

OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE
AT VANDERBILT

COFFEE, GLOBALIZATION, AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT

November 8, 2021, 1:30-2:45 pm CT

Session #6



THE CHAIN
collaborative

WELCOME BACK!

- Any comments/questions from last week
- Day's Agenda
 - Recap from last week
 - Common challenges in the coffee sector
 - Common solutions
 - Where do we go from here?



RECAP FROM LAST WEEKS

- We need commerce and informational exchange, but we can do this better
- We need trade and philanthropy, but we can do this better
- We need to move from reverence to justice and shift the power
- Some methods:
 - Untied aid
 - Invest in diverse leadership
 - Understand the roots of the problem
 - Understand that people are the experts in their own communities
- Main challenges: buyer-driver chain, one size does not fit all, interconnectedness
- Opportunities: collective action and individual responsibility, interested stakeholders

ONE OVERARCHING CHALLENGE: CLIMATE

- If growth continues at its current pace, “the coffee sector will need 300 million bags of coffee by 2050, which means doubling or even tripling the current annual world production....without major efforts to adapt coffee production to climate change, global production could be even lower in 2050.” – **The Coffee Barometer 2018, p. 10**

But...is it just climate change we need to worry about when thinking about the future of coffee?



Photo from videoblocks.com; Brazilian Plantation

IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE (AND LAND USE) TO THE FARMER

- Impacts:
 - Heavy rains and frosts, drought, increases in pests and diseases
 - Lower quality, lower yields, decreased profitability
 - Decrease in suitable land, degradation of soils, and habitat destruction
 - Wastewater management and water quality from agrochemical use and runoff
 - Long-term migration
- Meanwhile...
 - Deforestation is rampant, exacerbating the issues
 - Costs of inputs/living are steadily increasing while prices are volatile

COSTS OF PRODUCTION CALCULATION AS SOLUTION?

- “[Climate smart coffee’s] true price is estimated around \$3.90, while the market price of this CSA-coffee is around \$2.90.”
- What does this consider?
- Costs of production hard to calculate
- What about organic coffee? Is it a potential solution to industrial agriculture?
- Farmers need to transition to organic for at least three years, and costs of organic certification can be a challenge. Some farmers already doing organic without certification.

A half **truth**
is a whole lie.

Yiddish Proverb // Quoteistan.com

Photo from:

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/249598004326676310/>

AGRONOMY AS SOLUTION?

- Agronomy as both a problem and a solution
- What does agronomic research attempt to solve?
 - Increase yields, increase resistance, ensure quality
- But what are the challenges?
 - Biodiversity and monoculture, quality perceptions
 - “There are 3,600 varieties of watermelon in the UPOV international registry of plant varieties; there are only 50 varieties of coffee —a stark indicator of how little coffee breeding has been done around the world.” -World Coffee Research

Whose costs will increase?



WHAT ABOUT YOUTH? WHY ARE THEY LEAVING AGRICULTURE?

- According to the International Coffee Organization, the average age of smallholder farmers is 56 years old
- Youth farmers increasingly choosing to migrate
- Age interacts with other challenges
 - Land: suitability and availability
 - Credit and capital
 - Gender inequities
 - Stakeholders: government, roasters, cooperatives, etc.
 - Education and training
 - Culture and generational dynamics

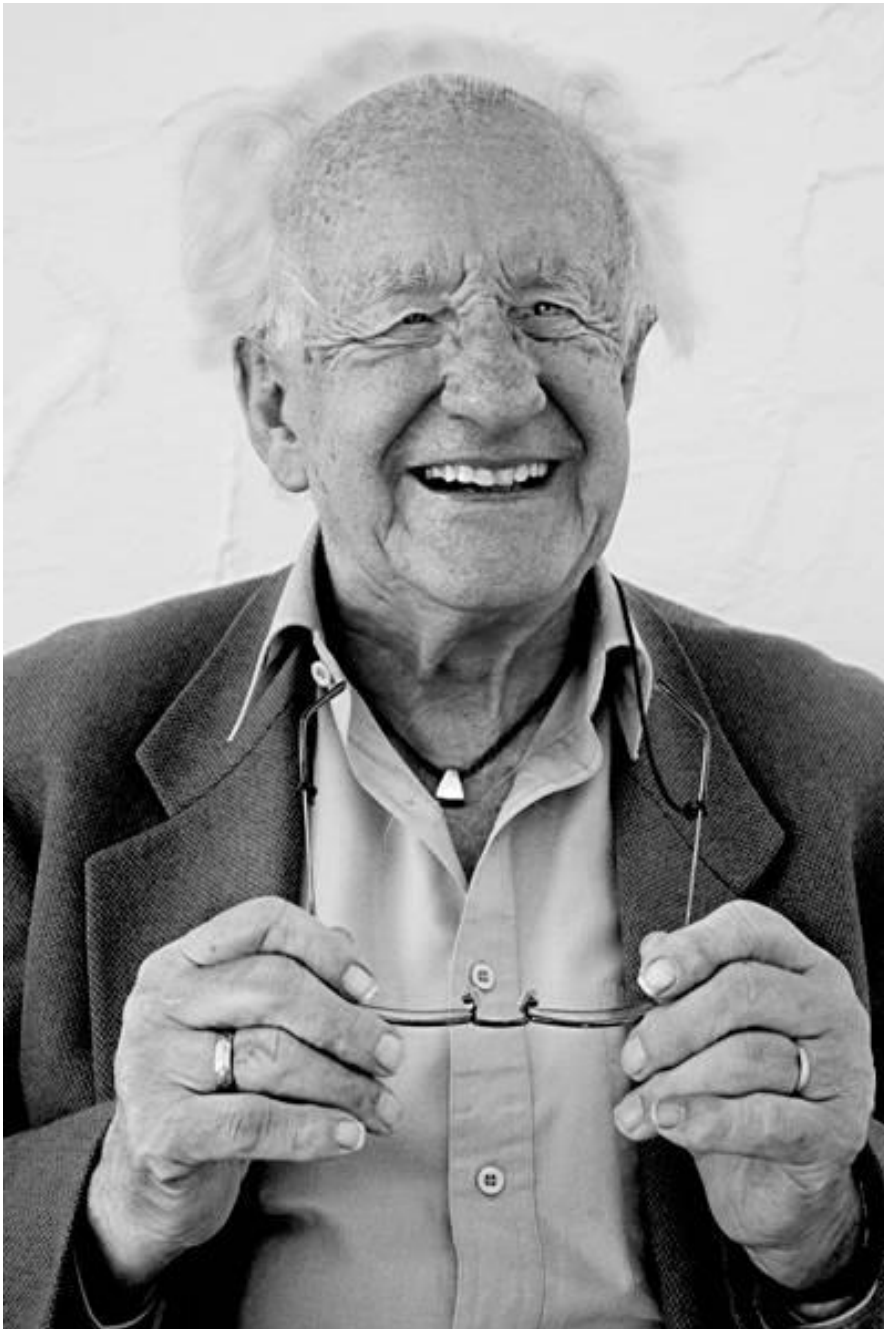


WHAT ABOUT FARMWORKERS?

- Farmworkers: family laborers, descendants of enslaved and indigenous people, migrant laborers, children
- Earn less than permanent workers, less likely to receive benefits and protections; they lack freedom of association and fail to access minimum wage
- Labor costs may account for 70% of coffee production, but industry lacks knowledge of how to reach farmers, and there is now a potential lack of supply
- Relates to issues of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and education
- It's about inequality, and responsibility: if farmworkers come from vestiges of colonial past, where "idle" farmers supposed to give up land, what is to be done today?

SOME COMMON SOLUTIONS

- Farmer organization to provide access to markets, credit, training, etc.
- Training on productivity and quality, best farming practices, farming as a family business, etc.
- Industry-wide upgrading and “Research and Development” activities, including technology
- Certifications and accountability for transparency and traceability (new technology platforms now a part of this)
- Cost of production calculation and decreases, paying more for coffee
- Transparent trade initiatives and policy developments
- Diversification and leaving coffee altogether
- Efforts toward income smoothing, such as education for youth, healthcare, etc.



SOLUTION AS TRANSFORMATION

- Structural violence: a term coined by peace scholar and grandfather of conflict transformation studies Johan Galtung in 1969
- Meaning: social structures or institutions that harm people and limit their ability to meet their basic needs and access freedom and equity
- Structural violence is a cause of death
- Is the coffee industry structurally violent?
- How does structural violence interact with physical violence?

Image from: https://www.galtung-institut.de/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/johan_bw.jpg

SOLUTION AS TRANSFORMATION

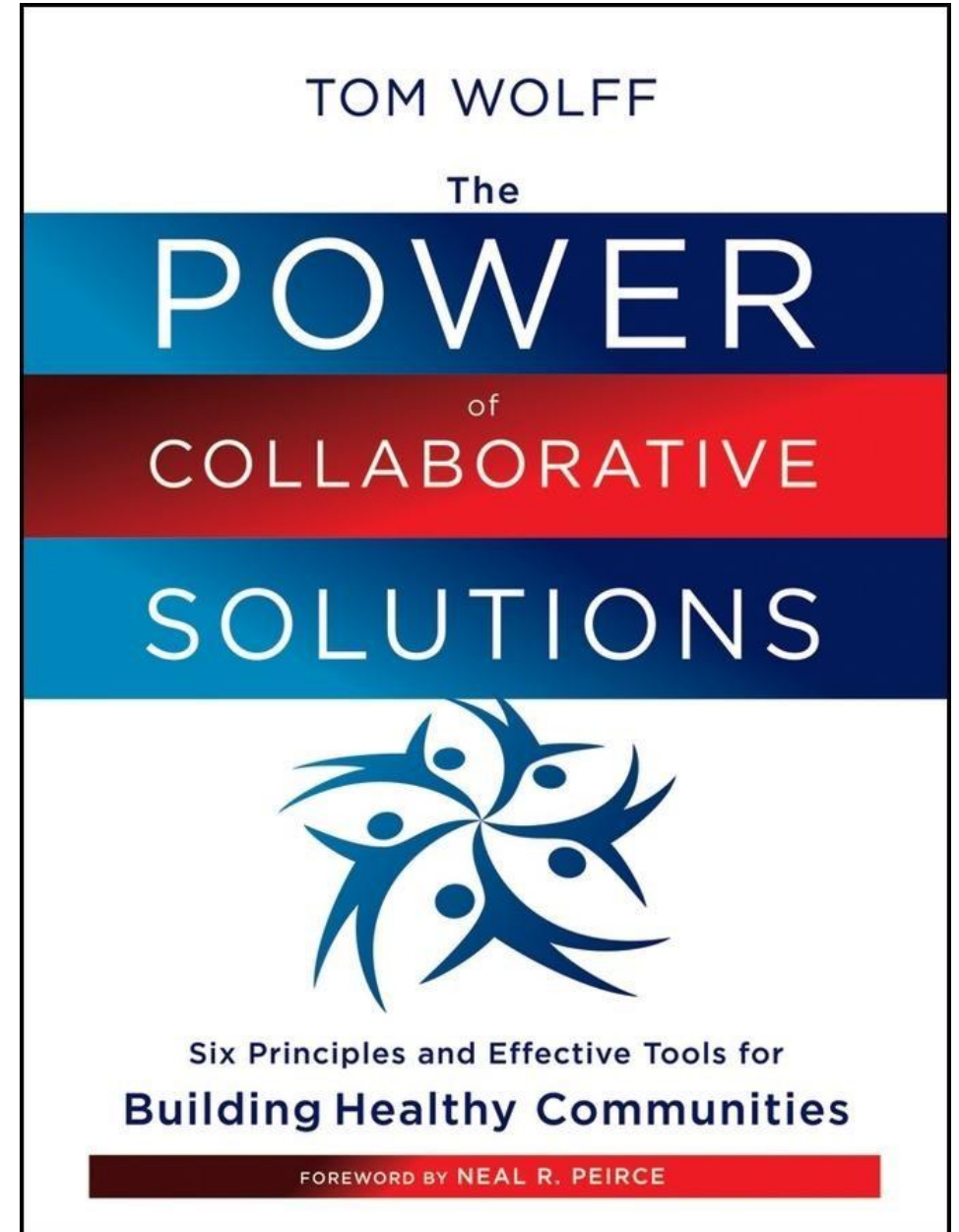
- Where a problem, or a gap between what is real and what is desired, is the result of incompatible goals
- Parties are not incompatible, their goals are
- To achieve change, parties are not to be controlled
- Transformation is transcending the goals of conflicting parties, and defining new goals that are compatible, taking the conflict from its original form and embedding it in a new place that is more promising.
- Achieved through dialogue, empathy, non-violence, and joint creativity
- If transformation does not happen, violence persists
- Conflicts have life cycles, they are complex, they involve many actors, goals, and issues
- Transformation must focus on cultures, structures, and actors

HOW DO WE TRANSCEND/TRANSFORM CONFLICT?

- Conflict (or problem) as a source of violence and development (potential)
- There is mutual causation and shared responsibility
- Transformation should be a self-sustaining process; it is the redefinition of ways of working
- Creativity is key, as is bringing in many stakeholders
- Use dialogue to identify varying goals, creative ideas, and new ways to transcend incompatibilities
- Specific goals should be identified that are acceptable to each party, in order to arrive at something acceptable to all
- It is the art of the impossible, combines idealism and realism

CHALLENGES TO CURRENT APPROACHES AND THE POWER OF COLLABORATION

- There is unequal access to information and resources at different points in the value chain
- Buyer-driven approaches dominate
- There is competition in the sustainability space, leading to duplicitous efforts
- Sustainability remains in the marketing department, not as part of the core business
- All these things challenge us from taking the work to scale



SO...WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Use research to better our approaches
- Bring on the right stakeholders to promote behavioral change
- Use rigorous monitoring and evaluation methods
- Champion community-driven approaches
- Coordinate meaningful (and inclusive!) collective action
- Encourage holistic approaches
- Ensure greater transparency and accountability
- Communicate intentionally and ethically, and share knowledge and metrics

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Developing solutions to the current challenges is complicated
- Current approaches have brought us a long way, but we can do better
- Social, economic, and environmental challenges intersect both within communities and across the value chain at various points
- Intersectionalities exist within these interactions
- We each play a role in addressing sustainability challenges in the industry, both as individuals and as part of a collective
- We need to be honest about what that role is and what we can each do
- Consider your power and that community-led development is more than just consultation

“DO NOT BE DAUNTED BY THE
ENORMITY OF THE WORLD'S GRIEF.
DO JUSTLY, NOW. LOVE MERCY, NOW.
WALK HUMBLY, NOW. YOU ARE NOT
OBLIGATED TO COMPLETE THE
WORK, BUT NEITHER ARE YOU FREE
TO ABANDON IT.” -THE TALMUD

THANK YOU FOR A GREAT CLASS!