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The Value of Genres for Uncovering Counter-Hegemonic Voices in North-South Relations: Social Representations of Artisans in a Burkinabe-Slovenian Fairtrade Partnership

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ABSTRACT

A critical approach to social representations is particularly relevant in North-South relations as hegemonic representations often reproduce their dominating structures. In this article, I explore potentials for challenging such power inequalities. I argue that the context of fairtrade partnerships can open a space for articulating counter-hegemonic representations of Southern actors. I investigate hegemonic and counter-hegemonic representations of artisans within a Burkinabe-Slovenian fairtrade partnership and trace different voices representing the artisans through an ethnographic approach that integrates diverse methodological genres. After mapping statements about the artisans by different actors in these genres, I analyse the artisans' portrayal between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic representations with regard to the labour division, dependencies and valuation of their craft in the partnership. These findings suggest that even though actors in the fairtrade partnership reproduce hegemonic representations in some genres, they also challenge them and provide counter-hegemonic alternatives in others.

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Social representations play an important role in reproducing power inequalities in North-South relations. In the present article, I pursue a critical approach by focussing on processes that disrupt such inequality-consolidating social representations. I investigate how participants in connections between Global North and Global South[1] – such as tourism, trade relations, or development cooperation – construct social representations of their Southern members. Therefore, I follow a trace emerging from Caroline Howarth's research on school exclusion. She suggests that alternative contexts such as Black supplementary schools foster resistance to stigmatising representations of Black pupils (Howarth, 2004: 369). The fairtrade movement presents one possibility for such an alternative context in North-South relations. Its adherents claim to promote more equality for and recognition of Southern actors (Wilson & Jackson, 2016: 14). Research in this field, however, indicates that hegemonic patterns continue as social representations limit Southern fairtrade producers to their role as

1. producers without a possibility to become consumers;
2. passive and dependent on charitable fairtrade organisations and consumers; and
3. 'traditional'[2] exotic producers, working with simple modes of production in far-off rural regions (Adams & Raisborough, 2011; Kiesel, 2013; Lyon, 2006; Mahoney, 2012; Marston, 2013; Wilson & Jackson, 2016; Zick Varul, 2008).

Thereby, social representations of fairtrade producers employ a "commodification of difference" between Southern and Northern actors (Lyon, 2006: 457). Less frequently, research shows potentials for counter-hegemonic representations portraying producers as entrepreneurial subjects embedded in transnational commercial networks. Such representations question aforementioned inequalities by implicating similarities between Northern and Southern actors

[1] The designations Global South/ North describe socio-economically and politically disadvantaged/ privileged positions in the global system, avoiding normative connotations such as 'developing countries' or the 'Third World' (Bendix et al., 2012: 4).

[2] I put these terms in quotation marks as "current discourses frequently oppose Western 'modernity' with 'traditional' African cultures or practices – where 'traditional' is a more acceptable euphemism for 'primitive'", thus implying cultural inferiority (Creary, 2012: 2).

(Adams & Raisborough, 2011; Childs, 2014; Leissle, 2012; Wilson & Jackson, 2016). These tendencies, however, mainly appear in studies beyond the advertising level that include Southern (producer) voices. With the present article, I extend this research body and argue that the context of fairtrade partnerships can challenge the above mentioned hegemonic representations if one considers the multiple voices representing fairtrade producers. I focus on social representations of local artisans in a specific Burkinabe-Slovenian fairtrade partnership. Starting from a theoretical approach informed by social representations theory and critical discourse studies, I explore which genres different actors use in which way to construct social representations of the artisans. Thereby, I assess the potentials of counter-hegemonic social representations in fairtrade partnerships and North-South relations more generally.

A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON HEGEMONIC REPRESENTATIONS IN NORTH-SOUTH-RELATIONS

To identify counter-hegemonic representations in North-South relations, I incorporated insights from social representations theory (SRT) and critical discourse studies (CDS).

SRT explains how social groups construct meanings. Its founder Serge Moscovici defines social representation as "a system of values, ideas and practices" social actors use to interpret their world and exchange with members of their group (Moscovici 1976 in Moscovici, 2001: 12). Social representations, thus, enable people to construct meanings by "familiarizing the unfamiliar" (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005: 434). Social groups collaboratively construct social representations through verbal and behavioural actions that are based on and produce shared meanings (Moscovici, 2001: 30ff; Wagner et al., 1999: 96).

As such groups incorporate people with heterogeneous worldviews, they construct multiple social representations (Howarth, 2006: 68). Moscovici introduced the terms "conflict and cooperation" to describe the tensions arising from this constellation (Moscovici & Marková, 1998: 377). Two central concerns in SRT are, thus, the negotiation of meanings (Howarth, 2006: 71f) and – as some group members assert their constructions and exclude others' – related power inequalities (Moscovici & Marková, 1998: 403). When many social groups accept certain representations throughout time and, thereby, stabilise the existing social order, Howarth speaks of

hegemonic representations. They, in turn, contrast with oppositional – or, as I call them, counter-hegemonic – representations (Howarth, 2006: 79; 2014: 1.51)[3]. Actively using social representations, thus, facilitates (re-)negotiating hegemonic representations (Howarth, 2004: 370; 2006: 77; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005: 440). Given these potentials, Howarth calls for a more critical, transformative and multi-perspective approach in studying social representations (Howarth, 2014: 1.63). The present article contributes to this call by exploring hegemonic and counter-hegemonic elements in social representations of Southern actors in North-South relations.

This approach can benefit from CDS that "are typically interested in the way discourse (re)produces social *domination*, that is, the *power abuse* of one group over others, and how dominated groups may discursively *resist* such abuse" (Van Dijk, 2008: 63, original emphasis). CDS scholars define discourse as a social practice influenced by power structures due to its dialectical relationship with socio-material realities (Wodak & Meyer, 2010: 5f)[4]. With this focus on the ways in which different actors construct and reproduce representations for certain outcomes, CDS add an action-orientation to SRT (Gibson, 2015: 214f,217; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005: 448). For instance, hegemony in CDS explains how dominating groups use socio-economic dependencies and discursive domination to secure their dominant status through a social consensus about their opinions, while excluding alternative ones (Wodak & Meyer, 2010: 8). However, CDS equally acknowledge that the constant encounter of diverse discourses in our globalised societies facilitate resistance (Van Dijk, 2008: 15). In this article, I explore such possibilities, i.e. the diverse discourses concurring within a fairtrade partnership. I investigate the different genres, i.e. the "[u]se of language associated with a particular social activity" (Fairclough, 2010: 96) different actors employed throughout the research to construct social representations of Southern artisans in, for instance, narrative interviews or PR material. I argue that not only the position of a specific actor in the fairtrade partnership influences the (counter-)hegemonic nature of social representations, but also the channel through which s/he voices them.

[3] This is also related to Moscovici's trisection of hegemonic, emancipative and polemical representations (see Moscovici, 1988). Counter-hegemonic representations embrace the complementary experience sharing of emancipative representations. At the same time, they acknowledge social conflicts, but in contrast to the antagonistic relations at the core of polemical representations, they emphasise the possibility to use different (counter-)hegemonic representations in different situations.

[4] In that, CDS conceptualise discourses beyond the purely linguistic level that Moscovici contrasts with the manifold social practices imbued in social representations (Moscovici, 1985: 92 in Voelklein & Howarth, 2005: 443f). This, in turn, enhances their compatibility with SRT.

Moreover, SRT scholars emphasise that actors construct social representations by drawing on diverse socio-cultural resources, i.e. "sedimentations" of cultural topics (Gibson, 2015: 210,212) linked through "networks of meanings" (Howarth, 2014: 1.51). As Northern fairtrade actors often employ "familiar discourses of 'self' and 'other'" (Lyon, 2006: 457), contextualising representations is indispensible: Whereas Leissle (2012), for instance, perceives the representations of female cocoa farmers in the *Divine Chocolate* campaign as a cosmopolitan alternative to traditionalising portrayals, Zick Varul (2008) criticises the same campaign for evoking erotic colonial thought structures. Considering the socio-cultural foundations of representations is, thus, crucial for transparently evaluating their potential meanings. To detect such foundations, I explore representational archives, i.e. socio-cultural resources different actors refer to when representing Southern artisans.

Theoretical insights from SRT and CDS, thus, informed the aims of this article in mainly two ways:

1. By relating the artisans' representations to different representational archives – e.g. development cooperation, tourism, or the arts and handicraft market –, I unveil how social representations reify and contest hegemonic knowledge systems (see Deaux & Philogène, 2001: 6; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005: 446).
2. I include voices of the artisans, NGO members, and myself appearing in different genres to capture how they contribute to social representations of the artisans (see Wagner et al., 1999: 101).

This combination is my starting point for tracing hegemonic and counter-hegemonic moments in social representations (see Gibson, 2015: 217; Howarth, 2004: 371; 2006: 67ff).

RESEARCHING SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF ARTISANS IN THE NYÒGÒNTÒN-PRIJATELJI[5] FAIRTRADE PARTNERSHIP

My ethnographic research design aimed to incorporate Southern perspectives in the representation of Southern actors, i.e. the artisans within the fairtrade partnership between the Burkinabe NGO

[5] For reasons of confidentiality, I changed the names of the NGOs, omitted specific locations, and used generalising terms for my research partners.

Nyògòntòn and the Slovenian NGO Prijatelji. After the foundation of Nyògòntòn in 2002, the NGOs launched a fairtrade project by training local women in weaving and cooperating with a group of local artists. From 2004 on, these artisans – the weavers and artists – sold their products in the Slovenian fairtrade shop GlobalenTrgovina. Over the years, a second group of weavers and artists working in further branches such as wood, bronze, and instruments joined the fairtrade project. In 2010, the NGOs launched a responsible tourism project offering tourists to join the artisans during workshops. Moreover, Nyògòntòn welcomes volunteers from European countries who, for instance, produce website texts. For my research, the field encompassed diverse actors in the fairtrade partnership that were involved in representing the artisans (see Figure 1).

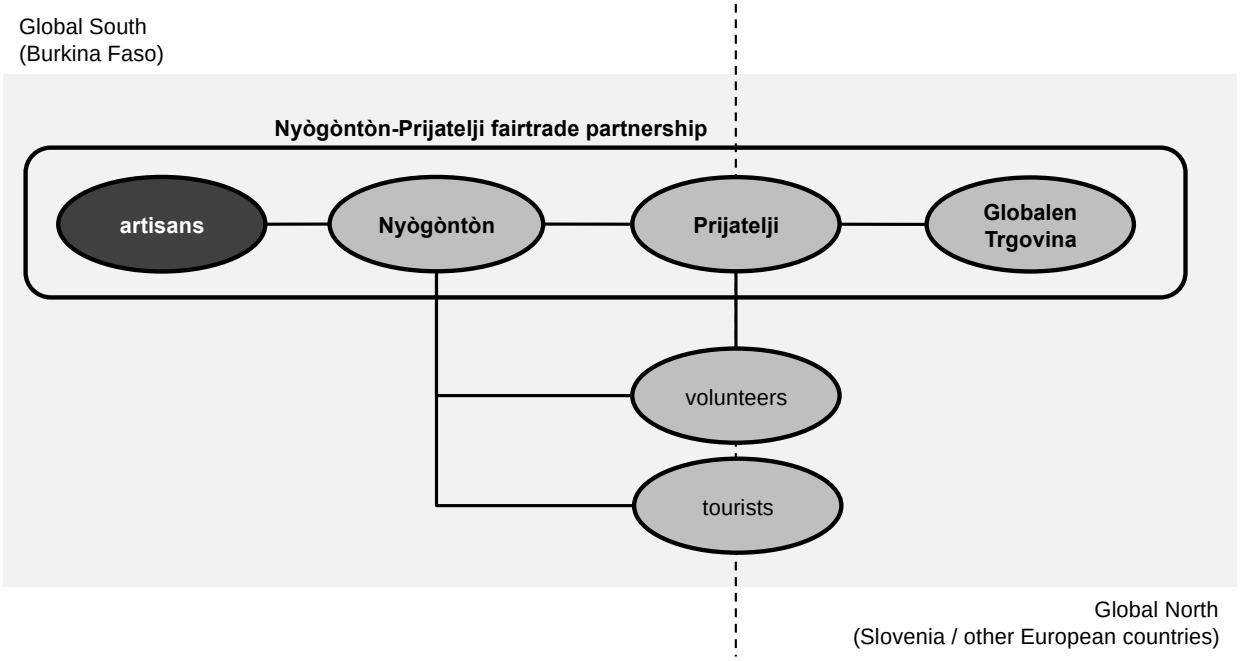

Figure 1. Actors involved in representing the artisans in the fairtrade partnership

In this setting, several constraints arose from my position as a Northern privileged researcher. Being the initiator of the research project, I experienced a "dilemma of power" (Nygreen, 2010: 18f). This influenced my interactions with the artisans, for example when they assumed me to be more knowledgeable or hoped for economic support. Moreover, the inevitable subjectivity of ethnography affected my research in two ways:

1. As I was closely involved with many artisans, I may have adopted an overly positive stand to their representations.
2. Due to my Northern socialisation, however, I am still prone to hegemonic thinking.

I addressed these constraints by systematically analysing the collected data and relating my interpretations to representational archives.

Collecting Data from Different Genres

During my research, I created opportunities for different actors[6] in the partnership to represent the artisans in different ways – the "genres" of the present article:

For three months, from September to December 2012, I conducted overt and open participant observation (see Flick, 2011: 287ff) as a volunteer at Nyògòntòn. My internship involved different tasks such as organising an exhibition with the artisans. I experienced the everyday representational practices in the partnership and many informal conversations. Moreover, I participated in the workshops the artisans normally offered to tourists. Thereby, I gained more information on the artisans' (self-)representations as producers. I documented my observations in a research diary each evening.

I furthermore drew inspiration from Participatory Action Research (PAR) that aims to take action against social problems and change unequal power relations between researchers and research subjects (Nygreen, 2010: 14). I followed Nygreen's claim that even though PAR cannot solve the power dilemmas of social research, researchers can use it for social change in addition to broader ethnographic approaches (ibid.: 28f). I took photos and recorded advertising texts with each artisan which I put on the Nyògòntòn website as an individual advertisement. During this process, I limited my input to explaining the idea of the individual advertisements, noting down the artisans' advertising texts and taking their photos as they preferred. In contrast to speaking about the artisans through my research, I, thereby, wanted to offer them a platform to consciously voice their representations.

[6] Nyògòntòn takes an ambivalent role in the North-South divide. On the one hand, Prijatelji and GlobalenTrgovina staff often equate Nyògòntòn with its artisans. On the other hand, many artisans equate Nyògòntòn with the Slovenian actors. I assume that economic interdependencies between the partners also imply discursive convergences which influence Nyògòntòn staff to construct rather hegemonic representations of the artisans.

In addition, I conducted narrative interviews with 19 artisans, two members of Nyògòntòn and two members of Prijatelji[7]: I asked the artisans about their professional history to get an idea of their self-presentation. I interviewed all artisans working in the fairtrade project at the time and selected eight interviews for the analysis. Thereby, I was following Oberhuber and Krzyzanowski (2008: 189) and their suggestion for maximal variation which allowed me to analyse the representations of artisans with very diverse experiences in the fairtrade project. Based on my experiences from participant observation, I created categories reflecting important influences on the artisans' position in the partnership (Figure 2). To reduce my personal bias in selecting the interviews for analysis, I chose the last interview I had conducted in each respective category.

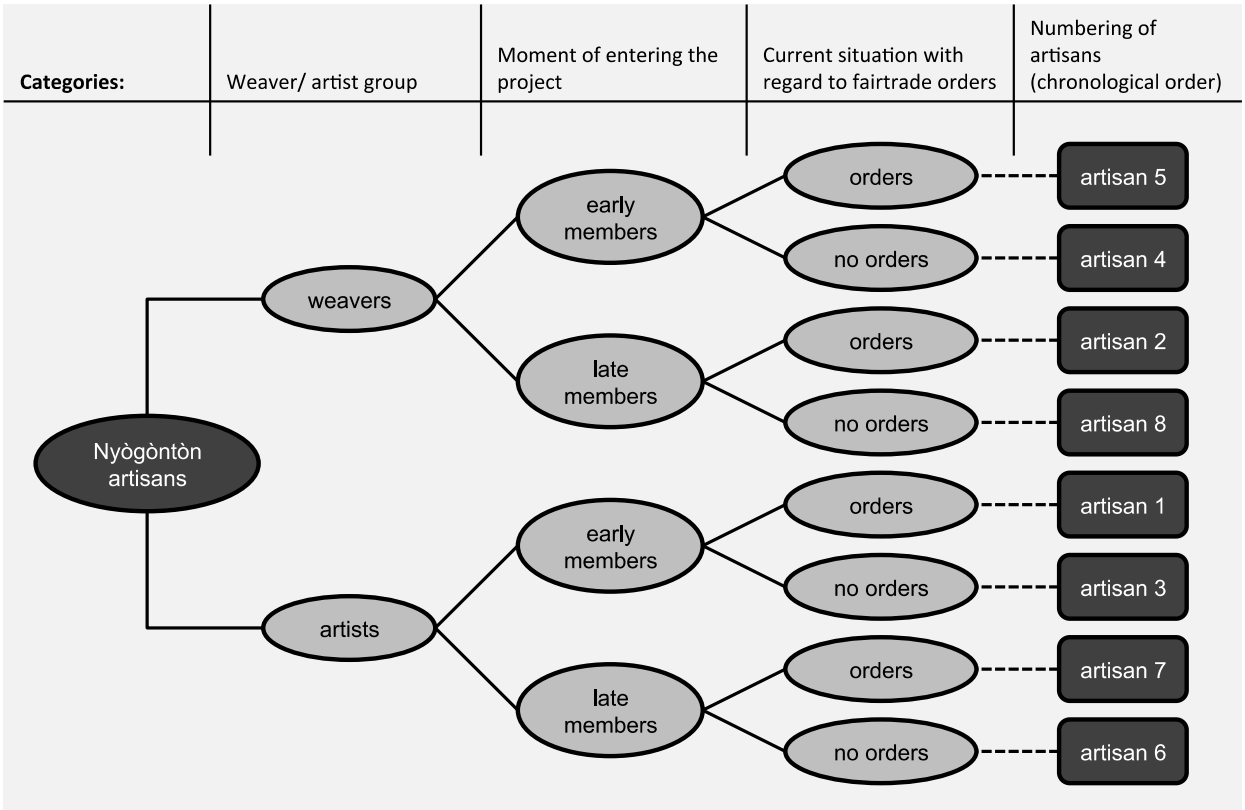

Figure 2. Categorisation of artisans to select interviews for further analysis

[7] In January 2013 I spent some days in Slovenia to conduct interviews with Prijatelji staff and visit the fairtrade shop GlobalenTrgovina. I had also asked the GlobalenTrgovina manager for an interview, but she referred me to Prijatelji.

Moreover, I interviewed the members of Nyògòntòn and Prijatelji about their experiences with the fairtrade partnership and paid special attention to the way they portrayed the artisans. I conducted the interviews in English, French or Djoula, depending on which language the respective interview partner preferred. For the present article, I translated all extracts to English.

Lastly, I selected those documents from public relations (PR) material of the NGOs and the fairtrade shop that mentioned the artisans:

- 13 pages of the websites of Nyògòntòn, Prijatelji, and GlobalenTrgovina (e.g. on fairtrade partners, products, and responsible tourism);
- The artisans' catalogue, i.e. portraits of 12 artisans on the Nyògòntòn website (a volunteer's project based on interviews with the artisans);
- Information on the artisans displayed in GlobalenTrgovina[8] (one flyer with information about fairtrade as well as necklaces and bronze sculptures; one product information sheet on leather crafts).

I considered this material important for the artisans' representations in the partnership as its public/online display indicates that NGO members and volunteers assessed it representative for the partnership.

Analysing (Counter-)Hegemonic Social Representations

To trace the (counter-)hegemonic nature of the artisans' representations, I analysed statements about the artisans voiced in these different genres: Working through the interview transcripts, research diary, individual advertisement texts and PR material sentence-by-sentence, I extracted statements about the artisans which I structured with the help of annotation tables. They consisted of one column for the representing – i.e. speaking/ writing – actor, one column for the represented artisan and one column for the statement voiced by the representing actor about the represented artisan. Producing such annotation tables for each interview, website page, research diary entry, etc. served as a preparatory step for an overview of which actors voiced which statements about which artisans in which genres. To further structure the data, I, then, identified overarching topics in these statements by open coding (see Flick, 2011: 388ff). For an integrated view of the

[8] As the information material in the shop was written in Slovene, I had it translated by a professional.

representational patterns in the respective topics, I mapped the various statements of different actors in different genres (Figure 3).

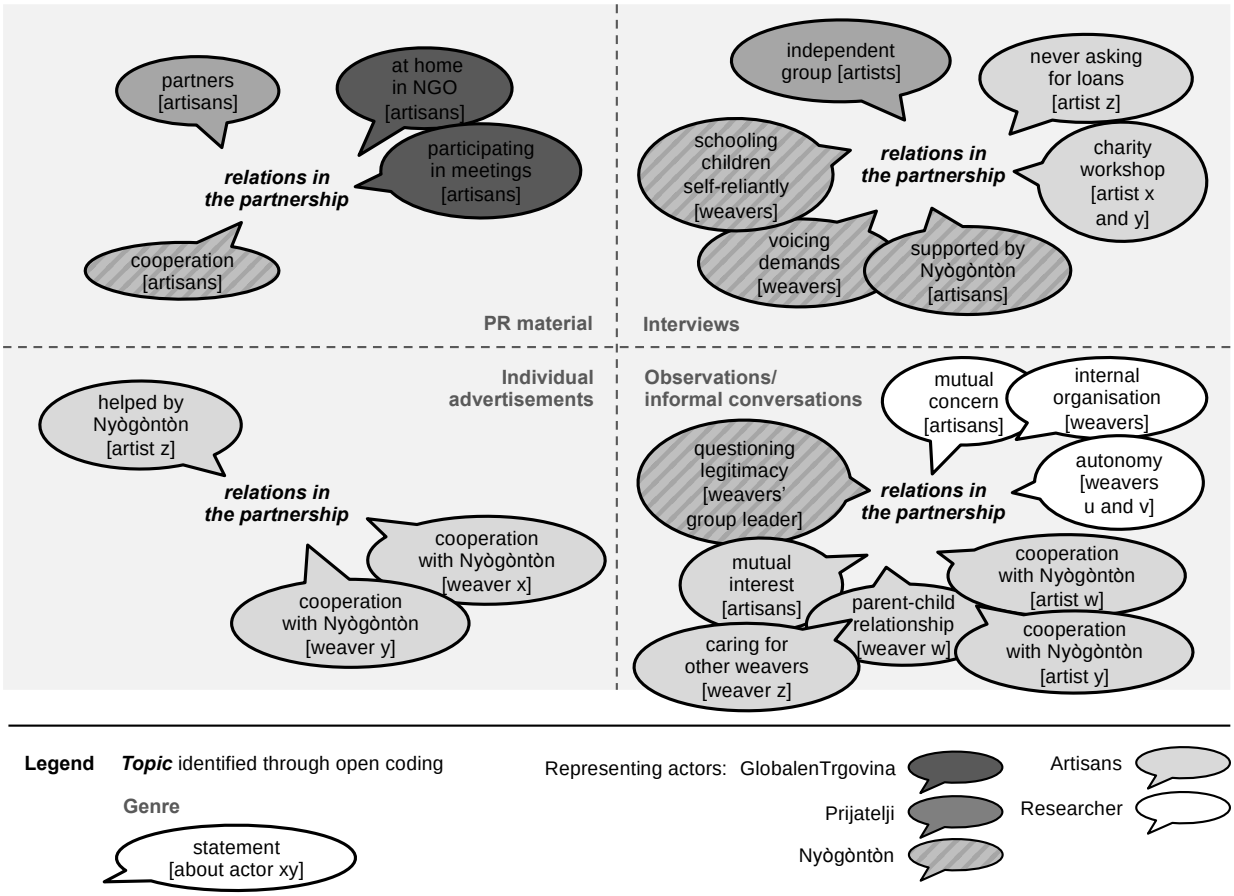

Figure 3. Exemplary mapping of statements about the artisans by different actors in different genres.

This mapping visualised which statements different actors used in which genres in relation to which topics. For interpreting these statements as (counter-)hegemonic, I integrated insights from representational archives of diverse North-South relations relevant for the present fairtrade partnership, i.e. socio-cultural resources the different actors drew on when representing the artisans. Therefore, I conducted a literature review on representations of Southern actors in the wider contexts of development cooperation, global education, tourism, volunteerism, and the arts and handicraft market. Figure 4 illustrates how these representational archives relate to different areas in the present fairtrade partnership.

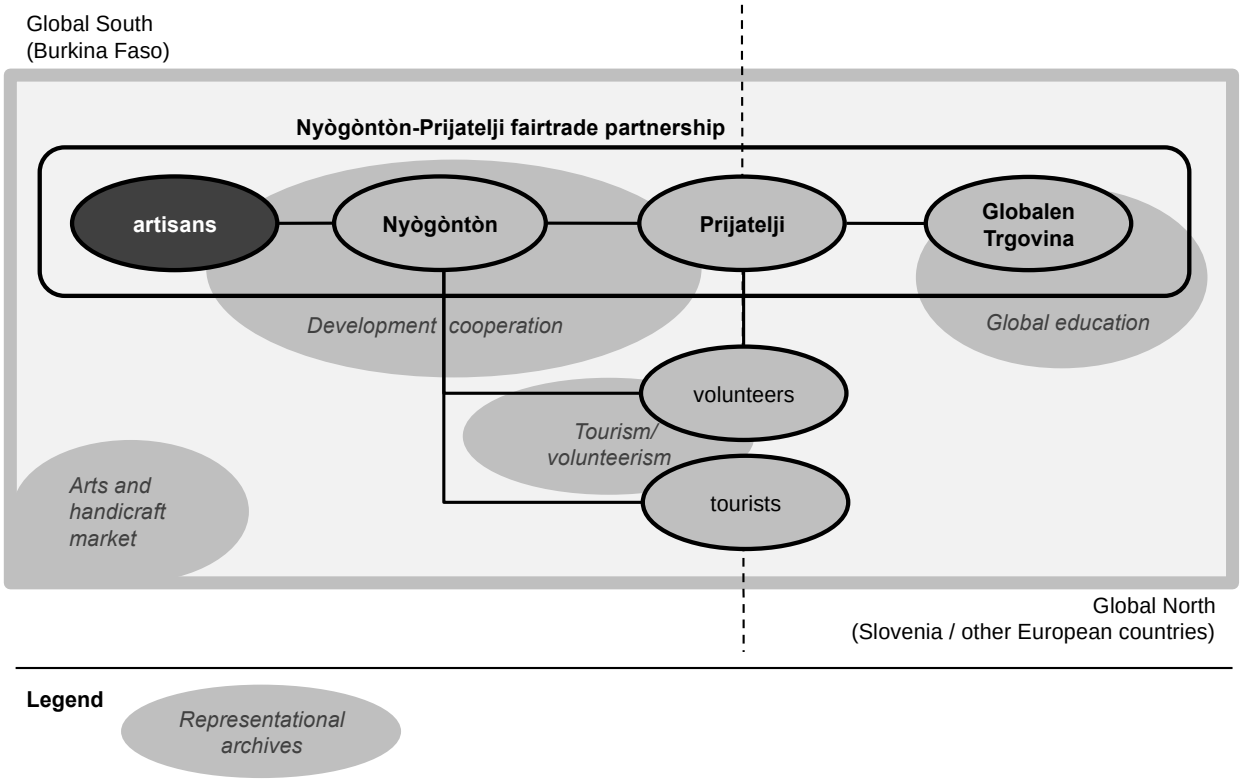

Figure 4. Archives relevant to representing the Nyògòntòn artisans.

In an iterative process, I circulated between the mapped statements and patterns discovered in the representational archives to assess the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic nature of the artisans' representations in the Nyògòntòn-Prijatelji partnership. This analytical approach unveiled genre-specific (counter-)hegemonic tendencies in the artisans' representations.

GENRE-SPECIFIC SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF ARTISANS IN THE NYÒGÒNTÒN-PRIJATELJI FAIRTRADE PARTNERSHIP

In the following, I apply the critique of fairtrade producers' representations to the Nyògòntòn-Prijatelji partnership. How do different actors negotiate hegemonic representations fixing the artisans as dependent, 'traditional' producers in different genres?

Multiple roles of the artisans

The statements by different actors in different genres demonstrated that the artisans' role in the fairtrade partnership can go far beyond one of simple producers. Especially in the PR material and the interviews, the NGOs' staff and volunteers, however, merely portrayed the artisans as Nyògòntòn's producing members and related the organising activities of the cooperation to themselves. The following extract from a flyer displayed in GlobalenTrgovina illustrates this.

> [GlobalenTrgovina] connects organizations and individuals in a partnership for planning and implementing projects which assist marginalized producers in accessing developed European markets. (...) There are currently seven producers who are working for the trade partner of the store – [Nyògòntòn]. Their products include (...) [*GlobalenTrgovina flyer*]

While those attributed functions are technically correct, they present a selective image of producing artisans in opposition to NGOs and volunteers dealing with more advanced tasks of the fairtrade work. This builds on global education archives that stabilise hegemonic narratives and power relations instead of deconstructing them (Danielzik, Kiesel, & Bendix, 2013: 45ff).

However, Northern actors also unveil discontinuities in their statements about the artisans' role in the partnership. For instance, they indicated in interviews and PR material that the artisans negotiate prices or promote fairtrade. According to the artisans' catalogue, another one is sending products and travelling to Slovenia. Such discontinuities point to a counter-discourse emerging in the development cooperation archive (Eriksson Baaz, 2005: 153ff).

The artisans themselves – during interviews, individual advertisements and informal conversations – indicated that their role is rather complex. Some, for instance, stressed that they had introduced further artisans into the fairtrade project, others emphasised their voluntary administrative functions and their involvement in exhibiting and exporting. One artist mentioned that Nyògòntòn had consulted him for design-related process innovation:

> We were doing it with plastic bags, its boss said that he did not want plastic bags (...), he wants leather. (…) They themselves, the people of [Nyògòntòn] themselves, they called me and asked me, how will we do this? [*Interview with Artisan 7 (artist, late member, orders)*]

During my observations and informal conversations, I as well noted the artisans' wide-ranging tasks in the partnership: they explored alternative products to foster fairtrade and actively engaged in preparing the exhibition we hosted during my internship. They contributed to promoting the fairtrade project by exhibiting Nyògòntòn brochures in their ateliers, working on the personal advertisements, or by helping with the publicity for the exhibition. Some artisans suggested potentials for Nyògòntòn through marketing their own work:

> He said that they had talked to [a member of Nyògòntòn] about it if they could lend money with [Nyògòntòn] and pay it back after they had sold the pieces (…). He said that it was what he understood with an association, that one would help another. So if [Nyògòntòn] gave him some money for the creations, he could sell them in the name of [Nyògòntòn]. [*Research diary, 19th November 2012*]

In addition, statements on the impact of fairtrade that I observed and the artisans voiced during, for instance, the individual advertisements, demonstrated that several weavers used their cloths themselves:

> "I became a weaver of cloth. I weave it and sell it and tie it and my children wear it as well." [*Individual advertisement*]

Hence, the artisans even become consumers, in contrast to the general trend in fairtrade of Southern producer/ Northern consumer binaries (see also Wilson & Jackson, 2016: 14-19). On a more general level, with these diverse representations of the artisans' role in the fairtrade partnership, they question hegemonic narratives that limit Southern actors to producing tasks. Thus, looking at different genres unveiled the multiple roles the artisans perform in the partnership, roles some Northern actors – e.g. those responsible for the PR material – might not even be aware of.

Activity and (inter-)dependencies

Analysing different genres also indicated heterogeneous perspectives on how different actors evaluated the dependencies in the fairtrade partnership.

Statements on relations in the partnership (see Figure 3) illustrated, on the one hand, the artisans' representations as dependent on Northern actors. On the GlobalenTrgovina website, for

example, the NGO staff stated the artisans had "a home" in Kafuli which evokes connotations of closeness, but also of a patronising parent-children relationship. The story on a flyer displayed in GlobalenTrgovina corroborates this assumption by focussing on one artisans' deficient situation before she entered the project.

> "[The artisan] never went to school and gave birth to a daughter when she was fifteen. In the beginning she made a living with making braids on the street, later she became a cleaning lady in a hotel, however she did not receive payment for her work. Under the Slovenian project of fairtrade she learned different techniques of textile dyeing and started to make scarves, covers, bags and dresses. [*GlobalenTrgovina flyer*]

Whereas this citation shows signs of activity, it suggests a dependency on the Northern actors as the artisan could not have succeeded without them. In the interview with the president of Nyògòntòn, he moreover stressed the NGO's support for the artisans. In addition, statements on the artisans' feelings voiced in interviews, the individual advertising and the websites evoke notions of dependency when the artisans are represented – or represent themselves – as thankful for the NGOs' help or happy about the presence of Northern actors.

One of the weavers explicitly named this dependency during an informal conversation after meeting a man who wanted her to come to his village to train the local women in weaving:

> I asked [the weaver] if she would do the training and she answered that it was [Nyògòntòn] who would decide this, "[Nyògòntòn] est comme notre père quoi." [Nyògòntòn is like our father.] [*Research diary, 29th September 2012*]

Actors voicing these statements draw on the development cooperation archive that represents Southern actors as passive and dependent on Northern actors, also by implying a parent-child relationship (Bendix & Danielzik, 2013: 37; Noxolo, 2006: 260ff). And even though Northern actors labelled the artisans as partners in the PR material, insights from this archive show that the partnership discourse often prolongs binary thought structures and even stabilises existing power relations (Eriksson Baaz, 2005: 147; Noxolo, 2006: 260).

On the other hand, statements in different genres stressed the artisans' agency. Especially informal conversations with the artisans and my observations on relations in the partnership

emphasised the organisation and support among the artisans which strengthens their position vis-à-vis Northern actors.

Moreover, one founder of Nyògòntòn I interviewed and myself in my observations depicted the artists as quite autonomous. And even though the weavers considered the NGOs vital for their training, when they introduced themselves for the individual advertisements, they portrayed their work as independent occupation, a group activity or a cooperation with Nyògòntòn:

> We work with [Nyògòntòn], we are weaving, traditional Burkinabe cloths. We weave ethnic clothes, cloths of the Dafi, cloths of the Mossi, we can weave all of this. We weave, we can sell it in our country, in other countries. [*Individual advertisement*]

In addition, especially the artisans themselves stressed their agency, for instance in statements about their feelings during interviews, informal conversations and collaborative projects such as the artisans' catalogue and the individual advertisements. Some portrayed themselves as active and not wanting to sit around, others emphasised their self-confidence as being proud and hopeful. With other statements in these genres, the artisans emphasised their work being crucial to maintain their families' livelihoods:

> Did you not see it? I have children, seven people. The son of my bigger brother, he came from the village to stay with me. Eight people. There is his elder brother, nine people. Me alone. I give them to [maize porridge], I give them water (…). [*Interview with Artisan 4 (weaver, early member, currently no orders)*]

Here, the artisan did not refer to the NGOs providing for the family but represented herself (alone!) as the crucial actor. Such statements refer to counter-hegemonic tendencies in the global education archive striving for more active portrayals of Southern actors (Macgilchrist & Müller, 2012: 201).

In addition, artisans' perspectives on the problems of the fairtrade project voiced during informal conversations rather point to contextual distributive issues – for instance if they lacked money and information for participating at an exhibition which could otherwise be interpreted as lacking initiative. This corresponds to an important claim for counter-hegemonic representations in all archives I explored, i.e. considering structural inequalities and the socio-political context of

Southern actors (see e.g. Bendix et al., 2012: 35f; Eriksson Baaz, 2005: 148ff; Micossé-Aikins, 2012: 153f; Torres, 2012: 321).

Moreover, in the individual advertisements and informal conversations, artisans even constructed reversed representations, e.g. by voicing a readiness to help others. Sometimes, they portrayed themselves as the ones supporting the NGOs, as in the following statement on a charity workshop two artisans arranged for some volunteers.

> It's the only workshop we have done with [Nyògòntòn] (...) He gave us only the material that we used, the costs of the material we used. Apart from that, it's done. We told ourselves, well, it's [Nyògòntòn], well he says it's [Nyògòntòn], it's for everyone. [*Interview with Artisan 1 (artist, early member, orders*)]

The artisans, thus, unveiled the actual dependency structure of fairtrade, i.e. their work and cooperation being essential for the partnership.

Such insights as well as the artisans' feelings and their everyday realities would not have been accessible in unilaterally produced genres such as PR material. Looking at the different genres, thus, showed the heterogeneous perspectives on the artisans' position in the partnership – from an official portrayal as partners and beneficiaries to more informal collaboratively constructed portrayals as active actors and important for the fairtrade project.

Artistic creativity and challenging tasks

The multiple perspectives from different genres and actors unveiled and transgressed the focus on cultural differences many fairtrade advertisements are reproached of.

On the one hand, different actors used references to the 'traditional' cultural context of the artisans, such as religious affiliations and patriarchal social structures, as well as their simple working conditions throughout all genres. However, they were especially strong in the PR material. The following extract from the artisans' catalogue describes how one artist changed from the welding he had learnt after school to bronze art.

> He returned into the family, in an atelier, to finally learn the bronze and return to his roots. [*Artisans' catalogue*]

Although Northern actors often highlight the value of the artisans' work with this sort of representations, they also limit them to one origin-related occupation which is depicted as a kind of destiny. Such portrayals introduce connotations of 'traditional' and hence backward producers – drawing on representational archives from development cooperation and global education that promote a Eurocentric development discourse and static understanding of cultures. These discourses assume a linear evolution of society, postulating hierarchical differences between Northern and Southern actors (Danielzik et al., 2013: 20f,25ff; Eriksson Baaz, 2005: 49f,110f).

In addition, in the PR material Northern actors employed exoticising representations as in the following extract from the Nyògòntòn website on responsible tourism:

> Just after you put one foot on the African ground, you observe them, contemplate them, admire them...The artisans are everywhere! (...) If you' re interested in African arts and crafts, if you are sensitive to the principles of fairtrade, if you love to create and work with your ten fingers, or if you simply wish to live an exceptional experience, then get involved (…). A unique occasion to discover and share the everyday of the artisans... [*Nyògòntòn website*]

The passage emphasises the difference between the artisans' and the tourists' daily life – a marketing strategy from tourism and volunteerism archives that objectifies Southern actors as exotic Others (Bendix et al., 2012: 32; Deyanira, 2012: 52; Snee, 2013: 149).

Such representations often pigeonhole the artisans' work into the 'traditional' handicraft niche, denying its artistic quality. The websites and interviews with NGO staff, for instance, emphasised the quality of the weavers' raw material, i.e. organic cotton, but at the same time neglected the women's creative input and even portrayed it as detrimental to their sales:

> The competition on the textile market is immense. (…) I think [one fairtrade import organisation] is doing (incredibly) well in this thing (…) they are really going into this mainstream designer type of clothes (…). And [Nyògòntòn] is not gonna able to do that. They can go into more of their, of their like, the stuff that they have from their cultural background, but then there is again the question how much you can sell of that. [*Interview with Prijatelji member 2*]

The subordination of the weavers' designs to Northern mainstream relates to hegemonic views in the global education archive, postulating that cultural differences should be managed in accordance with hegemonic power relations (Danielzik et al., 2013: 25f). Together with the aforementioned emphasis on cultural differences, these representations refer to a central dilemma African artisans face in the arts and handicraft archive: Their work is either too 'traditional' to be valuable or it is not authentic enough to fulfil expectations about African art (Micossé-Aikins, 2012: 150).

On the other hand, far more statements dealt with the high quality and challenging nature of the artisans' work. The artists stressed the passion for their work, and even referred to a kind of 'artist code' representing them as exceptionally persistent:

> But with all of this, (...) to carry on, that's an artist as well. If you don't talk, people don't know what's with you. But you have problems, but that doesn't do anything to you. You are used to it. (...) That's the strength of the artisans. Because they have nothing, but they stay who they are. [*Interview with Artisan 6 (artists, late member, currently no orders)*]

Accordingly, some changed from the term 'artisan' to 'artist' after I had introduced the former one during interviews and informal conversations. They, thus, did not refer to their role as authentic 'African' producers but to the universal artist profession. The weavers – during interviews, informal conversations and in the artisans' catalogue – mentioned their popularity with neighbours and other customers. They accentuated their passion for the craft, the creativity involved, and their constant search for new inspirations:

> Today, she is happy about her situation, she likes to create and never stops observing everything around her in order to search for new inspirations. She often calls the women she meets, looks at their clothes to take up the motives she likes. [*Artisans' catalogue*]

One told me in an informal conversation that she had even won the creativity price at the SIAO (International Crafts Exhibition at Ouagadougou) some years ago. Voicing such statements, the artisans follow a counter-hegemonic strategy in the arts and handicrafts archive to appropriate

and reverse dominant meanings, as, for example, in Winter's auto-exoticism. He illustrates how Southern actors interweave traditionalising and progressive narratives in the presentation of their products (Winter, 2013: 87f) – in this case the 'traditional' handicraft and artistic creativity.

Moreover, during the workshops, I experienced how challenging the work of the artisans can be, physically and mentally:

> He then started by working some piece of wood with a little axe and then drew some lines with chalk where I should remove the wood. Then he gave it to me and I started. He watched me some time, showed me an alternative point to start and at some point said that he had to finish displaying his works. When he came back, I had not advanced very much, so he cut a little himself, explained again and stayed next to me watching me. [*Research diary, 8th October 2012*]

With observations like this, I confirmed the working of performative authenticity, a counter-hegemonic element in the tourism archive. It suggests that the active involvement of tourists can lead to a deeper understanding of different cultures (Mkono, 2013: 185f). Appreciating the creativity and challenges involved in the artisans' work contests notions of simple 'traditional' producers and evokes similarities with sophisticated Northern workforce. This process supports tendencies in global education archives that question static binary cultures and recognise multiple belongings (Torres, 2012: 322).

Moreover, during interviews, informal conversations and in the artisans' catalogue, many artisans referred to their travelling activities and exhibitions at internationally frequented events. They, thereby, question cultural differences and suggest that encounters of Northern and Southern actors can redress them. They challenge fixed roles among Northern visiting and Southern visited actors in tourism and volunteerism archives (Deyanira, 2012: 52ff; Snee, 2013: 152). Of course, only some artisans in the partnership actually got this possibility as their travels were mostly founded by Northern actors.

The different genres unveiled individual realities, experiences and opinions by different artisans as well as my own observations. These insights question essentialising social representations of exotic Southern producers and encourage counter-hegemonic perspectives.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article explored diverse genres as a way to unveil hegemonic and counter-hegemonic representations of Southern fairtrade producers. Mapping statements about Nyògòntòn's artisans revealed that different actors created hegemonic representations of the artisans as dependent on Northern actors and limited to being 'traditional' producers. However, considering various genres and actor voices showed much more complex representations: (1) the artisans fulfil multiple roles in the fairtrade partnership; (2) they show considerable agency and are crucially important for the functioning of the partnership; (3) they master artistic creativity as well as physical and mental challenges in their work.

However, such counter-hegemonic representations mostly appeared in informal conversations and interviews with the artisans as well as in long-term collaborative projects such as the artisans' catalogue and individual advertisements. That they are rarely found in official public relations material demonstrates an important limitation for counter-hegemonic representations in fairtrade partnerships: The artisans possess only limited access to their representations, especially to those with a wide audience. In North-South contexts, considerable investment is necessary to unveil Southern voices, because writing about the artisans is much more 'effective' than to collaboratively elaborate their portrayals on site. With this control over access, the NGO staff and volunteers unwittingly still form the symbolic elites within the partnership and thereby foster hegemonic representations (see Van Dijk, 2008: 14).

Moreover, my research showed that the artisans as well employed hegemonic representations throughout the genres they have access to. Howarth suggests that different actors engage with representations according to their positions and interests (Howarth, 2014: 1.54). Hence, such contradictory portrayals also result from their context at a time of declining orders due to the financial crisis. Such precarious economic situations can, for instance lead Southern artisans to fulfil the demands for authenticity and reproduce stereotypical social representations (Karentzos, 2012: 257ff). Moreover, this economic pressure equally influences the artisans' representations by other actors as they are embedded in the broader hegemony of Eurocentrism and neoliberalism. These ideological structures pressure Northern actors to, for instance, promote 'exotic' artisans in order to please European consumers. This highlights the discursive and material constraints to Southern agency that limit the impact of counter-hegemonic representations (Kapoor, 2008: 149).

However, these limitations can also become a starting point for change. Fairtrade partnerships can indeed contribute to counter-hegemonic representations by facilitating personal encounters, mutual information and discussions between Northern and Southern actors. It is crucial to use these possibilities to promote the artisans' access to genres with wider audiences. Moreover, actors in fairtrade and North-South relations more generally need to combine this promotion of counter-hegemonic representations with awareness raising and political action to transform underlying hegemonic representational archives and their discriminating implications in North-South relations. For the goal remains the same: People from the Global South need to be seen as close enough, as human enough, so that opposing their exploitation becomes an urgent social justice issue for people in the Global North.

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