interviewing coffee actors from any coffee region. Hence, the data I collected with the semi-structured interviews also considered other production areas in America and Asia. Nonetheless, the diversity of production regions enabled me to add an additional layer of comparison since the data I collected allowed me to compare the same governance system across producing regions from different continents.

The initial reason to focus on East Africa was the intense fragility of small African coffee farmers due to their financial dependence on coffee cultivation. Indeed, coffee is the primary livelihood source for more than 10 million coffee producers in Africa (UNCTAD, 2019). East Africa is the central hub of African coffee production, accounting for 80% of Africa's total production (UNCTAD, 2018). The financial dependence of African farmers on coffee was accentuated by the low competitiveness, low yields, low coffee prices and the limited support provided by international development organisations. All these factors accentuated the instability of small African coffee producers (Wondemu, 2018). Hence, the reason for initially focusing on this area.

Furthermore, the instability that characterises the global production system of coffee affects African producers more intensively due to the overproduction that happened with the incorporation of new producing countries such as Vietnam (ICO, 2019; Murray, et al., 2006). For African coffee, this overproduction also meant an inevitable loss of relevance as a producing origin. The overall production of African coffee decreased from 18-19 per cent in 1995 to 15%-16% in 2002 (Ponte, 2002a) and to 11% in 2022 (Fairtrade, 2022).

In terms of power, the market liberalisation and regulation of trading, process and quality control practices in East Africa led to an institutional system in which producers had little or no voice (Civera, et al., 2019; Ponte, 2002b). Market practices such as supplier-managed inventories, corporate consolidation, greater relevance of branding, and the diversification and fragmentation of consumption transformed power relations within the African coffee market at the expense of coffee producers (Ponte, 2002a).

Lastly, regarding governance, the collapse of the ICA regime led to the sector's liberalisation. Such liberalisation took place in different ways within each African country. In Tanzania, for example, the liberalisation process was minimal, and coffee was bought and sold only at the auction. Conversely, Uganda experienced a significant liberalisation in domestic trade and processing with the strong influence of transnational corporations (Ponte, 2001).

Table eight below shows the worldwide coffee production per region in million 60-kg bags. It shows Africa as the region where less coffee is produced and unstained inter-annual growth (-7.2% in 22/23) only broken in the present year (12.1% in 2023/2024).

In summary, the decision to focus on East Africa is explained by (1) the high dependence that producers have on coffee, which is, in turn, a very volatile market, (2) the high number of small producers who seem trapped in poverty, and (3) the significant relevance of the coffee for national economies and local communities in East African countries. Therefore, improving the situation of coffee producers in East Africa could significantly and positively impact the livelihoods of many small producers.

Table 8: *Summary of World Coffee Production.*

Coffee Production, Million 60-kg Bags						
Regions	**2018/19**	**2019/20**	**2020/21**	**2021/22**	**2022/23**	**2023/24**
Africa	18.5	18.5	19.2	19.3	17.9	20.1
Caribbean, Central America & México	21,3	19.2	19.7	18.9	19.2	18.7
South America	81.9	81.1	83.9	77.6	81.3	98.3
Asia & Oceania	48.1	49.6	48.0	52.2	49.8	49.9

Source: ICO (2023)

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The University of Leeds approved the ethical review form, which covered issues such as how to address participants, informed consent, anonymity, protection and storage of information, (commercial) confidentiality, and disclosure (see Appendix 1).

Following the research ethics protocol, I ensured that participants completed and signed a consent form before participating in the study. One of the focuses of this document was to inform the option of withdrawing from the study participants at any time.

My research ethics protocol addressed crucial issues such as obtaining informed consent by fully informing potential study participants about my project and obtaining written consent using a clear letter of consent (Appendix 2), where I informed them about their option to withdraw at any time without any consequences. In the letter, I also told them about the confidentiality of the data collected, which I achieved by using a nomenclature that anonymised the data. Regarding the data, I also guaranteed the study participants their safety, ensuring them that the data would be only accessed by me. Lastly, to share the benefits of the outcome of my research with them, I informed all interviewees of my intention to share my results and the entire thesis with them once it was concluded.

The University Ethical Committee also reviewed the data management plan (Appendix 5) and the interview protocol (Appendix 3). Both documents were developed according to the university's ethical requirements.

3.7 Positionality

This section refers to the popular point of inquiry and debate regarding how the researcher’s position influences the research process. The researcher’s positionality justifies its inclusion as a factor affecting the study's outcomes.

Positionality refers to how the researcher views the world, shaping their interactions with “the researched”. The positionality relies on multiple factors such as gender, age, education, and social class (Holmes, 2020). Therefore, positionality influences research, including outcomes and results (Savin-Baden and Major, 2022). Consequently, Sultana (2007) referred to the necessity of paying attention to it to ensure ethical and participatory research. Due to the interaction with study participants, the researcher's positionality might influence participants’ responses and bias the data collection, questioning to some

extent the reliability of the data collected (Mather, 1996). Therefore, it is essential to know the potential impact that ignoring positionality might have on this.

As a male from the global north who has worked for a beverage company and can speak the language of some of the producers but not those in East Africa, I took a reflexive approach in the attempt to develop an objective stand, trying to reduce any bias or subjectivity as much as possible. However, knowing some of the interviewees before my PhD, and the cases in which I could speak my mother tongue in some of the interviews facilitated the interactions with some of the study participants. With the interviewees I had worked with, an initial trust allowed me to conduct a more relaxed interview. In the cases in which I had not previously worked with or had never met the interviewee, the flow of the conversation was less fluid at the beginning, affecting the length of the responses. The size of the responses was also influenced by the level of responsibility of the interviewee, which, in some cases, affected the details of the responses. When the interviewee occupied a high managerial position, their responses tended to be more abstract and with fewer examples.

In conclusion, I tried to address all the aspects of positionality that might have reduced the objectivity of my findings. To limit the impact of my positionality and compromise interviewees' responses, I meant to be as transparent as possible by clearly defining my philosophical, personal, and theoretical approach to guide me along the research process.

3.8 Methodology Limitations

Regarding the limitations of my methodology and study design, my conceptual framework was useful for exploring the nuances of power dynamics, governance structure, and empowerment pathways. I collected rich data regarding power dynamics concerning farmers in the context of the multiple coffee governance systems operating in coffee.

However, this study's findings are to be considered in light of some limitations. In some cases, the limitations of this research were accentuated by the impact of COVID-19 (see the COVID-19 impact statement submitted with this thesis).

By limitations, I refer to the flaws and shortcomings due to constraints in the use of methods, materials, or logistical aspects that, as a result, had an impact on the findings of this study.

This research investigated power dynamics, collecting qualitative data by interviewing a wide range of coffee actors, but not small coffee farmers. Therefore, findings are based on other actors' perceptions about farmers' empowerment. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was only feasible to conduct online interviews. The possibility of interviewing a range of actors from different levels, roles and geographical locations facilitated the collection of preliminary conclusions regarding farmers' empowerment.

Furthermore, I only used semi-structured interviews. Initially, I thought of meeting study participants to explore my findings. Still, resources were limited in time and availability, so I did not meet the study participants to validate my findings. The use of questionnaires could have contributed to making some of the responses more robust by enabling the collection of responses from a greater number of participants, but the use of semi-structured interviews permitted the building of a nuanced and deep narrative around the power dynamics affecting small farmers in the context of coffee GPN. Such a narrative allowed me to respond to the research questions raised by this study fully.

Another limitation regarding the objectivity of my findings and the use of semi-structured interviews relates to the positionality of interviewees. Corporate actors such as roasters, traders, and civil society organisations usually have their agenda that normally does not fully overlap with farmers' agenda. However, by interviewing a range of actors, I managed to identify conflicting aspects based on the different priorities different coffee actors have in comparison to small farmers.

Regarding the framework limitations, the criteria used to select the sources on which this study is based might not be enough to capture all existing governance systems currently functioning in East Africa. Nonetheless, this study encompasses a wide range of governance systems that, in some cases, have left room for a high internal variability within the different categories of governance systems. This limitation was addressed by clearly defining the categories of governance systems and the criteria to develop the typology of governance systems.

Furthermore, the number of possibilities for action considered within the conceptual framework might limit the robustness of the results. Selecting more possibilities for action could have led to different results in terms of power distribution. However, the possibilities for action used in this study embrace key aspects of the normal functioning of governance systems that suffice for concluding the power dynamics required to control a given governance system.

Additionally, this research only managed to capture a snapshot of coffee's governance structure and dynamics, which are very dynamic due to market trends, coffee buyers' interests, and consumers' preferences. Therefore, conducting the same research in a few years could contribute to capturing some of the changes happening over time in the coffee GPN.

From an empirical perspective, conducting online interviews raised several challenges. Interviewing participants online removed, to some extent, the control I could have had, as the interviewer, over the venue where the interview was held. However, in some cases, interviewees could not talk freely due to the presence of other colleagues or family members (Meherali and Louie-Poon, 2021). Furthermore, there were occasions when the sound and the video were not suitable due to poor internet connection, which affected the interview flow in some cases.

Lastly, some interviewees tended to spend too much time on the computer, influencing their willingness/availability to participate in the study. However, online interviews allowed

me to interview participants regardless of their location. Furthermore, online interviewees allowed me to surpass the social distancing requirements that made face-to-face interviews impossible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.9 Conclusions

This chapter established the methodological framework to answer the research questions of this thesis. Combining multiple methods allowed me to obtain a holistic approach regarding farmers' position in the coffee GPN. The combination of different qualitative methods also allowed me to surpass the significant limitations and challenges that the COVID-19 outbreak meant in terms of conducting in-person interviews.

After analysing the methodology and research design I used to collect and analyse data in detail, the three upcoming chapters refer to the empirical findings of this study. The next chapter investigates the range of governance systems steering the coffee GPN and the range of actors interacting within the coffee production networks.

Chapter Four: The Coffee Governance Landscape. Insights from East Africa

4.1 Introduction

This is the first of the three empirical chapters of this thesis. It focuses on the myriad of governance systems operating in East Africa. Firstly, it includes a theoretical section, drawing on the existence of winners and losers and the emergence of multiple governance systems. Chapter Four reflects on the existence of two different groups in the coffee GPN, losers and winners, deepening in their formation, durability, and the attributes of each group. It also expands on the context favouring the emergence of these two groups, including the interpretations given by the literature.

The existence of winners and losers within the coffee GPN and many governance systems guided the investigation regarding the typology of governance systems operating within East Africa (RO1). Identifying the range of governance systems operating in this region responds to RQ1.1. Identifying the leading coffee actors and some of the outcomes emerging from the interactions between coffee farmers and other coffee actors' answers RQ1.2.

The findings of this chapter regarding (1) the purpose of the governance systems, (2) the type of actors behind the setting of governance systems, and (3) the results of the interactions of coffee farmers with other coffee actors reveal the necessity to investigate, in more detail, coffee power dynamics. The reason for using the GPN approach (Chapter Two) is due to its capacity to capture the range of interactions held by coffee actors at multiple levels and focus on specific types of coffee actors -small farmers in this case- (Coe and Yeung, 2015). The reason for investigating power dynamics in detail is the necessity of understanding what is locking small farmers in such a disadvantageous position in the context of the governance systems steering the coffee GPN.

In terms of structure, Chapter Four is divided into five more sections. The following section draws on the two crucial aspects of the coffee GPN: the key actors and the multiple governance systems steering it. The following section analyses the findings, including (1) the uneven attention received by specific governance systems, (2) the plethora of governance systems currently functioning in East Africa, (3) relevant governance patterns identified across the coffee GPN, (4) the diversity of coffee actors and (5) specific features that are intrinsic to farmers and influence their participation in setting governance systems. The chapter concludes with a discussion and a conclusion section.

4.2 The Coffee Governance Landscape and its Actors

This section expands on the findings regarding the type of coffee governance systems operating in East Africa and the coffee actors operating within them.

4.2.1 The Heterogeneity of Governance Systems versus the Homogeneity of Scheme Setters

The systematic research review unveiled numerous coffee governance systems operating across East Africa. From undertaking the documentary analysis, I devised a typology of 5 categories of governance systems. They were grouped based on the purpose sought with its creation. The five categories that I found are as follows:

❖ Schemes based on voluntary certification standards. Their goal is to verify the compliance of social, economic, and/or environmental practices in the farming of coffee (Rice, 2015). This category includes five subtypes depending on who is responsible for verifying the compliance of the standards:

(1) In first-party voluntary certification schemes, the setting body was also responsible for its compliance (Loconto and Dankers, 2014). These schemes are usually set by TNCs (e.g., CAFE practices developed by Starbucks) (Snider et al., 2017).

(2) In second-party voluntary certification schemes, the standard's compliance is controlled by its owner, who enforces its compliance on the scheme's users (Loconto and Dankers, 2014). This type of scheme pursues the implementation of guidelines for sustainable agriculture along the value chain through the consensus of significant TNCs (Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005).

(3) In the case of third-party voluntary certification schemes, the compliance corresponds to a third independent actor (Loconto and Dankers, 2014; Reinecke, et al., 2012). Third-party voluntary certification schemes address varied purposes (see Table 9) and are usually set by CSOs (Raynolds and Bennett, 2015).

(4) In fourth-party multistakeholder platform schemes, compliance corresponds to a third independent actor. These schemes are also set by TNCs, coffee associations, and members of second-party voluntary certification schemes (Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005).

(5) Non-governmental actors set meta-standards schemes (Fransen, 2015), which coordinate and align the stances of several private standard organisations around the same topic (Reinecke, et al., 2012). Voluntary certification standards have in common the ability to be set and managed by actors, in most cases, from the global north, based on coffee-consuming regions.

❖ The farmer ownership model relies on FOs, i.e., associations/cooperatives, who act as facilitators. This scheme aims to support and empower small producers, so they learn how to get access to the coffee production stages where greater value is customarily added (Nkandou, 2011). The approach of this governance system is deeply rooted in the work conducted by the Centre for Agribusiness and Farmer Entrepreneur Enhancement (NUCAFE) in the context of the Ugandan coffee market. This governance system is one of the few schemes initiated and managed by small coffee farmers. The scheme starts with the organisation of individual farmers in groups, associations/cooperatives, and hubs (Chon and Tambito, 2018). This type of scheme seeks to make farmers fully autonomous

with the eventual withdrawal of the facilitators in a change of farmers' support. So far, it has been tested only in Uganda under the leadership of NUCAFE.

❖ Solidarity models such as Fair-Trade Social Enterprises (FTSEs) and microcredit schemes. These schemes emerge as part of the social economy movement and hold a hybrid identity. Both pursue the delivery of financial sustainability while at the same time securing the creation of social value. Their financial performance is contingent upon the pursuit of a social purpose (Doherty, et al., 2014). Non-profit organisations, cooperatives, commercial companies, or individual ventures are some actors responsible for setting FTEs. These types of actors sit on their boards. However, in many cases, producers' representatives sit also there, especially in the UK, e.g. Cafedirect (Huybrechts and Defourny, 2010).

Microcredits, instead, have, as purpose, providing financial services to those who cannot afford them so farmers can improve their standard of living (Nakabugo *et al.*, 2021). However, the setting of this type of scheme is in the hands of NGOs, commercial/community banks, microfinance institutions or aid donors (Magali, 2021; Nakabugo et al., 2021). Examples of this governance system are found in the African region, such as the VICOBA microcredits implemented in Tanzania (Magali, 2021). In Tanzania, there are also Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (SACCOS) that, as semiformal financial institutions, grant access to farmers to financial resources (Mruma, 2014).

❖ Public-private-producer partnerships (4Ps) involve cooperation between government, business agents, and small farmers to reach common goals by sharing benefits and risks and pooling resources and competencies (Abdulsamad et al., 2015). Producers are involved from the partnership's inception in this type of governance system, playing an active role in the partnerships and negotiations arrangements, governance, and monitoring. According to a guide developed by IFAD, 4P are usually initiated by corporate actors under the supervision of international actors (IFAD, 2016).

❖ Intellectual property law models include trademarks and geographical indications (GIs). Trademarks are signs that distinguish goods or services undertaken in a particular way. They can be owned by a natural/legal person or by a public or private collective (enterprises, governments, or trade associations) (Arslan and Reicher, 2011; Schüβler, 2009). Trademarks are designed to protect the producer of a product or a service. Although corporate actors normally initiate them, they could be undertaken by another group of stakeholders too (representatives of farmers cooperatives, coffee exporters, and government bodies) with the common objective of recognising the distinctive qualities of a given type of coffee (Johnson, 2012). Geographical indications (GIs) aim to protect the place of origin and its characteristics (Schüβler, 2009). GIs include certification marks, collective marks, and appellations of origin.

(1) The purpose of certification marks is to certify features (e.g., geographical origin, material, manufacturing mode) of a given coffee claimed by the proprietor of the mark (Johnson, 2012). Anyone can register for a certification mark if they are competent enough to certify the corresponding product (Johnson, 2012). However, certification marks' owners are often governmental bodies (Teuber, 2010).

(2) A collective mark aims to limit the market of a given product to the members' association (Johnson, 2012). Small coffee producers' associations can register a collective mark (Johnson, 2012), and indeed, these types of GIs are advised to small farmers since they can share the application costs.

(3) Lastly, appellations of origin aim to offer protection to a given coffee due to characteristics attributable to its geographical origin. Governmental bodies usually initiate this type of GI at the regional or national level (Teuber, 2010).

Table 9 summarises the typology of governance systems, including the setting actors, the purpose of the governance system and an example of each system.

***Table 9**: Categories of governance systems in East Africa*

Governance system		Setting actor	Governance system's focus	Examples
1. Voluntary Certification standards (developed across the global north)	**1.1 First-party Voluntary certification schemes**	They are set mainly by TNCs (Gereffi et al., 2001), who are also responsible for compliance.	To respond to consumers' demands regarding social & environmental dimensions of production (Macdonald, 2007) and for quality and traceability purposes (Snider et al., 2017).	C.A.F.E (Starbucks), Nespresso AAA
	1.2 Second-party voluntary certification schemes	They are set by significant food TNCs (Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005).	To define and implement commodity-specific guidelines for sustainable agriculture and harmonise them along the supply chain (Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005).	Sustainable Agriculture Information (SAI) platform
	1.3 Third-party voluntary certification schemes	Set social movement organisations, church groups, and alternative trade networks (Raynolds and Bennett, 2015).	Varied purposes: redistributing wealth, protecting people and the planet, ensuring consumer safety, mitigating supply chain risk, attracting green consumers, and challenging hegemonic control over global economic governance (Bennett, 2017).	Rainforest Alliance-UTZ Certified, Bird friendly, Organic, Fairtrade, Shadecoffee.
	1.4 Fourth-party multi-stakeholder platforms	TNCs, SAI platform members, or coffee associations set them. (Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005).	To develop a global code for sustainability across all stages of the coffee GPN (Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005).	The Common Code for Coffee Community (4C), Sustainability Coffee Challenge
	1.5 Meta-standard schemes	Mostly set by non-governmental actors (Fransen, 2015).	To steer private standards organisations by making them responsive to emerging shared objectives in standard norms, including critical overarching criteria (Reineke et al., 2012).	ISEAL, Global Living Wage Coalition, Global Coffee Platform Sustainable Coffee Challenge
Governance system		**Setting actor**	**Governance system's focus**	**Examples**

2. Farmer ownership model		This type of system starts with organising individual farmers into groups, associations/co-operatives, and hubs (Chon and Tambito, 2018).	To support and empower small producers so they learn how to get access to the coffee production stages where more excellent value could be added (Nkandou, 2011).	Nucafe (The National Union of Coffee Agribusiness and Farm Enterprises)
3. Solidarity models	**3.1. Fair trade social enterprises (FTSEs)**	They are set by non-profit organisations, cooperatives, commercial companies, or individual ventures (Huybrechts and Defourney, 2010).	To deliver financial sustainability while securing social value creation (Doherty et al., 2014).	Redemption Roasters, Café Direct
	3.2 Microfinance	They are set by NGOs, commercial/community banks, microfinance institutions or aid donors (Magali, 2021; Nakabugo et al., 2021).	To provide financial services to those who cannot afford them so they can improve their standard of living and become self-sufficient economically (Nakabugo et al., 2021).	Village Community Banks (VICOBA)
Governance system		**Setting actor**	**Governance system's focus**	**Examples**

4. Public-Private producer partnerships (4Ps)			They are set by cooperation between a given government, corporate actors, and small-scale producers, who agree to work together (IFAD, 2016).	To reach common goals by sharing benefits and risks and by pooling resources and competencies (Abdulsamad et al., 2015).	Permanent 4P: Sustainable Trade Initiative or Temporary 4P (SPREAD)
5. Intellectual property law schemes	5.1 Trademarks		They are owned by an individual person or a public or private collective entity (enterprises, governments, or trade associations) (Arslan and Reicher, 2011; Schüßler, 2009).	To protect the place of coffee's origin and the characteristics deriving from it (Schüßler, 2009).	Ethiopian trademark coffee SIDAMO, COFFEE KENYA
	5.2 Geographical indications (GIs)	**Certification marks**	They are set by governmental bodies (Teuber, 2010)	To certify features (e.g., geographical origin, material, manufacturing mode) of a given coffee, claimed by the proprietor of the mark (Johnson, 2012).	Example not found. within East Africa
		Collective marks	They can be set by and individual person or a collective entity provided they are member of the association (Johnson, 2012).	To differentiate a coffee produced by an association and to limit the use of the mark to its members. (Johnson, 2012).	Example not found. within East Africa
		Appellations of origin	They are set by governmental bodies at regional or national level (Teuber 2010).	To protect a given type of coffee based on specific characteristics linked to its geographical origin (Teuber, 2010).	Bugisu Coffee (Uganda)

4.2.2 Unequal Attention received by Governance Systems.

The systematic research review confirmed two clear trends within the coffee governance literature: (1) the prominent attention on voluntary certification standards schemes and (2) the dispersed and fragmented academic coverage of coffee governance systems.

(1) The prominent attention received by voluntary certification standards schemes became apparent, with nineteen sources focusing on this type of governance system, whereas nine sources referred to intellectual property law schemes. These two categories were the governance systems with more sources concentrated on them.

The prominent attention received by voluntary certification standards, in comparison to the rest of the schemes, had already been noticed by authors such as Grabs et al., (2016) and Levy, et al., (2016) with the detailed analysis of multiple aspects of voluntary certification schemes, such as setting actors' uptake and adaptation decisions (mainly corporate actors and CSOs). Instead, other categories of governance schemes, such as the Farmer Ownership model, have barely attracted academic attention. As of today, only Chon and Tambito, (2018) have investigated it. They highlighted the potential of such a scheme to bring rural prosperity to small farmers in Uganda.

(2) Furthermore, the systematic research review also unveiled coffee governance systems dispersed and fragmented academic coverage. There is an apparent lack of articles with a comparative approach, considering several categories of coffee governance systems simultaneously. Both academic and grey literature usually focus on one type of governance system, comparing only subcategories of the same scheme. (Minten et al., 2015; Loconto and Dankers, 2014; Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005).

Nonetheless, the systematic research review allowed me to identify enough literature to obtain a snapshot of the range of governance systems operating in East Africa and the actors interacting within them.

4.2.3 Governance Patterns across the Coffee Global Production Network

Drawing on the typology of governance systems introduced in the previous section, I undertook a more profound analysis based on the focus and the type of actors who set these governance systems. On one side, several findings confirm the presence of corporate actors in many governance systems categories and an increasing presence of formal state actors in the setting and functioning of intellectual property law schemes. I explain in detail below the findings that emerged from the documentary analysis: (1) the concentration of the capacity to set a scheme in a few coffee actors, (2) the existence of governance systems that prioritise coffee over coffee farmers, as the actors in charge of providing the raw material.

- **The possibility of setting a governance system within the reach of a few**.

Based on the type of actors with the possibility to set a governance system, the documentary analysis revealed that, in most cases, they are set by corporate actors and CSOs from across the Global North. Only the farmer ownership model breaks such a trend by putting small farmers (with the initial support of the scheme facilitators) in the position of setting a scheme. Nkundou, in defining “ownership”, referred to the situation in which farmers:

“Do not lose control or possession, before maximising value addition”; and responsible for its actions” (Nkundou, 2011, p.5).

However, between the group of governance systems mainly set by corporate actors and NGOs and the only scheme set by farmers, there is a third group of governance systems. These are the Intellectual Property Law Models. Although farmers are not excluded, per se, from setting a scheme, it is unusual to find one of them set by small farmers. This is due to the financial resources and technical skills required to set an Intellectual Property Law Model.

Within the group of schemes set by corporate actors and CSOs, three schemes were found: voluntary certification standards, solidarity models and 4Ps. In the case of

voluntary certification standards, corporations and CSOs set the schemes without seeking the initial engagement of small farmers. Bennet (2017) analysed 33 voluntary sustainability standards, finding that “two-thirds do not even imply intentions to include producers. At most, 25% ensure producers have votes/seats, and 18% give producers veto power” (Bennet, 2017, p.53). Nonetheless, some of these progressive schemes are working on reversing this trend, including small farmers in the highest governance bodies (Bennet, 2017).

In the case of solidarity models and 4Ps, despite farmers not being among the setting actors, their engagement is sought from the moment the scheme starts to function. Having said that, I identified a difference between the FTSE and 4Ps on one side and, microcredit schemes on the other. Despite addressing farmers as “beneficiaries”, the first two types of schemes involve farmers from the scheme's inception. Abdulsamad et al., (2015) observed that coffee cooperatives were involved from the inception of the 4Ps. In the case of FTSEs, that initial engagement became apparent through the participation of farmers on the FTSEs' managing boards (Huybrechts and Defourney, 2010). Microcredits, instead, consider small farmers as mere beneficiaries. NGOs and lender banks initiate these schemes in collaboration with local governments and aid donors. In this case, farmers are seen as mere beneficiaries of the financial services provided by the lenders (Nakabugo et al., 2021).

The farmer ownership model recognises the participation of farmers from the inception of the scheme, being the only scheme where setting actors are not located in the Global North, i.e., FOs, act as scheme setting actors, with the initial support of the scheme facilitators (Chon and Tambito, 2018; Nkandou, 2011).

Lastly, as said above, Intellectual property law schemes do not exclude “per se” small farmers from setting a scheme. However, most of them are initiated by actors who are not farmers. This is due to the legal expertise and resources required to register them and claim infringement. Furthermore, the possibility of setting intellectual property law schemes is shared by the return to leadership in setting governance systems of formal state institutions at regional and national levels. This trend is reverting what happened

with the withdrawal of formal state institutions that occurred after the ICA fallout. Next paragraph expands on formal state institutions' leadership in setting GIs.

Trademarks are usually utilised by corporate actors as part of their business strategy (Jhonsson, 2012), whereas "*certification marks are often owned by governmental bodies"* (Teuber, 2010, p.281). Collective marks, instead, do not exclude farmers from registering them, and due to the possibility of sharing registration costs among FOs, they are considered a feasible option for farmers. However, I did not find any example of a collective mark in the context of East Africa in the literature. Lastly, appellations of origin are sanctioned by governmental bodies at the national and regional levels despite being "defined by producers" (Rueda et al., 2017, p. 2482).

- **The detachment of coffee from the farmers who grow it**

My documentary analysis underscored the critical need for governance systems to focus on the livelihoods and needs of the farmers rather than focusing on coffee as a commodity. Even in cases where the governance systems aspire to be related to sustainability or development, the focus has remained on the commodity, not the farmers.

The literature analysis revealed two significant justifications for focusing on coffee itself rather than on farmers as the actors responsible for growing it: differentiation and protection. (1) One group of governance systems uses the differentiation of coffee as a crucial justification to prioritise their focus on coffee; (2) another type of governance system revolves around protecting coffee through legal instruments. These actions shouldn't be just about the coffee but about the livelihoods and futures of the farmers. (3) A third group of governance systems prioritise farmers' needs over coffee farming, recognising the importance of the human element in the industry.

1. **Coffee differentiation over farmers' needs.**

In the case of first-party voluntary schemes, the differentiation responds to the need to meet consumers' demands regarding their concerns about the origins of coffee and the social and environmental dimensions of its farming and growing processes. However, in the context of the CAFÉ practices implemented by Starbucks, Macdonald (2007) highlighted that the differentiation of coffee might initiate with "consumers' *demands but is decided based in ways that best serve their own corporate interests, making highly discretionary selections from a wide range of items on the sustainable coffee menu"* (Macdonald, 2007, p.807). It becomes apparent how these schemes subordinate coffee's differentiation to consumer demands insofar such differentiation satisfies their corporate interests.

Second-party voluntary certification standards differentiate the coffee by developing principles and practices based on environmental and social aspects that small farmers need to consider to get certified (Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005). An example of this scheme is the Sustainable Agriculture Information (SAI) Platform. SAI introduced a "common minimum set principles" (in 4 areas) and practices that farmers need to respect to get certified (SAI, 2009). Otherwise, farmers risk being left out of the scheme.

Third-party voluntary certification standard schemes emerged to guarantee sustainability in global value chains. Sustainability is to be achieved through the establishment and enforcement of norms and behaviour that coffee farmers need to follow to get their coffee certified (Cashore, et al., 2008). Indeed, the analysis of the literature reveals the greater attention allocated to explaining the standards uptake and adaption decisions taken by the standards setters (mainly civil society organisations) (Levy et al., 2016) rather than reflecting on how to involve small farmers in the development of the standards (Bennet, 2017).

Fourth-party multi-stakeholder platforms such as the Common Code for the Coffee Community (4C) aimed "*to enable social, environmental and economic sustainability in the production, post-harvested, processing and trading of mainstream green coffee for all actors along the supply chain"* (4C, 2024b). *The 4C platform aims* to spread recommended sustainability practices across the supply chain. The approach of spreading sustainability across the "supply chain" poses a significant problem as it leaves

out those actors who cannot comply with such practices to get certified (Kolk, 2005). However, the differentiation of coffee made by the 4C certification scheme is still happening despite excluding the most vulnerable farmers.

Lastly, meta-standard organisations differentiate coffee based on a standard normative resulting from the shared objectives of its members (individual standard organisations) (Reinecke et al., 2012). The existence of multiple voluntary standards schemes with different purposes within the same sector justifies the need for meta-standard organisations, such as the Global Coffee Platform or the Sustainable Coffee Challenge, to steer potential governance challenges arising among first-tier voluntary standards organisations (Reinecke et al., 2012).

2. Protecting coffee, but not in the farmers' name

Intellectual property law models form the second group of governance systems regarding the detachment of coffee from the farmers who grow it. This type of scheme differentiates coffee in the context of protection. Their purpose is to protect the specificity of a given kind of coffee, based on its distinct features and geographical origin, to inform consumers and restrict its farming from competitors (Schüβler, 2009). Only farmers whose coffee complies with the requirements would enjoy the protection provided by these types of schemes.

Despite the possibilities that intellectual Property Law schemes offer to secure a higher market price, Schüβler stated *that in the absence of other measures, profits are generally retained by other coffee actors within the chain (*Schüβler, 2009, p.172*).*

Therefore, who will benefit from the implementation of these types of schemes? In a country where coffee is produced through small-scale production, like Ethiopia," *local speculators and exporters may retain most of the profit from the coffee sale*," not small farmers (Schüβler, 2009, p.171).

Intellectual Property Law schemes are framed in a context of protection that many countries have initiated to protect multiple products, such as cheese, wine and coffee, that are linked to the concept of “terroir,” which refers to the unique combination of environmental factors of the cultivation of coffee plants (including geography, climate, soil, and farming practices) that affect the flavour of coffee (Smith, 2018). The protection of the terroir has gained traction within coffee governance due attention that specific terroirs have achieved within the European market. For instance, the recognition of the Café de Colombia in 2007 by the European Union (EU) to protect customers by ensuring they are buying authentic Colombian coffee, has allowed Colombian farmers to secure minimum prices in the international market (Schüβler, 2009).

3. Putting farmers first

The third group of governance systems that prioritise farms over the differentiation and protection of coffee are (1) the Farmer Ownership Model, (2) the solidarity models and (3) the 4Ps.

Firstly, The Ownership Model refers explicitly to the “*aim of improving the standard of living of farmers* (Nkandou, 2011, p.2). Secondly, FTSEs refer to the improvement of the livelihoods of certain producers in the Global South. According to Davies and Crane, (2003), such motivation shapes FTSEs’ practices and decisions. Huybrechts and Defourney referred to FTSE’s aim to serve a specific category of disadvantaged people *(*Huybrechts and Defourney, 2010, p.10). Microcredits focus “*on reaching excluded customers* that *cannot afford services from formal financial institutions”* (Nakabugo et al., 2021, p.5). Nakabugo referred to the priority of microcredits as improving people’s living standards and helping the poor become self-sufficient. (3) Lastly, Abdulsamad, et al. (2015) referred to the purpose of SPREAD, a 4P created in Rwanda in 2006, for the reinforcement of farmers’ technical and financial capacity to support them in “*continuing producing specialty coffee at economies of scale sufficient to attract specialty coffee roasters”* (Abdulsamad and Gereffi, 2015, p.6). The priority of this 4P was to enhance the

financial capacity of farmers so they could produce enough volume to be attractive for specialty roasters.

In conclusion, the dominance of corporate actors based on the Global North, with the growing engagement of state actors from within the Global South has become an apparent trend of coffee governance.

In the case of voluntary certification schemes, the dominance of corporate actors and CSOs becomes visible with their exclusivity in setting this type of governance systems. The dominant role of corporate actors, formal state actors, and CSOs is moderate in the case of Intellectual Property Law schemes since they admit the participation of small farmers in setting governance systems, such as appellation of origins and certification marks. Lastly, as mentioned above, the dominant role of corporate actors and CSOs is less evident in case governance systems, such as the Farmer Ownership Model, where FOs can set a scheme of this type of governance system with the initial support of scheme facilitators.

The dominant role of corporate actors, formal state actors, and CSOs becomes apparent when these actors lead the setting of a new governance system. In the case of governance systems focusing on coffee differentiation or protection, farmers become the subjects who need to meet specific requirements to be included in the scheme. When the governance systems prioritise farmers instead, farmers do not become compliance subjects. In such cases, farmers decide the scheme's requirements that other coffee actors need to meet to be part of the scheme, i.e., the Small Producer Symbol (SPP) case.

The dominant role of stakeholders from across the Global North in setting coffee governance systems has already been noted within the literature (Bennet, 2017; Bitzer et al., 2008). These authors have reflected on one of the consequences of this power asymmetry. One consequence is that Global North actors ‘voices are being heard over farmers’ voices, leading to the conservation of “*an agro-industrial model of agriculture*

founded on a market-industrial compromise and the predominance of civic rights rather than a "solidarity" approach to social principles", in the detriment of southern discourses, local knowledge and farmer preferences (Cheyns, 2011, p.23). Her research identified the difficulties encountered by multistakeholder initiatives to introduce pluralism in defining the common good, particularly for actors who were not part of them.

4.2.4 Diversity of Governance Actors

After identifying and classifying governance systems, I searched for the range of actors interacting with coffee farmers in the context of these governance systems. The rationale for investigating the range of actors was to understand if the interactions small farmers have with the rest of the coffee actors can explain, to some extent, the origin of the factors causing the disadvantageous position farmers hold in coffee.

Through my analysis of the documents about the governance schemes, I obtained a wide range of actors interacting with coffee farmers in the context of these governance systems. Table 10 shows the group of actors interacting with farmers. Those actors interacting with farmers got an "X," and when an actor was found to be the scheme-setting actor, it was highlighted in green. Table 10 was devised using the second body of literature resulting from the data collection process (see 3.4.1).

***Table 10**: Types of actors interacting with coffee farmers in each governance system.*

			Corporate actors	CSOs	Certifying organizations	Producers' representatives	International development organizations	Governmental bodies	Facilitators
Voluntary Certification standards	First-party voluntary certification schemes		X		X				
	Second-party voluntary certification schemes		X	X					
	Third-party voluntary certification schemes		X	X	X				
	Fourth-party multi-stakeholder platforms		X		X				
	Meta-standards schemes		X		X				
Farmer ownership model						X			X
Solidarity models	Fair trade social enterprises (FTSEs)		X	X	X	X			
	Microfinance		X	X		X	X	X	
4Ps			X	X		X	X	X	
Intellectual property law schemes	Trademarks		X			X		X	
	Geographical indications (GIs):	Certification marks	X					X	
		Collective marks	X			X			
		Appellations of origin				X		X	

Source: compiled by author

I searched the body of literature for extracts mentioning the actors involved in the scheme's functioning. The annexes (see Annexe 1) of the thesis include a brief definition of each group of actors and the roles of corporate actors.

The analysis of the range of actors interacting within the governance systems revealed the diversity of coffee actors operating in the coffee GPN. Such diversity can be attributed to several causes: the nature of the actors (corporate actors, formal institutions, civil society actors, international organisations), geographical location (consuming countries across the Global North as well as producing regions across the Global South), the geographical span of their operations (local, regional, national, international), and how actors organize themselves (multistakeholder platforms, partnerships, associations, cooperatives of several tiers).

Corporate actors and CSOs are present in most schemes. In many cases, these types of actors are the scheme-setting actors (see Table 10) whose decision-making processes take place at high levels, including the definition of their engagement in coffee governance systems. Due to their size, such decisions are generally taken at places[12] which exclude small farmers' participation since they only operate at a local level. Consequently, the design and inception-related decisions of a governance system should happen at "places" where small farmers operate and would be more likely to be able to intervene in its design.

Ponte (2000b) mentioned the lack of spaces where farmers engage in issues related to coffee production. He referred to the loss of" a *political forum of negotiations*" (Ponte, 2002b, p.1116) suffered by FOs when national governments retreated from regulating the coffee market after the ICA fallout. This is an important aspect to consider when designing future governance systems, and thus, it secures the engagement of small farmers from the scheme's inception at places where they are present.

For instance, Elder et al. (2014) referred to the challenges faced by small farmers with the rise of multinational retail power in terms of developing corporate sustainability standards (e.g., first-party voluntary certification schemes). Starbucks' aim with implementing its corporate sustainability program was to enhance its product quality.

[12] Places are understood in the context of the power cube, as in the arenas where critical social, political, and economic power resides (Gaventa, 2006).

Small farmers have been excluded from the “places” where decisions regarding the content of the sustainability standards are taken, despite the impact such standards might have on small farmers’ position regarding value distribution or market participation. The absence of small farmers is also apparent in the context of meta-standards organisations. The Common Code for the Coffee Community (4C)[13], claims the engagement of smallholder farmers in their decision-making processes. However, as of today, there are no farmers' representatives within their advisory Board, only representatives of corporate actors, members of CSOs, and academics (4C, 2024a).

Another aspect impacting farmers' position is the outcomes of their interactions with other actors. The following section expands on such outcomes and illustrates the disadvantageous position held by small coffee farmers.

4.2.5 *Factors Affecting Farmers' Involvement in Governance Systems Development*

This section draws on two factors embedded in the position of small farmers that emerged from the documentary analysis of the second body of literature: the intrinsic features associated with being farmers and the unfavourable outcomes resulting from farmers’ interactions with other coffee actors.

According to the literature, coffee farmers poorly understand the coffee market (Milford, 2004). This is partly due to their limited access to market information (Latynskiy and Berger, 2016) and their poor and limited marketing knowledge. Such limited knowledge tends to result in limited bargaining power to negotiate outside the security of governance systems (Murray et al., 2003). Farmers’ limited access to market information and limited marketing knowledge is relevant when interacting with other coffee actors. Both features hinder farmers' position when it comes to getting involved in the decision-making processes that happen within governance systems. The hampered position of farmers

[13] The 4C is a multi-stakeholder sustainability standard platform focused on raising social, economic environmental conditions of coffee production and processing worldwide.

because of the aforementioned features is partly responsible for overlooking the fact that governance systems are being implemented without their input (Milford 2004).

The features mentioned above partly illustrate the position of farmers in coffee production. However, the full portrait of their position must consider the outcomes of coffee farmers' interactions with other coffee actors. One key aspect to consider regarding coffee farmers' affiliation to a governance system is that they usually join once it has already been set. Without the initial participation of farmers in shaping certification standards, they may struggle to compete effectively or capture value-added benefits (Gaventa, 2006). Not being initially involved can perpetuate inequalities and reinforce the weakness of small farmers in the coffee GPN (Jaffee, 2007), since they will most surely remain "compliance subjects" or scheme beneficiaries for the whole time the scheme functions.

The documentary analysis revealed that small farmers were disadvantaged compared to other coffee actors. In the case of cooperatives formed by small farmers, cooperative leaders sometimes prioritise their interests over their members' interests. Wilson and Mutersbaugh (2020, p.363) referred to as "*certification conflicts*" when cooperative leaders prioritise selling to specific markets due to the attractive results for the cooperative, even when it results in uneven distributions among the farmers-members. Or cases in which cooperative leaders establish high-quality requirements for coffee beans to access premium markets, provoking the exclusion of the most disadvantaged farmers. Other examples refer to the cases when prices are set low to secure the financial sustainability of the cooperative, risking that some farmers do not receive fair prices for their coffee cherries (Cramer et al., 2016).

Small coffee farmers are also exposed when interacting with corporate actors across the coffee GPN. For instance, corporate actors functioning as roasters normally control processing, storage, and infrastructure facilities (Verma, 2015). These are the stages where more value can be added. Thanks to the roasters' dominance over the stages where more value is added, roasters normally obtain high gross margins and profits. Controlling those stages allows roasters to steer regional markets and decide the quality and type of coffee consumers must provide (Elder et al., 2014). Furthermore, when

corporate actors operate as traders, it becomes apparent their control over the quality of coffee available in the market (Ponte, 2001). Traders exercise this control by providing coffee buyers with limited information on the intrinsic quality of the coffee beans (Petkova, 2006). Grabs (2017) and Ponte (2004) observed how roasters can shape functional divisions of labour along the chain and set entry barriers to their benefit.

Regarding the corporate actors participating in the coffee GPN as retailers, several practices show their dominant position in the coffee GPN. Such practices refer to the capacity of retailers to increase sales and prices by taking advantage of the certified coffee and transmitting the price increase due to certification to consumers (Newman, 2009). Mayer (2016) even referred to the capacity of large corporate actors to decide what price, who produces what, and where. Ponte (2001a) also identified unfair trade practices committed by retailers such as squeezing on prices, threatening de-listing, retrospective deduction or changing of prices, demanding loyalty payments from farmers, keeping pricing opaque, using short-term or no contracts, demanding regional/global supplier agreements, paying late, demanding global promotions at short notice and demanding standards' compliance at suppliers' expense. Grabs (2017) also identified the slim margins farmers are forced to work with.

Regarding corporate actors acting as importers, Ponte (2001) observed that some of them prevent small farmers and workers from getting collectively organised by providing inputs and services to keep them captive producers. Importers also propose advance payment offers in cash for the whole harvest in exchange for farmers' resignation to bargain, using only small farmers' cooperatives as 'buffer' volume providers. This usually results in unfairly low prices being imposed on small farmers. Lastly, Ponte (2001) referred to cases in which exporters used false allegations about the coffee quality provided by cooperatives so they could substitute with coffee from unorganised producers.

In summary, this section portrays how the features shaping farmers' position favour the dominant position that cooperative leaders and corporate actors (roasters, retailers, and importers) enjoy in the coffee GPN.

4.3 Discussion

This chapter draws on the plethora of governance systems focusing on East Africa. Findings revealed many governance systems operating in East Africa and the wide range of actors interacting within them.

The study of governance systems has revealed the uneven academic attention received among them (Grabs et al., 2016), with a greater interest in voluntary certification standards schemes. Moreover, the limited existence of comparative studies of governance systems accentuates the critical knowledge gap within the coffee governance literature, showing the necessity of proportionally distributing academic attention among governance systems because voluntary certification standards schemes are not the panacea for improving farmers' position (DeFries et al., 2017).

The dominant position of actors across the Global North has become apparent, with their almost full exclusivity on setting up governance systems (Grabs et al., 2016), which allows them to influence the outcomes of participating in the coffee sector for their benefit. However, the volume of literature questioning the dominant position of certain coffee actors is still limited. Macdonald (2018) referred to how the dominance of corporate actors often undermines small farmers' position.

Indeed, the dominant position of corporate actors from across the Global North is still patent (Mutersbaugh, 2005b). Governance systems keep functioning without challenging enough the power dynamics that lock farmers into their disadvantaged position. Examples illustrating how the control of corporate actors is still exerted over the steering of the coffee GPN are the creation of two sector-wide platforms such as the Sustainability Coffee Challenge and the Global Coffee Platform. Both platforms are championed by Starbucks and Nestlé, respectively (Grabs, 2017), intending to be perceived as initiatives prioritising farmers' interests, when this is not always the case.

The implications that coffee governance systems and their dynamics have for farmers' position need to be addressed with greater criticality. This study intends to bring further

attention towards the need to conduct structural alterations within the coffee governance systems, despite the inconvenient implications that such changes could mean for the dominant coffee actors.

The governance literature has already recognised the need for such changes from different angles. Bennet (2017) has recognised the need to include farmers in the governance of voluntary certification standard schemes due to the benefits it would bring to their position within the type of schemes. Lyon (2007) referred to the benefits that including farmers in the governance of voluntary certification standard schemes would generate for them in terms of empowerment and strengthening of their skills. Jaffee and Howard, (2010) argued that small farmers have to be included in shaping governance systems to benefit from their functioning.

The urgency of the drastic changes that need to be undertaken with governance systems does not seem to be matched in the literature since many efforts within the coffee governance literature advocate for keeping on working in the existing dynamics of coffee governance systems, such as the efforts of academics and practitioners to increase the volume of certified coffee to benefit small farmers. However, increasing the sales of certified coffee could increase corporate actors' influence in governing certification schemes (Jaffee and Howard, 2010). They referred to the inviting target for corporate participation that the success of voluntary certification schemes poses.

For instance, the increase in the volume of FT-certified coffee, thanks to the sales made by Starbucks, triggered the company to abandon FT to implement their own certification scheme (CAFÉ practices) with more lenient requirements (Raynolds, 2014). Addressing this race to the bottom seems crucial to improve farmers' position since how most governance systems are designed, keeps benefiting corporate actors, favouring practices that would not have been accepted under the previous versions of the standards (Jaffee, 2012).

In conclusion, the argument that hearing farmers' voices could improve their position has not found enough support in the literature based on the empirical evidence presented

here. This lack of support demonstrates the limited relevance that academics and practitioners have given to the urgency of undertaking structural changes in the design of coffee governance systems. Small farmers are not involved enough in designing governance systems, except for Fairtrade (Bennett, 2017) and some FTSEs (Doherty et al., 2014).

Given the time that has passed since the ICA collapsed in 1989 and the emergence of new trends in the production and marketing of coffee, the findings of this chapter suggest that it has become crucial the need to investigate what aspects of governance systems need to be modified to improve farmers' position.

Building on the preliminary findings of Chapter Four, the following chapters of this thesis will deepen the analysis concerning the power dynamics behind the limited role of small farmers. This study has concluded that one factor explaining the poor position of farmers in coffee corresponds to the limited attention that the undertaking of structural changes within the coffee GPN has received to date.

This research addresses such gap by deepening the power dynamics existing at the core of governance systems (Chapter Five) and by drawing on the identification of empowering mechanisms to respond how governance systems could be modified to challenge the existing power dynamics that keep on compromising the position of small coffee farmers (Chapter Six).

4.4 Conclusion

Evidence from the coffee governance literature investigation revealed that prominent attention was given to voluntary certification standards. These findings contributed to unveiling the scattered and fragmented literature covering governance systems functioning in coffee. Identifying a plethora of governance systems steering the coffee GPN and the wide range of coffee actors revealed the convoluted and complex reality of the coffee governance landscape.

This study went beyond the limited scrutiny of the academic literature and homogenous empirical focus of coffee practitioners by conducting a comparative analysis that identified multiple governance systems that originated a typology of governance systems. These governance systems will be categorised and investigated using governance dimensions as common analysis criteria.

Using a comparative approach contributes to filling the gap in the literature since studies drawing on governance systems typically compare one or two types of governance systems as maximum. Furthermore, comparative studies can be used to bring attention to overlooked debates regarding the effectiveness and actual drivers for change within coffee governance systems. The consideration of small farmers as actors with the possibility of setting a governance system emerges as an alternative to break with the features associated with the condition of “small farmer” which is locking farmers in a position of subordination. These hindering features are embedded in the coffee governance landscape. This is why governance systems only deal with emerging outcomes generated by determining features that continue hindering the position of coffee farmers.

This chapter's results deepen the complexity of the coffee governance landscape. By deepening, I refer to the investigation of the dominance acquired by actors with the possibility of setting a governance system. Evidence presented in this chapter identified that the possibility of setting a governance system mainly corresponds to corporate actors and civil society organisations from the Global North. To investigate the power dynamics that need to be changed so that small farmers start to have a leading voice within identified governance systems, this study drew on the nuanced investigation of power dynamics, which is central to the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Investigation of Power across Governance Systems in the Context of the Coffee Global Production System.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates power dynamics across the governance systems identified in Chapter Four. Drawing on the findings of that chapter, the investigation of power dynamics was guided by the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter Two. This chapter utilises the body of literature that was obtained to identify governance systems. As in Chapter Four, findings in Chapter Five were obtained through a documentary analysis.

Chapter Five examines power dynamics in coffee governance systems to explore which of them are better equipped to favour farmers' position from the perspective of power. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to illuminate the implications of power allocations in the content of coffee governance systems for small farmers' position.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The following section presents the findings, including the types of powers farmers hold across governance systems and an analysis of which governance systems are better equipped to change farmers' position in coffee. It also includes a section discussing this chapter's findings. Lastly, Chapter Five finishes with a section that contains some concluding remarks.

5.2 What Types of Power Fall in the Hands of Coffee Farmers?

This section describes the analysis of power by examining under which governance systems farmers have (1) the possibility of setting or initiating a governance system, (2) the possibility of deciding the agenda of a governance system and (3) the possibility of enforcing the compliance of the requirements of the scheme.

In Chapter Two, I examined the conceptual link between governance dimensions and types of power. From such links emerged three possibilities for action that I used to claim the presence of power when small farmers perform the activities contained within the governance dimensions. This section, firstly, examines when farmers have visible power. Secondly, it examines when farmers have hidden power. In the case of invisible power, the documentary analysis could not provide relevant data to determine whether small farmers were entitled to it. However, the semi-structured interviews enabled me to collect data regarding invisible power (Chapter Six). At the end of the examination of the findings, I included a table (Table 11) summarising all the findings regarding power distributions per type of power across governance schemes.

5.2.1 The Power to set a Governance Scheme

This section explores when farmers can have visible power in the context of the multiple governance systems operating in the coffee GPN. Visible power[14] underpins the possibility of setting or initiating a scheme and the possibility of enforcing compliance using formal rules. The former rests on the governance dimension "leading actor," and the latter rests on "enforcement_1."

The analysis regarding visible power allocations revealed the existence of three groups of governance systems regarding the possibility of setting/initiating a governance system and two groups regarding the possibility of enforcing compliance through formal procedures.

Possibility to set or initiate a governance system.

[14]Visible power refers to the control over structures, formal rules, authorities and decision-making procedures and the enforcement formal compliance (Gaventa, 2006).

The first group of governance systems is formed by voluntary certification standards, where the absence of visible power became clear since the possibility to initiate or set a governance scheme falls upon a range of coffee actors different from small farmers.

Ponte has referred to farmers' exclusion from setting voluntary standards in many ways. He claimed that "*producers have been completely cut off from the game of standards setting and monitoring*" (Ponte, 2004, p.40), because farmers' participation in setting first-party voluntary certification schemes (e.g., Nespresso AAA) and fourth-party multi-stakeholder platforms (4C) "*has been at best marginal*" (Ponte, 2004, p.40).

In the case of third-party voluntary certification schemes, Carmin, et al. (2003) referred to the greater access given to corporate actors regarding decision-making opportunities. Bennet (2017) referred to all groups with access to participate in the setting of third-party voluntary certification schemes. She used the term "*organisational pathologies*" to describe:

"Structures that privilege elite stakeholders (such as industry associations, government aid agencies, philanthropic donors or corporations with massive buying power) over less powerful groups such producer cooperatives and grassroots advocacy organisations) (Bennet, 2017, p.56).

In the case of meta-standards, Fransen (2105) referred to the almost total exclusivity of non-governmental actors in running this type of governance system. For instance, ISEAL's current board is only formed by corporate and CSO representatives[15] (ISEAL, 2024).

15 As of 14/05/2024 the ISEAL Board was formed by Adam Cox, (Rainforest Alliance), Aik Hoe Lim, (WTO) ,Alan McClay, (Better Cotton Initiative), Chris Ninnes, (Aquaculture Stewardship Council), as Board Chair, Danielle Morley, (Bonsucro), Joseph D' Cruz, (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil) , Kiron Bose (Collington

Despite not being initiated by farmers, a second group of governance systems seek their involvement from the scheme's inception. This is the case of solidarity schemes, 4Ps and Intellectual property schemes, in which farmers are considered more than just "beneficiaries" of such schemes. Huybrechts and Defourny (2010) identified how producers' representatives are included on the boards of FSTEs. Cafedirect and Twin illustrate this emerging trend. In the case of both companies, farmers can influence the scheme's procedures under the invitation of the scheme-setting actors. The former invitation includes farmers becoming members of the governing bodies from the scheme's inception.

4Ps also involve small producers in the initial negotiations, partnership arrangements, governances, and monitoring (IFAD, 2016). The report that IFAD issued in 2016 about how to set a 4P explicitly refers to the engagement of small farmers from the inception of the 4P, as opposed to Private-public partnerships.

Due to the multiple subcategories, intellectual property law schemes have a diverse casuistry. (1) Corporate actors typically set trademark schemes as part of their marketing strategy (Johnson, 2012). However, trademarks could also be initiated by other types of stakeholders, such as representatives of farmers' cooperatives, coffee exporters and government bodies, who work together to recognise a given kind of coffee. This was the case with Ethiopian coffee designations: Harrar/Harar, Sidamo and Yirgacheff (Brownell, 2009). Trademark do not exclude small farmers from setting a scheme. Still, they require the applicant to have the capacity to be competent to guarantee that the trademark is only used with compliant goods. Blue Mountain coffee is an example. The Jamaican Coffee Industry Board defined the strict geographical boundaries in which the Jamaican Blue Coffee is supposed to be grown (Teuber, 2010). Owners of certification marks do not own the product itself. They can just promote its use. A certification mark represents a

Capital), Margaret Kim (Gold Standard,) Melanie Grant, (Responsible Jewellery Council), and Nina Schuler (AECOM).

collective right to inform consumers that a given coffee possesses certain characteristics. Governmental agencies usually own certification marks (Teuber, 2010).

(2) Collective marks do not exclude small farmers from setting one scheme, but the fees required to apply for its registration prevent, in many cases, farmers from setting a scheme of this type (Johnson, 2012). Finally, (3) appellations of origin (AO) recognise the specific participation of small farmers in the setting, but farmers cannot register and initiate it (Teuber, 2010). For instance, café de Colombia was registered as an AO in 2006 in Europe, (Teuber, 2010)

The Farmer Ownership Model forms the last group. This governance system guarantees small farmers an active role in the scheme's setting. With the support of certain actors called facilitators, small farmers are nudged to organise themselves into farmer group associations. In this way, small farmers are more likely to add value through the coffee GPN (Nkandou, 2011). Small farmers, therefore, can set /initiate a scheme. Being able to lead the setting of the scheme allows farmers to have control over structures, formal rules, and decision-making procedures, known as visible power.

- **Possibility to enforce compliance within a governance system.**

The possibility of enforcing compliance embraces formal (enforcement_1) and informal rules (enforcement_2). Whereas enforcement_1 can be used to argue the presence or absence of visible power, enforcement_2 refers to the presence or absence of invisible power (see below).

Findings regarding the possibility that actors have for enforcing compliance reveal the existence of two groups of governance systems. The first group is formed by voluntary certification standards, microcredit schemes, and intellectual property schemes. Within these governance systems, farmers do not have the possibility to enforce the compliance of scheme requirements.

Within voluntary certification sustainability standards, corporate actors and CSOs sometimes validate the compliance of the scheme requirements by themselves, or by the organisation they are part of, through a third independent institution, or by a standard certification body hired to audit them (Rueda, et al., 2017). In their research, Rueda et al. ranked sustainability instruments based on their stringency in auditing and compliance. First-party voluntary certification schemes are associated with lower stringency instruments because" they *are designed and managed by the company, so they are not intensively audited*" (Rueda, et al., 2017, p.2481).

Third-party and fourth voluntary certification schemes and multi-stakeholder platforms are included in the medium stringency instruments group due to "an external body that verifies compliance and establishes sanctions" (Rueda et al., 2017, p.2481). Meta-standard organisations enforce their objectives through the voluntary compliance of their members. In most cases, the objectives of meta-standard organisations are grounded on the objectives of their members, so they remain easy to comply with.

In the case of microcredit schemes, instead, producers must abide by the requirements set by institutions that, in turn, can be supervised externally. In Kenya, for instance, a system of prudential supervision is followed. This system establishes that "*an external supervisor would oversight the financial institution through examining and monitoring mechanisms to verify the compliance with the approved regulations"* (Ali, 2015, p.126). In this case, farmers must abide by the rules passed by the national government.

Regarding intellectual property law schemes, farmers are excluded from setting the scheme's requirements. They must abide by them. The TRIPS:[16]

establishes the general standard of protection that must be available for all geographical indications. It provides that "legal means" must be provided to interest parties to prevent

[16] The Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) is an agreement on international IP rights. It came to force in 1995, as part of the agreement that published the World Trade Organization (WTO).

the use of geographical indications which mislead the public as to the geographical origin of the goods (Johnsson, 2012, p.294).

The TRIPS also establishes that member states oversee providing the “legal means” they consider best. Therefore, member states are the only actors with the possibility to enforce (formal) compliance. The fact that only state partners have the possibility to enforce compliance could explain why Rueda et al., (2017) referred to the appellation of origins as instruments of “*high stringency” whose compliance only corresponds to* national governments. Only in the case of the certification marks a certification body supervises their enforcement and a national coffee board in charge of their monitoring (Johnson, 2012).

A second group of schemes where small farmers have the possibility to enforce compliance is formed by the Farmer Ownership Model, FSTEs and 4Ps. In the case of the Farmer Ownership Model, there is no compliance as such. Nkandou (2010) referred to conducting periodical evaluations to assess the failures and success of the scheme. This evaluation also increases transparency for the supporters who provided the funding. According to Nkandou, the periodical evaluation could be conducted “*by the donor’s representative or an independent consultant working closely with the farmer ownership facilitator(s)”* (Nkandou, 2010, p.34).

Regarding FTSEs, producers are collaborators who intervene in enforcing the scheme's objectives rather than being forced to comply. Mason and Doherty, (2016) identified mechanisms to involve small farmers in FTSEs, such as the pre-board meetings or induction programs for newly elected board representatives from FOs. They highlighted that such a level of involvement not only increases the feeling of belonging to the FTSEs, but it makes possible a different type to the standard corporate and nonprofit boards (Ruebottom, 2013).

In the case of the 4Ps, producers and the other parties (corporate actors, formal government and CSOs) have had the opportunity to discuss each party's commitment. In one of IFAD’s annual reports, there is a particular mention of farmers’ needs, not only to

make sure what the conditions they should accept but also "*to facilitate a process that builds trust and provides all parties involved with access to information* (IFAD, 2016, pp15).

To sum up, in the case of the governance systems where small farmers, rather than being in control of the enforcement, are subject to the compliance of the governance system's requirements, the focus of the scheme is put on coffee "as a good" over farmers' needs, with the setting of structural limitations in detriment of farmers such as the limitation of the types and amount of information to which actors have access to. Chapter Four identified the group of governance systems focusing on coffee rather than on farmers' needs by making them "beneficiaries" of the scheme, which puts them in a position of subordination. Not having the possibility to set and enforce the requirements of a governance system sheds some light on the causes hindering farmers' (visible) power and serves to know more about how power dynamics compromise farmers' position in the coffee GPN.

5.2.2 The Power to Control the Scheme's Agenda.

Hidden power is held by actors with the possibility of setting the agenda of a given scheme. This possibility rests on two governance dimensions: motivation and scope. The impossibility of certain actors to set the agenda of a given governance system shows the existence of limitations that prevent such actors from deciding who participates in the decision-making process. These limitations occur when actors lack hidden power. The dimension "motivation" refers to the rationale that triggers the creation of a given scheme. Such possibility for action normally coincides with the possibility of initiating a governance system since the rationale selection happens when the governance system is set, normally decided in the interests of the schemes' setters.

In examining the dimensions of "motivation and "scope", three groups of governance schemes were identified based on whether small farmers had the possibility of setting the agenda of the governance system.

- **“Motivation”**

The farmer ownership model forms the first group. In this scheme, small farmers have the possibility to influence the rationale of the scheme because they are included from the beginning in the definition of the scheme's motivation. This governance system has as its primary motivation small farmers’ empowerment (Nkandou, 2011). Indeed, one of the scheme's core values is that the scheme's control and ownership must always be in farmers’ hands without losing any of them “*to the governance and management structures*” (Nkandou, 2011, p.2).

The second group of schemes, formed by the solidarity schemes and 4Ps, show the limited possibility of farmers influencing the rationale of the scheme. Within the solidarity schemes, FTSEs have as motivation the generation of positive social and environmental externalities (Mason and Doherty, 2016). In the case of microcredits, it is the alleviation of poverty (Johnson, 2012).

Despite farmers not participating in the definition of the rationale of the scheme, this type of governance system is pushing for a greater engagement of small farmers by having the same number of producer and corporate representatives on their boards (Huybrechts and Defourny, 2010). Mason and Doherty (2016) in their investigation of the paradoxes[17] in the governance of FTSEs, found out that the equalitarian representation of farmers in boards is supported by complex ownership arrangements, making producers also shareholders of the FSTE and “*with pre-board meetings with producers to discuss the key issues in the boards' papers”* (Mason and Doherty, 2016, p.462) and, “*with induction programs for newly elected board representatives from producer organisations*” (Mason and Doherty, 2010, p.462) to ensure producers’ representatives are trained in board governance responsibilities.

Regarding the 4Ps, IFAD (2016) differentiates the rationale of each of the members of the 4Ps. Farmers’ motivation refers “*to profit from agriculture and related activities,*

[17] **Paradoxes** refer to ‘‘the interesting tensions, oppositions, and contradictions between theories which create conceptual difficulties’’ (Poole and Van de Ven 1989, p. 564).

improve incomes and livelihoods", whereas public sector agencies' focus "*on achieving economic growth and reduce poverty*", and private-sector motivations refer to "*securing reliable sources of raw materials*" IFAD (2016, p.4). Regardless of the parties' motivations, IFAD's report refers to a stage when the definition of the 4P rationale happens with the exclusion of small farmers since farmers are referred to as the "target groups" (IFAD, 2016, p. 9). Nonetheless, farmers are invited to join private sector partners and IFAD once small farmers' roles have been defined. This is the reason to argue that small FOs have limited hidden power. As part of the 4Ps, "*are invited to discussions and negotiations to facilitate a process that builds trust"* (IFAD, 2016, p.15) once the discussions about the 4P's rationale have taken place.

Microfinance systems embrace schemes in which funding could be provided by a third actor or by the members' savings. It is in the second case where farmers have the possibility to define the rationale of the scheme. Nakabugo et al. (2021), in their investigation of the microcredit services designed for coffee farmers, recognised the crucial help of NGOs in assisting "*microfinance institutions in East Africa to give out financial services through both individual and group borrowing"* (Nakabugo et al., 2021, p.5). These microfinance institutions are part of the governmental context based on detailed regulations that govern the sector. Hence, the leading role of the national government in devising an appropriate context for the success of microcredit schemes.

Lastly, the third group of governance systems is formed by voluntary certification standards and intellectual property rights. These types of governance systems normally do not involve farmers in defining the scheme's rationale. In both categories of governance schemes, corporations, standards-setting entities, national coffee boards, and national agencies were responsible for deciding who participates in the decision-making process or what is on the agenda.

The documentary analysis revealed that the rationale of voluntary standards and intellectual property schemes is competitive differentiation (Bennet, 2017). For instance, Starbucks's CAFÉ program aims to differentiate its coffee, based on social and

environmental practices, from the rest of coffee and thus satisfy the demand of environmentally and socially aware consumers (Macdonald, 2007). Meta standards organisations have as the rationale to coordinate voluntary certification standard schemes at multiple levels. Meta standards organisations work to improve the coherence of the content and procedures of individual standard schemes, e.g. ISEAL. Its motivations are decided by the organisation members, among which small coffee farmers are not (Reinecke et al., 2012). Derkx and Glasbergen (2014) question the task of coordinating the coherence of individual voluntary standard schemes for lacking enough credibility since they are "*exponents of the same regulatory approach" (*Derkx and Glasbergen, 2014,p. 47).

In the case of intellectual property law schemes, the definition of their rationale is decided by National Coffee Boards and national governments, with the consideration of international agreements, such as the TRIPS agreement, currently the most comprehensive multilateral agreement on intellectual property (Teuber, 2010). The TRIPS attributes to countries the implementation of measures that guarantee the protection of coffee features linked to their geographical origin. Indeed, *owners of* certification marks and appellations of origin are often governmental bodies (Teuber, 2010, p.282) or private and public collective entities in the case of trademarks (Arslan and Reicher, 2011; Schüβler, 2009).

- **"Scope"**

Scope is the second feature underpinning the possibility of setting the agenda of a governance system, revealing which actors hold hidden power. This governance dimension refers to the emphasis of a governance system. With the documentary analysis, I identified a group of governance systems where small farmers have the possibility to set the agenda (indicating the presence of hidden power) and another group of governance systems where farmers do not have such a possibility.

The first group refers to systems in which farmers can decide on the system's agenda, including the farmer ownership model, 4Ps, and appellations of origin (one of the intellectual property law schemes).

The Farmer Ownership Model focuses on social sustainability, which refers to providing a better opportunity to farmers and, at the same time, developing coffee with superior quality. Nkandou talks about the “strategic plan” to refer to the agenda of the scheme. The strategic plan is set by association leaders, with the support of external actors (facilitators). Despite the external support, farmers are responsible for setting the scheme agenda (Nkandou, 2011).

The scope of the 4Ps is defined by the business scheme binding all 4P members together. The scope of a 4P depends on the nature of the product, partners, and end market and is linked to its business plan, including the capacity-building and investment activities required to develop it. In the process of negotiating the business plan, the voices of small farmers could frequently be overheard. To address such risk, business plans normally include mechanisms securing the consideration of the needs of small farmers. According to IFAD 2016, one of those mechanisms refers to the inclusion of an independent broker. The following extract includes further information in this regard.

“*An accessible and independent broker can ensure that mechanisms for dialogue give voice to all partners and facilitate discussions of any differences when that arise, supporting the development of joint solutions”* (IFAD, 2016, p.23).

In the case of appellations of origin, farmers are consulted about the emphasis of the scheme, giving them the possibility of influencing the definition of the scope of the system. In the context of appellations of origin, farmers work with local, regional, and national institutions to define the protection scope of a given appellation of origin (Galtier, et al., 2013).

The second group of schemes, which does not allow small farmers to decide about the system's agenda, is formed by voluntary certification standards schemes, solidarity schemes, and intellectual property law schemes (excluding appellations of origin).

Voluntary certification standard schemes focus on a wide range of issues: good practices (UTZ), quality control (ISO), environmental sustainability (SAN/RA/Bird), and social sustainability (FT). At a higher level, meta-standard schemes reinforce and coordinate all the aforementioned emphasis and increase their credibility by developing codes of good practice to be used as a benchmark or credibility tool (Derkx and Glasbergen, 2014). The possibility of deciding the emphasis of voluntary certification schemes corresponds to their scheme setters, who normally are corporate actors, private certifying entities, and multi-stakeholder platforms. Since farmers are not part of their governing boards, do not have the possibility to set the agenda of voluntary certification standards schemes (Bennett., 2017). However, some voluntary certifying schemes, such as FT, have started to include small farmers in their highest governance bodies, allowing them to participate in the discussion about the scheme's emphasis (Bennett, 2017).

Regarding solidarity schemes, FTSEs emphasise achieving financial sustainability and creating societal value that promotes social change (Mason and Doherty, 2016). Microfinance schemes focus on guaranteeing access to credit for vulnerable groups (ITC, 2015). In both types of governance systems, farmers have the role of beneficiaries and do not have the possibility to set the agenda, except for those FTSEs that have started to include small farmer representatives on their boards, giving away some (hidden) power in the benefit of small farmers (Galera and Borzaga, 2009).

In the context of microcredit schemes, only when small farmers are members of a cooperative and the microcredit funds come from the savings of its members is it possible for them to participate in the scope of the microcredit scheme (ITC, 2015). Otherwise, the possibility to define the agenda of the scheme corresponds to the lenders: corporate actors, public-private partnerships, and non-governmental or international actors such as the World Bank (Aagaard, 2011).

The scope of intellectual property law schemes must be understood under the context of protecting coffee. These schemes link the particularities of a given coffee, in terms of quality and production process, with its geographical features (names, brands or places), protecting the peculiarity of a given coffee compared to other coffee with different characteristics. Formal institutions at multiple levels have clearly defined legal mechanisms in collaboration with actors who demand their protection, becoming, therefore, beneficiaries. In the case of trademarks, brand owners (corporate actors) are the ones seeking legal protection (Giovannucci et al., 2012). Regarding geographical indications and certification marks, formal institutions (e.g., certifying agencies) work with national coffee boards to develop the scheme's scope.

Regarding collective marks, farms' involvement varies substantially. Depending on the collective mark, farmers can get more or less involved. Collective marks seek to guarantee that they are only used by the members who comply with previously decided governing rules. However, no member can own the mark. The collective holds the mark title for the benefit of all its members. Members are constrained to abide by the requirements if they want to use the collective mark. Normally collective marks owners are trade associations (Schüβler, 2009), cooperatives or associations (Giovannucci et al., 2012). In any case, the collective mark’s owner must be able to undertake the registration process. Small farmers are associated with beneficiaries rather than scheme setters based on collective marks’ features.

In summary, the documentary analysis also showed that in most governance systems, small farmers hold limited hidden power (subject to the particularities identified within each governance system).

5.2.3 Invisible Power

Compliance with the requirements of a given governance system can be enforced through formal procedures (enforcement_1) controlled by certain actors or through informal rules (enforcement_2). As previously mentioned, the control through informal regulations is

linked to small farmers' perception of themselves as coffee actors and to what extent that perception can be used to control compliance enforcement (hidden power).

Farmers' perception of their place in the coffee GPN partly rests on their knowledge and experience. Unfortunately, the methodology I utilised for this research did not allow me to investigate the possibility of farmers enforcing compliance based on their local knowledge and culture due to the impossibility of finding evidence from within my database. The findings of the documentary analysis show a structural limitation to collecting data regarding the farmers' invisible power. Nonetheless, I collected relevant data for investigating invisible power using semi-structured interviews in Chapter Six.

Table 11 summarises the results examined above to provide a general outlook on the power dynamics found in the documentary analysis.

***Table 11**: Summary of power dynamics across governance systems*

Governance systems	Governance dimensions			
	Leading actor setting/initiating a scheme falls into…	**Motivation (rationale)**	**Scope (emphasis)**	**Enforcement**
Voluntary certification standards	Corporations, private certifying entities, multi-stakeholder platforms	Corporations, standard-setter organisations and multistakeholder corporations decide to prioritise competitive differentiation.	Decided by a broad range of stakeholders that usually does not include farmers	Corporations, standard-setting entities, independent auditing bodies.
	Absence of visible power	Absence of hidden power	Absence of hidden power (see trends of FT that are giving away some power to small farmers)	Absence of visible power
Farmer ownership scheme	Farmers can get involved in setting a scheme with the support of other actors who act as facilitators	Small farmers' empowerment	Small farmers, with the support of a facilitator, decide it	Farmers are responsible for the enforcement of the scheme's requirements
	The presence of visible power	Presence of hidden power	Presence of hidden power	Presence of visible power
Solidarity schemes	Small farmers can get involved in setting up FTSEs because, in some cases, small farmers are considered partners and not mere beneficiaries. However, small farmers have no possibility for action to initiate a scheme by themselves. Small farmers sometimes have the possibility for action to set up a microcredit scheme (when funding for financial services to members is generated from members' savings and shared capital contributions).	Some FSTEs involve small farmers in their boards. However, there are boards in charge of deciding the motivation of these schemes, which is normally to generate positive social and environmental externalities.	Achieving financial sustainability and creating societal value that promotes social change/ Guaranteeing access to credit for vulnerable groups. Farmers are considered beneficiaries. However, some FTSEs include small farmers' representatives on their boards	Regarding FSTEs, farmers, rather than enforced actors, are collaborators who intervene in enforcing the objectives of the scheme. As far as microcredit schemes are concerned, farmers must abide by the requirements signed by public financial agencies and credit institutions
	Limited presence of visible power	Limited presence of hidden power	Absence of hidden.	Presence of visible power/Absence of visible power in case of microcredit schemes.

Governance systems	Governance dimensions			
	Leading actor setting/initiating a scheme falls into…	**Motivation (rationale)**	**Scope (emphasis)**	**Enforcement**
4ps	Small farmers do not have the possibility for action to initiate a scheme. Such possibility for action falls into international actors from the development community with the possibility for action to coordinate the initial steps towards forming a 4P. However, they have the possibility for action to collaborate in process/setting of the scheme	The motivation is meeting specific goals more effectively thanks to resource pooling and sharing risks. However, those goals are influenced by the primary motivation of each group of actors that forms a 4P.	The possibility for action of farmers to decide about the emphasis of the scheme is guaranteed by a partnership binding agreement that is supposed to include mechanisms that ensure the voices of small farmers' organisations are heard as well as mechanisms that mitigate the risks small farmers' organisations can take as members of a 4P.	Compliance is enforced with a tripartite agreement signed by all parties.
	Limited presence of visible power	Limited presence of hidden power	Presence of hidden power	Presence of visible power
Intellectual property law schemes	Small farmers don't have the possibility for action to initiate any of these schemes by themselves. However, they can intervene in the process of setting one. It depends on a case by case to what extent their voice will be heard.	The motivation of the scheme is defined by national coffee boards and national governments that are, in many cases, part of international agreements such as TRIPS	Formal institutions and protection-seeking actors	International agreements enforce similar legal protection provided by the competent national jurisdictions within member states that can freely choose the protection method.
	Limited presence of visible power	Absence of hidden power	Absence of hidden power. Only in the case of appellation of origin farmers are consulted to define the scope of protection	Absence of visible power

5.3 What Governance Systems are Better Equipped to Improve the Position of Farmers in the Coffee Global Production System?

This section aims to answer which governance systems are better equipped to improve the position of small farmers in coffee. I ranked governance systems based on farmers' possibilities for action in the context of each governance system. I attributed the highest potential to those governance systems, allowing farmers to set or initiate a governance system, define its agenda, and enforce compliance. Having such possibilities for action indicates that farmers hold visible and hidden power. There is a broad consensus about the positive impacts that increasing small farmers' power can have on their position since power would enable farmers to have more control over their production and marketing process (Raynolds et al., 2007).

The analysis of power dynamics shows three groups of governance systems with different potentials to improve the farmer's position in the coffee GPN. The first group is formed by the Farmer Ownership Model, a type of governance system with the highest potential to improve the position of farmers in the coffee GPN. The second group is formed by a group of governance systems with limited potential due to the absence of one of the types of power in farmers' hands. It is formed by solidarity models, 4Ps and Intellectual property law schemes. Lastly, voluntary certification standards schemes form the type of governance system with the lowest potential to improve the position of farmers.

The Farmer ownership model is the type of governance system with the highest potential because of the possibilities for action small farmers have when operating under its umbrella. Farmers have the possibility to set/initiate a new scheme, have the possibility to decide about the agenda of the scheme, and have the possibility to enforce compliance with the scheme requirements. Having such possibilities for action indicates farmers have visible and hidden power, which endows them to change their disadvantaged position in the coffee GPN. The farmer ownership model is built on the premise that farmers control the ownership of the coffee until an additional value is added. Being in control of coffee allows farmers to sell their coffee at higher prices. "*NUCAFE farmers received an increase of 250% in prices compared to non-NUCAFE affiliated farmers*" (Chon and Tambito, 2018,

p.12). Furthermore, within this governance system, the support provided by facilitators is meant to be temporary. Farmers are supposed to run the scheme by themselves in the long term. The Farmer Ownership Model places farmers at its core as owners and control holders rather than beneficiaries like the governance systems included in the groups below.

Solidarity models, 4Ps and Intellectual property law schemes form the second group. In these group of governance systems, small farmers do not hold visible or hidden power completely because they do not control either the decision-making procedures or decisions regarding the rationale or emphasis of the scheme. However, in the case of solidarity models and 4Ps, on certain occasions, small farmers have been involved in taking specific scheme decisions through their involvement in the managing boards (FSTEs and 4Ps) (Huybrechts and Defourny, 2010) or the inclusion in the partnership binding agreement (4Ps) (IFAD, 2016).

In the context of intellectual property law schemes, the rationale and focus of the scheme do not recur in small farmers (except for appellations of origin). In the case of these governance systems, the significant role of formal institutions - at multiple levels - embraces the decisions about setting up a new scheme and about the rationale, emphasis, and enforcement of the scheme. In conclusion, the potential of this type of scheme to improve the position of farmers remains limited unless farmers' involvement increases in the decision-making process, agenda-setting, and enforcement of the scheme.

Lastly, the third group is formed by voluntary certification standards schemes. In these types of governance systems, farmers have minimal power. The possibilities for setting up a scheme of this type and deciding its rationale and emphasis correspond to other coffee actors, mainly corporate actors and civil society organisations (CFC, 2018). Nonetheless, the limited potential to benefit the position of farmers in this category of governance systems might vary due to the increasing trend found in some types looking

to increase the relevance of farmers' voices by including them in the managing boards, e.g., Fairtrade (Bennett, 2017).

The findings of this study regarding the limited potential of VSS to change farmers' positions align with those studies drawing on the short durability of this type of governance system to question their impact on small farmers' position. VSS sometimes lead to higher product prices (Oya, et al. 2018). However, it would not necessarily reflect on workers' wages or farmers' benefits since VSS also comes with certification costs, increased labour, and audits.

In conclusion, governance systems within which farmers have more types of power are better prepared to change their position positively compared to those governance systems where farmers do not have powers at all or only hold one of them. The reason for this can be found in one of the paradigms of power theory. When farmers have power, they usually use it to invest for their benefit and community (Gereffi et al., 2005).

The process used in the research to rank the categories of governance systems is based on a limited insight into power distributions within the coffee GPN. However, it opens the debate regarding the future development of the coffee governance landscape. Today, assessments about the impact of governance systems are still being made individually. However, it is time to holistically analyse the coffee governance landscape, including as many categories of governance systems as possible. A holistic approach grants a comprehensive understanding of the interconnectedness among governance systems. For instance, the overlapping among coffee governance systems from within the same category and between different categories is getting more common.

Vân Rijsbergen et al. (2016) investigated the impact that being Fairtrade and UTZ certified had on small farmers in Central Kenya, and they concluded that farmers with both certifications had better market access than those who only had one. Multi-certification is not the only cross-cutting issue affecting the coffee governance landscape; for instance, the impact that governmental agriculture policies such as subsidies and tariffs can have on the effectiveness of sustainability certifications (Raynolds, 2009). Furthermore,

analysis of the governance landscape can facilitate the study of corporations' influence on market prices and certification standards across the coffee GPN to portray the extent to which corporate actor can exert their dominant position in coffee.

Chapter Six draws on the concept of empowerment to investigate how to operationalise the possibility of farmers' action by identifying empowering mechanisms and the enabling and blocking factors with the potential to influence their implementation. Furthermore, it investigates invisible power, filling the gap identified within this chapter due to the limitations of the chosen methodology.

5.4 Discussion

The findings of Chapter Five reveal the need to set a new level of analysis that embraces the debates emerging from documentary analysis. The new level of analysis identified in Chapter Four is known as the coffee governance landscape. Such a level of analysis is appropriate to articulate the discussion over two crucial debates regarding the limited power of small coffee farmers: (1) The biased design of coffee governance systems in coffee and (2) the need for more closed spaces for small farmers.

5.4.1 The Biased Design of the Coffee Governance System

The biased design of coffee governance systems is one of the outcomes of the dominant position that corporate actors use to guarantee the preservation of such a position. The findings of this chapter have captured the dominance of certain actors from across Global North over the coffee GPN, in line with previous studies such as Ponte (2002a, 2002b) or Grabs (2017) with her investigation about the emergence of more company-owned standards as alternatives to third-party certification schemes.

However, previous literature has not focused on the design of coffee governance systems deriving from the dominant position of actors across the Global North. For instance, certain Global Northern actors have used their dominant position to make a biased interpretation of sustainability standards for their own benefit. The sustainability program

of Starbucks CAFÉ has required specific changes in local governance structures to allow farmers to comply with the standards set by the CAFÉ practices (Daviron and Ponte, 2005).

The limited questioning of governance and global studies literature regarding the design of coffee governance systems still succumbs to the attention given to studies investigating power dynamics in coffee. Indeed, Grabs and Ponte (2019, p.824) underscored, in their analysis of the evolution of power, how in the global coffee value chain

"*Dominant market actors strategically and flexibly move into niche sectors with high-value addition potential and re-impose value chain conditions to re-capture value from producers*".

Therefore, unless the design of coffee governance systems is profoundly questioned and reformed, the dominant position of corporate actors will remain constant, hindering the attempts with the potential to improve farmers' position, such as direct trade systems or speciality coffee.

In the context of Indonesian and Malaysian Palm Oil, Brazilian Soy and South African fruit Production, Schouten and Bitzer, (2015) questioned the lack of legitimacy affecting VSS's functioning across the Global North. They also identified a range of standards initiated by actors from the Global South with the legitimacy that governance systems set across the Global North normally lack.

In the coffee context, some examples of Southern governance systems have not gained much traction yet. Clark and Hussey (2016) referred to the Small Producer Symbol (SPP) as an alternative to the FT certification scheme that, despite being initially developed under the wing of CLAC, has now become an autonomous scheme. The SPP certification scheme has proved that producers' representatives can increase their influence over decision-making procedures within governance systems when the scheme is led and owned exclusively by small producers. Home et al. (2017) examined why Participatory

Guarantee Systems (PGS) represent an alternative to third-party voluntary certification systems due to their low associated costs and reduced paperwork burden (Nelson et al., 2010), their adaptability to local contexts and their capacity to involve a variety of stakeholders. However, they have been critiqued for being run and administered by NGOs or farmers' associations with limited smallholder involvement (Home et al., 2017).

Therefore, governance schemes run and administered by small farmers (across the Global South) seem to be good alternatives to increase the visible power of small farmers. Cafe de Colombia is another effort, also from South America, that without the direct influence of international roasters, donors, or formal state actors, has the potential to reshape relationships along the coffee GPN since, as any other GI, allows producers from developing countries to define their own rules for issuing label quality standards and its social boundaries (Quiñones-Ruiz et al., 2015). However, the real impact of GIs such as Café de Colombia still depends on consumers' willingness to appreciate and pay more and the roasters' and retailers' readiness to focus on original coffee.

In conclusion, northern actors have used their dominant position in the coffee GPN to design governance systems that perpetuate their position of dominance. However, the redesign of governance systems under the leadership of actors from across the Global South is increasing, posing opportunities to establish unbiased governance systems that positively impact small coffee farmers' position. The profound redesign of the government system across the coffee governance landscape could be the first step towards strengthening small coffee farmers' position.

5.4.2 The Need for More Closed Spaces

Another conclusion about small farmers' limited power is their restricted involvement within coffee governance systems, particularly in decision-making processes.

In terms of hidden power, findings revealed that small farmers have hidden power but with many limitations. Some attempts that were identified within the documentary analysis

refer to FT with the invitation to small farmers' representatives to be part of the managing boards (Bennett., 2017); the invitation received by small farmers representatives to join the boards in the context of FTEs (Mason and Doherty, 2014) or the inclusion of farmers from the inception of the partnership in the development of the binding agreement and, thus secure that farmers' voices would be taken in to account (IFAD, 2016).

All the examples represent attempts to increase farmers' possibility to influence the agenda of coffee governance systems. However, inviting farmers' representatives to join managing boards does not mean that they can make decisions about the agenda of a given governance system.

Recovering the concept of space; used by Gaventa (2006) and introduced in Chapter Two, its theoretical underpinning clarifies the invitations formerly mentioned. As part of the conceptual framework of this study, governance systems are identified with spaces[18]. Invitations to participate in decision-making processes were identified within governance systems such as FT; certain FTSEs and 4Ps. Understanding such invitations from the lens of Gaventa's power cube would allow them to be associated with 'invited spaces ". According to Cornwall (2002), invited spaces are those trying to move from closed spaces, by inviting actors who did not intervene in its creation. The invitation can be regularised if it's permanent or transient if it is through one-off consultations. Anyhow, what is critical to know is who creates the space because those who make it, are more likely to have power within it (Gaventa, 2006).

Therefore, as space's guests, small farmers do not have real power. This is why governance systems are supposed to identify which spaces have been created by farmers. Spaces are not neutral; instead, they are shaped by power relations (Cornwall, 2002). Governance systems are also" *humanly constructed means of control, and hence of domination, of power"* (Lefevre, 1991, p.24).

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[18] Spaces are one of the dimensions of the Power cube developed by Gaventa (2006). They refer to the opportunities, moments, and channels citizens can use to potentially affect the policies, discourses, decisions, and relationships affecting their lives and interests...

The documentary analysis identified examples of closed spaces created by coffee buyers that show their strong position in the coffee GPN. I refer to company-owned standards that Grabs (2017) identified when she confirmed that the control of corporate actors over the coffee GPN has remained strong despite the changes experienced within the coffee GPN with the consolidation of single-origin coffees, the rise of direct trade, or the growth of the high-quality coffee segment.

The “Small Farmers’ label” (SPP) is the only case in which farmers are in the position of inviting other actors to participate. According to Clark and Hussey (2016), the number of farmers’ representatives in the SPP standards committee surpassed the number of different types of actors: four producers and two Global Northern traders. In this way, the possibility of setting the agenda of this scheme uniquely corresponds to small farmers’ decisions.

In my opinion, the existence of governance systems with a biased design in favour of actors from the Global North, which can be associated in many cases with ‘closed spaces’, shows the limited criticality adopted within the governance literature to investigate alternatives for improving the position of small coffee farmers.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter undertook a nuanced investigation of power to unravel how power distributions influence the position of coffee farmers. This nuanced analysis of power facilitated the identification and prioritisation of coffee governance groups with different potentials to alter existing power dynamics in favour of small coffee farmers.

Evidence on whether current governance schemes could improve the position occupied by farmers within the global coffee production system is mixed, based on the design of governance schemes (Elliott, 2018; Auld, 2010). This chapter unpacked the possibilities for action for farmers, explaining why they do not hold visible or hidden power.

Furthermore, this chapter responded to RQ2.1 regarding the types of power held by small farmers within the context of the multiple governance systems operating in the coffee GPN. Findings showed limited power across most governance systems. This chapter also responded to RQ2.2 regarding the governance systems that are better designed to alter coffee farmers' position in the GPN. The farmer ownership model showed the greatest potential to change power dynamics for the benefit of small farmers due to the autonomy and leadership demonstrated by farmers.

The distributions of power identified in this chapter suggest the need for implementing mechanisms challenging such distributions. The next chapter focuses on the alternatives to alter power distributions by investigating how the notion of empowerment can be used to obtain new power distributions for the benefit of small farmers' positions.

Chapter Six: The Use of Empowerment to Challenge the Power Status quo in Coffee Global Production Systems

6.1 Introduction

This third empirical chapter employs the concept of empowerment to challenge the status quo of power dynamics within the coffee production network and improve the position of small coffee farmers.

Chapter Four demonstrated the disadvantageous position of small farmers in the coffee GPN. Building on this understanding, Chapter Five analysed farmers' possibilities for action and concluded with their limited possibilities. The limited possibilities for the action of farmers showed the absence of enough power for farmers to manage the normal functioning of a governance system.

Building on previous empirical chapter findings, Chapter Six investigates alternatives to change power dynamics and improve farmers' position in the coffee GPN. By examining such alternatives, Chapter Six addresses RQ3.1, about existing mechanisms challenging the status quo of power dynamics identified in the coffee GPN, and RQ3.2, about the blocking and enabling factors influencing the potential of mechanisms to change current power relations.

The rest of the chapter below includes two sections that examine the findings about empowering mechanisms and the enabling and blocking factors for empowerment. Then, a section discusses the alternatives that farmers have for empowerment. Lastly, a section with the concluding remarks closes the chapter.

6.2 Triggering the Change: Empowering Mechanisms

This section examines the empowering mechanisms that emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews. Six empowering mechanisms were identified. Table 12 lists them and includes a brief description of each. I analysed them from the perspective of the type of power they can boost and their implementation level. Annex 4 includes a table with the type of power, governance dimension and the level of implementation for each empowering mechanism.

Table 12: *Description of empowering mechanisms.*

Empowering mechanisms		Description
1. Increase small farmers' decision-making capacity	1.1 Design of governing bodies and procedures that increase small farmers' decision-making power	Change the composition of governing bodies so farmers representatives have the possibility of influencing decisions.
	1.2. Increase the participation of younger farmers and women in governing bodies	Increase their influence in the decision-making process.
2. Increase the closeness of the relationships between FOs and farmers		Enhance farmers' feeling of ownership over FOs by communicating to farmers the activities conducted by the organisation and thus, increase their engagement.
3. Capitalization of farmers' collective power.		Increase the coordination among farmers 'stances over a given issue to exploit the power they have when all agree. (E.g., their bargaining power when they agree on coffee bean selling prices).
4. Farmers' skills enhancement		Stimulate farmers' organisational capacity and financial literacy.
5. Setting and securement of communication channels available to farmers.		Setting channels that ensure farmers' voices are heard (e.g., providing feedback, offering to vote, and allowing farmers to show disagreement and engagement within country coffee networks).
6. Increase farmers' awareness regarding coffee market needs		Provision to farmers of reliable information regarding coffee market trends.

6.2.1 Visible Power

Interview analysis reveals the existence of empowering mechanisms with the potential to enhance farmers' visible power. This type of power focuses on tangible aspects of power, such as rules, structures, and decision-making procedures. Visible power rests on the possibility of setting the scheme requirements (leading actor) and enforcing its compliance through the setting of formal rules (enforcement_1).

From conducting the content analysis, three empowering mechanisms with the potential to boost farmers' visible power were identified: (1) Increase small farmers' decision-making capacity, (2) Increase the closeness of the relationships between FOs and farmers, and (3) the capitalisation of farmers' collective power.

- **Increase the decision-making capacity of farmers**

The first empowering mechanism with the potential to boost the visible power of farmers refers to implementing mechanisms that increase farmers' decision-making capacity. On the one hand, this can be improved through mechanisms that change the design of governance bodies and procedures so farmers have a greater possibility of influencing decisions, and on the other hand, through increasing the participation of younger farmers and women in the governing bodies.

The analysis of the interviews reveals the variability of perspectives regarding farmers' involvement in the governing bodies. Such a variability is based on the ownership of the scheme. Within the Small Producers Symbol[19], a label owned by small farmers, the control of farmers over the definition of the scheme requirements corresponds to farmers.

[19] The SPP refers to a governance system operating in Latin America that was not taken into consideration in the typology presented in chapter XX because the geographical location where it operates falls out the initial scope of the study.

Its executive director referred to the strong participation of farmers in the decision-making process:

"The SPP is designed so that if the producers strongly participate, they are very strong in decision-making. Most producers participate in both the board of directors and the standards and procedures committee, where the policies, regulations, and procedures for certification are set" (I1, #26).

For representatives of voluntary standards certification schemes, small farmers are involved but do not have any control over the decision-making process due to the lack of enough representation of farmers in the governing bodies. A representative of CLAC, a network of Fair-Trade Small producers and Workers, recognised that in most of the voluntary certification standards schemes, the decision-making process follows a *"very top-down approach*" (I4, #16), leaving farmers without the possibility of having the final say on setting the procedures steering voluntary certification standards.

Regarding the involvement of young farmers and women in the governing bodies, from the perspective of an independent coffee consultant, the involvement of farmers in the decision-making process lies in their willingness to participate in them. In his experience, cooperatives, in which young farmers and women are involved, become more dynamic. The reason for becoming more dynamic is that both demographic groups are more willing to face new challenges than elderly cooperative leaders. Additionally:

"The yo*unger generations are much more educated, the whole thing has really changed, they've got good access to the internet, normally, they know where to get that stuff, they* will organise themselves. (I9, #50).

- **<u>Increase the closeness in the relationships between FOs and farmers</u>**

Perspectives of interviewed farmers and roasters agree on the fact that enhancing farmers' ownership feeling over the organisations they belong to, can increase the possibility of farmers participating in the setting of the scheme's requirements. According to a Ugandan farmer (I3, #21), a way of increasing farmers' ownership feeling goes

through a clear distribution of activities beyond coffee farming, including how to spend cooperative funds, budget allocations, business plan design, and business priorities.

Nonetheless, a clear distribution of activities might work better in certain cooperatives than in others. A speciality roaster based in the UK (I21, #34) referred to the historical background of the cooperative movement to contextualise farmers' ownership over cooperatives. According to him, whereas in Latin America, "farmers feel they own the cooperatives", in Africa, farmers see "the cooperative movement as a "colonial legacy", which explains why farmers, in many cases, perceive themselves as beneficiaries rather than members and understand their relationship with cooperatives as an obligation.

- **Capitalisation of the collective power of farmers**

The last empowering mechanism that can be used to increase farmers' visible power refers to the capitalisation of small farmers' collective power when they all agree. Several roasters from Latin America (I20, #36) and the UK (I6, #13; I13, #49) agree on the power farmers have when they agree regarding a given issue.

For instance, when "*farmers try to manipulate the price, using their position within the market" (I6, #13), the bargain power farmers can achieve by withholding coffee bean sales, or the political influence farmers can have when they* agree to support a given candidate. However, in the experience of a UK-based roaster (I6, #13), such efforts do not always end well, as farmers frequently need to sell their coffee as soon as possible (due to poor liquidity/ need for cash).

6.2.2 Hidden Power

Hidden power refers to the possibility of participating in setting a governance system's agenda. This section examines the two empowering mechanisms associated with the two possibilities for action on which hidden power rests: "motivation" and "scope". The former refers to the rationale for creating a given scheme, and the latter refers to the emphasis

of the scheme. In the following sections, I draw on the empowering mechanisms linked to the possibilities for action underpinning hidden power.

- **Enhancement of the organisational capacity of farmers**

The empowering mechanism with the potential of boosting farmers' hidden power that emerges from the analysis of the interviews refers to the enhancement of farmers' skills, such as organisational capacity. Farmers with better skills have a greater possibility of deciding the rationale of the scheme and thus influence the priorities of the scheme. A wide range of interviewees highlighted the enhancement of farmers' skills: a farmer (I3, #40), CSOs (I8, #29; I22, #18) and a roaster (I15,51). Farmers with better skills have the potential to be in a better place to set the agenda of a governance system or at least influence the prioritisation of its items.

The problem observed by some interviewees who typically interact with small farmers is that, in many cases, the organisational capacity of farmers frequently refers to aspects seeking to secure the sale of the coffee bean. In the experience of a big coffee farmer based in Brazil (I20, #42), farmers should also be knowledgeable of tasks that allow them to have chances to add value to their coffee, such as coffee funds administration, giving out export licenses, conducting research, and providing training.

An independent coffee consultant (I9, #10) praised the Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia (FNC) for having a clear organisational structure that allows farmers to control tasks beyond coffee growing. According to this consultant, organisational capacity will enable FOs to conduct activities that are susceptible to adding more value to the coffee they sell.

However, in many cases, the organisational capacity of FOs frequently refers to aspects seeking to secure the sale of coffee beans without the possibility of adding any extra value. For instance, having a washing station within the FOs would allow for an increase in the price of the coffee beans. The director of a roaster company based in the UK (I20,

#42) witnessed that the knowledge of farmers is limited to tasks referred mainly to logistics:

"It was purely around the transactional process of getting coffee from a farmer to an exporter and getting the money back" I20, #42).

In addition to farmers' organisational capacity, improving their financial literacy also emerges as a way of increasing their potential to decide about the motivation of a given scheme, i.e., the governance scheme agenda. A UK/Ugandan-based farmer (I13, #13) mentioned the usefulness of farmers considering themselves business managers and being addressed as business partners by the rest of the coffee actors. For a UK-based roaster, improving financial literacy triggers a change in the farmers' mindset and can also increase the yield. He has witnessed how improving the financial literacy of 40,000 farmers in Rwanda had resulted in "*the average yield increase of the household income was up at 130%" (I15, #72).*

- **<u>Strengthening the link between farmers and their FOs</u>**

The second empowering mechanism to boost farmers' hidden power is strengthening the link between farmers and their FOs. These views are shared by UK-based roasters (I6, 17#) and (I15, #51) and a farmers' network representative (I8, #26). They agree that the link between farmers and their FOs can be strengthened by establishing channels that allow farmers to hear their voices, such as casting a vote, providing feedback, or even showing disagreement. However, the opportunity to show disagreement does not always exist. A UK-based roaster referred to situations in which farmers' involvement is so limited that do not have any input in how the producer sale its coffee:

"I've visited farms in rural East Africa, where the farmers basically take the cherries along to a collection point for the cooperatives to come with a lorry and pick them up. And they go off. And that's the extent of their involvement. They wait for some money to arrive. And they don't know where the coffee goes, what's done with it, you know, and they're utterly

passive in it. And, and they, they own that cooperative, and they don't seem to understand or appreciate that, they hold the power" (I21, #58).

The extract above shows how farmers lack bargaining power and control over their coffee when selling it to the cooperative.

6.2.3 Invisible Power

Invisible power refers to the influence some actors have on how other individuals see their place in the world (Gaventa, 2006). Empowering mechanisms associated with boosting farmers' invisible power rest on their ability to exert a non-material influence in formulating the requirements and enforcing their compliance. The empowering mechanisms that can increase farmers' influence in implementing the requirements of a given governance system go through increasing farmers' awareness about the market's needs.

- **Increasing farmers' awareness about coffee market demands**

This empowering mechanism seeks to bring farmers closer to the market by making them more aware of the coffee market needs and their marketing potential as coffee farmers. To make farmers more aware of coffee market trends, including their coffee marketing potential, this mechanism requires the establishment of loops of information. A UK-based speciality coffee roaster referred to the establishment of feedback loops (I21, #46) to provide farmers with useful market trends that could serve to adapt their coffee to the market demand and, thus, increase the demand for their coffee. This roaster highlighted how beneficial it was for farmers, providing them with detailed market information:

"We transmit direct feedback to farmers. And we tell them how the market is shifting a bit you know, you might want to think about doing more naturals rather than washed (I21, #46)*".*

These feedback loops are also an opportunity for the coffee market since they allow farmers to provide the market with information about the genuineness of their coffee. For

this reason, an independent coffee consultant (I9, #30) stressed the need for farmers to know how to market their coffee. Making farmers more aware of their relevance to the coffee market (invisible power) can potentially change the influence farmers might have in setting the requirements of certain governance systems.

The establishment of information loops requires the existence of a tight relationship and direct contact between roasters/traders and farmers/cooperatives. In the experience of a UK-based roaster (I21, #76), gaining farmers' trust facilitates farmers' consideration of the given advice. According to this UK-based roaster, the provision of comprehensive market information to farmers poses one of the most effective ways of empowering farmers, since such information enables farmers to change what they believe about themselves as coffee growers and their beliefs about what they consider a good (coffee) and safe, and acceptable practices:

My belief is just access to information goes for any human being on this planet; you know, knowledge is power. If you've got access to good quality, objective, unbiased information that is useful to your situation. That's the first step, that's the most empowering thing (I21, #76).

The provision of information emerged also as an empowering mechanism, not only in the view of roasters but also in the view of CSOs and coffee farmers. The manager of a UK-based charity running a project called *Farmers Voice Radio*[20] (I22, #1) underlined the significant changes within the cooperatives participating in the radio program. She referred to the increasing number of women occupying positions on the managing boards due to the opportunity to share their expertise gained through the radio program.

[20] **Farmers' Voice Radio:** i*s an innovative use of traditional technology, disseminating up-to-date, relevant, and practical information to even the most remote and isolated communities. It does this by bringing local farmers, agricultural experts, and supply chain partners together to share their knowledge, experience and expertise via the trusted medium of community radio* (Voice Radio Program, 2024)

The representative of a Brazilian farming company, instead (14, #44), referred to the opening of a sales office within consuming countries where they, as farmers, can familiarise themselves with coffee market needs. From the moment the coffee farming company where she works as a chief operation officer opened an office in the UK, she noticed how they started to be in a better position to transmit more information regarding their coffee and understand better coffee market needs, allowing the company to identify more easily beneficial operations for them.

These last three sections have examined the empowering mechanisms with the possibility of bolstering the visible, hidden, and invisible power of farmers. Each empowering mechanisms are also linked to one of the four governance dimensions I used to articulate the investigation of power. Both types of power and governance dimensions are part of the conceptual framework examined in Chapter Two.

The next section draws on the implementation levels identified across the empowering mechanisms, unveiling FOs' centrality.

6.2.4 The Crucial Role of Farmers' Organisations

The second crucial aspect of implementing empowering mechanisms is the level at which they will be implemented. Table 13 shows the empowering mechanisms discussed in previous sections with their level of implementation. The focus on the level of implementation reveals the centrality of FOs for the implementation of empowering mechanisms insofar as FOs have emerged at the level at which most of the mechanisms are to be implemented.

***Table 13**: Mechanisms for empowerment and the level of implementation*

Empowering mechanisms		**Level of implementation**
1. Increase the decision-making	1.1 designing bodies and procedures that secure most farmers in making decisions	Governance system

possibility for action by	1.2 giving cooperative leadership to younger farmers, including women, and the presence of farmers in governing bodies.	Farmers' organisation
2. Enhance the feeling of ownership of small farmers over the cooperative.		Farmer-cooperative Intra-farmers
3. Capitalization of the collective power of farmers		Farmers' organisation
4. Enhancement of the organisational capacity of farmers (by allocating tasks, increasing the engagement of coffee farmers within the cooperative, providing information on the whole picture of the cooperative, and improving the organisational skills of farmers.		Producers' organisation
5. Strength the link between farmers and their POs and among organisations.		Farmers' organisation Governance system National
6. Increase farmers' awareness regarding coffee market needs		Farmers' organisation

Most of the empowering mechanisms that emerged from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews refer to FOs' level as the most frequent level of implementation for empowering mechanisms. Implementing the empowering mechanisms requires undertaking changes within the structure and functioning dynamics of FOs. Firstly, in virtue of the direct relationship with small farmers, FOs bring together the responsibility (1) for tightening the relationship with farmers (hidden power), (2) for coordinating farmers' opinions (visible power), and (3) for securing the information flow between them and the market needs (invisible power).

Undertaking such responsibilities demands certain changes within the structure of FOs and their functioning dynamics. The change in their structure refers to including more women and young farmers in their governing bodies as one of the empowering mechanisms seeking to increase farmers' visible power. The change in their functioning dynamics refers, firstly, to a clearer allocation of responsibilities among their members and, secondly, to disseminating their activities among farmers based on the mechanisms seeking to boost farmers' hidden power. Therefore, FOs play a crucial role within small farmers' networks and represent an essential "place" in the Power Cube. Findings

regarding empowering mechanisms portray POs as a hub for disseminating power among farmers.

Table 13 also shows that empowering mechanisms exist at multiple levels. According to Drydyck (2008), the occurrence and durability of empowerment demand the simultaneous implementation of measures to secure the happening and duration of empowerment. The GPN approach is one component of the conceptual framework in which governance systems facilitate articulating the simultaneous implementation of empowering mechanisms that durable empowerment demands. The multilevel nature of the GPN approach facilitates the implementation of empowering mechanisms requiring the simultaneous implementation of empowering mechanisms at different levels to trigger a change that impacts farmers' position.

The following sections examine further findings regarding the starting point for implementing the empowering mechanisms examined in previous sections.

6.3 The Baseline of Empowerment

This section analyses the findings corresponding to the factors influencing the implementation of empowering mechanisms. Both types of factors form the baseline of empowerment, which can be taken as the ground above which empowering mechanisms are to be implemented. Therefore, the ground for empowerment rests on the potential of enabling factors to enhance the impact of empowering mechanisms and the potential of blocking factors to hinder the effects of empowering mechanisms. I identified a total of 10 enabling factors and six blocking factors.

***Table 14**: List of enabling and blocking factors.*

Enabling factors	Blocking factors
• Enhancing the opportunities for farmers to upgrade their products. • Enhancing the coordination of coffee farmers at multiple levels.	• Current characteristics of the coffee production system. • FOs functioning dynamics. • The limited financial and personnel resources of organisations working with farmers.

• Building denser and wider production nodes of which farmers contribute by generating closer relationships and expanding their networks. • Corporate actors can increase the opportunities to hear farmers' voices. • Securing farmer access to finance streams. • Professionalize the leaders and the rest of the cooperative staff. • Access of farmers to training, including technology and productivity, Increasing the marketing possibility for farmers' action. • Diversification of coffee farmers' income. • Grant farmers access to market information and preserve the information flow. • Starting to address farmers as business managers.	• The agenda mismatches between farmers and certification bodies. • Limited management capacity and scarce knowledge of the coffee system of farmers. • Poor cooperation between farmers

6.3.1 Boosting the Potential of Empowerment Mechanisms: Enabling Factors.

In reviewing the enabling factors for empowerment, it became apparent the possibility of grouping them into three themes: (1) the strengthening and development of farmers' networks, (2) the guarantee of farmers' access to finance and information, and (3) the professionalisation of FOs.

- **<u>The strengthening and development of farmers' networks</u>**

As discussed in Chapter Two, the funnel structure of the coffee GPN, with millions of small farmers on one side and a much lower number of coffee buyers on the other side, poses a significant challenge for setting a good ground for empowerment from the start. The complex structure of the coffee GPN hinders the strengthening and development articulation of farmers' networks. This theme embraces the multileveled coordination of farmers, the assistance to farmers in increasing the size and density of their production nods, and the generation of opportunities to hear farmers' voices.

The decentralised structure of production nodes within the coffee GPN unveils the challenge of improving farmers' coordination as one of the most crucial to set a solid base

for farmers' empowerment. The analysis of the interviews reveals that coordination among farmers is needed to organise efforts simultaneously at multiple GPN levels.

Developing multi-level and coordinated responses to address factors limiting farmers' networks varies among production nodes, starting with the national and local levels. A UK-based roaster (I12, #46) referred to the excellent alternative that coordinated responses represent to address issues such as the limited market access of small farmers or the miscalculation of the potential of farmers' collective power. Whereas at a global level, a representative of the Fairtrade farmers from Latin America expressed her opinion regarding the need to appoint a global institution:

"I think we have global organisations that are recognised for leading this kind of initiative, such as FAO. I think organisations like FAO could lead here, which I haven't seen until now" (I4, #52).

To justify her choice, she cited FAO's transnational presence and capacity to implement and coordinate transnational policy initiatives.

The strengthening and development of farmers' networks also embraces assisting small farmers in building the density and reach of their networks. Some of the alternatives to support farmers in expanding their networks, obtained from the interviews, referred to the generation of tighter relationships with other coffee actors. Based on insights from roasters and farmers, I collected in Table 15 a range of ways to support farmers in expanding the production nodes where they operate. This table lists several examples to support the expansion in size and density of production nodes.

Table 15: Examples of how to increase the size and density of farmers' production nodes.

Examples	Advantages	Source

Direct trade[21]	It reduces the number of intermediaries, which allows farmers to obtain higher benefits.	(I13, #90) Uganda-based Farmer
	It generates opportunities for farmers to interact with buyers and exposes the former to the final stages of the coffee value chain.	(I6, #29) UK-based roaster
	It increases the chances of gaining farmers' trust and, thus, their willingness to work with a given coffee buyer.	(I15, #100) roaster
	It provides a better opportunity for farmers to learn what they need to learn about coffee and what possibilities for action they need to create.	(I10, #40) roaster
	It reduces the need for certification and increases the information a farmer can transmit to potential buyers.	(14, #16) farmer
	It makes coffee buyers more aware of the problems that farmers may encounter.	(I20, #66) roaster
Specialty coffee subsector	It Increases the chances for a farmer to contact a coffee buyer who values and pays according to the quality of the coffee	(I20, 66) roaster
Creation of spaces for farmers to exchange their experiences within the cooperative and with other cooperatives: e.g. information exchange systems	At the local level, they promote collaboration among farmers and the exchange of experiences to address, for instance, mental and geographical isolation and/or farmer marginalisation due to age or gender.	(I3, #38) farmer
	At a local level, they increased farmers' working possibilities for action on the farms and supported them in adding value to their coffee.	(I13, #85/86) farmer/roaster
	Farmers use these spaces to share non-coffee-related experiences (politics, children, health, feeding programs).	(I13, #41) farmer/roaster
Partnerships and strategic alliances	At a local level, partnerships/strategic alliances connect farmers with third parties willing to invest and support them in strengthening their capacities.	(I1, #32) director of FO
	At a local level, these partnerships are beneficial for farmers, including production technology training linked to long-term projects and commercial links.	(I8, 44) market and production Coffee Coordinator of a coffee FO

[21] Direct trade refers to the choice of roasters to sourcing directly from farmers (Gerard, et al., 2019).

Coffee platforms	Join coffee farmers could find together potential and bigger customers**.**	(I14, #79) Brazilian farmer
National advocacy forums or international coffee conferences: e.g., spaces at national/international coffee events	Farmers could be heard and have opportunity t to expand their network.	(I14, #64)
	Farmers will meet, discuss, and share successful practices for seeking support for specific needs (e.g., construction of a washing station).	(I3, #34) farmer (I10, #29) independent consultant

Although examples from Table 13 present good alternatives to increase farmers' production nodes, they also symbolise a point of disagreement between large corporate coffee actors and consolidated civil society organisations.

The examples provided by speciality roasters and farmers relate to moving away from the C-Market[22] coffee to focus on the speciality market and direct trade. Such deviations can bring opportunities for farmers to sell at higher prices and increase the chances of transmitting the uniqueness of their coffee. However, for big coffee corporate actors (roasters and traders), such changes might jeopardise their bargaining power and increase the risks of their supply chain since direct trade and the speciality coffee market contribute to the de-commodification of coffee. Representatives of certification standards schemes also remain suspicious since sustainability certifications are seen as less important than guarantees of authenticity or value within the speciality coffee market and direct trade. Roasters and traders reported cases in which certifications do not influence their purchasing decisions since they do not see additional value in buying certified coffee.

[22] The C-Market coffee refers to the coffee futures market and reflects the dynamics of global coffee supply and demand, similar to other commodities and stocks. The C market coffee price, or “C price”, is a benchmark for the global market price of ‘regular’ green Arabica coffee (which has been processed but not roasted) (Craft Coffee Guru, 2021).

An example of the suspiciousness found among certification schemes representatives regarding direct trade was raised by a FT manager based in Latin America, referring to some of the disadvantages of direct trade when he argued that:

"A small producer who does not speak English will not establish a direct link because he does not speak the client's language. And if it does not reach the desired quality, the client will be forced to choose another producer" (I8, #58).

According to this FT representative, direct trade is only feasible for medium and large coffee producers because they have sufficient skills, in terms of knowledge about logistics, coffee market prices, or qualities, to work directly with coffee buyers. Small farmers lack the capacity to deal directly with coffee roasters or traders, so they risk being left out of direct trade and the speciality subsector.

The strengthening and development of farmers' networks also embrace increasing opportunities to hear farmers' voices. This aspect is related to the tight interactions happening within speciality markets or through direct trade. However, the generation of possibilities to hear coffee farmers' voices refers to the opportunities that coffee buyers can generate with the inclusion of farmers 'narratives into their marketing strategy. By doing this, coffee buyers facilitate customers' awareness of the farmers' story behind their coffee. A UK-based roaster referred to the use of QR codes in the packaging linking them to videos where farmers can present their coffee directly to final consumers with full control of the narrative:

"We're taking an approach where, with our packaging going forwards, we're also going to be kind of linking to videos directly from the packaging through QR *codes, that gives the producers a platform to talk to present their coffee to the consumer" (I6, #9).*

- **<u>Guarantee access to affordable and reliable information and financing streams.</u>**

The second realm of enabling factors for a favourable context of empowerment is related to the existence of a structure that guarantees farmers access to affordable sources of financing and information of different types.

Access to reliable sources of financing remains one of the most challenging issues farmers face. Representatives of governance systems, where farmers own the certifying label power, identified financing access as a crucial issue that governance systems need to offer by default so they can get out of the poverty trap coffee farming is nowadays. Setting a structure to finance farmers requires the commitment of civil society organisations and corporate actors to support farmers in facets of their lives that do not necessarily have to be related to coffee farming.

The director of a small FO referred to the pressure that involves searching for additional financing streams. He referred to the search process they are going through to identify:

“New streams of financing, including new sources of income, beyond certification, and creating strategic alliances” to be able to invest more in these processes of strengthening the capacities of producers (I1, #32).

A UK-based roaster also indicated how crucial it is for small farmers to find new financing streams. He referred to situations in which they, as a coffee roasting company, had acted as guarantors of FOs so farmers could obtain the loan they needed.

“We're bringing farmers to financial bodies that can give them the funds they need to harvest and pay pickers. We can also contribute to making available additional financing streams “(I15, #100).
He even referred to cases in which they financed FOs themselves, which allowed them to build a strong and long-term relationship with them.

Access to information emerged as a strategic aspect to secure empowerment. Farmers and roasters referred to establishing permanent communication channels that guarantee bidirectional information flows. A UK-based roaster (I21, # 76) referred to the high potential of information as a driver of change even if the information does not trigger immediate change.

“Because *of your circumstances, you may be unable to act on it. But it might mean, you know, it takes 10 years before you can do something about it because you have to get all*

your neighbours together and change how your cooperative works. But you can be working towards that (I21, #76).

The analysis of the interviews additionally revealed aspects regarding the information farmers should have their access granted to, including (1) aspects beyond coffee farming. A Brazil-based big farmer (I19 #63) stressed the dissemination of information regarding the stages their coffee goes through once it is beyond the farm gate to understand what happens to their coffee once is sold. This farmer referred to the use of smartphones as a way of enabling farmers to access information about market trends and price swifts or other relevant activities; (2) the other significant aspect regarding the provision of information refers to the need for being bidirectional. Both farmers and roasters highlighted that, in many cases, farmers do not normally have the chance to transmit information about their coffee traders, roasters, and consumers.

A Brazilian farmer referred to the information gap happening when farmers cannot transmit the “full story behind their coffee’. The way her company, as a coffee producer, dealt with it was to open a sales office in the UK. As a result, she managed to know more about what happened to their coffee after it was sold and experienced the benefits of having direct access to roasters and traders to whom she could pass information regarding coffee characteristics:

“It's like having a sales department. You know? it's like getting someone that they're going to talk to people who understand what they need, pass it back to the farm; it's aligning between the production line and the sales department” (I14, #18).

However, not all farmers can afford to do such a thing. A UK-based roaster (I21, #68) referred to farmers' benefits to contact potential buyers with coffee samples, so traders and roasters become familiar with the coffee. According to him, a potential buyer is more inclined to value and purchase a given coffee at a suitable price after tasting it. The good quality of coffee, by itself, is not enough to access the coffee market. However, sending samples typically requires appointing someone within the FOs to carry out marketing-oriented activities, which is unaffordable for many FOs.

- **The professionalisation of FOs and farmers**

The third group of enabling factors refers to the professionalisation of FOs' leaders. Representatives of CSOs, an independent consultant, and farmers stressed the benefits of having well-trained leaders within the FOs. A senior associate within a third-party certification body (I2, #22) referred to cases in which they have provided FOs members with workers to help them with the certification process, daily activities, or meetings with farmers. According to an independent consultant (I9, #60), one of the advantages of having leaders well trained within producers was the more significant potential to lobby for farmers' agenda.

However, FOs leaders are not the only ones who need to become professionalised. A Ugandan-based coffee farmer realised the importance of farmers seeing themselves as business managers, so the rest of the coffee actors start to address them as business partners:

*"I really think it is crucial to train farmers, not just as farmers but as business owners, to understand their farms from a business standpoint, encourage and work with farmers in that capacity, and start to look at them as entrepreneurs running a business" (*I13, #55).

Annexe 3 collates examples provided by civil society representatives and suggestions made by roasters to illustrate how training has been delivered to farmers.

In summary, this section has analysed the factors that can contribute to successfully implementing empowering mechanisms. In this section, I examined that the implementation of empowering mechanisms is more likely to boost farmers' power with a favourable baseline. Such baseline concerns (1) the expansion of farmers' networks horizontally (in size and density) and vertically (across levels), (2) with bi-directional information loops between farmers and the coffee market that go beyond coffee farming activities, and (3) the professionalisation of FOs and their members through multiple types of instruments and focus.

The following section examines the other factors shaping the baseline line of empowerment. The aim regarding hindering factors is to reduce their presence as much as possible since they have the potential to hinder the implementation of empowering mechanisms.

6.3.2 Hindering the Potential of Empowerment mechanisms: Blocking factors.

This section discusses the factors hindering the implementation of empowering mechanisms. The blocking factors that emerged from the content analysis revolve around five themes: (1) the characteristics of the coffee market; (2) the dysfunctional dynamics of FOs; (3) the limited financial and personnel resources of organisations working with farmers; (4) the agenda mismatches between farmers and certification bodies, and (5) the challenges farmers encounter to manage their farms and coordinate among themselves. The rest of the section examines each of them in detail.

1. **<u>Characteristics of the coffee market and implications for farmers</u>**

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed the consensus among roasters regarding the characteristics of the coffee production system. Some features of the coffee production system, identified by roasters (I10, #46; I16, #43; I21, #34; I6, #38), are significantly jeopardising the position of coffee farmers. According to a UK-based roaster:

“The inadequate way that the coffee markets, pricing structure functions, provides volatility, and, you know, uncertainty driven by speculation, along with other factors (I10, #46).

Indeed, he also referred to cases in which prices paid to farmers are so low that they cannot afford to invest in next season crop. This is why CSOs such as charities and FOs are also stressing the need to make prices more transparent, either by requiring

middlemen to disclose how much they receive (which seems unlikely) or by asking farmers to find out how much they would need to receive to be able to live on coffee.

To increase transparency along their supply chain, a US-based roaster shared their margins with some of the coffee farmers they work directly with, which gained farmers' trust. As a result of gaining their trust, these small farmers agreed to share their production costs.

"The cooperative we work in Brazil with just did a spreadsheet of all the costs of the cooperatives, like exactly what the farmers are making" (I17, #43).

In addition to the non-transparent setting price system in coffee, other features of the coffee GPN could also hinder the impact of the empowering mechanisms. One of these features refers to the limited capacity of farmers to add value to the coffee products they sell and the limited market access of small farmers. Unlike transparency, the consensus regarding the relevance of this feature relies on a diverse range of actors, such as farmers (I3, #7; I13, #88), CSOs (I8, #52) and roasters (I15, #53).

To fight the limited opportunities farmers have to add value, a CSO's representative (I8, #52) suggested that (1) farmers look for importers willing to import roasted coffee, (2) farmers open their coffee shops in coffee-consuming countries or (3) cooperatives join efforts to look for potential buyers together, so they gain scale and volume in the market and increase the range of coffees they can offer. All former suggestions pose a clear potential for increasing the opportunity for farmers to increase the value of their coffee. Yet, they have not gained much traction within current governance systems.

2. **Dysfunctional dynamics of FOs**

The second set of blocking factors refers to producing organisations' functioning dynamics. A certification scheme representative (I7, 64) referred to cases in which FOs do not transmit effectively to their members the beneficial aspects of belonging to a given certification scheme, provoking the farmers to underestimate the benefits resulting from being certified:

“Farmers only want money in cash. They don't really see that premium can be used to build their assets you know, to improve their quality, for example.... Right now, we require 10% of the premium to be invested to improve productivity. If they saw that, they would probably value the premium in the proper way (I7, #64).

In the case above, the underestimation of the advantages that farmers have gained from participation in governance systems is due to poor communication from the certifying body about the long-term advantages of participating in a given certification scheme.

3. **Limited financial and personnel resources of the organisations that work with farmers**

Other aspects affecting the FOs refer to the scarce financial and personnel resources experienced by organisations working with them. Representatives of certifying entities such as FT referred to cases in which insufficient funds prevent them from implementing programs to focus on specific problems such as women or young farmers.

“And also, issues, as I mentioned, around the Global Agenda, like gender, youth, and issues around human rights, will require us to focus on being able to support our users. Unfortunately, we don't have all the necessary resources to do that” (I12 #48).

Furthermore, the lack of resources sometimes forces FOs to agree with donors whose agendas do not have farmers’ needs as their priority. A presentative of a farmers’ network referred to cases in which certification schemes prioritise the needs of European consumers rather than small farmers’ needs:

“For example, if the funds come through a fair-trade program, you must comply with the fair-trade agenda when it is still not your objective. The objective is to strengthen the producers, but fair trade is the means to achieve the objective. But in the end, there is no choice but to bend down and accept. This is the case with other funders that are more interested in gender, for example, and thus responding to the needs of producers is complicated because there are other agendas to satisfy. This is very common, and, in

many cases, they correspond to agendas for the consumers' needs in the European market, which wants to wash away their guilt rather than meet the needs of the producers (I1, #39).

4. **Agenda mismatches between farmers and certification bodies**

Agenda mismatches happen when farmers' and certification bodies' interests are not aligned. The executive director of a producers' network in North America referred to situations where small farmers' and certification schemes' interests differ. Normally, the discrepancy is solved by prioritising certification schemes' agendas over farmers' agendas.

Farmers feel that certifications are pursuing their own agenda. And then, against SPP, I would say there this: We have quite a strong sense of ownership within our organisation because the producers know they are the full owners of this initiative (I1, #6).

The other type of mismatches refers to situations in which the priorities of FOs' representatives divert from the interests of the organisation they lead. In the experience of a UK-based roaster (I15, #48), leadership committees within FOs that are part of certification schemes sometimes decide to adopt certification scheme requirements even though it is not the best option for farmers' members' interests.

5. **Coffee farm management and coordination**

This range of blocking factors revolves around the characteristics of small coffee farmers. Farmers become dependent on coffee buyers' interests when they lack enough expertise to run a farm as a business. An independent coffee consultant (I9, #8) highlighted that when coffee farmers know how to manage a farm as a business, they have greater bargaining power.

"The main difference you see between a successful and a dynamic organisation that stays behind or doesn't manage to make it is the management. It's key if you've got good

management and they can sort out their issues, they can look for help that they need" (I9, #8).

An example of the negative consequences of farmers limited knowledge was mentioned by a UK-based roaster when he referred to the cases in which producers are reluctant to grow new, better quality, disease-resistant, and high-yield coffee varietals due to farmers' misunderstanding of the consequences of planting a coffee of higher productivity. In that specific case, farmers *"were mixing up supply and demand issues with their productivity" (I21, #74).*

6. **<u>Challenges encountered by farmers to manage their farms and coordinate among themselves.</u>**

The last blocking factor is the difficulty that some farmers have to coordinate with other farmers. Both small farmers' associations (I3, #38) and civil society organisation representatives (I8, #5) referred to the lack of coordination among farmers as one of the main factors limiting their achievements.

*The main problem has always been to get the farmers to understand that they needed to work together—the multi-level nature of the ground for empowerment (*I3, #38).

In the experience of a representative of a farmers' network (I8, #58), working together emerges as the key to achieving what farmers cannot achieve individually: Small producers must work in an organised way, either as part of an association or cooperative, to access the market, obtain a higher income, develop practices, and build and maintain their social fabric. How will a small producer achieve all of this by working individually? "*Associationism here is key*" (I8, #58).

In conclusion, many factors hinder the implementation of empowering mechanisms and the intrinsic characteristics of coffee GPN, including misalignment of agendas and interests and a deficit of resources and coordination among farmers.

6.3.3 The Multi-level Nature of the Baseline for Empowerment

Setting the baseline for implementing empowering mechanisms is based on considering enabling and blocking factors. The analysis of the semi-structured interviews reveals that empowering mechanisms are to be implemented across the multiple levels of the coffee GPN (Table 13). The formation of a baseline created by the coexistence of blocking and enabling factors also happens at various levels[23]. Hence, there is a need to investigate the formation of multiple baselines of empowerment occurring at multiple levels to

[23] Annex 5 includes a table with the level at which every enabling factor was found and the interviews within which every enabling factor was identified. Annex 6, instead, includes the same information for blocking factors.

implement empowering mechanisms successfully. Consequently, this subsection unfolds the levels at which the baselines for empowerment exist.

Individual/farm level

At a farm or individual level, the baseline of empowerment rests on farmers' self-perception, which, to some extent, is also influenced by the perception third actors have about them. The baseline of empowerment at the individual level depends on the farmers' access to training (coffee and non-coffee growing related), the opportunity to engage in other professional activities, their access to market information, and the inception of a mindset that leads to farmers to see themselves as business managers.

However, blocking factors must also be considered due to their potential for slowing down and even stopping that changing mindset process. Two blocking factors that could hinder the impact of empowering mechanisms are poor collaboration among farmers and the lack of improvement in farmers' managerial capacity.

All the former factors influence other coffee actors' perceptions about farmers and determine whether they address farmers as business partners.

Farmer organisations' level

The baseline of empowerment at farmers' organisations (FOs[24]) level rests on providing opportunities for coffee upgrading and FOs' pre-competitive collaboration among certification schemes to support farmers in multi-certification cases. The baseline also involves FOs addressing farmers as business managers (hidden power), contributing to the mindset-changing process initiated at an individual level. Therefore, the baseline of

[24]A farmers organisation (FO) refers to a formally organised, membership-based group with specific membership criteria and a stated objective focused on one or more defined agricultural commodities, acting collectively to advance its members' shared interests related to its overarching goal. Nowadays, they present a diverse structure, from state-managed, cooperative societies and unions to the new farmer-initiated federations and syndicates, as well as market-driven farmers' groups (Wennink and Heemskerk, 2006).

empowerment at the FOs' level transcends the role many FOs hold as coffee production hubs.

Blocking factors hindering the baseline of empowerment at the FOs' level are the limited professionalisation of FOs' staff due to their low qualifications. At the same time, FOs internal misfunctioning also hinders the implementation of empowering mechanisms due to the risk of diluting the benefits of being part of a given governance system. Lastly, the mismatches between representatives' agendas and farmers' also have the potential to hinder the implementation of empowering mechanisms at the FOs' level.

The significance of FOs as intermediaries between farmers and coffee buyers enjoys the consensus of the literature and practitioners: Bacon, (2010) referred to the bargaining power enhancement of farmers thanks to being part of an FO such as a cooperative; Muradian and Pelupessy (2015) referred to the better market access to international markets thanks to FOs; Valkila, (2009) referred to the vital role FOs play in promoting sustainable practices.

Despite the pivotal role of FOs, what we know about their interactions between them and other coffee actors is limited. Poole and Donovan (2014) referred to the complex position that FOs face in coffee when they support their members. For example, many FOs struggle to balance their focus on addressing broader development objectives for the benefit of farmers with strengthening their capacity.

The analysis of the interviews points out how little we know about the interactions between FOs and the coffee actors with whom they interact to understand power dynamics and governance systems' functioning outcomes. Some authors refer to the interactions between FOs and the actors interacting with them as the hidden middle (Reardon, 2015).

Local and national level

The floor of empowerment at local and national levels shows certain similarities, so I aggregated them in the same subsection. At both levels, it becomes apparent that farmers need to improve their organisational capacity to coordinate themselves, thus boosting the implementation of mechanisms designed to increase their visible power. Better coordination at a national and local level has the potential to expand farmers' production nodes. Improving farmers' organisational capacity was also mentioned at the farm and GPN levels.

Governance systems

Governance systems also need to set the baseline of empowerment. Relevant enabling factors across governance systems include guaranteeing farmers' access to training, enhancing pre-competitive collaboration among governance systems, and pursuing opportunities for farmers' upgrade (visible power).

However, governance systems are also threatened by blocking factors capable of compromising the impact of empowering mechanisms. Such factors are the limited resources of entities in charge of steering governance systems and the agendas' mismatches between governance systems and farmers' needs.

The coffee GPN

Finally, setting the ground for empowerment also applies to the GPN level. The floor of empowerment at the coffee GPN level is compromised by blocking factors related to its configuration, such as its pricing system and production structure.

As said above, the nomination of a central authority to coordinate the coffee GPN could enhance farmers' empowerment by implementing enabling factors across levels (vertically) and production nods (horizontally). However, none of the multiple attempts to replicate the ICA regime succeeded. Some of these attempts refer to the renegotiation of the Alliance of Coffee Producing Countries (ACPC), but it had a limited impact on the market (Akiyama and Varangis, 1990). Its limited impact rests on its lack of proper policing

and punitive clauses and the limited engagement of important exporting countries such as Guatemala, Indonesia, Mexico and Vietnam.

Other attempts at coordinating the coffee sectors have been criticised due to their clear industry bias (Steermers, 2016). Some examples of these sector-wide platforms and alignment initiatives initiated between 2015 and 2016 were the Sustainability Coffee Challenge (mainly financed by Starbucks) and the Global Coffee Platform (driven forward primarily by Nestlé) (Grabs, 2017).

6.4 Critical Reflections about Alternatives of Empowerment

Findings regarding empowerment showed some potential to alter existing power dynamics in favour of farmers. However, some of the conclusions I examined in this chapter's previous sections need to be clarified. The rationale for this analysis rests on the contributions of interviewees, which are influenced by the type of actors and their positions within the coffee GPN.

The findings of this study regarding empowerment partly underpin specific empirical insights and theoretical approaches regarding what is needed for empowerment to occur.

6.4.1 When does Empowerment really happen?

This study's findings partly underpin previous empowerment theories regarding what is needed for the happening of empowerment. A couple of examples regarding the coincidences between this thesis and prior studies refer to the focus of empowerment and the multilevel nature of empowerment.

As introduced in Chapter Two, the focus of empowerment varies depending on whether empowerment is understood as a process or as an outcome. Findings about empowering mechanisms and enabling and blocking factors evidenced the duality of the concept insofar as both types of factors provide the circumstances to trigger the process of change that is to be materialised by the outcome sought with the implementation of empowering

mechanisms. These circumstances revolve around farmers' interactions, their access to finance and information, and improving their skills. Lutrell et al. (2009) concluded that empowerment as a "process" focuses on providing economic enhancement and increasing access to financial resources.

The findings of this thesis regarding the understanding of empowerment as a process identified that providing access to resources also embraces access to training, alignment of the interests of FOs and their members, and assurance of FOs' access to reliable market information.

Empowerment, understood as an outcome instead, focuses, according to Lutrell et al. (2009), on building farmers' organizational capacity and providing assets and resources to farmers. The findings of this thesis identified more outcomes that can be pursued with the implementation of empowering mechanisms. Farmers should: (1) have the possibility of controlling governance systems' agendas, (2) improve their financial literacy, (3) have the possibility of exerting their collective power, and (4) have the possibility of showing their disagreement. Therefore, having clarity about how empowerment is to be understood, eases the focus of actions designed to empower farmers. Nonetheless, according to Drydyck (2008), both understandings of empowerment need to be combined for empowerment to happen.

The other aspect of empowerment that agrees with the current understanding is its multi-level nature. The analysis conducted in section 6.3.3 about the multiple levels for implementing empowering mechanisms and the multiple baselines for empowerment underpins the relevance of the multi-level nature of empowerment, which Drydyck (2008) also recognised. According to him, for empowerment to happen and last, it needs to occur simultaneously across levels.

Therefore, the content analysis has also revealed that a favourable context for empowerment relies on the simultaneous implementation of empowering mechanisms. However, the duality and multi-nature of empowerment are crucial but not enough since some of the mechanisms and factors draw on the neoliberal understanding of

empowerment, which makes farmers, to some extent, responsible for their lack of power and over-rely on market mechanisms to empower farmers, making them dependent and exposed at the mercy of market forces that cannot be controlled (Jafee, 2007; Talbot, 2004).

The following sections expand on the relevance of adopting a neoliberal position regarding the empowerment of small farmers.

6.4.2. Is Empowerment Available for all Farmers?

Given the type of coffee actors who participated in the interviews (see Table 6), it is not surprising that some of the findings about empowerment draw on the neoliberal understanding of the concept. Some of the conclusions about empowerment that emerged from the analysis of the interviews include nuances that deserve to be examined:

Firstly, the responsibility that farmers have for their vulnerable position. Certain empowering mechanisms referring to the limited skills of farmers (to boost hidden power), or the lack of farmers' awareness regarding the market's needs (to boost invisible power) are embedded with the idea that farmers are responsible for their powerlessness. Both mechanisms match a neoliberalist approach that builds empowerment regarding individual self-improvement and personal responsibility. The problem is that both mechanisms represent a narrow consideration of broader social and economic inequalities limiting individuals' opportunities. Mosedale (2005) identified how initiatives focusing on entrepreneurial skills for women in developing countries normally overlook the social and gendered-based barriers and the lack of access to capital and markets that women face. Indeed, within this study also emerged the enhancement of the participation of women in governing bodies as a mechanism to increase the decision-making capacity of farmers and boost their visible power.

Furthermore, the focus on the limited capacities of farmers in terms of skills or knowledge overlooks the origin of such limitations. The coffee GPN is steered by governance

systems that are social constructs that often serve biased interests (Fridell, 2007). He referred to FT's limitations in protecting small farmers from the impact of the commodified coffee market. In the end, FT still relies on the unpredictability of the international market, and its system is "r*ooted in conventional norms and assumptions of consumer sovereignty"* (Fridell, 2007, p.100). Moreover, giving farmers premiums to get a better price makes them dependent on receiving a higher price.

Secondly, from the analysis of the enabling factors, the professionalisation of the leaders (I9, #60) and the rest of the cooperative staff also emerged, as well as the change of mindset. The mindset change should be triggered by addressing farmers as business partners and considering themselves business managers (I13, #55). Both empowerment factors draw in a neoliberalist understanding of empowerment that relies on market-based solutions and economic growth as the primary means to achieve empowerment.

However, the danger of relying on both factors as part of the strategy to set a baseline for empowerment contributes to intensifying the orientation for the growth of certain certifications (Renard, 2005). The limits that specific voluntary standards show to adapt to the historical context of coffee-producing countries, risk exacerbating existing inequalities by benefitting those already in a relatively better position to take advantage of new opportunities (Harvey, 2005).

In this regard, a representative of FT referred to the dangers of direct trade (I8, #58) despite the traction that is gaining in the context of the speciality coffee market. All interviewed roasters referred to the benefits that direct trade means to the farmers involved in it, in terms of building long-term relations (I21, #58), their contribution to the decommodification of coffee, or the access to pricing systems where the coffee of small farmers is paid at higher prices. Vicol et al. (2006) and a roaster based in the UK (I21,#2), referred to direct trade as "relationship coffee", highlighting the attention gained among academics due to its potential to secure, in principle, rural development based on the close interactions roasters have with coffee farmers.

However, direct trade has also raised some criticisms from governance/development literature and some study participants because the growth of direct trade risks perpetuates and exacerbates inequality, as mentioned above. Direct trade could also favour the dependency of farmers operating under the context of direct trade since their access to the coffee market relies on the supply chain needs of coffee buyers where farmers sell their coffee. In the analysis of the interviews, examples of beneficial trade interactions in the context of direct trade became apparent thanks to the commitment and the good faith of certain coffee buyers. However, coffee trade under direct trade channels relies on the supply chain needs of coffee buyers.

Therefore, changes in the supply chain needs might demand finding new coffee somewhere else, leaving previous farmers exposed again. This is why some authors such as Raynolds (2009) have criticised direct trade individualism since it focuses on bilateral relationships between farmers and coffee buyers rather than addressing deeper structural inequalities. Furthermore, direct trade has been criticised for choosing well-established farmers over the most vulnerable farmers (I8, #58). In many cases, the latter cannot constantly provide high-quality coffee (Jaffee, 2012) and cannot always meet top-quality standards (Vicol et al., 2019).

On a different note, the analysis of the interviews also revealed the limited relevance of certifications in the context of direct trade since roasters operating under direct trade conditions prioritise good quality coffee over any certification. Such priority was widely supported by roasters in the speciality coffee subsector, where direct-trade practices are frequent (I6, #7; I15, #43; I1, #40).

6.5 Conclusion

Chapter Six drew on the concept of empowerment to find alternatives to alter the power dynamics examined in Chapter Five. These alternatives refer to the empowering mechanisms and enabling and blocking factors that emerged from the thematic analysis of the 22 semi-structured interviews.

Chapter Six examined empowering mechanisms that could boost visible, hidden, and invisible power. After a detailed examination of empowering mechanisms and blocking and enabling factors, the chapter assessed the crucial role FOs play in implementing empowering mechanisms and setting the baselines that, at multiple levels, can contribute to their successful implementation.

Secondly, Chapter Six offered some reflections regarding the theoretical aspects of empowerment previously investigated. This chapter also provides several critical reflections regarding identified empowerment alternatives drawing on its neoliberal understanding. Some of this chapter's vital remarks align with the type of coffee actors taking part in the study based on where they sit within the coffee GPN. That said, it is interesting that the limited remarks from the interviews referring to the need to conduct structural changes within governance systems referred to small farmers as responsible for their powerlessness.

Lastly, the overall thesis contribution of Chapter Six, embraces the different types of actions with the potential to alter the power dynamics examined in Chapter Five, and the hindering or easing circumstances that the implementation of such actions might encounter.

The following chapter combines the findings of the three empirical chapters structuring the discussion about the position of small farmers in the coffee GPN.

Chapter Seven: The Position of Small Coffee Farmers in Coffee

7.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to develop and discuss the findings emerging from the empirical chapters Four, Five, and Six. It summarises the key findings from each chapter and introduces the components informing the discussion regarding how coffee farmers' position is affected by governance structures, power dynamics, and empowerment alternatives.

The discussion revolves around the governance landscape trends shaping farmers' position, the persistence of uneven power dynamics conditioning the coffee governance landscape, and the questioning of the efficacy of the context of empowerment that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. The chapter also includes a section on this thesis's contribution to wider debates and terminates with a brief concluding section.

7.2 A New Perspective on Coffee Governance

7.2.1 Overcoming the Prominence of Voluntary Certification Standards.

The documentary analysis conducted in Chapter Four highlighted the variety of coffee governance systems and the plurality of actors involved in operating within them. However, the coffee governance literature focuses primarily on voluntary certification standards, despite their limited social impact claimed by authors such as Bitzer et al. (2008). The limited social improvements that FT provides for small farmers reflect the continuity of existing power imbalances as voluntary certification standards are typically designed by actors in the Global North (Raynolds et a., 2007) and exclude the farmers in the greatest need (Mutersbaugh, 2005a).

Furthermore, continuing to focus on voluntary certification schemes perpetuates the dispersed and fragmented academic coverage of coffee governance systems. The prevailing attention on voluntary certification standards schemes hinders consideration of other governance systems with different agendas and setting actors. Moreover, the perpetuation of the patched and skewed focus of coffee governance literature and practice favours overlooking actors' perspectives from across the Global South (Renard, 2005).

This study's typology of governance systems shows the dominant role of corporate actors, CSOs, and formal state actors as scheme setters. Additionally, the fact that most scheme setters are based across the Global North shows the need of shifting attention to governance systems set by actors from across coffee-producing regions. Giving more attention to governance systems set by actors from the Global South would not only make possible to obtain a more holistic perspective of how governance systems can impact the farmers' position, but it would also help address the limitations that most currently functioning governance systems, have regarding the small farmers' position, such as the lack of inclusion of small farmers' voices. Renard (2005) referred to the dominance exerted by TNCs as often marginalising small farmers' ability to influence certification standards.

The scarcity of governance systems set up by small farmers underlines the need to undertake structural changes in the design of coffee governance systems to make them fairer. However, the implementation of structural changes within governance systems has not gained much traction to date. Nonetheless, this study identified several examples of governance systems set by small farmers from across the Global South, such as the SPP in Latin America (Clark and Hussey, 2016), or the Farmer Ownership Model in Eastern Africa (Nkandou, 2011). Both governance systems are uniquely controlled by farmers.

The next section addresses the dispersed and fragmented academic coverage of coffee governance systems by drawing on the implications of the comparative study in Chapter

Four. It also investigates how existing coffee governance disadvantages coffee farmers in the Global South.

7.2.2 The Coffee Governance Landscape

Conducting a comparative study offered the possibility of simultaneously investigating several categories of coffee governance systems. Several authors have noticed the lack of comparative studies in coffee governance and have highlighted the importance of comparing the design of different governance systems and their impact on the small farmers' position in the coffee GPN. For example, Bitzer et al. (2008) highlighted that the existing studies are not able to draw broader conclusions about the effectiveness of various governance systems, and Reinecke et al. (2012) pointed out the difficulties of developing context-specific recommendations for policy and practice without comparative studies of governance systems.

This study differs from previous studies in the literature as it addresses such a knowledge gap by conducting comparative research constituting a new level of analysis known as "the coffee governance landscape." This new approach embraces the different categories of governance systems as parts of a broader study, allowing holistic conclusions regarding coffee governance systems to be obtained. These conclusions, therefore, represent a more in-depth and critical analysis of the features of governance systems hindering small farmers' position.

I used the comparative approach to investigate the foundations of the limited positive impact that certain governance systems have had on farmers' position within the coffee GPN. In some cases, this has been due to farmers' limited power within certain governance systems compared to other systems led by farmers (see 5.4).

This study questions the prominence of corporate and civil society actors in setting governance systems, across the Global North. Only a few studies refer to standard features undermining farmers' position across governance systems: Bennett (2017) investigated the limited legitimacy of some voluntary certification standards, and Grabs (2017) researched the consolidation of corporate actors' dominance in the design and

setting of coffee governance systems. Both studies represent examples of academic warnings about certain features embedded in the design of governance systems that perpetuate farmers' disadvantageous position across the coffee governance landscape. However, they do not get to provide alternatives to tackle the dominant position of corporate actors in the coffee GPN.

7.3 Power Dynamics operating across the Coffee Governance Landscape.

This section examines the implications of power dynamics for the position of small farmers in coffee. First, it expands on how farmers are excluded (by design) from the moments in which the distribution of responsibilities to manage coffee governance systems happens. Second, it examines how these moments of exclusion contribute to farmers' stagnation in a position of subordination.

7.3.1 The Exclusion of Small Farmers by Design

This section discusses the power analysis conducted using the documentary analysis in Chapter Five. The findings about power dynamics showed that small farmers have limited power in the context of governance systems operating in the coffee GPN, and identified the occasions when farmers are effectively excluded from discussions when responsibilities to manage a governance system occur. The impossibility for farmers to lead any activities required to manage governance systems reveals farmers' limited power within the coffee governance landscape.

Additionally, this section examines the perpetuation of farmers' exclusion from steering governance systems. Farmers' systematic exclusion demands to undertake structural changes (see Chapter Five).

The following paragraphs expand on the implications of farmers' being excluded from the specific moments in which responsibilities within the governance systems are distributed.

- **The setting of a governance system**

The first moment of exclusion happens when deciding to set up a given governance system. The exclusion of farmers at that moment illustrates the allocation of visible power to other actors rather than farmers, contributing to farmers being disadvantaged from the scheme's inception. The exclusion at this moment remains crucial to understanding the power dynamics operating within the scheme since not having the possibility to participate in the setting of the scheme utterly influences the role that small farmers would assume during the time the scheme functions (Gaventa, 2006).

In Chapter Two, governance systems were associated with "spaces," i.e. one of the Power cube dimensions devised by Gaventa (2006), where the criticality of knowing who creates the space was stressed. According to Gaventa (2006), those actors who make a space, i.e., a governance system, have the power within it.

As discussed in Chapter Four, The Farmer Ownership model (represents an example of a governance system in which small farmers are part of the setting process, enabling them to distribute the power (known as visible power) generally reserved for the setting actors. Farmers are part of the structure of this governance system, forming the "groups" and "hubs" from the inception of a new scheme (Chon and Tambito, 2018).

However, recent literature on coffee governance systems does not explicitly mention small farmers' participation in setting a given scheme. In terms of power, there are few mentions of the implications of such exclusion on small farmers' position. For instance, Raynolds et al. (2007) examined the effectiveness of certification schemes without delving deeply into the internal power dynamics.

Recent studies regarding the involvement of small farmers in governance systems still focus on increasing farmers' participation in governance schemes to improve coffee quality and increase production volume. Sengere et al., (2019) investigated the implications of forging strategic alliances and using farmers' collective power to source

quality coffee consistently. They concluded that in many cases, farmers' access to the benefits that strategic 4Ps offer happens at the expense of farmers' interests being subordinated to the interests of CSOs and corporate actors.

- **The configuration of the agenda of a governance system**

Another crucial moment of exclusion refers to the configuration of the governance system's agenda, underpinned by the scheme's possibilities for action "scope" and "rationale". Setting the agenda and its priorities usually takes place at the scheme's inception, but it is also an ongoing and iterative process that may change over time.

The exclusion of small farmers from the decision-making process regarding the rationale and scope of the scheme shows the absence of hidden power and, therefore, the impossibility of farmers influencing the scheme's priorities. As a result, in many cases, schemes' agendas do not match farmers' priorities, leading to scenarios in which farmers do not see the usefulness of engaging with the scheme's activity (agenda mismatches).

According to the executive director of a producers' network in North America (I1, #6), the mismatch between farmers' and certification schemes typically happens when the former does not own the latter. According to the findings regarding power distributions of governance systems (Chapter Five), the Ownership Farmer Model and the SPP are two examples of farmers pursuing their agenda and deciding how to prioritise the scheme's agenda.

Nonetheless, certain governance systems have started incorporating farmers' voices into the priorities of their agendas. In Chapter Four examples of governance systems (solidarity schemes and 4Ps) where small farmers were invited to participate in the agenda-setting process were discussed (e.g. IFAD, 2016).

However, increasing farmers' possibility to influence the agenda of a given governance scheme does not imply increasing their ability to influence the configuration of the agenda. Bennett (2017) identified that in the context of voluntary certification schemes, a vote or

a seat in the governing boards does not ensure farmers that their perspectives would influence policy outcomes. The study questions the impact of the minor changes conducted by voluntary certification schemes in their governance structure.

In some of the semi-structured interviews conducted within Chapter Six of this study, similar findings to Bennett's emerged insofar as the analysis of the interviews showed the difference between being invited to participate in the agenda-setting process and having a real possibility of influencing the scope or the rationale of the scheme (hidden power). However, in literature, such a distinction has not always been made clear enough. Cheyns (2011) identified the difficulties experienced in the context of soy and palm oil multi-stakeholder initiatives for introducing pluralism toward the definition of the common good. The study identified cases in which stakeholders spoke about the behaviour of small farmers without belonging to this category, which triggered frustration and indignation among farmers.

- **The enforcement of a governance system compliance.**

The last moment of exclusion refers to enforcing compliance with the scheme requirements. In Chapter Four, findings revealed the association of small farmers with "compliance subjects" due to their obligation to fulfil the scheme requirements set by other coffee actors from within the scheme. The association of farmers with the role of "compliance subjects" rather than "requirements setters" shows the absence of invisible power (as defined in Chapter Two) and illustrates the position of subjection **i**n which farmers are locked.

Previous studies on governance systems have warned about processes that exclude farmers by design. One of those processes is represented by the rise of buyer-driven sustainability governance under the leadership of corporate actors (Grabs, 2017). The study examined the increasing influence of corporate actors in defining sustainability within coffee. The existence of empirical evidence regarding the emergence of southern standards schemes (Shouten and Bittzer, 2015) balances the dominant position of

corporate actors. Unfortunately, Shouten and Bitzer (2015) did not identify any southern standard scheme, in the context of coffee.

With the growing recognition of the need for structural changes in the coffee GPN, a rising chorus advocates for developing more participatory and equitable systems. This shift in perspective could significantly impact the industry (Neilson and Pritchard 2009). Equally important is the need for systems that provide more support to marginalised producers. This focus on social equity could significantly improve the livelihoods of small farmers. (Ponte, 2002b).

The consequences of continuing to ignore the consolidation of corporate actors in defining sustainability within coffee and the lack of governance systems set across the Global South foresee the perpetuation of farmers' yielding position within the coffee GPN. Governance literature still does not question enough the way governance systems are evolving. However, researchers such as Lemeilleur and Allaire (2019) identified examples of third-party certification schemes related to organic farming that have turned to community-based certification systems in which the label is considered typical. Alternatives to the third-party certification scheme are the Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) (Home et al., 2017) already mentioned in Chapter Five.

In conclusion, this section has examined crucial moments of exclusion caused by the (visible, hidden, invisible) power that those small farmers lack in most coffee governance systems.

The following section deepens in the context for the happening of a change in the benefit of farmers' position within the coffee governance landscape.

7.3.2 The Context for a Change in the Coffee Governance Landscape

This section discusses the variables affecting the context for improving farmers' position. The two aspects influencing the context for change are the need for structural changes within the coffee governance landscape that grant farmers access to the places where

negotiations to set a governance system take place and the understanding of the coffee GPN in which actors with a privileged position do not want to give up any of their privileges in favour of small farmers.

- **The need for structural changes within the coffee governance landscape**

Previous sections referring to the coffee governance landscape and its power dynamics revealed farmers' limited power. Farmers' restrained access to the “places” where the conversations revolve around the setting of a governance system and the crucial moments of exclusion demonstrate the persistence of power asymmetries in the coffee GPN.

This study found that conversations about setting up governance systems happen in places and at levels to which farmers do not have access. In many cases, they take place at an international level where farmers’ voices are not heard. Furthermore, farmers’ exclusion from such “places” is reinforced by the crucial moments of exclusion farmers encounter (see section 7.5). Those places and moments are controlled by other coffee actors such as corporate actors, CSOs, and, increasingly, formal state actors, certifying the limited power of small farmers.

The findings of this thesis regarding power dynamics in coffee reiterate what previous studies have already reported the dominance exerted by coffee actors mentioned above. Ponte (2002b) referred to the oligopoly exerted by a few roasters such as Starbucks. Jaffee (2007) referred to the injustices that still resonate despite the existence of initiatives that “*were created to redress these imbalances*” (Jaffee, 2007, p.328). Jaffee referred to the prioritisation of TNCs’ voices over small farmers to increase the volume of certified, e.g. FT.

Lastly, Daviron and Ponte (2005) argued how, in the context of regulatory bodies such as the ICO, large-scale commercial operations have historically favoured TNCs, in many cases, at the expense of smallholders' interests. The most recent example is the creation of the Coffee Public-Private Task Force, established by the ICO in 2021 by 12 private

sector companies to build common ground for a global partnership between the coffee industry and governments, without mentioning small farmers (ICO, 2021b).

Chapters Four and Five's findings portray farmers as compliance subjects or beneficiaries. About twenty years ago, the dominance of corporate actors, NGOs, and formal public actors was reported (Ponte, 2002b). This study, in line with current literature (e.g. Gorlich et al., 2020), shows that the dominance of such actors has not changed, and it will not change unless structural changes within the governance of the coffee are undertaken, starting with the governance systems that are currently steering the coffee GPN. The happening of structural changes across the coffee governance landscape reduces the risk of perpetuating the disadvantageous position of small farmers.

- **Is power a zero-sum game in coffee?**

The need for structural changes at the core of governance systems collides with the stagnation of actions seeking to balance out the coffee actors' position within coffee governance systems. One of the reasons for the limited number of modifications undertaken at the core of the governance system is the risk of those in a dominant position losing the privileges associated with it. In other words, for farmers to improve their situation, corporate actors must reduce some of the privileges they have to the benefit of farmers. Therefore, coffee power dynamics constitute a zero-sum game.

The dominant position of corporate actors, CSOs, or state actors grants them privileges that might be lost in the event of structural changes affecting governance systems' functioning. The literature has captured some examples showing that power dynamics represent a zero-sum game. Talbot (2004) reported during the coffee crisis of the early 2000s, the historic low prices affected small farms in developing countries while TNCs benefited from the lower input costs. Ponte (2002b) discussed how the liberalisation of coffee markets benefitted TNCs with the resources to hedge against risks and absorb market shocks. Meanwhile, small farmers suffered from fluctuating prices. Grabs (2017) examined how corporate actors transformed the need for structural changes into an

opportunity to reinterpret the notion of sustainability to benefit their supply chain performance and to increase the legitimacy gained by company-owned standards.

The CAFFE practices program developed by Starbucks and the AAA Nespresso Sustainability program are two examples of corporate programs with lenient sustainability requirements that allow corporate actors to orient the practices of their suppliers to improve the quality of their products rather than enhancing the ethical concerns about producers' development, making the most of their position of dominance (Renard, 2010).

This conflict of interests that affects corporate actors (Ponte, 2002), CSOs (Raynolds et al., 2007), and state actors (Daviron and Ponte, 2005) underpins the idea of power being a sum-zero game in the context of the coffee GPN. Findings on power dynamics (Chapter Five) and coffee governance systems (Chapter Four) show the reluctance of coffee actors to give up the benefits and privileges associated with their position of dominance. This might be why interventions oriented toward balancing power asymmetries have not gained much traction among coffee actors.

Avoiding such interventions has been surpassed by the attention gained by direct trade as a mechanism to build long-term relations between farmers and coffee buyers and as a legitimate way for roasters to reduce the potential risks their supply chains face (see Chapter Six).

Nonetheless, recent studies recognised the necessity to undertake targeted interventions to change the coffee governance structure for the benefit of producing countries. Lima and Lee (2023) investigated emerging countries' opportunities to upgrade within the coffee GVC. Although their focus differs slightly from this study due to their emphasis on upgrading at a national level, they identified several interventions related to the coffee governance structure. They found beneficial governance changes for coffee-producing countries, which included merging small and medium coffee-producing enterprises, setting up a public national coffee agency, and the formation of a coffee cartel that gathered the central producing countries to gain market power. All these measures were also identified as part of Chapter Six findings regarding setting a favourable baseline for

farmers' empowerment. The problem with Lima and Lee's approach is that it undervalues the relevance of interventions at an individual level and their usefulness in supporting interventions at the national level.

Other studies, instead, focus on interventions at the farm/individual level, through setting up value co-creation projects (Civera et al., 2019) or stakeholder engagement (Candelo et al., 2018). Both studies focus on the possibility of altering power dynamics and concentrate on changing the role farmers play within the governance systems at an individual level. However, both studies do not combine measures taken at the individual level with measures at a higher level. Chapter Six findings, drawing on the concept of durable empowerment (Drydyk, 2008), identified the need to simultaneously implement global, international, national, and individual interventions to alter power dynamics.

The following section expands on articulating the response that improves coffee farmers' position.

7.4 Is the Potential for Change only rooted in Empowerment?

This section brings together the findings from Chapters Six, about empowerment alternatives; Five, about power dynamics; and Four, about governance systems.

This section aims to develop an empowerment strategy to improve farmers' coffee positions. Chapter Six examined the components of setting a favourable context for empowerment. However, the findings of chapters Four and Five about operating governance systems and power dynamics, respectively, demand the consideration of further aspects for devising an empowerment strategy.

Those additional aspects refer to the empowering potential of the central concept of the GPN approach, networks, and recognition of the coffee actors who better situated to lead the transformation of places and spaces to benefit small farmers.

7.4.1 The Empowering Potential of Networks

Under the necessity of considering aspects beyond the empowerment domain to devise an empowerment strategy, this study used the concept of networks as the conductive thread to articulate the strategy for small farmers' empowerment. This choice rests on the opportunity to link the empowerment strategy with the findings regarding governance systems and their power dynamics. On a conceptual level, choosing networks as the conductive threat allows the study to connect the empowerment strategy with the theoretical framework, where networks lay at the core of one of its elements, the GPN approach (Chapter two).

Networks rest at the core of interactions among and within groups and individuals. In many cases, the relational aspects of networks are related to power asymmetries. According to Drydyk (2008), when the scope of choice of a given actor is limited by actors from a different group, it is recognised as group subjection. Whereas when the limitation comes from within the same group is called intragroup dominance. The design of an empowerment strategy will vary depending on the type of relational aspects since they explain the type of relations happening among farmers and the rest of the coffee actors.

Findings from this study revealed the presence of both group subjection and intragroup dominance, identifying empowering mechanisms with the mission of addressing both.

Examples of empowering mechanisms to address group subjection are represented by empowering mechanisms seeking to reduce the gap between farmers and the rest of the actors, such as the securement of communication channels that secure the quality and transparency of information to which farmers access. Appropriate empowering mechanisms to reduce intragroup dominance that were identified in Chapter Six are those seeking to increase the relationships between farmers and their FOs or those mechanisms seeking to increase the participation of younger farmers and women to balance out the dominant position of older masculine farmers within the collective.

There are not many examples in the literature where both types of power asymmetries are addressed simultaneously (Wortmann-Kolundzija, 2019)[25]. Indeed, some studies warn about the difficulty of confirming tangible shorter benefits for specific groups (female farmers) in the context of studies focusing on the empowerment of small coffee farmers as a collective (Sirdey and Lallau, 2020). Pineda et al. (2019) highlighted that in their research focusing on female participation in certification programs, they noticed that the relevance of the female organisation was marginal in a broader economic context, as it is complex for female-only associations to question many prevalent gender norms and challenge the dominant position of coffee buyers.

This research shows the significance of combining empowerment strategies that consider the relational aspects of empowerment and can address intragroup dominance and group subjection. In that combination, this research advocates for using the concept of networks due to their capacity to connect such relational aspects.

Lastly, the empowering potential of networks becomes apparent with their fitness to navigate across the places where negotiations to set governance systems take place. The frequent exclusion of small farmers from these places can be addressed by the multi-level nature of empowerment that the concept of networks includes.

The consideration of networks as hubs of interactions complements the multi-level nature of empowerment found in Chapter Six. Incorporating “networks” into the design of an empowerment strategy facilitates the navigation between levels, identifying areas that can reduce beyond the discreet levels within a multi-level structure and exposing the intermediate settings that Rowlands (1985) used to refer to the possibility of empowerment happening between levels. Acknowledging these intermediate arenas can facilitate the design of empowerment strategies for governance systems (as in spaces) that function between levels (as in places).

[25] She used FOs managed by women as part of the FOs sample that was used in the research of empowerment of small farmers versus other supply chain actors.

This study advocates for a more frequent use of the GPN approach in investigating farmers' empowerment since its theoretical advantages have been underused so far (Table 1). As of today, the attention gained by the GPN approach focuses mainly on the investigation of power (Gereffi, 2014; Grabs, 2017).

7.4.2 The Champions of Empowerment

Another important aspect of the empowerment strategy refers to its implementer. As discussed earlier in Chapter Six, FOs sit at the core of implementing the empowering mechanisms in the context of the coffee GPN (see section 6.2.4). However, the attention FOs have attracted from within the empowerment literature has not been equaled yet in the context of the GPN approach. Instead, corporations have been the coffee actors gaining most of the traction (Fridell, 2007). Additionally, growing bodies from within the GVCs and GPN literature are also demanding greater attention from state actors due to their increasing prominence in roles including regulator, production (state-owned enterprises) and buyer (public procurement) (Horner, 2017). This study, instead, advocates for increasing research efforts focusing on FOs due to their centrality within the coffee GPN for empowerment purposes.

Furthermore, the greater attention that this researcher places on FOs becomes more relevant in the face of the rapid transformation that global production systems (coffee included) face (Reardon, 2015). This study highlights the limited attention that the mid-stream[26] segment of the agrifood value chain has received in policy debates. Market segregation on the upstream end of the coffee value chain and the rise of the number of medium-scale farms (Jayne *et al.*, 2016) show that (FOs) operate in the context of the profound transformation affecting the coffee GPN.

[26] Reardon (2015) refers to storage, wholesaling, and logistics as mid-steam segment.

To conclude, as per all discussed above, the GPN approach, with its vast knowledge regarding power, could benefit substantially from the incorporation of the empowerment debate surrounding FOs in the design of an empowerment strategy.

7.4.3 Factors Affecting the Implementation of the Empowerment Strategy.

As discussed in Chapter Five, corporate actors have consolidated their dominant position at the expense of farmers. Chapter Six examined the potential of empowering mechanisms to boost (visible, hidden, and invisible power).

However, the success of the implementation of an empowerment strategy also depends on aspects that transcend the design of an empowerment strategy. The aspects that emerged from the interviews, which have also been examined by the literature, are the generational gap affecting farmers' turnover, their level of engagement with producer organisations (Arana-Coronado et al., 2019) and the increasing impacts of climate change (Grabs, 2017; Eakin and Wehbe, 2009). Other aspects benefiting the dominant role of certain actors in coffee refer to technological upgrading, which influences the productive structure of coffee farmers (Lima and Lee, 2023).

Despite the significance that the previous factors might have in compromising the success of an empowerment strategy, a change in the way of looking at the limitations small farmers face is currently needed. The fact that the empowering mechanisms identified within this study mainly focus on the farmers' limitations (as in their limited skills, limited organisational capacity, etc.…) shows the need for more self-criticism from most of the coffee actors farmers interact with. To some extent, the investigation of power in the context of the coffee GPN emerges as a zero-sum game in which some actors will have to give up some of their power to benefit farmers' empowerment.

A UK-based roaster (I15, #78) referred to the need for neutral support from corporate actors, civil society organisations, and other actors in giving away some of their privileges for the greater good, e.g., the sustainability of the coffee production system. This is particularly true in the face of additional challenges faced by farmers with the rapid

transformation of the coffee GPN, which is making small farming models unsustainable as parcels become smaller and need to be farmed more intensively (Jayne et al., 2016; Headey and Jayne, 2014).

To sum up, an empowerment strategy needs to consider elements that transcend activities that impact the coffee GPN in multiple ways and understandings of empowerment, frequently blaming farmers for their lack of power.

The following section expands on the contribution of this study to wider debates.

7.5 Contribution to Bigger Debates

This section examines the empirical and conceptual contributions of this study. It also discusses the need for multidisciplinary approaches that combine political economy, global studies, and the transversal study of power, governance, and empowerment theories.

My thesis contributes to the scholarship centered on understanding the vulnerable position of small coffee farmers. I used governance structures, power dynamics and empowerment alternatives, in the context of coffee GPN, as the core concepts to assess farmers' position. Therefore, the contribution of my thesis can be unfolded in multiple directions.

Firstly, this thesis contributes to governance literature with the expansion of the understanding of coffee governance systems under a comparative context. Adopting a comparative approach facilitates the incorporation of critical perspectives regarding governance systems' effectiveness. In comparing coffee governance systems, this thesis provides empirical evidence of the unbalanced academic attention and empirical practice conducted across coffee governance systems (Chapter Four). To fill this knowledge gap, this thesis delved into the governance systems that received limited attention. The excessive reliance on VSS has shown their limited potential to address farmers' disadvantageous position in the coffee GPN. Some limitations detected in studies focusing on voluntary certification schemes refer to their excessive focus on corporate

actors and the association of farmers with compliance subjects rather than scheme setters.

Therefore, this study, recommends considering the entire range of governance systems currently functioning and take advantage of their working features. Comparing multiple governance systems opens the door to ranking features within each governance system with the highest potential to benefit farmers' position. Having an analytical tool, such as the governance landscape typology, devised in Chapter Four, can be extremely beneficial to conduct the comparative study of coffee governance systems.

The advancement on the concept of governance landscape, undertaken within this study will become helpful for scholars and practitioners interested in investigating the governance landscape of global production systems, that like coffee, harbour the existence of multiple governance systems whose effectiveness remain unclear.

Secondly, this thesis also contributes to power theory with the use of Gaventa's power cube in the context of the GPN approach. The contribution to power theory embraces the investigation of current power dynamics across the coffee governance landscape populating the coffee GPN. As result of such investigation, it became apparent the types of power preventing farmers from steering most of the governance systems.

Having a nuanced knowledge of power dynamics will allow policymakers to identify common trends across governance systems hindering farmers' position. Consequently, policymakers could identify what power features benefit farmers' position the most, e.g., the inclusion of farmers from the scheme's inception (Gaventa, 2006). The conceptual framework developed within this study offers a flexible analytical tool to investigate power dynamics across the complex governance structure of the coffee GPN. Despite this complexity, the conceptual framework shows the potential to obtain and organise information from multiple sources, possibly expanding it by incorporating further governance systems when required.

Thirdly, this thesis contributes to development studies with the deepening of the concept of “durable empowerment”. I identified the presence of specific hindering mechanisms in the context of the coffee GPN, i.e. relational aspects of empowerment (group subjection and intragroup dominance) whose presence impacts small farmers’ position. Within this thesis became apparent the neoliberal understanding of “empowerment” that certain interviewees have. Such understanding of empowerment represents a theoretical limitation in changing farmers’ position, since such stance considers farmers to be in a great extant responsible for their own disadvantageous position.

A better understanding of the conditions to make empowerment last can support civil society members in improving the design and implementation of empowering mechanisms that this type of actors might implement to enhance farmers’ position in global production systems. The consideration of the relational aspects developed in the realm of development studies rises as an opportunity for GPN scholars to normalise the incorporation of theoretical advancements from development studies scholarships into the GPN approach.

Lastly, this thesis contributes to the economic geography literature by enriching the scholarship regarding production networks. I used the concept of “networks” to frame the investigation of the governance-power-empowerment nexus in so far, such concepts and their interactions are relevant to enhancing farmers’ position. The focus on farmers’ position and their interactions undertaken in this thesis have contributed to satisfy the demand of significant changes regarding power dynamics and governance structures that are required to enhance the position of small coffee farmers.

The utilization of production networks as structures placing small farmers at their core, will facilitate scholars from the global studies to conduct further studies focused on investigating alternatives to address the drastic changes required to alter the power dynamics and governance structures of the coffee GPN.

7.6 Conclusion

This thesis has expanded the understanding of coffee governance through the nuanced analysis of power dynamics across governance systems. Firstly, this research delved into the fragmented academic coverage of coffee governance, unveiling the dominant role of corporate actors, CSOs, and state actors as scheme setters and the scarcity of governance systems set by small farmers.

To surpass the fragmented coverage of the literature, it developed a governance systems typology to facilitate comparative studies in which all governance systems received similar attention. Moreover, it introduced a new level of analysis—the governance landscape—capable of embracing governance features relevant to the coffee GPN and features that only apply to certain governance systems.

Secondly, the research conducted a nuanced analysis of power dynamics across governance systems and identified the exclusion, by design, of farmers from setting governance systems in coffee. This study also raised the need for structural changes in the coffee governance landscape to include farmers' views at critical moments in the agenda and strategy design of governance systems.

Thirdly, the research discussed alternatives for challenging power dynamics within governance systems. In the first step, it examined the components to set a favourable context for empowerment, incorporating, in a further step, the notion of networks to provide a holistic response capable of addressing aspects that transcend the conceptual barriers to empowerment.

Understanding how power dynamics function across the governance systems within the coffee GPN is complex. It requires to consider a diverse range of power dynamics at multiple levels. Expanding the size of the governance landscape might increase the internal variability of the findings, compromising, in turn, their reliability. However, the fact that both analytical tools (the governance landscape typology and the theoretical framework) are set up entirely independently, yet related, allows the researcher to focus on one portion of the governance landscape, depending on their research interests. The

flexibility offered by the conceptual framework enables the analysis of the coffee GPN to be fragmented and, from a bottom-up approach, to investigate the simultaneous power dynamics operating within it.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This thesis began by investigating governance systems in the coffee global production network to assess how they affect small farmers' position. To this end, it focused on three aspects that significantly impact the position of small coffee farmers.

The first aspect referred to the investigation of governance systems. The study deepened the understanding of categories of governance systems and the types of actors steering them. The second aspect investigated the power dynamics functioning within those governance systems. This involved examining whether small farmers had the possibility of undertaking three activities that showed whether small farmers held visible, hidden, and invisible power. Based on the number of powers in the farmers' hands, the study assessed under which governance systems farmers are more likely to improve their position. The third aspect investigated the empowerment alternatives that could be undertaken in the context of the coffee GPN to alter, to a greater or lesser extent, the power dynamics and governance systems hindering farmers' position.

Chapter Eight combines the thesis's main ideas to provide an outlook on the research findings. It highlights how this thesis contributes to advancing academic knowledge and guides future investigation.

The rest of the chapter is divided into seven sections in terms of structure: one section addresses the importance of this research, followed by the examination of the study's novelty. This chapter also has one section about policy implications and recommendations. The final sections refer to the ideas for future investigation and limitations of the study undertaken. The thesis ends with a section with some concluding remarks.

8.2 Summary of Findings

Findings obtained in Chapter Four provide a nuanced snapshot of East Africa's coffee governance landscape. Evidence gathered in Chapter Five expands on the power dynamics operating across governance systems The findings in Chapter Six examine the empowerment alternatives. Lastly, in Chapter Seven, findings from the three empirical chapters were brought together to discuss them jointly.

8.2.1 The Coffee Governance Landscape

The myriad of governance systems operating in East Africa was examined in Chapter Four. This chapter is conceptually grounded in political economy theories devised to study power dynamics in the context of global production systems, such as the GPN approach, and the widely accepted appreciation of the existence of two groups of actors within GPNs: winners and losers (Mayer, 2016). In coffee, political economists and geographers recognised that within GPNs, certain actors have been favoured to the detriment of others, e.g., small farmers (Utrilla-Catalan et al., 2022).

Chapter Four answered RO1 and RO2 regarding the catalogue of governance systems operating in East Africa, including the range of players operating within them and the nature of some of the interactions between coffee farmers and the rest of the coffee actors. Findings of the systematic research review highlighted the prominent attention received by voluntary certification schemes among all governance systems and the dispersed and fragmented coverage of coffee governance literature despite the heterogeneity of governance systems. The thesis addressed this knowledge gap by developing a typology of governance systems formed by five categories (see section 4.2.1).

The heterogeneity of governance systems coincides with the heterogeneity of coffee actors interacting with small farmers. However, despite the diversity of governance schemes and actors, findings showed the limited range of coffee actors with the possibility to set a governance scheme. Indeed, findings illustrated the clear leadership of corporate actors in many categories of governance systems, along with the less prominent

presence of formal institutions and civil society actors. It became apparent that such actors assumed roles as the scheme setters of governance systems. Additionally, it became clear that, in most cases, these actors were based across the Global North.

In the best-case scenario, small farmers were considered beneficiaries of the governance systems. Giovannucci and Ponte (2005) already recognised the passive role of small farmers. They found that farmers, amid the steering of multiple coffee governance systems, have become “compliance subjects "who must satisfy the requirements set within governance systems. Such compliance indicates that small coffee farmers could obtain market access for their coffee.

Findings also showed that farmers’ position was not only hindered by the disadvantageous position they hold compared to corporate actors (roasters, retailers, traders) and cooperative leaders but also by the intrinsic features embedded in the condition of farmers as “coffee growers”. These features refer to the poor understanding farmers have about the functioning and evolution of the coffee market (Milford, 2004). Such poor understanding can still be argued due to farmers' limited access to the coffee market (Latynskiy and Berger, 2016) and the limited prioritisation embedded in governance systems when it comes to communicating to farmers what the coffee market needs are.

8.2.2 Power Dynamics within the Coffee Governance Landscape

Chapter Five investigated existing power dynamics within operating governance systems (RO2). Findings regarding power dynamics showed the types of power held by small coffee farmers (RQ.2.1) and what governance systems are better equipped to improve their position (RQ2.2).

Chapter Five is conceptually grounded in three theoretical trajectories: economic geography, power theory and governance theory. The analytical lens of the conceptual

framework was used to investigate the three research realms, and the power small farmers had in the context of coffee governance systems.

Findings showed a variety of power dispositions within governance systems. The type of power in small farmers' hands varies across governance systems' categories. The array of power dispositions embraced three types of power (visible, hidden, and invisible) and leaned on allocating the possibilities for action to other coffee actors but farmers. Concerning the variety of power arrangements among governance systems, findings also revealed an uneven potential of governance systems to alter power dynamics in the coffee GPN for the benefit of farmers' position.

Utilising the conceptual framework allowed power dynamics across several governance systems to be investigated simultaneously to obtain a novel point of view. By taking this new approach, this study addressed a significant knowledge gap within coffee governance literature related to the absence of comparative studies paralleling multiple governance systems categories.

Chapter Five findings showed that small farmers have limited possibilities to control activities required for the normal functioning of governance systems. The lack of control of such options within governance systems enlightened the disadvantageous position that small farmers bear in coffee.

Conducting a comparative study allowed this peace of research to identify three groups of governance systems with different potentials to improve farmers' position based on the possibilities for action farmers have. Chapter Six built on the possibilities for farmers to alter existing power dynamics within governance systems.

8.2.3 Alternatives to alter Power Dynamics within the Coffee Governance Landscape.

Chapter Six identified empowerment alternatives to alter the power dynamics found in the context of multiple governance systems. The empowerment alternatives referred to the empowering mechanisms with the potential to boost small farmers' power (RQ3.1) and a baseline of empowerment formed of enabling and blocking factors that could increase/hinder the implementation of such mechanisms (RQ3.2). Chapter Six drew on empowerment theory to build the findings on the appropriate theoretical underpinning to illustrate the changes required to alter existing power dynamics.

A range of mechanisms for empowerment related to the three types of power and the four governance features were identified. The findings of Chapter Six revealed (1) the need for empowering mechanisms to include issues beyond coffee production and to focus on farmers' leadership enhancement, promotion of farmers' engagement within FOs, and the provision and securement of farmers' access to (market) information; (2) the multiple levels at which empowering mechanisms are to be implemented and, (3) the transferability of the mechanisms for empowerment, allowing them to be implemented in any type of governance system.

Chapter Six also provided evidence about the design of a favourable context for the implementation of empowering mechanisms by identifying blocking and enabling factors that could hinder or boost the impact of empowering mechanisms. Findings about empowering mechanisms, enabling, and blocking factors showed the existence of factors at multiple levels and scales, justifying the consideration of a multi-level approach toward obtaining a baseline for implementing empowering mechanisms. Throughout Chapter Six, the study argued the existence of appropriate mechanisms to challenge power dynamics in the context of coffee governance systems. However, the analysis showed a wide disparity in the extent to which mechanisms are being used. Despite knowing their potential, some of them are not being used at all, others are starting to be utilised, and others have been used for a longer time.

8.3 The Relevance of a Holistic Outlook

This section draws on the relevance of having a level of analysis that embraces the governance aspects of the coffee GPN. The coffee governance landscape represents a level, that enables the possibility of obtaining a holistic outlook of the coffee GPN regarding its governance structure, power dynamics, and empowerment alternatives.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the coffee GPN is characterised by the existence of multiple actors endowed with disparate allocations of power and resource ownership. Small farmers have been normally the actors bearing the disadvantages derived from their participation in the coffee GPN. This thesis identified a plethora of governance systems simultaneously steering the coffee GPN. Each governance system mainly represents the multiple private regulatory efforts to fill the void left by the ICA to produce sustainable coffee (Raynolds et al., 2007).

In the light of the persistence of disparate power and resource allocations, this thesis investigated why despite the multiple (governance) efforts seeking to balance the allocation of positive and negative outcomes among coffee actors, small farmers are still bearing most of the negative consequences of such interactions (Borrella et al., 2015). Understanding how to address these uneven allocations emerges as a crucial issue because it compromises farmers' position in coffee and exposes the long-term sustainability of coffee production. Therefore, finding governance systems that boost farmers' position emerges as a matter of urgency.

This research's significance lies in the urgent aspects of coffee governance addressed in each empirical chapter. Findings obtained in Chapter Four provided a snapshot of East Africa's coffee governance landscape. Evidence gathered in Chapter Five deepened power dynamics, providing a nuanced understanding of the types of power in farmers' hands. Lastly, the findings in Chapter Six acknowledge the results from the two previous chapters to deepen the empowerment alternatives to change the governance structure of the coffee governance landscape and coffee power dynamics in the benefit of coffee farmers' position.

The relevance of the research conducted in Chapter Four lies in the use of a comparative approach that goes beyond the analysis of just one category of governance systems by considering several categories of governance systems simultaneously. Within Chapter Four, five categories of governance systems were identified as part of the coffee governance landscape. Coffee governance literature, instead, has normally focused on investigating coffee governance systems individually with a priority focus on voluntary sustainability standards. Daviron and Ponte (2005) and Raynolds et al. (2005) are examples of the disparate attention gained by VSS. Bitzer et al. (2008), despite focusing on the effectiveness of sustainability partnerships, pointed out the predominant focus on VSS.

Going beyond the traditional attention that VSS schemes have attracted in coffee governance literature, Chapter Four offers the opportunity to identify other governance systems that recognise their relevance within the coffee GPN. Considering multiple categories of governance systems also provides an opportunity to deepen understanding of the reasons that have conferred corporate actors a dominant position, granting them a privileged position within the coffee governance landscape.

The contribution of Chapter Four lies in the critical assessment of unprioritized debates regarding the dominance of certain coffee actors in the context of governance systems. So far, coffee governance literature has not questioned enough how the dominant position of certain actors within the coffee GPN has influenced their position within coffee governance systems. Therefore, the relevance of Chapter Four lies in the critical assessment of certain coffee actors' position in the emergence and design of coffee governance systems.

Some of the crucial debates that were identified in Chapter Four refer to the (1) exclusivity of actors across Global North (mainly corporate actors and civil society actors) to set governance systems; (2) the focus of certain governance systems in the sustainability and protection of “coffee” itself, rather than in the coffee farmers; (3) the endogamy of scheme “setting actors” despite the varied types of governance systems; (4) the limited

access of small farmers to the fora where negotiations to set a governance system happens; (5) the intrinsic features that turn and keep farmers into compliance subjects of governance systems requirements, and (6) the dichotomy faced by voluntary certification schemes regarding the dilution of their goals at the expense of governance systems growth.

These questions were answered by investigating the drivers responsible for locking small farmers in a disadvantageous position. The literature has already identified the need for governance systems to change some of their functioning dynamics (Bennett, 2015; Lyon, 2007). However, the debate about what reforms are necessary to obtain changes that produce positive outcomes for farmers' positions has still attracted limited attention. Chapter Four concluded with the acknowledgement of the limited power of small farmers within the coffee GPN.

The research conducted in Chapter Five is relevant for understanding small farmers' position because it leans on the nuanced study of power dynamics across the coffee governance landscape. The conceptual framework offers the possibility of exploring specific facets of power from the perspective of small farmers that have not been studied enough within the coffee governance literature.

Power dynamics have been investigated before using the GPN (Coe et al., 2008). However, this study has used the navigability offered by the GPN approach to focus on the position of small farmers (rather than corporate actors) in the diverse context generated by the multiple governance systems that are simultaneously steering the coffee GPN.

Lastly, the importance of this research also lies in the trends identified regarding the dominant role adopted by corporate actors across and within multiple governance systems. Identifying these trends suggests looking for alternative mechanisms to challenge existing power dynamics to improve small farmers' position. Since 60% of the worldwide coffee is produced from farms smaller than 5 ha (Siles, et al., 2022) finding

alternatives to improve their position within the coffee GPN will likely benefit many of them across the worldwide coffee belt.

The relevance of Chapter Six lies in the specificity of the empowering mechanisms that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. Using the analytical lens of my theoretical framework, allowed this study to recognize and connect the alternatives identified for farmers' empowerment with the power dynamics identified in Chapter Five. The specificity of these mechanisms lies in their acknowledgement of the multiple levels existing within the coffee GPN, their applicability across governance systems and their awareness of current farmers' position. The outcome of Chapter Six refers to empowering mechanisms tailored to be implemented in the context of identified coffee governance systems. Along with the empowering mechanisms, the relevance of this chapter lies in identifying the favourable context for empowerment to boost the impact of implementing empowering mechanisms (RQ3.2).

Finally, the holistic relevance of this study leans on the synergies derived from populating the coffee governance landscape with power dynamics existing across governance systems because of the interactions among the coffee actors operating within them. Identifying mechanisms tailored to change such power dynamics unveils possibilities to go beyond the issues referring to adaptation approaches embedded in most of the coffee governance literature. See Muradian and Pelupessy (2005) for price volatility, Utrilla-Catalan et al. (2022) for income inequality, Latynskiy and Berger (2016) for poor access to the market, Derkx and Glasbergen (2014) for multi-certification issues, Ventocilla et al. (2020) referring to the increase in climate change variability and Kuma et al., (2019) for farmers' excessive dependency on coffee. This work does not seek to investigate how farmers are to adapt to unfavourable circumstances provoked by the functioning of the current coffee GPN. Instead, it pursues the configuration of a new governance landscape, where the design of coffee governance systems focuses on the (Power) dynamics provoking the aforementioned issues in the coffee GPN.

8.4 Novelty of the Study

The issues faced by small producers, on which most of the literature has focused are, among others, price volatility (Muradian and Pelupessy, 2005), limited market access (Latynskiy and Berger, 2016), limited bargaining power and income inequality (Utrilla-Catalan et al., 2022), diversification opportunities (Borrella, et al., 2015) and environmental vulnerability (Bunn et al., 2015). For this thesis, it was crucial to investigate the causes triggering such issues to improve farmers' position in coffee effectively. Uneven power allocations are considered one of the main causes of farmers' disadvantage (Grabs and Ponte, 2019).

However, this thesis took a different approach to previous studies investigating power dynamics in the context of global production systems. The novelty of such an approach not only leans on the conceptual framework, providing a novel lens to study power dynamics but also on the focus on farmers and the utilisation of the outcomes of such a study to challenge the power dynamics hindering farmers' position. This study of power dynamics focused on the coffee governance landscape existing within the coffee GPN and identified potential alternatives to respond to current power dynamics by identifying mechanisms and forming a favourable context to alter them for the benefit of farmers' position.

This thesis did not consider the entire coffee GPN, as the unit of analysis, like previous studies have done. The GVC and GCC approaches and even the GPN framework have focused on explaining the dynamics of entire global production systems: Gereffi (1994), referred to producer-driven and buyer-driven commodity chains; Gibbon (2001) used the term international trade-driven GCCs, where the aspects of power were associated with the coordination of the entire GCC, rather than concentration of productive resources ownership. In the context of coffee, the GPN structure acquired significant governance complexity (Chapter Four) with the coexistence of a plethora of governance systems, which demanded a different approach to studying power dynamics in depth. Therefore, this thesis incorporated the consideration of the complex coffee governance landscape into its investigation of power dynamics. By doing this, it was possible to acknowledge the

coexistence of multiple coffee governance contexts, which opened the opportunity to focus on smaller units of analysis (governance systems) and collect individual results for each system and the coffee governance landscape.

This thesis investigated the coffee governance landscape (Chapter Four), acknowledging multiple governance systems functioning in the coffee GPN. Identifying the coffee governance landscape has as its main implication the possibility of conducting comparative studies among governance systems and, therefore, filling one of the knowledge gaps within the coffee governance literature.

Previous studies investigating coffee governance systems normally focus on just one category of governance systems, with limited examples of studies comparing multiple subcategories included in one category. Ruben and Zuniga (2011) referred to the scarcity of comparative studies involving multiple certification standards. The scarcity of comparative studies is even more accentuated in relation to studies comparing categories of governance systems. The lack of comparative studies limits our knowledge about which systems work best under different conditions (Ponte, 2002), hinders the identification of best practices (Clapp, 2014), and prevents researchers from identifying opportunities emerging from holistic approaches (Taylor, 2005).

The main outcome of the investigation of the coffee governance landscape was the creation of a governance system typology formed by five categories of governance systems. This typology facilitated the comparison among governance systems and enabled the critical evaluation of governance systems using different criteria such as scope, leading actor, motivation, and enforcement (see 2.4.3).

Identifying the coffee governance landscape facilitated the undertaking of a nuanced study of power dynamics based on the differences in power allocations among governance systems. The scrutiny of the coffee governance landscape and my conceptual framework provided me with a set of analytical tools capable of navigating across the variety and complexity of the coffee governance landscape, deepening in the

multiple governance contexts with different power dynamics and actors operating within and across governance systems.

The conceptual framework (Chapter Five) was used to investigate power dynamics within the coffee governance landscape, previously identified in Chapter Four. The combination of the four framework components (GPN approach, the power cube, governance dimensions and the concept of durable empowerment) generated an analytical space that allowed this study to conduct a multi-layered analysis of power dynamics. To perform such analysis, this framework used the possibilities for action defined by the governance dimensions developed to classify voluntary certification standards.

Starting with the GPN literature, even after the research update that Coe and Yeung conducted in 2019, this approach still shows some of the limitations that it manifested from its inception in terms of power dynamics investigation. The GPN approach captures interactions at a meso-level (Coe, et al., 2008). Consequently, all the interactions happening at a low level lay beyond the scope of its understanding**.** One of them refers to the contribution of the GPN approach to understanding the occurrence of uneven development in the context of the global interconnected economy. Coe and Yeung (2019) noticed that despite the possibilities offered by the theoretical expansion of the GPN approach, it emerged as a necessary but insufficient analytical tool for understanding uneven development in the global economy (Coe and Young, 2019, p.793).

Power dynamics are an optimum proxy of the occurrence of uneven development. The limitations of the GPN 2.0 approach to address the investigation of uneven development relate to its detachment from its political economy roots (Phelps et al., 2018). Werner (2019) referred to the incapacity of the GPN2.0 to engage with macro-scale questions of global inequality and its impairment to interpreting when the success of certain actors and regions happens at the expense of others. However, using the GPN approach as part of the conceptual framework in this study allowed the study to surpass the limitations previous studies encountered regarding the disparity of outcomes emerging as part of the GPN by explicitly considering power dynamics and specific possibilities for action.

This study also addressed the tendency of previous studies using the GPN approach to focus on corporate actors. Such a tendency was even noticed as part of the new developments delivered by GPN.2.0 (Werner 2019). This tendency was already seen by Coe et al. (2004), and despite the progress made to explain power dynamics within GPNs, corporate actors still emerge as the central actors of the approach, showing, with some exceptions, the limited engagement of the GPN approach with agricultural production in the Global South (Horner, 2017).

Neilson et al. (2018) applied the GPN framework to assess the value capture potential of geographical indications within Indonesian smallholder communities, and Vicol et al. (2019) brought a livelihoods perspective to bear on the GPN literature. Instead, this study combined the GPN approach with power and governance theory to surpass GPN's limitations in focusing on non-corporate actors and boost its questioned capacity regarding the investigation of the impact of uneven power allocations affecting small farmers.

The findings of this study revealed the limited power farmers hold in the context of the coffee governance systems steering the coffee GPN. The analytical tools devised under the development of this study showed that the origin of the limited visible and hidden power relates to the absence of the possibility of farmers to set or initiate a new governance system of almost any type and the limited possibility of setting the agenda of governance systems (Chapter Five). Despite the limitations of the study’s framework to investigate invisible power, the interviews I conducted with a wide variety of coffee actors, showed some of the mechanisms and contexts to boost invisible, visible and hidden power (Chapter Six).

The holistic picture regarding farmers’ role across coffee governance systems showed farmers as compliance subjects rather than scheme setters. A change in the role of small farmers across existing governance systems could positively impact the position farmers have in the coffee GPN.

Findings in this study identified that small farmers' delicate position within the coffee GPN is a common factor across the governance systems where small farmers have the role of compliance subjects. Previous studies have not paid much attention to the influence that the role of farmers within a governance system could exert on the position of such actors within the coffee GPN. The main limitation to establishing whether there is a connection between the role coffee farmers occupy within governance systems and their position in the coffee GPN is the lack of comparative studies relating the role of farmers across operating governance systems. This study's contribution to investigating such a connection relates to the findings that emerged from the investigation of power dynamics using the Power cube developed by Gaventa (2006) in combination with governance theory developed in the context of voluntary standards.

This study stretched the “Power Cube” application by using it for the first time in the context of the coffee GPN. The power cube was designed to explain ways for citizens to be part of political processes, engagements opportunities to influence polices or alternatives to affect governance processes (Gaventa, 2006). Indeed, it has been widely applied in multiple contexts, such as social entrepreneurship (Korstenbroek and Smets, 2019) or governance and power dynamics in small-scale fisheries (Shamsuzzaman *et al.*, 2020).

Despite the lack of previous experiences using the power cube in the context of the coffee GPN, the appropriateness of this power framework was confirmed thanks to the possibility of associating types of governance systems within “spaces”, one of the dimensions of the power cube. Some governance systems proved to meet features of spaces defined as closed, where decisions are made behind closed doors and, in some cases, imposed on farmers. Renard (2005) referred to Starbucks’ code of conduct called “total quality”, by which they pay a good price for the coffee. Still, in exchange, farmers need to let Conservation International (CI), the certifying organisation, take control of their internal organisations’ resources.

Other governance systems were identified with Invited spaces. This is the case of IFAD (2016) and its methodology of inviting small farmers into the design of 4Ps once the business case and the required funding have been decided. Lastly, a third group of governance systems could be associated with claimed spaces. This is the case with any of the Standards for sustainable production schemes that have proliferated in developing countries because of the legitimacy challenges of Northern Standards (Schouten and Bitzer, 2015).

Regardless of the type of space, findings about power dynamics confirmed governance systems are not neutral. They are, instead, shaped by power, by the power of actors in charge of creating the space (Gaventa, 2006). Findings confirmed that actors with visible and invisible power could set up the scheme. This is the case of voluntary certification standards with the corporate actors and CSOs leading the schemes they set up.

This study also stretched the use of governance features devised to explore the working dynamics of voluntary certification standards. Indeed, the research of this thesis, with its typology of governance systems, confirms the excessive attention received by voluntary certification standards, constituting a good example of the limited existence of studies comparing different types of governance systems. The undue attention and the lack of comparative studies remain, and only scarce studies have focused on other governance systems as alternatives to steer the coffee GPN. Peixoto et al. (2023) conducted a study exploring the coffee governance structure to study the sustainability status of the coffee value chain. Stretching the application of the governance classification criteria by incorporating them as one element of the conceptual framework in this study defined the orientation of the analysis of coffee power dynamics. Therefore, using governance features to centre the study of power unlocked the possibility of investigating power dynamics, distinguishing when small coffee farmers had the possibility of initiating a governance system, setting its agenda, or enforcing the compliance of the requirements set within a given governance system.

The Findings in Chapter Six revealed the necessity to centre the implementation of empowering mechanisms around enhancing farmers' leadership and inter/intra engagement and providing access to market information. These empowering mechanisms can be pursued to boost specific types of power.

Previous studies, instead of focusing on altering the power dynamics, have used empowerment for different purposes, such as increasing stakeholder engagement (Civera et al., 2017) to improve the relationships among coffee actors and increasing the participation of vulnerable stakeholders in value co-creation projects to reduce the vulnerability factors of the coffee chain (Candelo et al., 2018).

According to Gaventa (2006), only by knowing how power dynamics work, approaches to change them can be developed. Therefore, this study has focused on investigating power dynamics to change farmers' positions, not livelihoods or relationships, because farmers can change both by themselves from a better position to the one they currently have. Lastly, the reason to investigate power dynamics in the context of governance systems is due to the necessity of contextualising such investigation under the realm of the different structures and institutions simultaneously steering the coffee GPN.

8.5 Policy Implications

The three empirical chapters have shown several opportunities for addressing specific governance challenges and have shed some light on changing certain governance system features to improve small farmers' position in the coffee GPN.

8.5.1 Opportunity for a Policy Mix and an International Coordinator.

In general terms, based on this study's findings, the variety of governance systems and actors that were identified operating in the coffee GPN shows an opportunity for collaboration among governance systems, since none of the governance systems, by themselves, have the potential to solve any of the challenges caused by current power dynamics to the detriment of small farmers.

Collaborative efforts are represented by the Common Code for Coffee Community (4C), the Sustainable Coffee Challenge and the Global Coffee Platform (GCP). However, they do not foresee collaboration across governance systems among coffee actors, and instead, they maintain the prominent role of corporate actors. Academic and empirical evidence within governance literature underlines the insufficiency of focusing on governance systems independently, highlighting the necessity of using a “governance systems mix”. This approach has already been explored and implemented within the realm of global environmental governance to tackle climate change. Gunningham and Sinclair (1999) referred to the excessive reliance on single instruments and advocated for using a combination of instruments. Excessive dependence on single market-based instruments is also happening in the coffee governance landscape with the majoritarian individual use of market-based instruments, e.g. VSS.

Implementing a “governance-systems mix” that advocates for the collaboration among governance systems should be championed by a coordinating actor from either the public sphere or the civil society realm in charge of securing small farmers' relevance for the coffee GPN (I4, #47). This global coordinator could deal with the dispersed and fragmented academic knowledge of governance built on the excessive focus on voluntary certification standards. This global coordinator could also correct the excessive attention put on corporate actors, logically leading to prioritising their interests in designing governance systems.

In many cases, corporate actors have the power to set places that farmers cannot access. Therefore, the existence of a global coordinating actor could potentially secure farmers' access to places where governance discussions regarding the design of governance systems take place. Granting farmers access to the discussion nodes reverses the trend of prioritising not only corporate actors’ agendas but also the farmers’ (Cheyns, 2011).

8.5.2 Farmers' Engagement from the Scheme's Inception

Chapter Five examined the power dynamics across the governance landscape, revealing the limited (visible and hidden) power small farmers have in the context of most of them, except for the farmer ownership model. The two main factors explaining farmers' limited power were the limited involvement of farmers at the inception of the schemes and the limited possibility of farmers to decide about governance systems' agenda. Consequently, the policy process created for the design and setting of a governance system must grant farmers' engagement from the beginning and enable mechanisms securing farmers' ability to decide about the agenda. In this way, small farmers would stop being seen as beneficiaries or compliance actors and would become setting actors.

Furthermore, these new engagement processes must start to emerge from within coffee-producing regions, and in the case of some initial support from other groups of actors might be required, these new processes should include clauses including the support from other actors but only for a temporary period, letting small farmers lead the setting of the scheme.

Lastly, these new engagement mechanisms need to be aware of the relevance of the multi-level nature of the coffee GPN, which requires the simultaneous implementation of empowering mechanisms to trigger a change strong enough to alter existing power dynamics. The long-term success of implementing empowering mechanisms must advocate for governance systems where farmers have the last word. As Bennett (2006) highlighted, participation does not grant the capacity to decide.

8.6 Policy Recommendations

Evidence provided by this study suggests the necessity for structural changes in the design and functioning dynamics of most coffee governance systems. The intensity of the changes will vary depending on small farmers' potential for action. The obstacles that such changes might encounter due to the resistance of actors whose positions might be undermined fall beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, it became clear that the

investigation of power dynamics in the context of the coffee GPN represents a zero-sum scenario, in which for farmers to gain power, other actors must give up some (Gaventa, 2006).

The complexity of the coffee GPN requires novel approaches that acknowledge the diversity provided by geopolitical coffee production contexts that demand different governance systems. From an empirical stance, approaches must be capable of dealing with governance systems' diversity by adapting to the particularities of each governance context. Understanding the coffee global production systems as a GPN eases the process of understanding the vertical integration (coffee farmers' presence in consuming countries) and the segregation (speciality coffees) of coffee production systems that have become apparent during the research process of this thesis.

Regarding the segregation of the coffee market and the increasing relevance of the south-south markets, approaches already applied to other crops, such as apples (Alford, 2023), with the development of Regional Value Chain/ Domestic Value Chain (RVCs/DVCs) concepts to address the growing relevance of South-South coffee market and domestic coffee markets. Such approaches could be considered in the face of the fragmentation of international coffee production (Backer et al., 2018).

There is a need to acknowledge new trends in the coffee GPN, such as the growing volume of the south-south trade, which is now surpassing the North-South trade. This is happening simultaneously with the expansion of lead firms from the Global South, operating within and across their own regions (Barrientos et al., 2016). These new trends within the coffee GPN will significantly impact the design of governance systems since producers will not rely on markets oriented exclusively to the Global North (Horner and Nadvi, 2018). The changing geography of GPNs holds crucial economic and social implications for suppliers and workers, including how and by whom they are governed (Kaplinksky and Farooki, 2011).

8.7 Future Research

This thesis's empirical findings contribute to advancing knowledge regarding power dynamics across the plethora of governance systems steering the coffee GPN. However, further understanding regarding coffee power dynamics could be very beneficial not only for the improvement of small farmers' position but also for the long-term sustainability of the coffee GPN. The identified knowledge gaps to expand the research initiated by this thesis are as follows:

- Investigating the implications that structural changes, to be undertaken within existing governance systems, could have for consumers across the Global North. For instance, structural changes improving coffee farmers' position could mitigate the impact of the price rise associated with developing the speciality coffee subsector. Price increases will likely impact the price paid by final consumers, making coffee unaffordable for many consumers. As the uprising of speciality coffee indicates, the improvement of farmers' position cannot happen at the expense of a significant price rise to be supported by final consumers.

- Investigating whether there is any connection between small farmers' role within governance systems and their position within the coffee GPN. This study provided evidence regarding small farmers' limited power within most governance systems. Efforts to investigate whether increasing farmers' power within governance systems would provoke a positive change in farmers' position in the coffee GPN would open the door to a new stream of research that could bring even more light to improving coffee farmers' position.

- Investigating the use of general governance theory in the investigation of coffee GPN would benefit the investigation of coffee governance due to the additional theoretical frameworks and analytical tools that would become available. Using other theoretical frameworks, such as adaptative governance or multilevel governance, could ease the implementation of changes required to improve farmers' position. For instance, the concept of multilevel governance captures very well the governance processes happening within the coffee GPN in terms of the displacement of state power and

control that occurred with the ICA fallout, going upwards to international actors and organisations and downwards to regions, as well as outwards to civil society and non-state actors (Pierre and Peters, 2000).

- Investigating how the use of alternative frameworks interested in units of analysis smaller than a GPN could contribute to understanding dynamics that cannot be extrapolated to an entire GPN but can explain phenomena affecting parts of it. New trade and governance processes, such as direct trade or speciality coffee uprising, are fragmenting, even more, the coffee GPN, making it more complicated to identify dynamics subject to be extrapolated to the entire coffee GPN. Therefore, the use of regional/domestic value chains could be used to explain the emerging fragmentation of the coffee GPN (Backer et al., 2018).
- Investigating farmers' interactions with multiple coffee actors would also increase the knowledge regarding the hidden middle of value chains that Readon (2015) raised with his research about the important transformation of the midstream segment of value chains that he identified with the significant proliferation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the context of agrifood value chains.

8.8 Limitations

I identified two groups of limitations: the first refers to the methodology, and the second refers to the findings of this study.

Limitations regarding the methodology refer to the number of governance categories. Due to the time and context, this study does not capture all the governance systems functioning in East Africa. The inclusion of further categories of governance systems could lead to different results. However, incorporating other categories of governance systems might increase the internal variability within each category of system, which could hinder the undertaking of a comparative study across governance systems. For instance, in the case of voluntary certification standards and intellectual property law schemes, both governance systems include multiple subtypes, making it difficult to come

up with conclusions that apply to all governance subtypes. Nevertheless, this design of the conceptual framework was devised to allow the incorporation of additional categories of governance systems if required. Furthermore, this first comparative study sets a baseline for incorporating further categories of governance systems.

Limitations affecting the results refer to findings regarding the Farmer Ownership Model. The power dynamics within it are utterly different from those within many governance systems. For example, under this governance system, small farmers hold more power than in the rest of the governance systems categories. The Farmer Ownership model started to be implemented recently, which explains the limited evidence regarding its empirical and policy achievements. Consequently, it is necessary to be cautious and wait for more studies to be conducted to give the findings emerging from its implementation the appropriate academic and policy relevance.

Secondly, this work cannot explain what type of power has a greater impact on small coffee farmers' position. However, according to the findings about power dynamics, the involvement of actors from the inception of the governance systems setting facilitates the allocation of visible power, which, according to this thesis, significantly affects the attainment of the invisible and hidden power, i.e. holding visible power makes it more likely for actors to be endowed with invisible and hidden power. Nonetheless, I recognise the challenge that represents analysing power, especially in its hidden and invisible forms, due to the difficulty of finding evidence of the exercise of power, which often forces the use of impacts or footprints that properly represent existing power dynamics.

8.9 Concluding Remarks.

This thesis extends our understanding of the aspects impacting the position of small coffee farmers in the coffee GPN. It focuses on the factors responsible for farmers' vulnerability rather than on the impacts or implications of this vulnerability.

Firstly, the research demonstrated the dispersed and fragmented academic coverage of coffee governance systems, highlighting the prominent attention received by voluntary

certification standards schemes. To address the unbalanced attention, this thesis examined a plethora of governance systems and devised a typology of governance systems category (Table 9) that provides an appropriate level of analysis to carry out comparative studies using the coffee governance landscape.

Secondly, this research examined the power dynamics across the governance landscape, demonstrating small farmers' limited power within most governance systems and focusing on the possibilities for action. In addition, this thesis argued the different potential of each governance system based on the types of power held by small farmers.

Thirdly, this thesis identified a range of empowering mechanisms and enabling and blocking factors with the potential to challenge the coffee governance landscape and the existing power dynamics within it. The neoliberal understanding of empowerment that was identified in the analysis means that the findings about empowerment need to be viewed with caution. The danger of embracing a neoliberal understanding of empowerment makes small farmers responsible for their delicate position in the coffee GPN. In addition, such an understanding still prioritises the interests of actors with a dominant position in the coffee, hindering the implementation of the structural changes that must be undertaken across the coffee governance landscape. However, the caution that is advised over the empowerment findings should not reduce the urgency for structural changes to be undertaken in the design and functioning of coffee governance systems to effectively change the vulnerable position of small coffee farmers.

Above all, this thesis stretched the use of the four components forming the conceptual framework that can be used to maintain the investigation of the structural changes that need to be undertaken for the benefit of farmers' position. The four components were the GPN approach (Coe, et al. 2008), the Power Cube (Gaventa, 2006), four governance dimensions to investigate the classification of VSS (Alvarez, 2010) and the concept of durable empowerment (Drydyk, 2008).

It seems that the dominant position that certain actors exert within the coffee GPN has inevitably been transmitted to the coffee governance landscape with the passive

connivance of the neoliberal understanding of empowerment that blames small farmers for their delicate position in the coffee GPN and exculpates actors for shaping governance systems to perpetuate their privileged position in the coffee GPN.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance: University of Leeds

AREA 20-079 - Ethics application - APPROVAL

Dear Jose

AREA 20-079 - Examination of power dynamics in governance models in the coffee sector. Insights from East Africa.

NB: All approvals/comments are subject to compliance with current University of Leeds and UK Government advice regarding the Covid-19 pandemic.

I am pleased to inform you that the above research ethics application has been reviewed by the School of Business Environment and Social Services Ethics Committee and on behalf of the Chair, I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion based on the documentation received at date of this email.

Please retain this email as evidence of approval in your study file.

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the original research as submitted and approved to date. This includes recruitment methodology; all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. Please see https://ris.leeds.ac.uk/research-ethics-and-integrity/applying-for-an-amendment/ or contact the Research Ethics Administrator for further information researchethics@leeds.ac.uk if required.

Ethics approval does not infer you have the right of access to any member of staff or student or documents and the premises of the University of Leeds. Nor does it imply any right of access to the premises of any other organisation, including clinical areas. The committee takes no responsibility for you gaining access to staff, students and/or premises prior to, during or following your research activities.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as documents such as sample consent forms, risk assessments and other documents relating to the study. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited.

It is our policy to remind everyone that it is your responsibility to comply with Health and Safety, Data Protection and any other legal and/or professional guidelines there may be.

I hope the study goes well.

Best wishes
Kaye Beaumont
On behalf of Dr Matthew Davis, CHAIR, AREA

Appendix 2. Letter of Consent

Examination of power dynamics in governance models in the coffee sector. Insights from East Africa.

5 Consent to take part in research.

6

I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I understand that participation involve the investigation of coffee governance models from the perspective of power.

I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

I agree to my interview being audio/video-recorded. Once transcripts have been produced, all recordings will be deleted.

I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

I understand that extracts from my interview may be quoted anonymously in Jose Manuel Vega's doctoral dissertation and peer reviewed papers etc.

I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

I understand that signed consent forms and original audio/video recordings will be retained by Jose Manuel Vega Barbero and will be only accessed by his supervisory team in case is required until the exam board confirms the results of their dissertation.

From which all identifying information will be retained for two years.

I understand that I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

I understand that I am free to contact you in the research to seek further clarification and information (see below contact details.

Jose Manuel Vega Barbero
University of Leeds
eejmvb@leeds.ac.uk

Signature of research participant

---------- ----------
Signature of *research* participant Date

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

Signature of researcher

---------- ----------
Signature of researcher Date

Appendix 3 Interview Protocol

Interviewee	
Role/Affiliation	
Stakeholder group	
Date	
Recording method	

Instructions; Please answer the following questions from the perspective of coffee farmers.

Warm up questions

Can you talk to me about your role in____
What are the roles that keynote has in the coffee supply chain
What type of coffee farmers do you work with?

Part 1. types of governance models operating in coffee in East Africa and type of interactions that happen within them

1. Are farmers **part of other governance models** in addition to this scheme? E.g. Certification, denomination of origin.... If yes, why do you think that is happening?
2. Could you talk to me about the **interactions coffee producers have within** the scheme? In terms of actors who they interact with, main reasons to interact ***Note to self**: in case additional clarification is needed I could refer to: types of actors and at whether coffee farmers interact with other actors who normally operate at local, regional, national or international level.*

Part 2: Structures and procedures of the governance models, including where small producers fit.

3. Can we talk about the **role farmers play** within the scheme? ***Note to self****: do you think coffee farmers are beneficiaries/ owner/ users of the scheme?* Do farmers have **the capacity** to decide about issues that affect their livelihoods? And the issues that affect the daily functioning of the scheme are the capacity to set a new scheme, set the agenda, motivation and compliance of the scheme's requirements.
4. Let's talk about the organizational structure of which farmers are part of. What **responsibilities** do you have within the scheme? Are they clearly distributed? Is there an organizational structure maybe? ***Note to self****:* What could be done to support coffee farmers and help them to organize themselves? Organizational training to help farmers to identify roles and responsibilities leaders, logistics, quality and marketing?
5. When farmers **don't agree with the outcome of a given interaction**, what can they do about it?
6. How affects **farmers 'livelihoods** being part of this scheme affect? Do you think that farmers are being empowered in so far they are part of a given scheme? If yes, how ***Note to self****: benefits/costs for farmers' livelihoods?*

Part 3. Explore alternatives that can improve the position small farmers hold to potentially increase their access to benefits and reduce the costs they might bear.

I am interested in knowing if governance models include mechanisms to empower farmers, and if they do, how they do it?

7. In your opinion, do small farmers have opportunities to improve and expand their skills? How? ***Note to self:*** *What types of skills are contemplated? E.g., technical aspects related to extraction, land treatment, production methods, entrepreneurial skills, negotiation skills.* 7.bis If they cannot, Does the scheme foresee to take measures to implement them.?
8. How do you think that small producers you work with perceive their place in the coffee business?
9. We talked about the interactions that farmers have before, is there a mechanism to link farmers to other types of stakeholders outside of the production node? **9.bis**. If not, what type of actions could be implemented in your opinion? E.g. fostering collaboration between producers through cooperatives?
10. What are the main Barriers to implement actions for the empowerment of small coffee producers?
11. What are the main enabling factors to implement actions for the empowerment of small coffee producers?

Farmers are talking to the wrong people, roasters, importers and consumers are the actors whom farmers should be talking to.

Farmers are notable to secure the flow of information, to defend the characteristics of the coffee. When they sell it to exporters, a lot of information gets lost. They can't advocate for the quality and all the work in terms of cultivation that is behand the needs.

Appendix 4: Data Management Plan

University of Leeds Data Management Plan (DMP) Template

Researcher Name	Jose Manuel Vega Barbero

Project Title	Examination of power dynamics in governance models in the coffee sector. Insights from East Africa.
Faculty	Environment
KRISTAL Reference Number (if applicable)	
Supervisor(s) name (if applicable)	Anne Tallontire, Rory Padfield and Bob Doherty
Funder	ESRC
Scheme	The White Rose
Research Start Date	Sept 2017
Research End Date	April 2022
Ethical review number	
DMP review due	

Date	Version	Author	Change notes
22th March 2020	1.0	JMVB	
8th January 2021	2.0	JMVB	
24th February 2021	3.0	JMVB	
24th March	4.0	JMVB+AT	

Please provide a brief overview of your project including proposed research methods
My research concerns the examination of governance models in coffee in East Africa, such as voluntary certification standards, geographical indications, or solidarity models. It maps out the governance models operating in the sector, from the global to the local, identifying actors within in them and the various roles they play, as well as the extent to which different actors are able to influence the evolution of these models or suggest different ways of governing the coffee value chain and standards and systems that shape outcomes. I will do this through a combination of documentary analysis and interviews.

Regarding the methods I intend to take a mixed methods approach drawing on qualitative research methods. Data collection will involve semi-structured interviews (online). No field work will be conducted due to the Pandemic. Potential participants will be interviewed virtually. The focus of my analysis is finding alternatives that in terms of power distributions improve small farmers' position.
None of the conclusions will be able to be connected to individual insights/opinions expressed by participants, since results will be obtained from aggregating and analyzing all the data collected through the interviews, and quotations will be attributed to stakeholder group rather than individual or organization.

1. **What data will be produced? What data will be used from other sources?**

- Interview video/audio recordings (MP4 files)- generated through interviewing producer organisations members, civil society representatives and corporate actors, - will be kept on encrypted devices-and uploaded to secure cloud sites as soon as possible. Interview video/audio recording will be deleted as soon as transcripts are available.

- - The resulting transcripts will be kept on encrypted devices.

- Meeting notes in Word format for further analysis. They will also be kept on encrypted devices and uploaded to secure cloud sites as soon as possible.

- Note: no data (personal or otherwise) will be kept on paper when outside Leeds University campus.

There is no intention of using data generated by third parties.

2. **Where will data be stored? How will data be structured? Include file formats and approximate volume.**

Data will be generated in word and mp4 format. All mp4 recordings will be deleted as soon as they are transcribed,

Data will be stored on the servers of Leeds, thus being covered by the backup and security practices of the University. Data conversion will be conducted when in case is required and advised by the UoL.

When personal or confidential data is collected and includes certain sensitivity will be stored anonymously in encrypted files.

Furthermore, I am familiar with the multiple storage systems that exists within the University, e.g. m-drive or One Drive. I also have a file name convention and a directory structure that I will use to store all the information related to my project.

3. Access to data during the project. Give details of collaborators and any controls.

During the collection and analysis stages, only me will have access to the collected data. However, I will share them with my supervisors whenever is required using my university of Leeds email.

4. Ethics and legal compliance: are there any 'special' requirements for your data? Any contractual or consent issues? Key policies (internal and external)

No, I will follow the standard procedures as set out in the Ethical Review form

Individual consent will be gained through a consent form that will be delivered at the beginning of each interview (template attached), despite the opportunity that all participants will be given, in terms of choosing to not respond to sensitive questions,

correcting their answers and the possibility of withdrawing their permission up to two weeks after the interview would have been conducted.

5. How will data be documented and described? Methodologies and protocols.

I will design a protocol for recording and storing data from interviews, so that the findings can be easily summarised and learning from the process can be generated. At the end of each working day, research notes will be stored in a safe device in a safe location and uploaded to secure cloud sites protected by the UoL encryption system . Video/audio recordings will be deleted once transcripts have been made. Data collection activities will comply with procedures of anonymization and codification.

Interview transcripts will be retained for two years from the date of the exam board.

Consent will be obtained through a letter of consent and will be asked on the day of the interview.

6. Training and support

I have been trained to use Nvivo, and I also attended the course "Research Data Management Essentials" delivered by the University library staff.

7. What are the plans for data sharing beyond project partners? Include justification if some of your data needs to be restricted. Include data and code. Include repository.

All data will be used for the exclusive purposes of the research and never disclosed to a third party for uses which depart from research objectives. Furthermore, all data will be codified, anonymised and stored at a safe location. Permission to share data will be asked prior to sharing it.

Once digitalised, all data will be exclusively stored on university servers, protected by an encryption system. No data will ever be left unattended or in unencrypted devices (such as USBs, external hard disks or clouds). Data will be released immediately as an embargo is not foreseen to be needed.

I will provide exhaustive information, regarding all the procedures described above, to potential participants before the actual data collection starts.

8. What Intellectual Property will be generated? How will IP be protected and exploited?

No

9. Who is responsible for managing the data? What resources will you need?

I am be responsible for managing all collected data, which will never be left in unattended devices. All data will be exclusively stored in encrypted computers. .When stored in the cloud, all data will be protected by the UoL encryption system

.
10. Ongoing data curation / data housekeeping - you may find it useful to include a retention table I will keep and store all the collected data at the repository University data in a way they can be understood. I will keep a diary of the activities that refer to data management so an accurate data management process can be recorded.

End of Project

At the end of a project and/or before you leave the institution, you should ensure that data and research materials are deposited with the School or a trusted data repository and documented in such a way that they can be found and understood.

Dataset name	Location	Person responsible
PhD_data_JMVB	University of Leeds	Jose Manuel Vega Barbero

University of Leeds Data Management Plan (DMP) Template: Prompt Sheet

1. What data will be produced or used? (Including original software)

- What physical data will you study? (e.g. artefacts, samples, paper archives, etc.)
- What digital data will you generate? (e.g. field-notes, images, spreadsheets, audio interviews, survey data, annotated bibliography, etc.)
- What original software will you generate?
- What third party data will you reuse?

2. Where will data be stored? How will data be structured?

- Estimate how much data you will produce over time – do you have enough storage?
- Do you know what University storage is available and how to access it?
- What file formats and software will you use?
- Do you have a logical file naming convention and directory structure?
- How will you use versioning so you can identify the current version of documents / data?
- How will data generated in the field be saved to safe University storage?

3. Access to data during the project. Give details of collaborators and any controls.

- Have you discussed data sharing with your research collaborators/ supervisor?
- Who needs to access data during the research? How will they access data?
- Do you need a data sharing agreement? (see also section 4.)

4. Ethics and legal compliance: are there any 'special' requirements for your data?

- Have you read the University's Information Protection Policy? Data must be assessed for sensitivity and storage in line with this policy

https://it.leeds.ac.uk/it?id=kb_article&sysparm_article=KB0011140

- Are you familiar with the University's advice on data protection and GDPR? https://dataprotection.leeds.ac.uk/
- Does your research funder have specific data management and sharing requirements?
- Are there other policies and protocols you need to be aware of and observe? For example, NHS codes of practice?
- Will you anonymise your data?
- Should some data be destroyed? When and how?
- How and where will you record any participant consents and/or contractual requirements which impact data management and sharing? The DMP can be a good place to record this information.

5. How will data be documented and described? Methodologies and protocols.

- Will others understand your data? Write documentation. Make sure table and spreadsheet values are clearly labelled.
- What information about data collection methodology will be recorded?
- Is it important for the research to be reproducible? Why/why not? What additional documentation will be required?
- Will you write software? Where will this be documented and stored for future use?

6. Training and support

- What training do you need for data gathering, organisation, analysis or presentation?
- Are there relevant courses available at the University? Online? Who can provide support?

7. What are the plans for data sharing beyond project partners?

- Have you considered reasons for and against sharing data? Will data be openly available to everyone or will there be access restrictions?
- If your research involves people, have you obtained appropriate consent for data sharing?
- Can your data be released immediately, or should you embargo (delay access to) the data?
- How long will / should data be available for?
- Will you use a data repository? Which one? Are there subject specific data repositories in your field?

8. What IPR will be generated? How will IPR be protected and exploited?

- Will you be applying for a patent? Will your research have commercial applications? Do you need to contact the Commercialisation team in the Research and Innovation Service?
- Have you read the University Intellectual Property Policy? http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/downloads/download/600/university_of_leeds_ipr_policy

9. Who is responsible for managing the data? What resources will you need?

- Who is responsible for data at different stages in its lifecycle?
- On projects with complex data management requirements, different types of role should be specified.
- How will best practice and guidance be shared across the project partners?
- Are sufficient resources (skills, people, storage, technology) available to deliver your plan?

10. Ongoing data curation / data housekeeping - you may find it useful to include a retention table

- What data will you keep? Who decides?
- Where will data be kept and for how long.
- Who needs to know what data exists on the network, where it is, how it should be managed and how long it should be retained?

Don't forget to review and update your data management plan regularly

But I don't have any data! *Anything can become research data if it is used for research purposes – data is not just numbers on a spreadsheet. Think creatively about the materials you are using and producing: what could be shared with other researchers who are interested in your work; what could be reused to produce new insights? Any evidence or material which underpins or sheds light on your findings, your academic publications, your thesis or your project can be considered research data.*

Annexes

Annex 1: Definition of Coffee Actors

Small farmers are those who cultivate coffee on farms of less than 5 hectares and are characterized by their reliance on family labor and minimal use of external inputs (Jayne *et al.*, 2016).

Facilitators: refer individuals or organisations play a role in promoting and supporting the farmer ownership model, where coffee farmers have more control over the value chain and decision-making processes. They may provide technical assistance, financial support, or capacity-building programs to empower farmers to engage in direct trade and cooperative structures. Giovannucci et al., (2019).

Corporate actors refer to the various companies and entities involved in the coffee industry, undertaking critical roles within the coffee industry. They significantly influence the market dynamics and practices within the sector (Gibbon and Ponte, 2005).
Depending on the role they undertake within GPN, corporate actors can be addressed as follows:

- R**oasters,** companies or individuals who roast green coffee beans to create the desired flavour profiles before packaging and distribution (Ponte, 2002b).
- **Retailers** refer to businesses that sell coffee and coffee-related products directly to consumers. They can range from small coffee shops to large supermarket chains (Daviron and Ponte, 2005).
- **Coffee exporters** are companies or individuals engaged in the business of selling coffee beans or processed coffee products to international markets. These entities are responsible for sourcing coffee from coffee-producing regions, processing it, and packaging it for shipment to other countries.
- **Coffee importers** are businesses or individuals who purchase coffee beans or processed coffee products from coffee-producing countries and bring them into

their home country or distribute them to local markets. They act as intermediaries between coffee exporters and domestic buyers, such as coffee roasters, wholesalers, retailers, and coffee shops (Ponte, 2002b).

- **Coffee trader** are intermediary agents or firms facilitating transactions between coffee exporters and importers. They operate as matchmakers, helping coffee producers find potential buyers in international markets and assisting coffee importers in locating suitable suppliers (Ponte, 2004) .

Civil society organisations are non-profit, voluntary, and independent organisations that operate independently of any government. In the context of coffee, they play an important role in advocating for sustainable and ethical practices throughout the production systems and working to address social, economic, and environmental issues(Rainey, Wakunuma and Stahl, 2017).

Farmers' organisations (FOs) are formed by groups of coffee farmers to market and sell their produce collectively (IFAD, 2016a). In many cases, FOs chose representatives, to negotiate contracts, pricing, and sales with other actors in the supply chain. They represent the interests of the coffee producers during trade transactions.

Certification bodies are organisations responsible for evaluating and certifying coffee as meeting specific sustainability or quality standards. They provide certifications such as organic, fair trade, Rainforest Alliance, etc.

Multistakeholder platforms are collaborative forums involving various actors from the coffee industry, including producers, traders, NGOs, governments, and consumers. They aim to address challenges and find solutions for sustainability, social issues, and environmental concerns. The International Coffee Organisation is an example of a Multistakeholder platform in the context of coffee (Fuchs *et al.*, 2009).

National Coffee boards are government bodies responsible for overseeing the coffee sector within a specific country. They may formulate policies, regulate production, and trade, and promote the coffee industry domestically and internationally. Its function might vary from one to another. The Tanzania Coffee Board and the National Coffee Association of Guatemala represent examples of this type of coffee actor.

Annex 2: The body of Literature used in the documentary analysis

Source	Author & year of publication	Type of source
A Fair Trade-off? Paradoxes in the Governance of Fair-trade Social Enterprises	Mason and Doherty (2014)	Academic paper
Globalising justice within coffee supply chains? Fair Trade, Starbucks and the transformation of supply chain governance	Macdonald (2007)	Academic paper
Can non-state global governance be legitimate? An analytical framework	Bernstein and Cashore (2007)	Academic paper
Food security governance: A systematic literature review	Candel (2014)	Academic paper
Assessing Certification as Governance: Effects and Broader Consequences for Coffee	Auld (2010)	Academic paper
Brewing justice: fair trade coffee, sustainability, and survival	Jaffe (2007)	Academic paper
Smallholder Farmers in the Specialty Coffee Industry: Opportunities, Constraints and the Businesses that are Making it Possible	Borrella et al. (2015)	Academic paper
Regulating sustainability in the coffee sector: A comparative analysis of third-party environmental and social certification initiatives	Raynolds et al. (2007)	Academic paper
Fair trade and beyond: Voluntary standards and sustainable supply chains	Alvarez (2010)	Academic paper
Guide to Geographical Indications: Linking Products and Their Origins	Giovannucci et al. (2012)	Academic paper
The economics of quality in the specialty coffee industry: insights from the Cup of Excellence auction programs	Wilson and Wilson (2014)	Academic paper
Just-in-space: Certified rural products, labor of quality, and regulatory spaces	Mutersbaugh (2005)	Academic paper
Governing the coffee chain: The role of voluntary regulatory Systems	Muradian and Pelupessy (2005)	Academic paper
Reviewing the impacts of coffee certification programmes on smallholder livelihoods	Bray and Neilson (2017)	Academic paper
Assessing the institutionalization of private sustainability governance in a changing coffee sector	Grabs (2020)	Academic paper

Fair trade certification as oversight: an analysis of fair trade international and the small producers' symbol	Clark and Hussey (2016)	Academic paper
The impact of coffee certification on small-scale producers' livelihoods: A case study from the Jimma Zone, Ethiopia	Jena et al. (2012)	Academic paper
'Direct Trade in the specialty coffee market: contributions, limitations and new lines of research	Werneck and Rocha (2020)	Academic paper
Securing our Future Coffee Supply Chain: a Global View	Verma (2015)	Academic paper
The Emergence of a Standards Market: Multiplicity of Sustainability Standards in the Global Coffee Industry	Reinecke et al. (2015)	Academic paper
Weak Coffee: Certification and Co-Optation in the Fair Trade	Jaffee (2012)	Academic paper
Fairtrade and Labour Markets in Ethiopia and Uganda	Cramer et al., (2016)	Academic paper
Partnering for Change in Chains: The Capacity of Partnerships to Promote Sustainable Change in Global Agrifood Chains	Bitzer (2012)	Academic paper
Impact of international voluntary standards on smallholder market participation in developing countries: a review of the literature	Loconto, and Dankers(2014)	Academic paper
Quality certification, regulation and power in fair trade	Renard (2005)	Academic paper
Practices of Third Wave Coffee: A Burundian Producer's Perspective	Rosenberg (2009)	Academic paper
Quality standards, conventions, and the governance of global value chains	Ponte and Gibbon (2005)	Academic paper
Shifting regimes of governance in the coffee market: From secular crisis to a new equilibrium?	Petkova (2006)	Academic paper
Tropical commodity chains, forward integration strategies and international inequality: coffee, cocoa, and tea	Talbot (2002)	Academic paper
The `Latte Revolution'? Regulation, Markets and Consumption in the Global Coffee Chain	Ponte (2002)	Academic paper
Who decides what is fair in fair trade? The agri-environmental governance of standards, access, and price	Bacon (2010)	Academic paper
Coffee Trademark Licensing for Farmers : Brewing a Farmer-Owned Brand	Brownell (2009)	Academic paper

The Political Dynamics of Sustainable Coffee: Contested Value Regimes and the Transformation of Sustainability	Levy et al. (2016)	Academic paper
Geographical Indications of Origin as a Tool of Product Differentiation: The Case of Coffee	Teuber (2010)	Academic paper
Are geographical indications a way to "decommodify"; the coffee market?	Galtier, et al. (2013)	Academic paper
The Protection of Geographical Indications After Doha: Quo Vadis?	Evans and Blakeney (2006)	Academic paper
International intellectual property scholars series: using intellectual property rights to create value in the coffee industry	Johnson (2012)	Academic paper
Protecting 'Single Origin Coffee' within the Global Coffee Market: The Role of Geographical Indications and Trademarks and Trade Policy	Schüβler (2009)	Academic paper
Analysis of Institutional Factors Affecting Optimization of Coffee Yields in Chuka Sub-County, Tharaka-Nithi County, Kenya	Kihoro and Gathungu (2020)	Academic paper
Assessing the institutionalization of private sustainability governance in a changing coffee sector	Grabs (2020)	Academic paper
Projected shifts in Coffee arabica suitability among major global producing regions due to climate change	Ovalle-Rivera (2015)	Academic paper
Corporate investments in supply chain sustainability: Selecting instruments in the agri-food	Rueda et al. (2017)	Academic paper
Towards a Balanced Sustainability Vision for the Coffee Industry	Samper and Quiñones-Ruiz (2017)	Academic paper
Government, Governance and Good Governance	Shankar (2018)	Academic paper
Intersectoral partnerships for a sustainable coffee chain: Really addressing sustainability or just picking (coffee) cherries?	Bitzer et al. (2008)	Academic paper
Winners and Losers in the Context of Global Change	O'Brien and Leichenko (2003)	Academic paper

Business models for quality coffee	Lundy et al. (2012)	Academic paper
Long Black: Export Controls as a Means of Addressing Coffee Price Instability	Gabriele and Vanzetti (2008)	Academic paper
The evolution of power in the global coffee value chain and production network	Grtabs and Ponte (2019)	Academic paper
The governance of global value chains	Gereffi et al. (2005)	Academic paper
Governing global value chains: and introduction	Gibbon et al. (2008)	Academic paper
Brewing a Bitter Cup? Deregulation, Quality and the Re-organization of Coffee Marketing in East Africa	Ponte (2002)	Academic paper
Corporate cooptation of organic and fair trade standards'	|Gereffi (2014)	Academic paper
A Typology of Power in Global Value Chains	Dallas and Ponte (2017)	Academic paper
Ethical Decision making in Fair Trade Companies	Davies and Crane (2013)	Academic paper
Standards and sustainability in the coffee sector: A global value chain approach	Mhando (2004)	Academic paper
Upgrading Primary Production: A Global Commodity Chain Approach	Gibbon (2001)	Academic paper
Standards and sustainability in the coffee sector: A global value chain approach	Ponte (2004)	Academic paper
The emergence of Southern standards in agricultural value chains: A new trend in sustainability governance?	Schouten and Bitzer (2015)	Academic paper
Surviving liberalization: the cooperative movement in Kenya The Cooperative Facility for Africa	Wanyama (2009)	Academic paper
The politics of meta-governance in transnational private sustainability governance	Fransen (2015)	Academic paper
Fairtrade International governance	Bennett (2015)	Academic paper
Handbook of research on fair trade	Raynolds and Bennet (2015)	Academic paper

Grounds for Agreement: The Political Economy of the Coffee Commodity Chain.	Talbot (2004)	Book
The coffee paradox: global markets, commodity trade, and the elusive promise of development	Raynolds and Bennett (2015)	Book
Business, power and sustainability	(Ponte, 2019)	Book
Farmers And Markets In Tanzania	Ponte (2002)	Book
How to do: Public-Private-Producer Partnerships (4Ps) in Agricultural Value Chains	(IFAD, 2016)	Institutional Report
Why Geographical indications for least developed countries?	(UNTACD, 2009)	Institutional Report
How can sector governance models drive sustainability performance in smallholder-dominated agricultural sectors?	Blackmore et al. (2015)	Institutional Report
Impact of international voluntary standards on smallholder market participation in developing countries: a review of the literature	Loconto and Dankers (2014)	Institutional Report
Microfinance in East Africa	ITC, (2015)	Institutional Report
Powering up Smallholder Farmers to make food fair	Fairtrade 2013)	Grey literature
Commodities at a glance. Special Issue on coffee in East Africa	UNCTAD (2019)	Grey literature
Coffee Barometer 2014	Panhuysen and Pierrot (2014)	Grey literature
Tanzania - United Republic of Coffee Annual 2018 Coffee Report	Towsend and Mtaki (2018)	Grey literature
Principles & Practices for Sustainable Green Coffee Production (SAI)	SAI (2009)	Grey literature
National Coffee Platforms (GCP)	GCP (2016)	Grey literature
Coffee Development Report (2019)	ICO (2019)	Grey literature

Annex 3: Means to provide Training to Farmers and their Advantages.

Example	Contribution	source
Development of a training catalogue based on farmers' long-term needs	Satisfaction of the long-term needs of small farmers.	**C**ertification body representative (I2, #29)
Platform training	Permanent and autonomous access of farmers to the training of farmers.	FOs director (I1, #33)
Digital platform **blog about coffee market analysis**	Small farmers could access virtual training.	(I8, #34) Producer organisation representative
Setting an information exchange system	Change of experiences among cooperatives.	(I8, #34&40)
Centres of excellence	Learning directly from peers posed the most powerful way of learning.	(I8, #30) Producer organization representative
Delivery of wider knowledge of the coffee industry	Gain a better context about what the market wanted, to increase their awareness about how vital his role is to deliver different coffee profiles, and to understand what type of coffee suits each of them better.	UK-based coffee roaster (I6, #23)
Sensory skills workshops	Increasing the possibility for action of farmers to value the quality of the coffee they grew	(I14, #52) Coffee farmer

The skills covered by the range of training delivered mainly by civil institutions are 1) business skills training (I19, #37) to improve farmers' knowledge about how to manage a farm, (2) farming skills training (I5, #6) with and special focus on the Pros and cons of multi-cropping vs monocropping, (3) health issues, such as maternal health, child protection or COVID19 (I21, #21), (4) technology (I3, #40), e.g., data collection, marketing strategies to increase farmers' ability to transmit and communicate their story and the features of the coffee and how they grow it and, (5) lastly techniques to improve farmers' productivity (I8, #88).

Annex 4: Governance Dimensions, Empowering Mechanisms and Levels

Type of power	Possibilities for action	Empowering mechanisms	Levels	Actors in whose interviews the mechanism was found
Visible power	Leading actor	1.Increase the decision-making possibility for action by: 1.1 designing bodies and procedures that secure most farmers in taking decisions. 1.2.by giving the cooperative leadership to younger farmers, including women and presence of farmers in governing bodies	Governance system Cooperative	(# 1, 22)(I4, #16) (I9, #24)
	Enforcement _1	2. Enhance the feeling of ownership of small farmers over the cooperative (by let them take decisions and nudging them to engage with cooperative activities. 3. Capitalisation of the collective power farmers have when they all agree (to increase bargain possibility for action and possibility for action to increase set prices)	Farmer-cooperative Intra-farmers Farmer-Cooperative	(I3, #21)(I21, #34) (I11, #17)(I7, #25) (I21, #34)(I9, #30) (I13, #49)(I6, #13) (I9,#44)
Hidden power	Motivation	4. Enhancement of the organizational capacity of farmers (by allocating tasks, increase the engagement of coffee farmers within the cooperative, provision of information of the whole picture of the cooperative, improvement of the organizational skills of farmers.	Individual Farmer-cooperative Cooperative	(I8, #29)**(I22, #18)** **(I3, 40)**(I9, #30) (I15, #51)
	Scope	5. Enabling farmers to express their opinion by the provision of feedback, voting, being part of the directive boards, and the possibility for action to show disagreement, engagement within country coffee networks	Farmer Cooperative Governance level National	(I7, 18#) , (14, #44). (I15,#51)(I8,#26)(,I21, #57) (I10, #21)
Invisible power	Enforcement_2	6. Provide farmers with access to market information	Farmer Cooperative	**(I21, #46, #50)**

Annex 5: Enabling Actors and Levels

Enabling factor	Level	Actors in whose interviews the factor was mentioned

1. Adapting the coffee GPN so farmers systems where farmers can add value.	Farmer, Cooperative	(I15, #28&65) (I17, #60)
2.Favouring the coordination at the upstream end of the GPN of coffee.	GPN/national/local	(I4,#52), (I12,#46)
3. Building denser and wider production nodes of which farmers are part of by generating closer relationships and expanding their networks	Direct trade: inter levels: farmer--scheme -level (production node). Expansion of the range of interactions: local (inter farmers, with third parties (partnerships,) National, international coffee platforms.	(I13,#90), (I6,#29), ((I15, #100) (I10, #40), (I14, #16), (I14, #46), (I20, 66),(I3,#38), (I8, 34), (I21, #32), (I13, #85-86), (I13, #41), I1, 32), (I8 #44), (I14, #32), (I14, #79), (I14, #64), (I3, #34), (I10, #29)
4.Generation of opportunities to hear farmers' narrative	Local levels between farmer-consumer relationships	(I6,#9)
5.Align business models with governance systems that guarantee the voices of farmers to be heard.	Governance system Individual	(I10, #19), (16, #8) (I12,#40), (I14, #14).
6.Securing farmer access to finance streams Improvement of local infrastructures	Local Cooperative	(I1, 32) (I3, #40), (I10,#), (I18, #32/48) (I20, #66)
7.Professionalization of the leaders and rest of the cooperative staff	Cooperative -governance system	(I1, 39), (I2,#22) (I9, #60)
8.Precompetitive collaboration among certification schemes		(I8, #66), (I10, #60)
8.Access of farmers to trainings including technology and productivity Increasing the marketing capacity of farmers	Farm, cooperative, governance system.	2, #29) (I1,#33) (I18, #34), (I8, 0), (I6, #23), (I14, #52), I5, #56) (9, #37), (I4, #), (I21, #21) (I2, 9), (I18, #32).
10.Diversification of coffee farmers income.		(I8, #88) (I15, # 56).
11.Grant the access of farmers to market information and preservation of the information flow	Farm GPN, governance system	(I4, #44), (I12,#8) (I20, #76), (I19, #63), (14, #24), (I14, #24), (I20 #68)
12. Starting to address farmers as business managers	Farm, cooperative, GPN	I9, #58), I(13,#55)

Annex 6: Blocking Factors and Levels

Blocking factors		Level	Actors in whose interviews the factor was mentioned
1. Current characteristics of the	1.A Inadequate pricing system: lack of transparency in prices	GPN	(I10, #46), (I16, #43) (I21, #34) (i6, #38)

coffee production system	1.B Production system structure: limited upscaling, limited access to markets, size of farms	GPN	(I15, #53) (I8, #52) (I3,#7) (i13, #88)
2. Cooperative functioning dynamics		Cooperatives	7, #64) (I10, #25)
3. Limited financial and personnel resources of the organizations that work with farmers		Certification schemes	**(I12 #48)** (I1, #39) I3, #38)
4. Mismatches of the farmers' and certification bodies' agenda		Certification schemes, cooperatives	(I1, #6), (I15,#48) (I3, #38).
5. Limited management possibility for action of farmers and scarce knowledge of the coffee system.		Farm	(I9, #8) **(I20, #74)** (I3, #38) (I8, #5).
6.Poor cooperation between farmers		Farm	

Annex 7: Glossary of Key Terms regarding global production systems

This section presents a list of concise working definitions of relevant terms that will be used across the thesis. Therefore, there is a need to be clear about their meaning from the beginning of the thesis, in particular, the terminology from the global studies domain with terms such as Global Value Chains (GVC), Global Commodity Chain (GCC) and Global Production Network (GPN). Notwithstanding, a detailed discussion will take place in further chapters. Some of the definitions are from within the business management domain, such as supply chain or business models. These definitions were included in this section to avoid potential confusion that could emerge because some concepts are common terms used in global studies and business management, such as “chains”.

- **Supply chain (SC):** refers to three or more entities (organisations or individuals) that bring products, services, finance, and flows of information from a source to a customer (Mentzer *et al.*, 2001).

- **Value chain (VC):** refers to the range of activities oriented to create value at every step of the chain, from the inception, transformation, customer delivery to the disposal of the product after use (Kaplinsky and Morris, 2001).

- **Global value chains (GVC):** refer to the full range of activities involved in the design, production, marketing, and distribution of a product across different countries. analyse the global distribution of labour, economic disparities, and value distribution. Due to the scope, GVCs are systems of production that normally disintegrate and are spatially dispersed (Gereffi, et al., 2005). They depend on three variables: the complexity of the transactions, the ability to codify transactions and the capabilities of the supply-base (Gibbon, et al., 2008).

- **Global Production Network (GPN):** refers to the interconnected and geographically dispersed activities involved in producing goods and services, often controlled by multinational corporations. GPNs also involve various regional actors (Coe, et al., 2008). The concept of GPNs has been instrumental in understanding the spatial organization of production processes, the distributional effects of economic activities, and

the power dynamics among different actors within the global economy (Henderson et al., 2002).