Direct and Tasty coffee: a Case Study of Specialty Coffee Industry in Helsinki.

by

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Master’s Thesis

May 2018
According to the study done by International Coffee Organization, the years between 1964 to 2013, the volume of coffee consumption has grew on an average 1.9% per year and it grew from 57.9 million bags in 1964 to 142 million bags in 2012 (ICO, 2014). On the other hand, study has also shown the positive relationship between growth of GDP per capita and the growth of national consumption of coffee, in another words, with emerging economies like India, China and other South East Asian countries there will be more demand for coffee in the future (Grigg, 2002). However, the global demand and supply for coffee market has never been bigger but also way more stratified than ever. It is because of the parallel developments of specialty coffee market and ethical consumerism in coffee, the two most recent developments of coffee market used to operate in two different segments, the specialty coffee market is smaller in total volumes and puts more emphasis on taste and quality, for ethical consumerism like fair trade movement it focuses more on the commodity market and targeting multinational companies like Starbucks and Nestles. However, the two parallel developments has shown signs of converging and was called as "Third Wave Coffee" which set out to provide ethically and directly traded coffee but at the same time more delicious than the rest.

This thesis scrutinized Third Wave coffee movement which it proposes that with direct and closer relationship between coffee farmers and coffee companies: it will be the guarantee for higher quality coffee to the consumers and also raise the living standards for coffee farmers in the process. I approached third wave coffee movement and direct trade with few questions in mind: how do these professionals understand direct trade and their reflections of it? How did the taste and distinction manifest itself in practice? How did the language of quality and trade justice converge together? How do they tell the story of specialty coffee and direct trade, what kind of representation are used to bridge the gap between the two ends of coffee production chain?

In order to answer my questions, I interviewed coffee shop workers and roasters in Helsinki with years of working experiences and also make use of various sources of literatures like internet publications and events. For the gathering of primary materials and analysis, I relied heavily on qualitative mixed method approach: semi structured interviews, content analysis and participatory observations.

I was able to identity the narrative structures of discourses said and performed by specialty coffee professionals in Helsinki and their reflections on direct trade. More importantly, I have also included theories such as moral economy, distinction and alternative globalization in order to better understand and analyze my primary materials.

In conclusion, I categorized the language that they used into three distinctive characteristics: quality statement, portrayal of professionalism and connections. By using them in their discourses to wider public, they were able to politicize and differentiate themselves from the rest of the coffee market. My research brought light to a telling example of contemporary development of ethical consumerism and the effort paid by actors to propose a different imagination of global supply chain. Ultimately, it is about the current transition of contemporary consumer society and the different forms of political consumerism.
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It has been a long and rewarding journey for me to finish this thesis. Along the way, I received helps from numerous people that made this journey possible. I would like to thank my family back in Taiwan and Hong Kong without their support and indulgence, this would have never happened. Also, my friends in Helsinki who lend their helping hands whenever I needed them: Maria, Brad, Onerva, Ran, all of my interviewees and the wonderful crew at Café Artisan. Last but not least, my thesis adviser Emilia, she has been a great mentor to me during my writing process.

Thank you all.

Chau, Meng-Han

29.04.2018
1. Introduction

The focus of this research is to capture and explain a unique development in coffee industry, which is called direct trade. It is a global development that can be observed in many Western countries. The author of this thesis decided to make use of the proximity and personal connection to study and analyze the development by interviewing and participating in the community of coffee professionals based in Helsinki. I approached them with few questions in mind: how do these professionals understand direct trade and their reflections of it? How did the taste and distinction manifest itself in practice? How did the language of quality and trade justice converge together? How do they tell the story of specialty coffee and direct trade, what kind of representation are used to bridge the gap between the two ends of coffee production chain? This thesis is set out to answer these questions using mixed-method approach: by combing semi structured interviews, content analysis from internet publications and participatory observations at events. This research draws inspirations from political sociology, cultural sociology and political economy, my intention is to apply the insights from those theories and concepts to better understand direct trade and its use of language, also to contribute back to the discussion of aforementioned field of study with the unique case study.

I have divided this these into six chapters, starting with introduction chapter which I explained the historical context of coffee market in order to better understand the reason of this unique development and also the terminology. Secondly, I looked back previous studies done on similar topic with special attentions on specialty coffee market, cultural sociology and ethical consumerism. Followed by third chapter dedicated to theories about politicization, representation and moral economy which will be the base of analytical tools for later discussion. In fourth chapter, I will go into details of data collection plan and analysis method, followed by fifth chapter where I will present my research findings and discussion with theories. This thesis will ended with recap of previous chapters and the possibilities for future research.
1.1 History of Coffee Market and Trade Mechanism.

Nowadays, it is almost impossible not to find any food products in supermarkets without any trade justice related labels. The most recognizable one would be the fair trade label, started out as a trade justice movement in coffee now has 17 different products (Fairtrade International, 2011). It is part of the broader context that I positioned my research at, this context not only influenced the initiation of fair trade movement but also the very topic of this research. In order to understand such context, it is crucial to start with the regulatory mechanism of International Coffee Agreement and its subsequent deregulation. I would like to first explain the pricing system of coffee commodity market and how the deregulation of it lead to the rise of fair trade movement because of price volatility. As this overall change in international regulations, will be the ground for subsequent developments and it was also mentioned repeatedly in my fieldwork.

In 1962, the international coffee agreement was signed between producing countries and consuming countries, the agreement was aiming for maintaining exporting quotas and keeping coffee prices high and stable in the market (Daviron & Ponte, 2005).

With the introduction of quota system in the 1960s, which it covered almost all of the global coffee exports, the mechanism of the system worked as follows, first of all the quota for producing countries was based on indicator price (1.20 to 1.40 USD per pound): this meant when the price rose the quota subsequently

![Figure 1: World coffee prices from 1965-2013(ICO, 2014)](image)
relaxed so in this way, the mechanism would help to keep supply and demand at equilibrium levels, also, under this system it also favored the producing countries for its price predictability and market stability. (Rettberg, 2010, p.114)

However, this market price stabilizing mechanism started to break down in the 80s when dispute between United States and Brazil over country quota made 1983 agreement eventually expired on 1989. Without quota negotiation mechanism at the turn of millennium, the world witnessed not only the price of coffee hit historically low but also market price became more and more volatile. (Daviron & Ponte, 2005)(Rettberg, 2010) As is shown in the figure above, the magnitude of price volatility had increased drastically. This set the stage for the subsequent development of fair trade movement but more importantly for specialty coffee industry as well, this will be one of the crucial reference points for specialty coffee industry among themselves and to wider audience. The transparency behind each price tag is important and reoccurring theme and this will be further discussed in other chapters.

Without the indicator price as reference point, the coffee farms were left alone to deal with multinational corporations. This market liberalization lead to an unequal distribution of wealth of coffee trade, coupled with over-supply of coffee which resulted in decline of coffee prices. In Rettberg’s article, she pointed out that for growers they obtained about 20% of total income along the coffee chain in 1970s, this share dropped to 13% after 1989. On the other hand, she also reminded us that for roasters in consuming countries the share grew from 53% to 78% in the same period (Rettberg, 2010)(Ponte, 2004). It also lead to a situation that nearly half of the global coffee commodity market was controlled by five international retail companies which meant for coffee farmers their bargaining power was severely reduced. “According to one Colombian coffee expert, “for coffee producers so-called globalization has failed” (Santos, 2002) cited in (Rettberg, 2010, p.116).”
1.2 The Parallel Development of Fair Trade Movement and Specialty Coffee

The low price has without a doubt brought hardship to many coffee farmers around the world (Wollni & Zeller, 2007). Against this market inequality, many citizen initiatives from consuming countries have launched to address this issue e.g. certification program like fair trade. For example, in the late 1980s to early 1990s, several consuming countries in North-West Europe, North America and Japan started to take actions in order to address the imbalance share of wealth in coffee production chain and later in 1997 Fair-Trade International as we know it today established in Germany and cooperated with other national initiatives and harmonized global standards (Fair-trade international, 2017). The attempt to rebalance the market was mainly targeted at commodity side of coffee market which meant those coffee we saw on supermarket shelf or used by Starbucks. At around this point, with growing knowledge in coffee agriculture and cultivation, the market stratification also took place. The term specialty coffee was first coined by Erna Knutsen in 1974,” In essence, the concept was quite simple: special geographic microclimates produce beans with unique flavor profiles, which she referred to as ’specialty coffees.’” (Specialty Coffee Association of America, 2017) (Rhinehart, 2009)

Knutsen was and still is one of the female pioneers in establishing their own coffee import and export companies in 80s' America and also contributed to the creation of Specialty Coffee Association of America which would later be crucial for standardization and promotion of the market itself. (Sprudge Staff, 2014) According to Specialty Coffee Association of America, which was established back in 1982 and European counterpart in 1998, specialty coffee meant coffee beans distinguished themselves from others based on its quality and uniqueness of origin, more specifically for those coffee which scored higher than 80 points during cupping1 (Specialty Coffee Association of America, 2009). This standardization and creation of professional common languages and knowledge also helped significantly to describe and define characteristics of

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1 Coffee cupping is a practice in coffee industry that aims to observe, taste and compare different coffee beans, SCAA gave out clear instructions on how to grade each coffee based on its sensory performance during cupping.
coffee from certain areas. This will closely linked to the community’s demonstration of taste and distinction and also on trade relations.

The production of specialty coffee often required specific growing condition, microclimate, experiences and right strand of coffee trees thus resulted in very limited volume of coffee beans. In order to accurately reflect the quality and price of each coffee lots the Association for Coffee Excellence was established and also Cup of Excellence (CoE) programs (Wilson & Wilson, 2014). The goal of Cup of Excellence was to set a competition platform for coffee farmers in the same country to test their products and thus have a clear picture of qualities.

The non-profit organization Association for Coffee Excellence (ACE) host these events each harvest seasons without any entry fee and open to all farms and cooperatives in the country, now it has similar competitions in many Latin American countries and in Africa too. Coffee lots which submitted to C.o.E. undergo serious elimination process where all coffee are “cupped” by international certified judges and scored base on its sensory quality. Every coffee lots in the competition would go through three stages of elimination processes and within each process if any defects were detected will automatically disqualify. For the remaining coffee that scored above 84 points out of 100 in the final rounds would receive “Cup of Excellence Award”, and all of these award winning coffee would then rank according to the points they received. After the ranking, all the winning coffees entered online auction subsequently. (Wilson & Wilson, 2014) Needless to say, the winners of C.o.E. represented the top-tiers quality of coffee beans and the average price was significantly higher than average market price. With high quality like C.o.E., bidders from all over the world could be seen in the auction stage. For example, in May, 2016 the highest bidding price in C.o.E. Costa Rica was $59.00/lb and $42,952.00 in total. (Alliance for Coffee Excellence, 2016) Not only in Latin America, in other coffee producing countries like Ethiopia was involved in the production of specialty coffee too. Generally speaking, the higher a certain coffee scored the higher the revenue will be paid back to the producers. The biggest market for specialty coffee was United States with 48% of total coffee market dedicated to it, followed by Europe and Asia (Specialty coffee association of America, 2015).
1.3. Emergence of Third Wave Coffee and Direct Trade

What have mentioned was just a quick glimpse of the development of coffee market, generally speaking we could say that the market of specialty coffee has in fact became a distinctive market apart from mainstream coffee market and more importantly a group of consumers and enthusiasts around it. From a news article in LA weekly, Jonathan Gold divided the history of coffee in United States into three waves. The following quote demonstrated an important image of specialty coffee in popular understanding, combined with the focus on service and presentation resulted in what was described below as “third wave coffee.” It is important to point out that although the trend itself has in fact became a global social phenomenon, it has its roots in American context and how other societies like Finland adopt this trend will need further research which due to the focus of this thesis won’t be able to discuss here.

“"The first wave of American coffee culture was probably the nineteenth century surge that put Folgers on every table, and the second was the proliferation, starting in the 1960s at Peet's and moving smartly through the Starbucks grande decaf latte, of espresso drinks and regionally labeled coffee. We are now in the third wave of coffee connoisseurship, where beans are sourced from farms instead of countries, roasting is about bringing out rather than incinerating the unique characteristics of each bean, and the flavor is clean and hard and pure. The new face of coffee is neither Juan Valdez nor a gum-snapping waitress named Madge, or even Starbucks' Howard Schultz, but a postmodern barista like [Eton] Tsuno, spiked hair and a gauzy shirt, stirring a siphon of Sumatran peaberry with the pouty insouciance of Jimmy Page executing a guitar solo, while awestruck customers study every flick of his long fingers." (Gold, 2008)

The term “third wave coffee” has evolved and contained much more connotations than just coffees that scored more than certain points at C.o.E. It now has its own subculture circle which might labeled themselves as “coffee geeks” (Manzo, 2010) and a global cultural phenomenon as well which could be
observed in cities like Berlin, London, Helsinki, Tokyo, Taipei and Los Angeles etc. In the following quote summarized what third wave coffee is:

“Third wave coffee drinkers appreciate the flavour nuances of single estate coffee; that is coffee that is sourced from single estates, farms, or villages in coffee growing regions. When processed carefully, it will have a distinctive flavour and taste profile that reflects the region and the culture of the coffee production. The flavour of coffee is influenced by many factors including: the characteristics of the region where it is grown and, the way it is grown, harvested, and processed after it is harvested. For the average coffee drinker, caramel, butterscotch, toffee, hazelnut, spice, and chocolate are added to coffee to improve its flavour but to third wavers, these flavour characteristics can be found within the roasted coffee bean.” (Adams, 2010, p.2)

As was indicated in above quotes, the flavor characteristics are important quality indicator for each coffee and it will significantly influenced its price points. Industrial standards like the Coffee Flavor Wheel (Specialty Coffee Association of America, 2016) developed by Specialty Coffee Association of America was used extensively to communicate and define what are the flavor characteristics. To be able to accurately tell all the tastes from a cup of coffee would be seen as a demonstration of professionalism and connoisseurship. The Connoisseurship of coffee would no doubt play an important role in the formation of identity and I would also like to see how in the connoisseur circle of coffee think about the issue of ethical consumerism in coffee. In case of third wave coffee shops they are intentionally telling customers that their coffee were bought through direct trade which meant there were closer cooperation between producing farms and roasting shops. The quote below was from one of the biggest third wave coffee shop in Oslo “Tim Wendelboe”’s website, they publish their annual transparent report on their website and explain how much they pay to the producing farms and how much more was that price compared to fair trade coffee.

“We strongly believe that paying fair prices to the farmers is the best way of ensuring they continue their hard work and are able to invest
in producing quality coffee in the future. We see all over the world that farmers are uprooting their coffee trees in favor of other cash crops as the commodity market coffee prices today are at best at a break-even point but in most cases lower than the production cost. It simply is not sustainable and we need to change that.” (Wendelboe, 2016)

Similar theme of direct trade could be found on the website of the coffee collective from Copenhagen, Denmark. It explained their definition of direct trade and how did they conduct their business, also what would be the desire outcome of this business initiative.

“Direct Trade is based on the notion that the better the quality we get, the better price we are able to pay, and the better quality we will have again the following year and so forth. Ultimately, our dream is for a coffee farmer in Kenya to obtain the same status and living conditions as a wine grower in France.” (The Coffee Collective, 2017a)

These are just two cases in Nordic countries demonstrating the global trend of combing the niche and connoisseur part of coffee market with concerns of trade justice and sustainability. More specifically speaking, I want to use third wave coffee community in Helsinki as my main field of research. Below is a quote from Good life coffee’s website which is one of the early third wave coffee and independent roaster based in Kallio.

“Our idea of good coffee is simple: carefully selected high-grade beans combined with precise procedures and a no-bullshit take on roasting and brewing. Instead of a well-trimmed romantic re-enactment of the artesian 19th century, our coffee is bang on the now. Honest and uncompromising.” (“Good life coffee,” n.d.)

The discussion above are telling examples of this thesis’s field of interest, based on the initial observations, they occupied an intermediate positions within the global coffee chain, they are based in consuming countries but acted as service providers to the end consumers but for producing countries they are buyers and consumers. This dual roles has interesting dynamics, on one hand,
they are dependent of their knowledge on coffee and taste to help them choose what to buy but also to distinguish their products in front of consumers at consuming countries, on the other hand, thanks to the position they occupied in the global coffee chain, they are able to understand how the coffee was traded and this allows them to distinguish themselves from other business practices by making the global coffee chain more transparent, for example, in Tim Wendelboe’s shop website (Wendelboe, 2013) (Wendelboe, 2012) they actively share stories about the relationships they had with coffee farmers and exactly how much they paid back to the farmers. Based on initial observation, the core concepts within specialty coffee market and their narratives could be best described as “quality” and “process”, quality means the above discussed flavor characteristics and process means the chain of production of coffee, the dynamics of these two concepts will be further discussed in later chapters.

There are currently about 10 independent or self-recognized third wave coffee shops in Helsinki. Based on previous studies (Donnet, Weatherspoon, & Hoehn, 2007) (E. Brown, B. Derudder, C. Parnreiter, W. Pelupessy, P.J. Taylor, 2004) we can divide each member into different roles like roasters, baristas, competition judges and green coffee buyers, roasters are professionals who specializing in roasting green coffee beans into consumable roasted coffee beans, baristas specialized in brewing and preparing methods by costumers’ orders in the shop, competition judges are professionals who served on yearly held national competitions such as national Barista championship and green coffee buyers are in charge of visiting different coffee farms in the world to make purchase decisions. In the course of my interview, I found out that an individual on his or her professional career would change between different roles or even served two roles like roaster and barista at the same time. It is due to the emphasis on acquiring knowledge of these interdependence roles to advance their professional career.

It is a growing and energetic community with regularly hold competitions and meetings. It’s a community revolves around same kind of interest and shared passion, it makes them a subculture and with distinctive sense of self-awareness in comparison with other coffee drinkers. Just like another quote from Good Life Coffee’s website,” In all honesty, excellent coffee comes down
to some nerdy shit.” (“Good life coffee,” n.d.) The “nerdy shit” is implying what differentiate themselves from other chain stores like Starbucks or Robert’s Coffee. It is not only the distinction makes them unique but it could also be seen as part of wider development in contemporary ethical consumer movement.

The third wave coffee movement as we briefly discussed above can be placed in wider framework of global consumer activism, it shares the same idea of “from farm to table” and also pays great attention on the quality of coffee, as journalist and long-time coffee market observe Michaele Weissman said in one of her article on direct trade.

“Customers opened their wallets for the taste of the coffee and the meaning embedded in the taste. This is a crucial point: the value of specialty coffee is a function of both pleasure and meaning.”(Michaele Weissman, 2017)

In order to gather materials for later analysis, I have interviewed different people behind specialty coffee shops, roasteries around Helsinki and utilize literatures from different sources. I hope to uncover how people within the industry negotiate two different competing concerns, on one hand there is the desire for higher quality coffee, on the other, there is ethical concerns stem from direct trade which requires stronger connection, transparency and partnership with coffee farmers. How did those coffee shop owners or roasters in Helsinki understand these two different concerns in their daily business operations and more importantly how did they resolve possible conflicts between these two? By doing interviews and participatory observations I hope to illustrate what they are thinking and by studying the case of coffee, it can also shed a new light on contemporary consumer movement.
2. Literature Review

This chapter is divided into four different parts, each dive into details that will help to better understand this research topic. To start with, I will present the past studies done on specialty coffee industry, later moving on to existing studies done on specialty coffee with the emphasis on sociology and finally finish this chapter with the past research on ethical consumerism which would connect to next chapter about different theatrical insights.

2.1 Nature of Specialty Coffee Market

Specialty coffee as relative new coffee market segment has received small but substantial academic attentions. These studies were focusing on how the quality driven and auction nature of specialty coffee market affect farmers who participated in it. (Ponte, 2002) (Wollni & Zeller, 2007) (Donnet et al., 2007) (Wilson & Wilson, 2014) In these studies, they conduct studies on various different coffee producing countries in order to observe and explain the effects of specialty coffee market on local farmers.

In (Ponte, 2002), the study demonstrated that the coffee commodity market liberalization process which took place at the late 80s had serious impact on the livelihood of Eastern African coffee farmers because of volatile international market price, and easier access for multinational coffee companies to switch to different producing countries. However, the author illustrated in his study that it’s important for coffee communities and cooperatives to differentiate their products from commodity coffee market by focusing quality and reputation in order to secure higher revenues. On the other hand, further research (Wollni & Zeller, 2007) was done in Costa Rica where researchers looked into whether or not participating in specialty coffee market generates higher revenues for farmers. In this research, the authors discovered that farmers who participated in specialty coffee market do receive higher revenues compared those who sold their coffee through conventional channels. Similar conclusions were made in later studies on the competition-auction system of specialty coffee market which put producers and quality of their products onto center stage of value-adding process. (Donnet et al., 2007) (Wilson & Wilson, 2014) Above mentioned studies explained the specialty coffee market as being quality driven, competition-auction based market pricing scheme and more importantly it rewarded higher
quality with higher prices than the commodity market. With the nature of specialty market, a new kind of coffee trade model called direct trade was developed, direct trade model not only emphasize on the origins of coffee and the positive relation between quality and price but also promoting an equal and transparent business relationship. As some proponents of direct trade suggested this positive relation between price and quality would have bigger potentials to bring about positive changes to farmers than current coffee certification programs. In the next parts of literature review, I will review some of the recent studies done on coffee activism and ethical consumerism which would be a theoretical underpinning of this thesis.

2.2 Specialty coffee in past researches

The previous research works which emphasize on cultural aspects of coffee or coffee houses tend to focus on the customers or patrons and their activities inside the coffee houses (Laurier, Whyte, & Buckner 2001; Manzo, 2015). There are numerous works done on this topic e.g. on the topic of public sociability and the formation of civil society. (Habermas, 1991) , on “third places” which is not work related or family related places (Oldenburg, 2001) but these works are not specifically focusing on coffee houses per se. On the other hand, there are extensive works on history of coffee houses (Arjomand 2004; Cowan 2005; Haine 1998; Kömeçoğlu 2005) but they focus on pre 20th century history and emergence of early modern civil society thanks to the emergence of coffee houses. Studies dedicated to contemporary coffee houses are relatively fewer (Manzo, 2010), however, there are still some works employed ethnographic method on cases like neighborhood coffee house (Laurier, Whyte, & Buckner, 2001) or university coffee house and emotional attachment to the physical surroundings (Milligan, 1998). Cultural and sociological researchers (Manzo, 2010; 2014; 2015) have studied in specialty coffee industry. In these researches, the focuses were on the cultural aspect, connoisseurship of specialty coffee and the interaction between workers and costumers. This body of literature will be discussed in details in next section.
2.3 Previous Sociological Studies on Taste and Distinction.

This part will refer to theoretical resources from one of the most well-known sociologists like (Bourdieu, 1986) and more specifically his concepts on cultural capital and taste. For Bourdieu, taste is more about collective demonstration of exclusive and distinction. This demonstration also serves as key to associate with right people. It is fundamentally about distinguish between good and bad tastes. (Zukin, 2011, p.105)(Skeggs, 2004) He argued that there is a positive relation between one’s social status and cultural practices. For example, the taste and participation in classical music is a typical indicator of cultural capital and status. (Purhonen, Gronow, & Rahkonen, 2010, p. 267) One of his core concepts in academic research is his attempt to bridge the gap between structuralism and individualism and in doing so he came up with distinctive term “habitus” which he used to describe how human behaviors were influenced by pre given social status and structure. (Navarro, 2006) (Purhonen et al., 2010)

“Habitus is ‘the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinate ways, which then guide them.” (Wacquant, 2011)

Habitus works as middle ground between society and individual in the sense that neither variables can claim to be sole dominating explanation to societal phenomenon. Individual and society in this understanding is not mutually excluding rather they are both equally important in examining any topic regarding human behaviors. For example in (Johnston & Baumann, 2015) the authors reminded us that status and distinction is learned thanks to education and socialization in the habitus thus certain cultural practices were seen as natural elements of sophisticated taste or uneducated. As (Johnston & Baumann, 2015) discovered that the gourmet foodscape is a field filled with discourses which defines what is good and tasty food but at the same time those discourses employed different and conflicting standards on what counts as good food or not.

In relation to this topic, what am I trying to do here is to closely observe and reflect on this particular social phenomenon and if possible to explain how and why this social phenomenon emerge and maintain itself. How this refined taste
in coffee emerged and reproduced itself especially in the contemporary state of capitalism which encourages consumption and diversification of merchandise. (Boltanski, Chiapello, & Elliott, 2007) There has been academic efforts (Manzo, 2010) to apply sociological concepts like taste, connoisseurship and distinction into the research of third wave coffee. In Manzo’s study, he was using online discussion forum which dedicated to coffee enthusiasts and in it he found out that the discussion took place over there clearly indicates that it has formed a subculture which revolves around coffee enthusiasm.

In (Manzo, 2010), the author employed ethnomethodology to study the discussion took place among devoted specialty coffee or “third wave coffee” hobbyists in various internet forum. This research found out that for subculture group like this, the organizing and distinguishing concept for them was “taste.” For these hobbyists, it was crucial to learn and acquire such taste in order to be part of this specialty coffee group. It meant one has to learn and understand the jargon and knowledge which this taste was based upon. (Manzo, 2010, p.153) Second, the taste in here affected those hobbyists in two ways, on one hand, their ability to distinguish bad coffee from good coffee could be seen as arrogant or snobbish in other people’s eyes, on the other hand, it also allowed them to participate and socialize with other people who shared the same taste and anti-social experiences. (Manzo, 2010, p.153) The acquired taste of coffee in itself sufficiently became the threshold for entering this subculture group and thus enabled enthusiasts to share the same passion and socialize with each other on online forum. For example, in his study one of the reoccurring topics on the online discussion forum were about their acquired taste brought about negative reactions from people without such taste for coffee, negative reactions such as people might be hesitant to offer them “bad” coffee at their place. (Manzo, 2010, p.150) On the other hand, they also expressed their disappointments in chain coffee shops serving subpar quality coffee causing them to recognize their taste could be a burdensome as well. (Manzo, 2010, p.151) Based on previous examples, it is sufficient to say that the member within the coffee enthusiast circle share and produce distinction between us and others without such acquired taste. In this case, it also clearly demonstrated the classical sociological understanding of taste is social which was also discussed by Manzo in his study. (Manzo, 2010, p.152) It might be a single case of coffee
enthusiast circle, however, similar phenomena in culinary discussion is also studied by other researchers. The reoccurring trends in culinary industry signified that although de rigueur dishes are always changing but they serves the purpose of display distinction. (Johnston & Baumann, 2010, p.13) In tandem with previous research, I argued that similar characteristics can be observed in specialty coffee community of Helsinki as well and it will be further clarified after interviews with members of community. In conclusion, the current research on specialty coffee emphasize more on the cultural aspects and sociological identity formation process less about the side of ethical consumerism of this relatively young coffee market segment.

2.4 Ethical Consumerism

In Lekakis’s “Coffee Activism and the Politics of Fair Trade and Ethical Consumption in the Global NorthPolitical”, she implemented the concept of liquid modernity to explain the emergence of fair trade movement. Liquid modernity which was developed by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, for him, the contemporary liquid life was marked by this transition from “solid” to “liquid” state of modernity, the past traditional rigid community values, “solid” realm of politics, and cohesion has gradually eroded to individual value systems, freedom of choice and multitude of identities. This could be witnessed through the decrease of voter turnouts, party memberships and other forms of traditional political engagements. In this background a diversified citizenships flourished in different areas of society,

“A multiplicity of forms of participation in liquid modernity has complemented a complicated palette of types of citizenship. There is a reconfiguration of modalities of citizenship, as distinct but non-mutually exclusive avatars of citizenship bloom; terms such as ‘ecological citizen’, ‘consumer citizen’, ‘cosmopolitan citizen’, ‘intimate citizen’ or ‘youth citizen’ are now valid terms to describe citizenship through the practice of correspondent acts (Isin and Nielsen, 2008)” (Lekakis, 2013, p.52)

In Lekakis’s research, the case of coffee activism could be seen as an example illustrating the broadening civic engagement and also the landscape of
contention through the simple act of consumption. (Lekakis, 2013, p.5) As was noted in the research, it was a growing phenomenon with expanding landscape of contention and symbolism. With more and more consumers demonstrated their concerns other than prices and over all kinds of products on the market. The choice of consumption has never been so complicated and charged with symbolic discourses. In other words, consumers were becoming more and more aware of the problem of global trade justice and eager to make the right choice which was both “meaningful” and “rewarding.” With this theoretical underpinning in mind, the case of specialty coffee industry served as insightful case study of how contemporary consumer culture and business ethics are incorporating concerns that are not purely business oriented. As was point out by journalist and author Michaele Weissman in her investigative report on direct trade and specialty coffee,

“As with shoppers at farmers’ markets paying more for heirloom tomatoes, the stories behind their purchases made a difference. Customers opened their wallets for the taste of the coffee and the meaning embedded in the taste. This is a crucial point: the value of specialty coffee is a function of both pleasure and meaning” (Michaele Weissman, 2017, p.2)

The model of direct trade and specialty coffee industry brought out this new hope for ethical consumer of coffee, bridging the information gap between coffee farms and consumers, consumers would be able to reward those coffee farmers who produced high quality coffee beans and thus elevating them out of poverty because of their attention to quality.

This development of consumer culture which focus on both hedonistic pleasure and ethical consumerism could also be observed in other food consumption than specialty coffee. As was discussed in (Johnston & Baumann, 2010) the foodie culture in America also demonstrated such concerns for environment or social justice, this was described as “vote” with fork, however, these concerns also demonstrated certain limits and characteristics. The dominant framing of food politics was mostly focus on win-win scenario, in other words, we could enjoy eating locally produced food and saving the nature at the same time while the issue of poverty and labor rights was relatively marginalized. (Johnston & Baumann, 2010, p.149) This framing of foodie politics relied on neo-liberal
understanding of environmental change which believed that with more conscious and educated consumers asking for environmental friendly food, the market would then have to change and fulfill their demands thus achieving the goal of protecting the environment.

“In essence, the market—in the form of educated and enlightened consumer choices—is presented as a solution for market failures, and the suggested focus is on how individuals can ultimately make the “right” choice at the restaurant or grocery store. When faced with the plethora of political concerns that surround our food—and the feelings of guilt that accompany them—the proposed “solution” is to become “an informed consumer”" (Johnston & Baumann, 2010, p.150)

Similar discussion could also be in specialty coffee industry and this was exactly what this thesis set out to uncover, with most of the current research focusing on the side of consumer, this thesis would instead focusing on the business owners and operators who describe themselves with meaning-laden words like direct trade and more importantly how did they negotiate these concerns in their daily operations.

3. Theoretical Discussion

In this chapter, there will be two sections dedicated to theories I believed would be useful in the research on this thesis, first section is about different theories’ take on the process of disrupting established meanings and bring about new kind of understanding. Second, I will dive into the discussion of analytical tools that will be deployed in later analysis chapter.

3.1 Politicization, Representation and Moral Economy.

In (Palonen, 2003), four different words about politics in English language was used as linguistic starting points to discuss multiple ways to conceptualize politics. These words are policy, polity, politicking and politicization, the author divided them into two pairs based on sphere concept and activity concept, policy and polity are the former one because at its core it was about borders and regulation of space, on the other hand, politicking and politicization pair was about the performative aspect of politics. To look more closely of how each of these words means brings nuanced understanding of politics but more importantly this will be crucial for this thesis as well. In his own words, polity
refers to “a metaphorical space with specific possibilities and limits” (Palonen, 2003, p.171) For the purpose of this research, it will not be of a physical space but rather a community which was formed by common interest and common ideas within it the discussion takes place. It will be important for this thesis to distinguish how the border of this community maintained and what are the ideas shared among themselves. This will be further developed and observed in the later interviews and publications. As for policy, it is referred to as the regulating aspects of politics, in other words, it also means how things are organized. Similar definition can be found in David Easton’s work. Easton viewed politics as “authoritative allocation of values for society.” (Easton, 1953, p. 128) This definition emphasize more on the policy side of political science research but nonetheless share similar view on the regulating aspects with Palonen. In relations to this thesis, it will be constant discussions about how coffee trade should be done and what have they been doing, more importantly, how it will affect their own idea of their professionalism. In other words, it is also a normative discussion about the existing mainstream coffee commodity market and on their efforts of bringing change to it by doing it themselves. This will closely linked to the concept of politicization. For Palonen, politicization is about “marks an opening of something as political, as “playable.” (Palonen, 2003, p.171) This “playable” aspect was further discussed in that as the author point out the process of politicization is to “name” something as political and thus summon the necessary controversies surrounding this process. For him, there is no politics “before” politicization. (Palonen, 2003, p.182) This process marks the moment of the beginning of new playing field allowing different kinds of politicking or performance to take place on this stage. In later sections he developed further of how the mechanism functions. He argued that Politicization brings forth a fresh and different challenge to the established practices and recalled the previous lost or naturalized politicizing moments from the past. He also noticed that in order for this to occur, certain degree of simplification of current polity and its polies is required, in order to present and stage itself as novelty and clear break from the existing policies. This could happen by “reinterpreting history” in a sense that emphasizing the “marginalized politicization” in the polity. (Palonen, 2003, p.183)
In the case of coffee market in general, this “opening” has already took place thanks to the fair trade movement which links trade justice, North-South relationship together with the simple act of consuming ethically. In the case of this research, after two decades of fair trade movement, the coffee market has already transformed itself due to two developments incorporating the fair trade practices and the rise of specialty coffee market. As discussed before, the mainstreaming of fair trade movement effectively led to a situation that most of the coffee products on the shelf has one or two fair trade certifications. However, for the niche market professionals whom this thesis focused on, this politicization has become a naturalized practices and thus become an existing policy that they are trying to break away from. For specialty coffee professionals their efforts of bridging the gap between producing and consuming side of coffee and the debate on the term and definition of direct trade among themselves could be seen as their “politicking” effort of bringing forth novelty and alternative on to the current playing field. This “politicking” in this research is also a representation because of the global nature of coffee, the geographical distance is mediated by performance, activities and events, how this mediation is achieved in practice will be the focus of this thesis as well, but in the coming parts will emphasize more on the meanings of representation.

This will be crucial in the understanding of this research topic because from fair trade coffee movement and to the broader food movement, there are similar process of politicization happening in all these movements, in other words, the process of transforming the uncontested and neutral nature of products into meaning laden political objects. For example, similar process was observed and discussed in the case of cultural politics of rice in Taiwan (Lii, 2017). In this case the rice was not just staple food product but also a symbol used by social movement to express their anti-globalization agenda. It thus became an open playing field welcoming different forms of performance to take place.

In Papaoikonomou and Ginieis’s research on local food systems: “Putting the Farmer’s Face on Food: Governance and the Producer–Consumer Relationship in Local Food Systems”, similar process was observed as well, it was seen as morally just and possessed transformative potentials in comparison to existing mass produce food industry. In this case the active role of consumer was emphasized and encouraged, the two case studies of community supported
agriculture and responsible consumption cooperative both put efforts in bridging the gap between production and consumption on different degrees (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017, p.64). This gap bridging process also allowed participants and members to have different and political meanings of such cooperatives as the quote bellowed indicates:

“RCCs(Responsible Consumption Cooperative) are perceived by many members as a counter- hegemonic tool that resists the hegemony of food culture homogenization, lack of territorial sovereignty, and industrial farming methods” (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017, p.65)

From the discussion above we can easily recognized that when citizen choose to participate in such cooperative, the food they buy from there are no longer just food, the choice in itself has meanings and self-actualization that is more than just simple act of consumption. In the study, the authors also mentioned that regular held farmers-consumers activities serves as rituals and practices, routinized practices help to reconnect the two end of food production for example, cooperative members were asked to help during the harvest seasons. This kind of practices not only has effect on reconnecting the two ends but more importantly, it’s also a politicking performance and a representation which enables participants to imagine and “putting farmers’ faces on foods.” Coming back to the topic of this research, similar process of politicization and representation of production process of specialty coffee can be observed as well, however, giving the global nature of coffee, the process of representation plays different role than the previous discussed case study.

In the following paragraphs I will dive into the concept of representation and how this concept which was heavily discussed in political science could be useful in this research. According to (Coleman, 2005, p.178), representation is an communicative activity, “entailing the symbolic embodiment of a previously absent entity.” This was thoroughly discussed and theorized in (Anderson, 1983) especially his chapter on print capitalism which demonstrated printing press’s effect and wide circulation help different nationalities to have common discourse and representation. This is crucial in our understanding of representation in politics and the nature of representation.
“The tense conflation of disconnection and reconnection is central to the meaning and function of representation……… Representation performs an indexical, informational function; it renders an account which must be read, decoded, interpreted and evaluated for its authenticity.” (Coleman, 2005, p.178)

I think the important aspect here of representation is the mediation between experiences, meanings and summoning the absent to the present. This mediation process emphasized the constructive aspect of representation which relied on narratives, performances, or simply by story-telling. This process is aptly described by political theorist Lisa Disch in an article: “Toward a Mobilization Conception of Democratic Representation”. The author described the process as having the potential to activate constituency by giving a picture of itself and construct through shared problems, shared virtues and more importantly the process is not “self-evident but must be narrated into being.”(Disch, 2011, p. 108) In tandem with previous discussion on politicization, these two concepts can help this research dive deeper into the present topic, with constant story-telling, images, activities and discussions in representation of specialty coffee, it also facilitates the process of opening up the possibilities of meanings in another words politicized specialty coffee in the perception of its audience and members. This could have larger theoretical implications regarding the possible transformation of economic life. According to Arnold in his: “Rethinking Moral Economy”, moral economy is a concept and operational definition for analysis contributed among others by anthropologists, “essentially noneconomic norms and obligations that mediate the central social, political, and/or economic relations of a given (almost always pre- or nonmarket) people.”(Arnold, 2001, p.85) In this paper, he proposed that to utilize the concept of social goods in order to incorporate additional grounds for analysis of politically significant moral judgements and enables moral-economic political study of wider range of cases. The author started out by positioned his point that all goods even pure commodities are social constructions, and these constructions are common understandings of beneficial characteristics that are culturally dependent constructed. By focusing on the constructive aspect, the author propose to consider social goods as formulating elements of sense of self.
A shared understanding of social goods within certain community or a people that has the potential to become the nodal point of collective action.

“Constitutive social goods establish and symbolize important senses of self….People inevitably take stock of themselves and interpret the identities of others largely in terms of social goods. Moreover, patterned use, display and exchange of social goods place people in specific social, economic, and even political relations.” (Arnold, 2001, p.91)

The communal constructed social goods would be sources for shared notion of legitimacy but more importantly also acting as tools to evaluate specific developments as appropriate or not. The author argued that moral economic political analysis based on social goods would be suitable to explain crucial political and economic activities which inherently reflects “the cultural properties of meaningful goods.” In sum, this discussion on moral economy points out the important argument that economic behaviors are embedded in human societies’ concrete and functioning social relations, and the concept itself is to recognize this thus analysis it.

3.2 Theoretical implications

At the end of this part, I would like to summarize how this research topic can be of contribution to wider theoretical discussion. Starting from the illuminating discussion from (Palonen, 2003) in the beginning, it is core not only to specialty coffee but also to wider food movements, that the process of politicking and politicization is central to challenge the existing policies no matter it’s against the mass production of food industry or suggesting alternatives to current coffee trade model. It started with a grouping of people where the polity can take place and more importantly the starting point of this challenge.

As was discussed before, the fair trade movement in coffee and wider global food movements like the case of local food system served as wider background for politicization process to take roots in Third Wave coffee and this process can be observed through different forms of presentation about coffee productions in various discussions, publications and activities. Similar patterns has been noted in previous studies on fair trade coffee of its potentials to transform the meaning
of commodities and more importantly the process of polarization thanks to its discourses and campaign.

“It also means that ethical consumption might be more significant in political terms than is often acknowledged, in so far as it is an aspect of new forms of organization, campaigning and mobilization around issues of global trade, environmental justice, human rights, world poverty and social justice that stretch the understanding of what is political and how being political can be performed.”(Barnett, Cloke, Clarke, & Malpass, 2011, p.202)

At the same time, the display of distinction and the demonstration of taste in sociological terms for specialty coffee served as another meaning giving process in this tight coffee circle. With these two concerns at the center: “process” and “quality”, the topic at hand shares great similarities with other food justice or ethical consumption movements (Barham, 2002, p.354). More importantly, by employing these two narratives, the meaning of coffee has effectively transcendent the previous neutral status as market commodity and becomes the example of how representations and narratives can challenge our economic life (Kurasawa, 2004). In line with discussions on moral economy, the case study of specialty coffee industry will be illuminating example to show how economic activities embedded in social relations, this embeddedness helps us to recognize the dynamic relations between market, society and politics thus allowing us to capture more fully on individuals’ choices and actions (Mau, 2011). In summary, from the simple acts of presenting the production side of coffee at consuming side, the focus on production process and how it affect the quality in end-product, they are effectively doing politicking and politicization by attaching meanings to coffee. For those specialty coffee professionals, process and quality are inseparable and their dynamic relations are a constant theme of discussion. Their focus on this dynamic relations in return allows them to be more than just passive subjects who are dictated by their acquired taste, but also giving them agency to question and propose different ways to do coffee trade, their wider than economic concerns also resonates with previous discussion on the embeddedness of economic activities in society and more importantly, contributing to the discussion of rational choice assumption alone is
not enough to capture the complexity of economic activities and in this case coffee trade.

At this point of discussion, it's important to broaden our scope and mentioning another important implication of this research, which is globalization and North-South relations. Globalization is an intensively debated term and it receives significant amount of academic attentions from different disciplines, for this research, I will rely on this definition which sees globalization as a process. According to Guillén in (Beckert & Zafirovski, 2006, p.306) the globalization should be best understood as “a process of intensified exchange leading to greater interdependence and mutual awareness among economic, political and social units in the world, and among actors in general.” This definition helps us to capture two important aspects of globalization, intensified exchange and mutual awareness. The academic discussions on when this globalization process started has yet to come to a conclusion but one thing is certain that coffee like many other commodities were symbols of early stages of this intensified exchange (Courtwright, 2001). Due to the popularity it receives in Europe and coupled with European colonial expansions to Caribbean, South-East Asia and Americas countless coffee plantations were established as well, and also brought about the mutual awareness which at this stage extremely Euro-centric. Coffee since then has an inseparable globalized nature not only because of its colonial past but also geographically speaking it has to grow in tropical highlands between latitudes 25 degrees North and 30 degrees South (Mitchell, 2017).

This process also changed significantly the understanding of space, as was discussed in (Massey, 2006), Massey proposed three propositions for conceptualization of space, first she proposed that, space was our creations of our lives from individual levels onto global scale, second, space and multiplicity has co-constitutive relations and the last point which also resonates with the previous definition on globalization was that “Space is an on-going production.” because in practical terms there are “always connections, relations, yet to be made, or not made.” (Massey, 2006, p.90) She then went on to scrutinize two common “evasive imaginations”, one which was to categorize vastly different countries into “developing” and “developed” implying one mode of progress which is defined by those in lead (Massey, 2006), on the other hand, “the
voyages of discovery” was another common imaginations, which was a classical colonial imagination which rendered the “discover” in this imagination as active agent and those people on the other end of space were waiting passively to be discovered and deprived the history of their own. In this paper, she ended with an important point that the “challenge of space” is about full recognition of it as the dimension of the social, and that requires us to take up the political responsibility to scrutinize the “normal condition” of today which is “current global inequality.”(Massey, 2006, p.94)

Similar concerns were extensively discussed in Iris Marion Young’s works on shared political responsibility and global distributive justice, for example in her “From Guilt to Solidarity: Sweatshops and Political Responsibility.” (Young, 2003), she utilized the U.S. based anti-sweatshop consumer movement to demonstrate an important point that the popularly held idea of political responsibility is no longer only tied to certain membership in particular political community but rather increasingly tied to social and economic connection which as she indicated in the case of anti-sweatshop movement does not recognize the boundaries of nation-states (Young, 2003, p.44).

From both Massey and Young’s discussion, an alternative understanding of globalization emerged, this understanding requires us to recognize and take up this shared political responsibility. Academic attentions has been inspired by this understanding, for example in the introduction chapter of “Globalizing Responsibility: The Political Rationalities of Ethical Consumption”, it was inspired by the analysis frame work developed by Young and it set out to understand:

“the practical ways in which the politicization of consumption in Western capitalist democracies can be understood as responding to broadly shared concerns about the possibility of living responsibly in a highly unequal world.”(Barnett et al., 2011, p.9)

Similar understanding is shared in this research as well, however, in previous researches, the role of consumers and how their choice of consumption was transformed by different kinds of ethical consumerism movements has been extensively researched on. In this research, I am focusing on companies who claimed to incorporate ethical concerns in specialty coffee business and broadening the current academic scope. By shift the focus from consumers onto
companies and people in it, it could bring us more insights of how our globalized economic lives are increasingly inseparable from our societal and political concerns.

In other words, it allows us to experience and imagine a different kind of globalization in global north and this research aims to demonstrate how people in global north understand such position in their daily life.
4. Methodology

Specialty coffee, it is also a field imbued with discourses. In order to gain a full understanding of multiple layers of the field and to access the abundance of scattered and various kinds of data related to this new activity, I have chosen a mixed-methods approach, this is inspired by the book “Foodies: democracy and distinction in the gourmet foodscape.” written by Shyon Baumann and Josée Johnston from University of Toronto. In the book, they set out to understand the cultural phenomenon of foodie and ever increasing volumes of different forms of discussion related to culinary culture. In order to gather materials for their research, they employed mixed method approach which comprised of semi structured interviews, articles from food journalism and internet publications to generate materials for their analysis on food discourses.

“While food will always retain an inescapable material dimension, contemporary food culture is deeply discursive. We don’t simply eat food—we think about, talk about, dream about, and philosophize about food.” (Johnston & Baumann, 2015, p.41)

4.1 Research Methods and Data Collection.

As was described in above quote, their field of research has enormous amount of different forms of data which can also be said to the specialty coffee community but on a smaller scale. The core questions for this research are to investigate why there is a group of people fascinated about specialty coffee and more importantly how coffee professionals understand this globalized trade and the meanings for them. For the purpose of this research and gathering of materials, I have chosen mixed-methods approach which is a reflection of the nature of the field. The plan for data collection was to conduct interviews around Helsinki’s specialty coffee shops, attend related events e.g. meet the farmers and internet publications. In the table 1 below categorized what are my sources of data, their characteristics and methods for gathering them.
The nature of field of specialty coffee is filled with activities, talks and discussions. The talk which takes place among enthusiasts themselves, numerous blogs sharing their coffee experience, internet medias (Manzo, 2014) dedicated to discuss, teach and disseminate the latest development and also live-streaming competitions like World Barista Championship helps competitors from all over the world to gain global recognition and popularity. For example, World Barista Championship of 2016 attracted 278,859 total viewership on its live-streaming channel (World Coffee Event, 2016). With this knowledge in mind it’s important to see how this knowledge is discussed in the third wave coffee circle in Helsinki because this will directly linked to the discussion on distinction, taste and cultural capital. This concern will also reflect in my interview guide. The people for my interview included Baristas, Special Coffee Association Finnish Chapter, roasters and other potential interviewees that emerged during field work. The reasons for choosing them as my target interviewees are first, most of them are either the owners or employees at specialty coffee shops, second, they involved themselves in specialty coffee professionally or demonstrate that they have substantial knowledge of this phenomenon and thus qualify to answer my questions, third reason is that they are personally involved in the industry which gives them different perspectives than average costumers and their reflections on direct trade will be crucial for this research.
By employing ethnographic method on topic like specialty coffee community and questions of direct trade, we will first ask what are people doing in this coffee subculture and other practices whether individually or collectively and unveil members’ definitions, discourses, believes, ideas and so on that makes this community visible and recognizable for people inside and outside of the community. Additionally, it’s going to be illuminating to understand direct trade from their perspectives in order to gain further insights and contribute the current discussions around ethical consumerism. This approach was inspired by (Manzo, 2010), (Johnston & Baumann, 2010) because in these studies they recognized that there were nuances would not be captured by traditional structural analysis (Manzo, 2010, p. 153) (Johnston & Baumann, 2010, p. 210). By adopting open-ended and in-depth interviews, these nuances were able to emerge from the interview, thus, brought about more lively and personal accounts. Another reason for me to use ethnographic method is that I have similar working experience and interest so it would allow me to have better understanding while I am doing participatory observation. Also, being as practitioner and self-identified specialty coffee enthusiast, this research is by no means a purely outside observation rather it situates at the intersection of observation, participation and reflexivity. Exactly for this particular proximity between author and field of research, ethnographic method would be a legitimate and productive method. The ethnographic study will be my foreground arguments and combined with multivariate arguments as theoretical background (Alford, 1998, p. 38). This theoretical orientation implies that my interviews, participatory observation will serve as data that not only could contribute to current studies of specialty coffee but also broaden the discussion on ethical consumerism. There are going to be three major sources for my data collection, event participation, semi-structured one on one interview and internet publications. The reasons for doing these are first, the community in Helsinki has routinely held coffee competition and events and by taking part at these events I will be able to document a lively use of knowledge and also acquire photographic details, second, individual interviews will allow interlocutors to dive deeper into the details and reflections of direct trade.
4.2 Participatory observation

Specialty coffee community in Helsinki organized events regularly which can be categorized into two types.

Meet the Farmers Events

Events that fall under this category are not as professional as the one mentioned above, in this category events could be cupping events of coffee beans roasted in other countries and meet the farmers. Meet the farmers events are becoming more and more popular and it is where the coffee companies invites farmers who sold the coffee beans to them to the coffee shops in Helsinki and share the details on the farm in order to bridge the gap between farmers and costumers. It will be crucial for my research to participate and document the discussion of these events and also how the relationship between them was presented to costumers. This part will also be the source of photographic materials in later analysis chapter.

4.3 Individual Interviews

The following parts will be the themes that I will asked during interviews. I intend to do 8 individual interviews in order to generate enough data for later analysis. The themes are directly related to my theoretical discussions in previous chapter and the core concerns of this research.

4.3.1 Definition of Specialty Coffee

For the research focus of this thesis, it is important to let interviewees freely express their understandings of specialty coffee industry, because their definitions and experiences is what this thesis wants to uncover and seek to contribute to the discussion. Also, by asking open ended questions to different people it would be illuminating to observe if any patterns emerge out of these replies by different people in the same industry.

4.3.2 Direct Trade and Business

As was discussed before trade justice in coffee industry has been discussed and advocated for quite some time now, so it will be important to hear what
people involved themselves in specialty coffee industry think about related issues. Also, how the ethical consumerism discussion in specialty coffee affect their ideas of their profession will be a crucial point to ask because this will illustrate the potential conflicts between business interests and ethical concerns on personal level. During this part of interview, I hope to have more in depth discussion on direct trade and how their business concerns interact with this. It is important for this research to present interviewees’ understanding and reasoning of their profession. I will also ask their past experience when asked by costumers about the issue of trade justice of coffee, it might render this research meaningful replies as well.

4.3.3 Coffee knowledge and Personal Coffee Taste

As was discussed earlier before in this thesis, the parallel development in global coffee market: emergence of specialty coffee and fair trade movement in commodity coffee, meant that people in specialty coffee industry needs to acquire certain taste and knowledge in order to enter this market and thus separate themselves from the rest of coffee market. In this part I will be focusing on how they introduce their coffee to customers because one of the common theme in specialty coffee shop is that they all have quite structured knowledge about the coffee beans they are using. Most of time, it will consist roasting profile, roaster, country of origin, farm, growing altitude, pulp process, tasting notes, recommendation of brewing process etc. The knowledge behind coffee growing is going to be one of the crucial talk points when employees engaged with customers and on the other hand how this knowledge being used within the community will be another crucial observation point.

4.4 Internet publications

I have chosen three roasting companies’ websites who sells coffee beans directly to the end consumers: The Coffee Collective of Copenhagen, Tim Wendelboe of Oslo and Kaffa Roastery of Helsinki. Two are in other Nordic capitals but due to the close relationship of specialty coffee community among these cities, their products can be often seen in Helsinki specialty coffee shops. They regularly published articles on their websites and descriptions of their
coffee on offer. I incorporated the content from there into my analysis, with specific attention paid to their journals on their regular trips to coffee farms and the ways they introduce coffee on their website. In the journals, they discussed their relationships with coffee farms in terms of how many years of cooperation and so on, this will be an illuminating account for my analysis and further examination of direct trade. On the other hand, the way they introduce their coffee on the website clearly influenced by languages of taste and distinction which will be further categorized in later chapters.

4.5 Doing Analysis: Discourse Analysis, Concepts and analytical tools

In the parts above, I have listed ways to gather materials for the purpose of this research, here, I will lay out my methods of analysis that will be put into use in the coming chapters.

4.5.1 Discourse Analysis

Specialty coffee industry is a niche market which means it caters to a small segment of the whole coffee market, it is even more so in the eyes of these professionals who are working at such market. In order to understand how they differentiate themselves from the rest of the market, it is important to analysis their discourses. In this case, discourse means how specialty coffee as such and their own professionalism is talked about, argued and understood among themselves and in the public. Discourse can also be understood as “an institutionalized system of knowledge and thought that organizes populations, and shapes the parameters of what thoughts are popular and even possible.” (Johnston & Baumann, 2010, p.37) This research will be a close analysis of such discourses and how meanings are assigned and arranged.

It is important to define analysis because it will closely relate to how materials that were gathered in this research will be utilized. According to (Corbin & Strauss, 2012, p.45) analysis “involves examining a substance and its components in order to determine their properties and functions, then using the acquired knowledge to make inferences about the whole.”

For the purpose of this research, there will be different stages for the analysis process, first, a descriptive accounts of the data generated by previous
mentioned methods, this will be a close reading process and the result will be the foundation for later interpretative stage. At this stage, it will be crucial to recognize the context of events, discussions, judgements and so on documented in the data. It is the background knowledge of the acquired data. Based on this foundational stage, concepts will be able to develop and ultimately to formulate the web of meanings which render the raw data sensible, this stage or process can also be called as coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2012a). This is crucial for the later stages because the interpretations, inferences and conclusions which happens at later stages, their accuracy and explanatory power will dependent on capturing this context. Below quote by Corbin and Strauss from their writings on qualitative research method, stated the importance differently but more clear manner:

"When doing analysis, delineating the context or the conditions under which something happens, is said, done, and/or felt is just as important as coming up with the “right” concept. Context not only grounds concepts, but also minimizes the chances of distorting meaning and/or misrepresenting intent." (Corbin & Strauss, 2012, p.58)

4.5.2 Concepts and analytical tools

After the descriptive stage, concepts would be able to emerge from the data which has its meanings grounded in the context. Concepts are words that has important functions for researchers to compare and anchor meanings across different sources of data, thus allow insightful explanations or even theories to develop (Corbin & Strauss, 2012a).

However, this will also be a dialogue between data and theories that this research draw inspirations from. Theories will form the analytical tools that will put in use in this research, they will facilitate the process of making sense of the data. These tools are like thinking devices or procedures enable the researcher to engage with data more easily. For this research, two crucial analytical tools will be put in use, “quality” and “process”. Quality derives from sociological studies on taste and distinction, also the nature of specialty coffee being a niche market, particularly in this research, it will be important to understand the quality
standard of these specialty coffee professionals because it is also a crucial part of meaning giving process. This would be the point of discussion and common language among them. On the other hand, Process is closely relate to quality, it contains two meanings, first, the knowledge system explaining the quality attributes of specialty coffee, in other words, it is the discussion of why and how certain coffee taste like this? Secondly, it also ties directly to the discussion of “direct trade” the ethical and political discussions specialty coffee industry on coffee trade. It will also employed concepts of politicking, politicization from Palonen’s work (Palonen, 2003), as was discussed before it is crucial to recognize the political undertone in the materials and to observe and analyze the ways of actors in the field “performed” such political undertones. For this research, it’s unique in a sense that the people in the field already has a certain degree of recognition of the position they occupied in coffee chain of production, thus in this research it is important to understand what they mean by “We believe that it is important to have a handshake and a smile to seal every deal.” (Akins, 2017b) or regularly published their visit to coffee farms and also how these demonstrations affect their ideas of professionalism. The analysis will not limit itself on these two ideas only, rather it will be an open process which allows the possibility of new concepts emerge from the data. For this to happen, this research will make use of the data in ways such as compare, sample, grouping between interviews, publications or even webpages in order to draw a sensible and insightful understanding of the field. Lastly, as the author of this thesis who is trying to understand what motivates these people but also convey this understanding to outside readers. The analysis will start from asking basic questions to materials at hand, recognizing possible patterns, developing concepts which are helpful to grasp inner logic of the field and finally complete with faithful interpretations which both be able to answer research questions but also allow readers to acquire clear understandings. (Corbin & Strauss, 2012) In appendix 1 will be a list of questions that will be asked during interviews, identities of interviewees will not be disclosed in this thesis full transcription of interview can be provided under request.
5. Findings and Analysis

As discussed before, this research gathers its materials from interviews, internet publications and participatory observations. Building on these sources, this thesis is able to present a colorful, descriptive and meaningful image of specialty coffee community in Helsinki. This is an image which loaded with terminologies, photos, conflicts of opinions, values and stories, all of which contributed to this research’s endeavor to understand the people within this community and their significance to wider discussion. I have divided this chapter into 4 parts: (a) description of sensory knowledge in use in specialty coffee community based on the example of meet the farmers event and internet materials; (b) definition and reflection of direct trade expressed by informants and the second case of meet the farmers event; (c) content analysis from website materials and articles; (d) examples of journals to different coffee farms gathered from websites. As was point out before, this is a field filled with different forms of discoursers, activities and the attempt of this chapter is to categorize and analyze them closely in order to strike a meaningful conversation with existing theories and previous research.

5.1 What is a Cup of Flavorful coffee? Sensory Knowledge and Distinction in Practice.

5.1.1 Sensory knowledge, common language and acquired taste.

In this part, I will explain the operational definition found from the field and the knowledge base to form such commonly accepted definition. This will closely linked to the previous discussion on taste, distinction and cultural capital because by accumulating and demonstrating one’s familiarity of such knowledge is key to be part of the specialty coffee industry. It also serves as the criteria to distinguish between good taste and bad taste, in the following paragraphs this will be further demonstrated. On the other hand, it also ties closely with the framing of trade justice issue for specialty coffee professionals because for many of them offering higher price according to coffee quality is the key to secure the livelihood of coffee farmers and sustainability. In the following,
we will start with close examination of the sensory knowledge and its practical example.

For coffee professionals specialty coffee has a concrete meanings that is certain coffee beans pass their objective quality standards but more importantly is what are the reasons for coffee to taste like this and how to reproduce that tastiness. It’s a story not only about a small group of people’s pursuit for tasty coffee but also acknowledging their position on the global journey of coffee trade and their subsequent actions. For an outside observer, it’s hard not to recognize the emphasis on various terms used to describe how a certain coffee taste like e.g. extensive description of taste notes. Almost all of the coffee described here is single origin which means the coffee is from the same farm or at least the same producing area. One of such examples is a Danish roaster and coffee company: La Cabra which was established in 2013 at Aarhus, has long and close business relationship with one of the specialty coffee shop in Helsinki. In this research we will focus on one of its particular cupping event combined internet conference with Burundi coffee farmer. On their website such sentences were used to describe their coffee from Gitwe, Burundi.

“At its best, Gitwe is a dark berry medley. Stewed fruit and floral flavours fill the cup. It has the sugary sweetness of white peaches, candy floss and simple syrup with an acidity approaching red grape and melon juice. Upon finish, it will leave the smooth feel of canned fruit syrup in the mouth.” (La Cabra, 2018)

The way they describe their coffee on offer is widely visible in other specialty coffee websites as well and is closely related to the sensory knowledge developed alongside specialty coffee market. This knowledge is crucial to specialty coffee professionals in the sense that they trained their sensory abilities to accurately describe the aroma and taste from any given coffee. This serves as a common language which was used to communicate among themselves and also to the purpose of determining which coffee has better quality than others. The use and demonstration of such knowledge also could be observed in numerous events that author has participated personally. One such events was coffee cupping organized by La Cabra roaster showcasing
their coffee on offer from Burundi and other producing countries, in the following sections I will discuss more in details of different kinds of coffee events.

One constant theme which been brought up constantly regarding taste during my interviews with these professionals, was the comparisons with wine and other products which requires certain level of acquired taste to enter. For example, one interviewee explained to customers using comparison to wine and craft beer:

“S: You mean, specialty coffee? I would say, what we usually compared to is beer or wine in that sense, because it's easier for people to understand, because coffee has usually been just the everyday commodity. You don't really think of it as something you enjoy, which is something you need to go on with your day, that's why we usually refer to like craft beer, because that's really easy to put people to understand that, that is made with like care and really good ingredients and it's all about the precision and passion behind it and knowledge also, yeah I would just explain it's more about taking care of the ingredient and making the costumers happier in that sense”( S, Personal interview, February 21, 2018.)

The quote here clearly shows their definition when they are explaining to people without prior knowledge, what is important here also, is the comparison with wine and craft beer which both has strong connotations with taste and distinction, it further proves the similarities with other studies done on food discourses (Johnston & Baumann, 2007 ; 2010).

The specialty coffee community globally uses the same industry standard to communicate with each other on certain single origin coffee’s sensory attributes, this will be used to differentiate good and bad coffee and ultimately affect the price as well. The figure 2 below is an important example from sensory knowledge which was designed and developed by Specialty Coffee Association which is an international non-profit organization came into existence in 2017 after the merge of two biggest Specialty coffee organization: Specialty Coffee Association of American and Specialty Coffee Association of Europe. One of
the mission statement of S.C.A is education and research, the picture 1 below is

such example of their output. (Specialty Coffee Association, 2017)

This is the newest edition of coffee flavor wheel, it was first introduced and published by S.C.A.A. in 1995 and subsequently, it became the industry standard to describe and communicate what are the tastes in a cup (Specialty Coffee Association of America, 2016). Based on sensory scientific research, it grouped the potential tastes of coffee in 9 different categories. Starting from the middle, these 9 categories are floral, fruity, sour/fermented, green/vegetative, other, roasted, spices, nutty/cocoa, sweet, these are called taste notes. The rims on other layers are more specific descriptions of tastes, as in wine tasting,
in the coffee flavor wheel, the researchers relied on other foods or drinks to convey certain taste in coffee metaphorically. Not all of the flavors in figure 2 can be traced in every single cup of coffee, it depends on coffee varieties, terroir, roast profile, and many other processes in between the long journey from farm to cup. The consensus among specialty coffee professionals that I interviewed or from their websites, is that they are looking for coffee which obtained flavors from floral, fruity, nutty/coca, sweet, sour/fermented these 5 categories, floral notes referred to the aroma and the rest were mouth taste. They occupied the upper half of the wheel and represented by warmer colors. The more flavors a single cup of coffee can possess the higher quality it is and subsequently better the price. This is only a glimpse of the sensory knowledge they used in specialty coffee industry, the rigorous process in Cup of Excellence competition/auction program also dependent on such knowledge to distinguish between good and bad coffee. It is a practical example of the cultural capital used in the field, it is crucial to acquire such knowledge in order to be part of the specialty coffee community and to share the similar criteria for tastes and distinction. It also transformed the meaning of coffee from basic necessity to enjoyable object and it also refers back to the previous comparisons with wine and craft beer that in the eyes of specialty coffee professionals, specialty coffee could also provide such hedonistic pleasure.

With this distinction between good flavors and bad flavors established, in the following sections, I will discussed more in depth on coffee events which relied on such knowledge.
5.1.2 Meet the Farmers event with La Cabra roaster in Helsinki.

As was mentioned before, the Danish roaster La Cabra has extensive collaboration with one of the specialty coffee shop at Helsinki, in which, they presented several coffees from Burundi, Brazil, and Columbia. In this section I will discussed more in details of this event and the discussion. The event took place on 27th of February, 2018 at Andante coffee shop, two people from La Cabra roasters were the host of the event and there were five different single origin coffees from Burundi, Brazil, Columbia and Costa Rica.

At that event, we were able to taste or in their language “cup” 5 different origins of coffee, the idea of cupping is to reduce as much factors as possible, thus any differences noticed by tasters could only be resulted from the coffee itself. The process started from smelling the aromas of coffee grounds, slurping the coffee after pour in hot water, the whole process would take about 20 to 30 mins for all participants to taste all the coffee on the table. After the tasting and cupping, participants would be able to decide and give out judgements and share among each other based on the sensory knowledge mentioned above. At this event,
there were about 40 participants, most of them are employees at specialty coffee, and this was one of the regularly held events that served the purpose of improving their professional knowledge and also maintaining the sense of community. At this kind of cupping event, the ability to make distinction and be able to name different tastes from each coffee is crucial to engage in the discussion. The two hosts from La Cabra roasters repeatedly mentioned that one of their newest endeavor was to collaborate with wine fermentation experts at Brazilian farms which resulted in extraordinary tastes in coffee. Such comparison between wine and specialty coffee was a reoccurring theme in my interviews as well, further proved the importance of acquired taste and the ability to make distinction in their understanding of professionalism. This will be further discussed in later sections.

Another main focus of this event was the talk given by Ben Carlson of long miles coffee project which based in Burundi started in 2013. According to La Cabra’s website: “Ben Carlson and his family have truly broken new ground with the Long Miles project in Burundi, moving there over seven years ago, and establishing a company and a social enterprise focused on exceptional coffees, sustainable soil practices, and serious local engagement.” (Evar, 2018)

Also from their website their mission statement is:

“Our dream was that one day we could facilitate direct and meaningful relationships between coffee roasters and coffee growers by producing great coffee and telling the story of the farmers who grow it. If we could do that, then the local farming community would thrive and the world would gain the gift of great Burundi coffee.” (Carlson, 2018)

The topic of the talk was his experience in Burundi, working with local coffee farmers and helping them to produce high quality coffee. Burundi liberalizing its coffee production and market in 2010, before that it was mostly owned and operated by government. After 2010, there were more and more access for outside buyers to taste and purchase Burundi coffee, this was also the time for him to decide to move to Burundi for long miles coffee project. At first, it was difficult to gain the trust of local farmers and also farming practices like trimming,
irrigation and so on had much room for improvements. In order to enhance the quality, they initiate the coffee scout program which was teaching youth from local villages on better farming practices so they could educate local farmers afterwards. Overall quality in production was significantly increased and in 2015 the coffee from long miles project won third place on national coffee competition (Alliance For Coffee Excellence, 2015). Due to overall increased quality, they were able to sell at higher price than before and bring about positive changes to the farmers. Such changes were discussed in one interview he gave to another online publication:

“More money into families pockets by over 50%. Chickens, goats and cows in the family farm where before there were none. Job creation for our 50 full time staff of agronomists and team members. Environmental impact that is creating Green Belts webbing out from our two washing stations into the hills surrounding us. Health care/medical aid for all our staff and we have started it for many of the 4,500 families we work with and our goal is for 100% coverage of our fellow farmers in the next year. That’s nearly 25,000 individuals previously without health care that are now covered.”

(De Angelis, 2016)

At the end of the talk, he discussed future projects with local government on fighting against climate change and its negative impacts on local agriculture. He cited one study indicates that by year 2030 50% of Burundi’s farm land will be unsuitable for farming due to raising temperature and raising soil acidity which according to him was already noticeable for the past 3 years. The talk ended with him sharing his future program on planting more trees in neighboring areas in order to sustain future environmental challenge and continuously working with local farmers producing specialty coffee.

The important message from this event was that there existed a positive relation of having higher quality of coffee at consuming side and having close relationship with producing side of coffee and rewarding farmers with higher premiums accordingly. After invited us to taste their Burundi coffee such position and stance was even more pronounced, this positive relation was
called “direct trade” within specialty coffee industry and has been constant topic of debate. Similar discussion was brought up during interviews as well, the idea of direct trade has been central to many of my interviewees’ understanding of their career and professionalism.

5.2” We should have both.”: Direct Trade in Practices and Reflections among Specialty Coffee Professionals.

In this section I will be dealing with the topic of direct trade which is for many interviewees crucial to their professional ethics. I will start with the definition of direct trade that I gathered during my interview and followed up with observations at events with similar ideas. Finally, I will concluded with debates and different opinions on direct trade at the end of this section.

Direct trade has received attentions not only from specialty coffee industry but also international news outlets (Terazono, 2016)(Meehan, 2007). The definition that was agreed by most, described the trade model of which roasters buy their beans directly from the farms not from brokers, it also requires intensive communications and visits between buyers and producers. This trade model served as a way for roasters and buyers to trace quality coffee back to its origins and farmers but also pay accordingly to its quality attributes. During my interviews, their understandings and reflections of direct trade was one of the core focuses, especially, on the part of closer relationship and what it means for them. For example, in one of the discussion I had with one interviewee who has more than 4 years of professional experiences as Barista and bar manager at one of the biggest Finnish specialty coffee companies, I asked that what I have observed in specialty coffee industry was that there was great amount of attention in coffee quality but also how the coffee was traded was equally important as well, do you think these two concerns can be balanced?

“S: Yeah, I think yes, we do, also, like how we as coffee farmers’ costumers so if we paid them straight and pay them more, they can develop their farm more efficient and more environmentally friendly. So in that sense, economically efficient and when they get more money from their products they can also grow their business in a way,
I would say that *we should have both*...Direct trade adds to the taste also, also the other way around. I think those who knows more about the coffee, they think it tastes better also, and same thing like we can develop the taste with the farmers, I think so.” (S, Personal interview, February 21, 2018.)

For professional like her, the model is a way which she believes would be able to deliver better results in the cup but also better share for the growers themselves. Similar opinions were shared with me from other interviewees and also added to the discussion of the importance of transparency in the whole coffee train. The transparency which for the consumers at the end of the coffee train should and could be able to know how much money were paid back to the farmers. Such opinion was shared with me by another professional who is in charge of green coffee buying and marketing and 7 years of professional experience before him.

“M: For me, we defined it as transparency in the entire chain, we tried to understand the economic factors everywhere, so like I said, when I go to talk our producers now, the first thing, other than hey your coffee is awesome, is this the thing works for me, how much does it cost for you to grow coffee? That's an actually pretty tough question. A lot of times they don't know the answer, so we tried to figure that out and make sure of that. That's what my personal definition, and as a company we defined it as transparency, so we say this is how much we pay to the producers, this is how much we can prepare what they could have gotten paid if they didn't sell it to us. That's kind of how we see this thing, so directly for us.” (M, Personal interview, March 7, 2018.)

Transparency and fair compensation to the farmers were reoccurring themes during interviews and also on websites. For them the biggest challenges are not finding the most delicious coffee or having heathy relationship with the farmers, rather the communication is the biggest challenge for them when they are trying to convey the vast information from the coffee chain to consumers. Several measures were adopted to tackle this, on their website and many
others as well, they consistently published their visit to the farms or their company stance on trade justice. One such example is called “Kaffa Handshake” by Kaffa Roastery, it is a stamp and certification which tells consumer the coffee they are selling has met their ethical standards. On their website, they also explained that their “Kaffa Handshake” means whoever they do business with have met their code of ethics. They encouraged producers to sign the “Kaffa Handshake” contract with them which guarantees they will do their best to meet ethical requirements such as, paying fair and legal salaries to workers on the farm, no child labor or forced labor conditions, workers are free to join union and lastly environmental concerns are taking into consideration. (Akins, 2017b) Many more stories are on their website as well, stories about their visit to El Molino, Columbia for example and how much they paid compared to fair trade price(Akins, 2017a)(Leivo, 2017). Besides internet, they also occasionally held events which they invited farmers to Helsinki to introduce their farms and coffees to wider public.

5.2.1 Meet the Farmers Event at Helsinki

Similar to the one discussed in detail before, another example that I am going to analyses was hosted by Good Life Coffee at Helsinki in 2017. It is important to look into this kind of event because it’s one of the core example of the process of politicization took place and intertwined with quality statement and distinction. This is the second meet the farmers event that I have covered in this chapter, both shared similar discourses of demonstrating the quality of coffee by cupping and discussion with farmers themselves and roasters thus brings forth this sense of connection that ultimately saying: it’s possible to at the same time enjoys the tastiness of coffee and also knows the farmers receive fair compensation.

One of the biggest specialty coffee sourcing company in Nordic region: Nordic Approach based in Norway and started in 2011 which has focusing on providing high quality specialty coffee to roasters in Europe and also engaging their business in direct trade and transparency. On 17th of October, 2017, Helsinki based roaster Good Life Coffee which has extensive cooperation with Nordic Approach, invited two Costa Rican farmers whose coffee beans has already
been purchased by Good Life Coffee through Nordic Approach, to Helsinki and gave a talk at one of the coffee shops. At the event there were 8 different origins of coffee from both of their farms, and they were also sharing their experience working with Nordic Approach. Both Ricardo and Carlos were from generations of coffee farmers and they both mentioned that it’s not financially possible to survive in commodity coffee market where the price was unreasonably low. For them, changing from commodity coffee farming into specialty coffee requires more investment in order to meet the quality standard. For example, using the right coffee varieties, fertilizing, processing and only picking the ripest coffee cherries all of these necessary practices increased the cost of production compared to what they used to do in commodity coffee farming. Not only the cost which came with the switch into specialty coffee production but also compared to Columbia or other Latin American countries, their labor cost and the price of fertilizer was higher as well. Even with all these aforementioned obstacles, they firmly believed that engaging in direct trade and specialty coffee market is the only way for them to survive as coffee farmers.

In figure 4 above, three people in the middle from right was the host from Good Life Coffee, and the two next to him were farmers from Costa Rica. Besides
sharing their experiences working on coffee farm, they also mentioned that because of specialty coffee they from one end of coffee production chain is finally able to see the other end. One of the farmers said that talking to roasters on the other end was really important for him to connect and improve and to his surprise he never thought he would visit Finland again after many decades ago working as berry picker on a Finnish farm. At the event, there were few types of participants, first was specialty coffee professionals, second was consumers without any professional background but were eager to know more. Event like this has different effects on different types of participants, for professional who has substantial knowledge about coffee growing, this event served as a chance to confirm their assumptions about coffee growing because not all of them visited the farm before, however, for consumers, this served as a glimpse to the wider and deeper stories behind their cup of coffee. It also helped the company who invited them in the first place to convey the message about direct trade they would like the wider public to receive. It’s presentation in which effectively uncovering what was lost on the coffee’s long and global journey from South to North. This presentation coupled with the story telling on Good Life Coffee’s website was telling a story about coffee growers’ effort in producing high quality coffee in some of the most remote areas. From both of these channels, a certain image started to emerge, it’s an image that saying this specialty coffee with distinctive taste notes has origins and processes which make this coffee possible, it’s a connection between quality and process, more importantly, it recognizes the fundamental importance of those process which in turn portrays farmers as dedicated professionals and gives credits to them. (GoodLifeCoffee, 2018) Such attempts also resonated with other interviewees that it’s crucial to bring transparency into the whole coffee production chain.

“It would be very easy to buys a lot cheaper coffee than we buy currently, very easy, but the simple thing is that, producing coffee it has certain cost for the farmer and if we want to keep the coffee around i.e. coffee farming around in the future people that do the farming, they need to get enough money in order to live and they have to be able to pay the producing cost but also rest of the stuff that they have to do with their families and so on. They have to live.”
The quote is from the interview with a roaster and one of the founder of Good Life Coffee at Helsinki, who has 10 years of interest in coffee but establishes the current coffee roasting business only after 2014. For him, he defines direct trade as the producing side getting paid the fair compensation for their work. He also mentioned that the two concerns: higher quality of coffee and fairer trade relations has positive effect over one another, it helps to sustain each other in the long run. Similar understanding was also shared by the founder of Nordic Approach Morten Wennersgaard, in one of his interview he expressed his understanding of direct trade and how does it translate into his business practices:

“Connecting producers with consumers, through a roasters branding of the single farms etc., is in my opinion key to more sustainable farming and coffee production,” writes Wennersgaard. “It can really be emotional observing a farmer or a coffee farming family looking at a coffee bag with their name on it. Especially when it is the first time they have ever experienced it.” (Kramer, 2015)

Convincing and persuasive as it sounds, there were some of my interviewees expressed their doubts and reflections on direct trade, their reflections will be the focus of the final part of this section.

5.2.2 Reflections on Direct Trade.

During my interviews with many specialty coffee professionals, there were few points of reflections being brought up numerous times. First, giving the fact that it’s important to bring transparency to the process, what this transparency brings to us is a great influx of information from the coffee farms, to coffee buyers and finally to roasters, as one interviewee points out, we don’t have any means to validate all of these information. It also brings a serious challenge to the trust worthiness of the model itself.

“Interviewer: Since you mentioned earlier there is the whole transparency thing, how can they be really transparent, when they are the one writhing the report?
J: They can't, they can't verify it. That is something that we have been talking a lot about it at the shop, how would we be talk about it? And what do we call it? you know because, if we get someone that really wants to know and wants to know this is the truth, I can't say that I can't say I am 110% certain, even if you go there how would you know? You make a coffee for living but you don't certify these farms that's maybe the first farm you ever been to. You know, you just don't know. We are not there yet. I hope that we will get there. That is like an infrastructure that hasn't been built yet because I think again the type of people we have, we just focused on quality and get them these machines, get them these drying beds, get them these set up and then it's going to taste so good.” (J, Personal interview, March 28, 2017.)

Working in specialty coffee for five years now, this would be one of the biggest challenges for her and the business to build up institutions to tackle the trust problem but she believed that if such institutions are in place it will be a great boost to the reputability of the whole industry. The wider public would have clearer picture of what they are and what they do and also communication would be easier in general. As of right now there are only industry standard to evaluate and score different coffee based on its sensory attributes, however, there are no third party organization like fair trade organization to certify any companies’ claim to direct trade, or disclosed information on their websites.

Secondly, Not only the problem with validation but also what constitute as direct trade has been the topic of discussion as well, the same interviewee argued that there has to be some form of longer and meaningful commitment in order to call itself direct trade, this commitment cannot just be about enhancing the quality of coffee itself but also an investment in the community’s livelihood and environment.

“J: In my mind (it should be) very very high standard to call anything direct trade, you can't just like this is that farm on your vacation and pick the coffee out from supplier, some people are going to say to them that's direct trade, and a lot of people would think I bet they
would be like "yeah, that's direct trade." I am like "what you went to farm once on your vacation, cool." That is not it, I think it really has to do with that actual effort to support that producer and community through whatever means are necessary, in order to get that lot finished. And it should build relationships, it's not a one season agreement I think direct trade is about really investing in long term development of people's farms and product. I guess there is vision."(J, Personal interview, March 28, 2017.)

Similar concerns and understandings were shared among international coffee professionals as well, for example, Michaele Weissman: a journalist and an author who published an in-depth investigative report on direct trade on one of the popular websites for specialty coffee professionals, the report was titled “Is Direct Trade fair?”, in the report she dived deep into the history and development of direct trade, and the challenges that it faces in the future as ethical considerations infused model. She recognized that the confusion of the definition was real and still posed as a challenge, however, she believed that the current model of presenting the information about producing side and putting farmer's names on their coffee, it's a step in the right direction which empowers farmers in a market that was plagued far too long by imbalance of bargaining power.(Michaele Weissman, 2017)

Finally, many of the interviewees also agreed on that specialty coffee relies on consumers' willingness to pay extra for the taste and ethical production. Based on their years of experiences, they saw that there were more and more consumers showing their interests year after year. The interests and numbers of consumers in Finland has been on the increase year after year. However, at the same time they also recognized it’s hard to imagine specialty coffee to be common and popular, because there is a specific type of consumers that according to their observation is the main audience.

“S: Usually, the majority of the people is very young, let's say under 35 and interested in food, wine, cocktails, beer, coffee, in general, but equally we have costumers that are very old and have people, that you won't initially think that is the person enjoys our coffee, so
it's not that simple to say, this is the type, more usually, it is the
people that enjoy coming to or going to cafes like this. That's the
majority, we know that our coffee does not sell on the shelf of
supermarket, which is the wrong audience. So, that's not interesting
for us."(S, Personal interview, March 9, 2018.)

Their understanding of consumer base illustrated a specific segment of the
market which would prefer to spend their money according to hedonistic tastes.
This resonates with other interviewees’ opinion that it’s hard to imagine the
audience of specialty coffee will grow without limits. This limitation came from
the acquired taste which ironically served as barrier to entry but also the
foundation of its existence. Although, most of them would agree the limitation to
its market growth is expected, however, they expect that the model of direct
trade would be more and more common in other areas of Finnish market. The
concern for how a certain product is produced and ethically traded has in their
opinions more and more popularity in other areas of society. The consumers
would like to feel and hear about stories that ease their conscience, in other
words, some of them would like to be educated on how a certain product come
in to being and be able to trust it. The story telling that is prevalent among
specialty coffee industry has started to see its imitations by bigger companies
like Nestle and Espresso House in its advertising and branding, now in the next
section I will focus on specialty coffee roasters’ website materials, in other
words, how specialty coffee industry tells story to wider public?

5.3 Storying-telling and representation: website materials from specialty
roasters.

In this section, I have chosen some websites of coffee roasters based in Oslo,
Copenhagen and Helsinki, many of the specialty coffee shops in Helsinki, they
roast their own coffee but at same time also order roasted coffee beans from
companies from other Nordic cities because of the cooperation I am now
including them into my analysis. Tim Wendelboe which is both a Norwegian
specialty coffee professional and also roasting company, is based in Oslo who
has been a strong advocate and pioneer in promoting direct trade in specialty
coffee which occupies prominent spot on the company website. The coffee
collective of Copenhagen which also has strong emphasis on direct trade of specialty coffee. Both companies’ coffee can be found in Helsinki’s specialty coffee shops and they both happened to open in 2007. On the other hand, I have also included Kaffa roastery of Helsinki into my analysis and additional interview materials to be discussed in-depth in this section.

In the following parts, I will present what are the characteristics and structures of their presentation on their websites, also how they represent the workers on the other end of coffee production chain, finally how this story telling serves as connection between the far ends of the chain which covers vast geographical distance in between.

5.3.1 Ethical Entrepreneurship: Trade Justice and Quality Coffee.

Many of their websites have statements of their business ethics, concerns that are more than just price and quality but also their commitment to minimize negative impacts of businesses. This can be observed in their understanding and analysis of coffee production chain and their commitment to pay a fair share that is truthfully reflect the quality of coffee. In order to do so, transparency is their way of convincing the audience that they try to be as open as possible about the reasons behind the price they charge and the information about the whole production chain. It often would include articles showing their visits to coffee farms, how many years they have cooperating with certain coffee farm, many ways that they help to improve the production quality and so on.

For example, on the website of the coffee collective, it described its mission and goal in few sentences as follows:

“The dream that drives The Coffee Collective is to explore and unfold exceptional coffee experiences in a manner that gives better living conditions to coffee farmers across the globe. Coffee quality is brought about in three links: Farmer, roaster and barista. We work hard to ensure that these three links collaborate, working towards the collective goal: Exploring coffee’s taste potential. As coffee is grown far from Denmark, it is important for us to work with transparency. With our Direct Trade model, we lay out a distinct set of criteria for our trading with the producers. Direct Trade is based on the notion
that the better the quality we get, the better price we are able to pay, and the better quality we will have again the following year and so forth. Ultimately, our dream is for a coffee farmer in Kenya to obtain the same status and living conditions as a wine grower in France.” (The Coffee Collective, 2017a)

On the same page as this quote, they explained that their direct trade model meant they will pay at least 25% more than fair trade price and visit the farm at least once per year. For them, it’s important to bring the best possible potentials out of coffee but at the same time, providing information to their customers about the process behind it. For example, one of their coffee on offer during the time of this research, was Kenyan coffee from Kieni area, similarly to the previous La Cabra roaster’s description, it also starts with detailed flavor notes divided into aromas and mouth flavors. But not only with words, there were also the use of images as well, the whole page starts with a local farmer holding bright red coffee cherries in hands, followed with a google map showing its location. The page ended with photo galleries of their previous visits to the farm, group photos with local farmers, coffee drying and processing facilities under bright Kenyan sun and farmers stand proudly next to their coffee. (The Coffee Collective, 2017b) Not only the visual story telling but also the detailed description of how much were paid back to the farmers of their purchase. For example, in one of the first paragraphs after the flavor notes, this immediately comes in: “We paid 285% above market price ($6.30 USD/lbs FOB) for the excellent quality that has made the Kieni one of the highest paid cooperatives in Kenya.” (The Coffee Collective, 2017b) Costumers would be reminded that the price they pay is not only a reflection of the flavorful attributes they are offering but also the farmers were paid significantly higher as well. Besides all of the previous information, there are other technical details explaining the growing condition, coffee varieties and so on. All of the previous mentioned are on the same page, on the other hand, they also regularly update their visits to Kenya and many other origins, I will discuss more in details in the following part. Similar way representing their coffee can be seen on Tim Wendelboe and Kaffa Roastery’s website as well (Tim Wendelboe, 2018)(Kaffa Roastery, 2018).
There are few concepts that I would like to present here after the previous description. First is quality statement, the quality statement is integral to specialty coffee industry that they use specific descriptors to communicate with their audience of how exactly certain coffee tastes like. The main focus is on coffee beans itself. Although, their purposes are about giving a clear and transparent description of the taste, but the language they are using required certain level of background knowledge and it's also a clear display of acquired taste that only caters to certain type of consumers. Only if the audience understands the difference between natural process and washed process, then the audience will be able to understand the technical aspects on their webpage. This observation was also shared by my interviewees that they fully understood the market they are at is not the same as the majority of coffee market.

Second, connections and representations, is another characteristics of communicating. By displaying information on the farm and all the other information on the coffee production chain, they wished to bring about more transparency, this was also shared by my interviewees as well. In doing so, these companies which occupied the middle position between coffee farms and the end consumers also become the relay point of information flow. By demonstrating the information from the global coffee production chain, they articulated this particular connection between North and South into being.

Lastly, they often portrayed the production side as professional and hardworking farmers who despite all the natural diseases and societal upheavals are putting all their effort into farming, in order to produce the next flavorful and tasty coffee. This again also ties back to the goal of transparency by bringing as much information as they can to the surface and also realizing the quality they are offering cannot be separated from the process behind it. This also paints the picture of roasters in the consuming North countries having equal partnership with farmers in producing South countries.

In the next part, I will discuss the stories they publish about their trips to origins.

5.4 What Happened on the Farm Goes to the Cup: Trips to Origins and Story-telling.
In this part I will use the same examples from these three roasters and their visits to different origins. The growing areas of coffee in the globe is called the coffee bean belt vast areas the north and south of Equator. During their visits to coffee farms, they traveled to Kenya and Colombia. Afterwards, they published journals documenting their trips on their blogs and websites. The distance reflected the nature of this global product and the loss of information on its long journey from South to North. One common theme for all these roasters was to show their visits and educate audience of the process and relationship they have built during their cooperation.

5.4.1 Country specific examples of Direct Trade: The Coffee Collective in Kieni, Kenya.

From the previous webpage description, the coffee collective provides even more detailed account of Kieni, Kenya on their blog for eager readers. The roaster has been working directly with farmers from Kieni for more than 7 years now from 2010. As with what we have seen before, in the blog there is photos showing the facilities on the farm and farmers drying the coffee beans under the sun. What is important here is the story that they tell to introduce readers into their story and relationship. In the first section, the author started with historical background of Kenya, and how coffee was brought to Kenyan high ground where distinctive red soil contrast with lush green forest covers the whole fertile area. It all started at the end of 19th century, with the establishment of British East African Protectorate in 1895 after Berlin Conference. After the completion of railways on Kenyan high ground, the coffee, tobacco and tea plantation began their massive transformation process of the land and the people. The introduction of coffee production by the British authority, plant the seed of what would become one of the most delicious coffee from Africa, rivaled only by Ethiopia: its biological origin. However, the plantation and single crop cultivation had serious negative impact on the land such as soil erosion and diseases (Thomsen, 2017). Building on the environmental challenge and historical roots, the story turns to the details of their cooperation and the past harvest. One of the common theme as we mentioned before was the portrayal of professionalism of coffee farmers. In the past harvests, Kenya faced serious drought and it has negative impact on its soil and plant health. In order to keep
the quality as good as before, they encouraged all the 900 cooperative members to pick the ripest berries only which would lead to better taste of coffee and ultimately better salary as well. Afterwards, the story followed up with careful description of the whole process of making coffee cherries into coffee beans that is ready to be export. The representation of the coffee farmers gave the reader an impression that they are professionals and worth the price they are paid.

“It demands experienced knowledgeable people such as Josphat and Charles to run a wet mill like Kieni factory, their attention to every detail is remarkable. The way they oversee the process all the way from red ripe coffee cherry to dry green bean, is what makes coffee from Kieni remarkably tasty.”(Thomsen, 2017)

The story ended with a reminder that even though the British brought coffee to Kenya over 100 years ago, Kenyans were for a long time forbidden to drink and that was why up until now most them still prefer their black breakfast tea over coffee. Nowadays, things have changed from Colonial times, the farmers now owns the land and oversees the process themselves but they still depend on the rest of the world to buy their coffee, not at any price but the price faithfully reflect the quality. The story ended with a reiteration and reasoning for direct trade.

“In order to produce great coffee they need to be paid a higher price according to quality and not according to the marked price. This way they get the means to keep producing high quality coffee in a way that is sustainable for their livelihood.”(Thomsen, 2017)

5.4.2Country specific examples of Direct Trade: Tim Wendelboe in Finca Tamana, Columbia.

Starting from 2012, Norwegian roaster Tim Wendelboe has been collaborating with Finca Tamana at Columbia in various aspects. Compare to the previous Kenyan case, the main focus here is on the collaborations of how to improve quality and various experimentation. It emphasizes more on the process of making better quality coffee, for example, investments for facilities and infrastructures at the farm. One way of doing so, on the fifth anniversary in 2012,
they decided that on the day all the costumers who comes to the shop, could pay at whatever price they want and have as much coffee as they like, all of the money would later be used to buy facilities for Finca Tamana to improve and maintain production quality. (Wendelboe, 2013) Here similar characteristics of storytelling can be found as well, the use of images, quality statement, transparency and connections. The same as the coffee collective’s website, all the previous visits could be found on Tim Wendelboe’s website. Uniquely in this case, there are more aspects concerning the technical processes and different improvements done for quality control. However, it follows the same modus operandi of transparency to the extent that the price and quality should be a positive correlation and information about it should be open. This is one of the message being disseminated to the audience through its journals. For example, such reasoning could be found in quote like this one:

“Although our USD 4 per lb (453g) FOB price seems like a great price for coffee in Colombia, it is not necessarily a fantastic price for Don Elias, as the way he produces his coffee now is a lot more expensive than what is normal in Colombia. I have therefore decided we need to review the price with him and make sure we pay a price that is more sustainable. In other words, since we demand better quality, we better pay for it as well.” (Wendelboe, 2013)

It is clear that quality and process is inseparable, quality meaning better tastes in the cup and the process meaning the reasons for such quality. The important thing here is not just technical details of the process but also how the price was negotiated, because it revealed that the concern here is not about business and cost-efficient, rather, it’s about the relationship that has formed due to the production of coffee, and also the sustainability of it.

5.4.3 Country specific examples of Direct Trade: Kaffa Roastery in El Molino, Columbia.

In the final and the third country specific examples, I will focus on the Finnish company Kaffa Roastery who is one of the first Finnish companies to focus and introduce specialty coffee to Finland. In this part, I will make use of the journal they publish about their visit to one of their Kaffa Handshake farms in Colombia.
The journal is filled with photos showing the hill where the coffee was grown, like most of coffee bean belt, ideal condition for coffee is moderate amount of sunlight and high enough elevation from sea-level. In the figure below shows the surrounding area and it uses similar way to previous examples of immersing readers in galleries of photos.

In this journal, it introduced to its reader that this is a small farm owned by the same family and given its limited infrastructure that their ability to already produce better quality coffee compared to the rest of the region shows the great potentials it has. One of the key point from here was that they promised to invest into its facility in order to improve overall quality. This resonates with the business ethics they are after that is creating lasting relationship with farmers and visits them regularly. (Blomqvist, 2017) In the journal, it says they will invest the farm to buy better drying beds so in the long run they will be able to produce higher quality coffee with an increase in total crop. Followed with a description of the remoteness of the farm and flavor notes that even use phrases like “Taste the rainbow.” (Akins, 2017a)

Overall similar to the previous journals, it is telling a story that portrays the coffee origins in a certain fashion. For these journals, it is not only about what
goes behind each high quality specialty coffee but also the connection that was built on it. As one of the interviewee told me:

“Interviewer: So, it's not just about the quality, there are more concerns behind it.

S: Yes, it's not just about the quality, it's very important the taste, but it's also important in a way, the quality of life.” (S, Personal interview, March 9, 2018.)

At the final part of this analysis of website materials, I would like to recap the discussion previously and formulate some other analysis. As it was mentioned before, three concepts based on their narrative structure came to the forefront of this analysis. The representation in their storytelling consists of quality statement, portrayal of professionalism and connections. Before we move into closer to inspect all three of these points, it is crucial to remember they are all closely interconnected which legitimized each other’s claim and to ultimately justify their business model: direct trade.

5.4.4 Recount of Narrative Structures Identified in the Study

Quality statement is closely related to the nature of specialty coffee being an “affordable luxury” as one interviewee puts it, this is their way to qualify their coffee to potential consumers. The language they use whether its flavor description or technical details are by no means easily accessible to all, in another words, it can be accessible only for those with acquired taste. This is also a display of distinction in sociological terms which implicitly talks to specific type of audience on its website. At the same time, the use of such language present themselves to be professionals and this will lead to my second point. The portrayal of professionalism manifests itself in the way they talked about quality of their coffee and the processes behind it. As we have seen in the previous analysis on their journals of their trips to coffee farms, they put serious amount of attentions on technical details of coffee processing. The micro-climate, facilities, machines and coffee varieties all of these points of discussion help to portray these coffee roasters and companies as professionals. On the other hand, this framing also extends to the farmers by looking into how they grow coffee exactly on the ground. Also, recounting the past improvements
made together during their years of cooperation also portrays coffee farmers as diligent, responsible professionals. This framing of both sides of coffee production chain will aptly lead to the final point: connections. The connection comes from the fact that the global nature of coffee has to travel in order to be at consumers’ cups, also against the other market practices that neither value quality nor display the process of growing coffee. By telling the story of this global journey and the process of growing high quality specialty coffee, this effectively connects the both ends of coffee production chain. These specialty coffee professionals make use of their position which plays two roles at the same time, they are consumers to the coffee farmers but also suppliers to the end consumers. Because of this particular position, they are able to representing what was usually lost in traditional mass produce approach: the information at the origins. It’s not the same as in typical fair trade discourse that focus on trade justice, rather, it also values the quality of coffee itself. Thus, it is a meaning giving process that shed new light on one of the oldest global production chain. These three points combined together justify their claim to direct trade and also legitimize itself in front of wider audience.

5.5 What is so special about specialty coffee?: Discussion on Theoretical Implications.

In the last section of this chapter, I would bring in the insights provided by different theories in order to understand more thoroughly about the findings and its larger implications. I would start the discussion with concepts from sociological studies, and followed by concepts and analytical tools from political science and political economy.

5.5.1 Distinction, Tastes and Cultural capital.

After previous discussion on narrative structures and thick description of the field, it is important to put them into the lens of theoretical resources this research draw inspirations from. This research has inspirations from different schools of thought, I will start with sociological concepts of distinction, tastes and cultural capital. The field of specialty coffee community as we have seen in this research is filled with discourses, with special attentions pays to the knowledge and language of tastes. The tastes in here has two meanings first it literally means the flavor notes from coffee itself but also the common language
like the standardized coffee flavor wheel. This knowledge serves as the base of judgement for distinguishing between good and bad coffee. The knowledge can also be seen as a form of cultural capital which serves as a barrier for anyone wishes to enter this field. In turn, the accumulated cultural capital is necessary for acquiring such taste then it serves as the collective demonstration of exclusiveness and distinction (Zukin, 2011, p.105). This collective demonstration can be seen in events like cupping where tastes, cultural capital and distinction all been put into use. This also effectively help to build the sense of community and sociability which supports the conclusion reached by previous researches on online specialty coffee discussion forum (Manzo, 2010 ; 2014)(Liu, 2016). As was discovered before by (Manzo, 2010) in his research on coffee enthusiasts and hobbyists, this acquired taste has positive and negative effect on sociability which means people who shared the same interests would be able to meet new people and socialize , on the other hand, it could also draw criticism from others who don’t understand such taste. The similar pattern could be observed in this research on professionals as well, their appreciation of taste enables them to have stronger opinions on choices of food or drink. It also serves as a standard to tell good from bad which in turn influenced their consumption habits. For example, when asked how they would explain specialty coffee, wine is the reoccurring analogy that they used to help people make sense of specialty coffee. The importance of knowledge in sustaining and gaining access to such taste effectively creates distinction which was observed in (Manzo, 2010) as well. Only by learning or in sociological sense accumulating cultural capital, then it’s possible to fully enjoy and access to specialty coffee.

5.5.2 Representation, Politicization, Moral Economy and Globalization.

Secondly, they also paid attentions to the process which makes “good” tastes possible and visible. This process means how the coffee was produced and in what conditions. They regularly point out to me that without the dedication paid by the coffee growers, it’s impossible to have coffee with good tastes. With events and story-telling on their websites, they are engaging in meaning building process which resonates with politicking and politicization (Palonen, 2003). It’s a process which challenges established practices like fair trade by
bringing concerns for tastes and compensation paid back to farmers for such tastes. Previous studies on consumer activism like fair trade picked out an important disparity of representation, that is:

“Western consumers being stitched together with place-specific producers in developing-world contexts. These producers will often be personified in packaging and advertising, whereas consumers are faceless and placeless, an amorphous group somehow susceptible to the commodification of moral betterment.” (Barnett et al., 2011)

What is unique in the case study of specialty coffee of this research is that there is a strong emphasis on production quality and joint effort to improve. It’s one of the characteristics in their representation of understanding and representing their trade relation which was called direct trade.

It’s opening up the field of coffee trade by proposing a new kind of trade relationship which rewards coffee farmers according to the quality of their products but also advocating for closer partnership between the two sides. This also resonates with the previous discussion by Young who points put the political responsibility in the age of globalization should not be confined to the boundary of nation-state (Young, 2003). Instead, we should recognize our economic activities are increasingly operated on a global stage and more often than not have global consequences.

Lastly, connections that direct trade model wants to build are about alternative understanding of globalization and global coffee supply. This is achieved by display of information and engaged in a way also empowers the coffee growers by collaborating and knowledge sharing. It shares concerns with trade justice as fair trade movement did, however, direct trade aims to challenge the notion of fair compensation by adding the variable of tastes into the equation. Different elements were used to articulate this connection into existence, thus, effectively gave symbolic meanings to specialty coffee. It also further supports the notion of moral economy that economic activities are not self-contain field of operation instead they operate within the society where other concerns such as ethical, political and environmental concerns should also be taken into account (Hossain & Kalita, 2014) (Arnold, 2001)(Mau, 2011).
Similar processes can be seen in previous studies on rice and anti-globalization movement in Taiwan (Lii, 2017) or in the case study of localized food consumption movement in Spain (Papaoikonomou & Ginieis, 2017). The process resonates with what Disch discussed on representation (Disch, 2011) that representation is not a self-evident process but must be built upon narratives. The events, visual story-telling and portrayal of professionalism are all elements of direct trade which serves as structure of narratives that make politicization possible. The current research also resonates with previous studies emphasizing on the importance of imagining an alternative globalization (Clarke, 2008)(Massey, 2006). In other words, this research seeks to contribute to the discussion by presenting the endeavors by people who are connected by the global journey of coffee in consuming countries and producing countries.
6. Conclusions

In the last chapter of this inquiry into specialty coffee industry in Helsinki and broader Nordic context, I would like to divide this chapter into parts of different focuses, first with a recap of our previous discussion and follow by comments for future research and more broadly on the implications of current consumer society.

6.1 Specialty Coffee then and now: a Recap on Previous Discussion.

From the beginning, this inquiry aims to understand a unique phenomenon took place in coffee industry on a global scale, which is a new trend both emphasize on coffee’s untapped potentials of flavors and the new way of coffee trade with ethical concerns in mind. Coffee shares similar patterns of trends in other consumer products, the phenomenon we are focusing right now could be called third wave coffee or specialty coffee, for the sake of clarity I choose to settle on specialty coffee to refer to this phenomenon, which has a common industrial definition and focuses more on its flavor attributes. However, for some these two words sometimes were used interchangeably. Coffee has a long history tied closely to the development of globalization and colonialism, and this has been the background context in order to understand the specialty coffee market and the direct trade model they are doing. It’s a combination of two trends in the recent development of coffee market, first is fair trade movement which was a response to the coffee commodity price downfall in the 90s and early 2000s and also broader consumer activism in other areas of society, second, it was also influenced by the stratification of coffee market, from a mass production oriented market towards a fragmented market with segments cater to different audience separated by tastes. With these two developments happened about the same period, the specialty coffee and its direct trade ethics entered the scene with its ambition to offer a cup of coffee that is tasty, fair and direct at the same time. Thanks to the global expansion of brands like Starbucks, the specialty coffee trend which was originated in United States (Specialty Coffee Association of America, 2009), is now effectively a global consuming trend. With this historical background in mind, this research puts its focus on the Helsinki specialty coffee community and professionals. By employing interviews and
content analysis, it seeks to answer questions like: how do these professionals understand direct trade and their reflections of it? How did the taste and distinction manifest itself in practice? Finally, how do they tell the story of specialty coffee and direct trade, what kind of representation are used to bridge the gap between the two ends of coffee production chain?

In order to answer these questions, participatory observations were used in various events within the community, individual interviews with eight different professionals with 3 to 5 years of experiences, and with content analysis from websites. What this research discovered is that many of the interviewees do believe the importance of direct trade ethics for their professional career, however, this doesn’t mean they do so without any reflections or doubts. For example, the most common one is the difficulty to explain why they are different than fair trade to consumers: they value tastes and more importantly willing to help farms to improve while fair trade focuses only on paying fair compensation to the farmers without concerns for tastes. On one hand, they recognized the fact that they are dependent on consumers’ continuous support but on the other, they also admit that it's the taste of coffee which is not for everyone as one interviewee described. So, in light of overcoming such obstacles, events such as meet the farmers were organized and opened to public in order to educate participants, internet publications was also used for the same purpose. In this research, both of these channels of communication were used for analysis. In two of the meet the farmers events, similar patterns of presentation could be observed, a cupping part which allowed participants to taste the coffee for themselves and followed with talks given by the farmers themselves. Events like this builds a connection between quality and process i.e. the quality in the cup comes from the process behind it and taking care of the process reinforce the final result in the cup. Similar connection can be seen in the representation on their website materials. In the three journals to the origins by three different Nordic roasters that were analyzed in this research, three characteristics were identified: quality statement, portrayal of professionalism and connections. It’s a representation that gives meaning to specialty coffee and by doing so they also broaden its narrower industrial definition which only define it according to objectively evaluated flavor attributes. By telling the stories of their visit to coffee
farms, they portrayed coffee farmers as professionals and extensively describing the flavorful outcomes thanks to their hard work. It is employing the same logic of quality and process especially in all of these cases they claimed to be engage in direct trade with coffee farms. Ultimately, it is achieving the result of bridging the gap between the producing side and consuming side by representation and story-telling. For the readers, they would receive an image of these coffee professionals devote themselves with coffee farmers to deliver the delicious cup of coffee into their hands.

6.2. Theoretical discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Characteristics of Language</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Theoretical discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality statement</td>
<td>Flavor descriptions of coffee.</td>
<td>Employment of professional terminology such as coffee varieties, flavor notes and processing methods.</td>
<td>Indication of quality and distinction based on its flavor attributes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrayal of professionalism</td>
<td>Introducing coffee farmers as hard-working professionals.</td>
<td>Hard working in condition of hardship like plant diseases or natural disaster.</td>
<td>Presenting the two sides as equal partners in producing tasty specialty coffee. Transparency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Narrative structures and theoretical implications.

In order to convey my previous discussion on theoretical implications clearly, I draw the table above to further demonstrate my points. The key contribution of this thesis is to employ existing theories to bring insights to this new phenomenon which only receives minimal academic attentions. As is
demonstrated about, this field is filled with symbolic meanings worth further research and this master thesis is only initial attempt to do so. As was discussed in previous chapter, thanks to the insights from different disciplines and concepts, I was able to formulate a broader understanding and position this research in larger academic discussion.

6.3 Possibilities for future research

This research due to the scope as a masters’ thesis still has some questions left unanswered. For example, in terms of time frame, it would be an illuminating study to focus on few direct trade examples, and track how this trade model changes the farming community after years of cooperation. It would be an important research which could further prove or disapprove the effectiveness of this model and this is the question which this thesis fail to answer. On the other hand, this field could potentially be understood in the lens of latest development of consumer society, that is, it’s increasingly more so that our consumption choices become elements of our identity, our sense of self is built upon according to our consuming habits, I believe specialty coffee will be a telling example of such development and possibly contribute to the discussion of pleasure seeking, individualistic consuming subject. Even though direct trade model is a global trade model, it would also be illuminating to compare different companies based in different countries and to see if their practices and understandings of direct trade differ. Lastly, in terms of research limitation, this thesis would be able to bring more insights if the author have enough time to interview more people and also overcome the language barrier.
References:


Coffeelands Staff. (2014). The market may be the most important factor at origin. | Coffeelands. Retrieved March 14, 2018, from https://coffeelands.crs.org/2014/04/405-its-the-market-stupid/


Appendix 1

Interview guide:

Definition of specialty coffee

(1) To start with, can you tell me how long have you been working in coffee? What was your past education, experience before coffee?

(2) How did you start drinking coffee?

(3) How about third wave coffee? When, where, first cup?

(4) How would you explain third wave coffee to people who don't know? How about the knowledge behind it?

(5) How would you define what is third wave coffee? What are the composing elements? Comparing to other coffee business?

Direct trade and business

(6) Is direct trade an important part of third wave coffee? What is your definition of direct trade?

(7) Do you think there is any confusion on what direct trade is and how it should be done?

(8) Do you think there is any connection between coffee quality and trade relationship?

(9) How important is direct trade for your career in coffee and business in general? And to customers?

(10) What are the differences between fair trade and direct trade, is it important for your business concerns? Have you been to any coffee farms before?

(11) Do you think it is a sustainable model? For the specialty coffee companies and for coffee farmers? What are the challenges?

Coffee knowledge

(12) Have you attend any coffee related events? What are they?
(13) Have you organized any coffee event for regular customers before? Do they have a chance to learn more about the coffee itself?

(14) How do you explain the taste profile to your customers?

Personal coffee taste

(15) What kind of coffee media do you use? How do you learn about new coffee equipment or trends?

(16) How do you shop for coffee? What are your criteria?

(17) Is there any coffee shop you avoid? And why?

(18) Do you have favorite coffee shop in Helsinki and why? Do you have any favorite book or coffee celebrity?

(19) Has your taste of coffee changed over the years? If so, how? What are the reasons?
Appendix 2:

All interview were done by author and used in-depth, open-ended interview method, all interviewees were given pseudonym.

Personal interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Time of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jarno, Mikkonen</td>
<td>Barista/Finnish Barista Champion/Competition Judge</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>December 5, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia, Giddens</td>
<td>Barista</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>March 28, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mike, Stern</td>
<td>Green Coffee Sourcing</td>
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<td>March 7, 2018</td>
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<td>March 9, 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandra, Ikonen</td>
<td>Barista/Bar Manager</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>February 21, 2018</td>
</tr>
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</table>