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**The power of disruption:**

A multi-stakeholder exploration of the potential for an eCommerce platform to disrupt power dynamics in the coffee value chain

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# Abstract

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Many companies have introduced initiatives to achieve environmental sustainability and improve the wellbeing of the producers. This is the goal of the Era of We – an online platform that strives to disrupt the current market practices, promote environmentally sound coffee production and empower farmers. This thesis explores the perceived power dynamics between different stakeholders and how are they affected by this new, disruptive innovation. By engaging in nine semi-structured interviews, it outlines the experienced power dynamics of three stakeholder groups – coffee producers (farmers or their representatives), purchasers (roasters and platform developers) and customers from the hospitality industry. To achieve this, it is grounded in the power typology proposed by Dallas et al. (2017) which outlines four types of power relationships. The results show that all four types of power are present, but the most often noted and therefore also the platform’s central point of interest is the bargaining power of farmers. Whilst the platform has the potential to achieve a disruptive scale, the research shows that the platform’s future development needs to acknowledge other types of power relationships due to their interconnected nature.

*Keywords: coffee value chain, power dynamics, sustainability, multi-stakeholder perspective, disruptive innovation*

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## List of abbreviations

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<b>SC</b>	Supply chains
<b>SCM</b>	Supply chain management
<b>GVC</b>	Global value chains
<b>EoW</b>	Era of We
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate social responsibility
<b>RQ</b>	Research question

# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1. Research context

### *1.1.1. Sustainability in the coffee value chain*

Coffee is one of the key commodities consumed in the world. With a market of over 88 billion US dollars currently, the consumption of coffee has been on the rise and is expected to continue to grow at a 4.61% rate annually (Statista, 2021).

The increase in consumption, however, has not come without its sustainability challenges. According to the UNEP (2022) Emissions Gap Report, the current progress on climate change mitigation is not even close to being sufficient. Food systems are no exception – agriculture is a substantial emitter of emissions and therefore plays a crucial role in achieving the world’s emission reduction goals (Blandford and Hassapoyannes, 2018). At the same time, coffee production is characterised by highly fractured supply chains (SC) as currently, more than 70% of coffee is farmed by small-scale growers (USAID, 2019). This results in additional social and economic sustainability considerations – due to high market volatility and growing power asymmetry, the farmers are vulnerable to a disproportionately large share of risks, compared to other stakeholders (Zhang et al., 2022).

Therefore, coffee companies have received significant pressure to engage in sustainable production practices, both within environmental, but also social regards that would benefit the farmers. Coffee roasters have communicated goals like 100% certified organic coffee or invested resources in educating the farmers to switch to more regenerative agricultural practices. To achieve the most ambitious sustainability goals that exceed the impact of just the specific roaster’s operations, going beyond corporate social responsibility and implementing innovations that disrupt the current market practices have been suggested by some academics, private sector players and NGOs (Kuokkanen et al., 2019). As a result, more and more companies are collaborating with other stakeholders across the value chain to drive industry-wide change (ibid.).

However, Kuokkanen et al. (2019) question the potential of such interventions by stressing the lack of clarity around how to successfully implement them and “what is to be disrupted” (p.3) in the first place. If not implemented in a smart way, “disruptive” innovations and initiatives risk becoming yet another buzzword (Nagy et al., 2016).

Similar to other sustainability initiatives, when dealing with disruptive innovations (DI), caution needs to be applied to ensure they do not contribute to enforcing the current inequalities and other negative side effects. This raises concerns about the true impact of interventions that strive for wide-scale change across the coffee market.

### *1.1.2. Power in sustainable initiative implementation*

One of the first steps in ensuring successful change implementation is understanding who is impacted and how (Avelino and Wittmayer, 2016). Rotmans and Loorbach (2010) argue that in most interventions, a broad range of stakeholders are to some degree affected. At the same time, they also argue that in any intervention, the power of the involved actors is impacted (*ibid.*), which is generally understood as changes in one's coercive power or the ability to "compel another actor to act according to their wishes" (Dallas et al., 2017, p. 1). Indeed, Grabs and Ponte (2019) stress that power is highly fluid and can be shifted depending on the specific context. This suggests that the existing power structures and how they are being changed is an important and useful step in understanding the impacts on core stakeholders in change implementation.

Nonetheless, "the different forms of power interact" or so called power shifts take place (Rutting et al., 2022, p. 3). In business-to-business relationships, the different partners rarely have similar levels of power (Siemieniako et al., 2022). This disbalance usually equates to unequal access to resources, opportunities and hence also rights (Tverskoi et al., 2021). As a result, the opportunities for less powerful actors to change current practices and increase their level of influence are limited (*ibid.*). In the case of small-scale farmers, who are already a marginalised group and often faced with issues like poverty, this means increased dependence on more influential actors to improve their wellbeing.

In the coffee industry, power dynamics play an especially significant role. Since the Second World War, the industry has undergone significant power dynamic changes that can be grouped in three power regimes – the different stages of which "incumbent actors" held influence (Rutting et al., 2022, p. 2). Firstly, between 1962-1989, the regime was characterised by stable coffee prices ensured by implementation of multi-country quotas (Grabs and Ponte, 2019). This was followed by a significant shift in the power towards coffee purchasers resulting in the second regime – the "Liberalisation phase" (*ibid.* p. 2) during which the use of market-based differentiation, as well as

increased quality and sustainability requirements were initiated. Currently, coffee industry is experiencing a more portfolio-based diversification phase and the influence and role of large-scale roasters has been increasing, whilst the opposite can be said about small-scale farmers (Zhang et al., 2022). The currently existing power disbalance between specific stakeholders are further explored in Section 2, however, this suggests that power dynamics are especially important when addressing initiatives that focus on coffee farmers.

Therefore, this research aims to contribute to literature addressing power disbalance in coffee production. Specifically, it will explore the existing power dynamics between different stakeholders in a coffee supply chain and how they are shifting due to an initiative that strives to disrupt the current market structures.

## 1.2. Case background

Era of We (EoW) is an eCommerce platform (further: platform) that was developed in 2020 with an aim “to disrupt and reinvent the coffee supply chain, shifting the value of the coffee brand back to the growers and consumers” (EoW, 2020, p. 8). Originally launched with the help of Löfbergs – one of the largest family-owned coffee roasters in the Nordics, but now operates as an independent enterprise. The platform is based in Sweden but works to connect farmers and customers across the globe.

According to the EoW whitepaper (EoW, 2020), the business plan is based on the New Optimistic Capitalism thinking – “a WIN-WIN-WIN business model” (p. 8) that benefits all stakeholders involved in coffee production and therefore “promotes equality for the entire coffee supply chain” (p. 8). Through this model, value is believed to be created for farmers by enabling them to be in charge of their own brand and control the price of their products, for roasters and hospitality actors like cafes because they can better support their suppliers in achieving their sustainability visions, and for consumers who get a unique experience by being able to directly connect with the farmers.

To achieve this, EoW has functions and content tailored for four stakeholders: estates, roasters, hospitality, and end consumers. For estates, the platform is designed to share their branding material, connect to other stakeholders, and sell directly to end-consumers. Roasters are encouraged to connect with farmers to learn about their production and source from them. Hospitality representatives and customers can gain



similar benefits from this platform – learn about the story behind each estate and purchase it directly through the EoW.

The platform also consists of The Coffee Lab – a questions and answers-like platform where anyone can ask questions related to coffee production, trade and consumption or read blog posts about it. The Coffee Lab provides opportunities for coffee consumers to learn more about topics like coffee brewing at home and different sustainability challenges associated with its production. It is a collaborative platform where anyone can contribute to the answers and posts. It is also a place where individual brands like micro-roasters can share their story.

The EoW has ambitious growth plans that build on the currently offered services. For example, within The Coffee Lab, it hopes to offer classes and share educational videos from people established as experts in the coffee field. Additionally, part of the value-creating ambition for farmers includes a Hand in Hand program where larger estates can collaborate with smaller players to help to onboard different farms on the platform. The ultimate goal for this platform is to reach a global brand status by being involved in at least 5% of all coffee trading in the world. (ibid.).

### 1.3. Purpose & research questions

This paper aims to strengthen the literature on power dynamics in a global coffee value chain and provide new insights into the power regimes and potential shifts due to innovations that aim to disrupt traditional market processes. It does not, however, discuss the controversy regarding business responsibility and instead builds on the assumption that businesses will continue to develop different interventions to manage sustainability in their supply chains by addressing the differences in perceptions of power between these companies and their suppliers. Moreover, this research does not provide in-depth explanations of the specific conditions of each stakeholder and instead concerns itself with mapping the power landscape present in the coffee value chain and exploring how is it impacted by an innovation like the EoW project. As such, the questions guiding this study are the following:

1. *What power dynamics are present in the coffee value chain facilitated by EoW?*
2. *What is the role of different power types in achieving a sustainable coffee value chain?*

3. *How is the EoW platform perceived to influence the existing power dynamics in the coffee value chain?*

To achieve this, firstly, an outline of the previously published literature on power dynamics in coffee supply chain management (SCM) is presented (Section 2) followed by an introduction of the theoretical background of this study (Section 3). Then, the methodological considerations and reflections (Section 4) are provided, which is followed by an outline of the results and discussion of the data gathered in light of the literature introduced (Section 5). Lastly, the conclusion (Section 6) summarises the findings and discusses further research potential in the SCM field.

## 2. Literature review

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A considerable amount of literature has been published on supply chains and their management. Whilst in general the importance of suppliers in companies' success is not a new notion in academia, there has been a surge of research published on SCM strategies since the early 2000s (Zimmer et al., 2016). Within sustainability, the general trend has been to focus on environmental challenges and impacts (Zimmer et al., 2016). This paper therefore deviates from the previous research on sustainable SCM by instead focusing on how relationships and power dynamics take place in the coffee value chain. Consequently, the following literature review outlines previous publications on the importance of relationship management in SC, what power dynamics are present in the coffee value chain, how do they impact SCM and how the power asymmetry can be lessened. Lastly, an explanation of the role of DI in sustainability is provided, as well as a summary of the identified knowledge gaps.

### 2.1. Power in coffee supply chains

As part of SC and stakeholder relationship management, many academics have highlighted the central role of power (e.g., Benton and Maloni, 2005, Meehan and Wright, 2012, Cox, 2004). Whilst usually not the core focus of the study, within literature focusing solely on sustainable SCM, the importance of power dynamics has been recognised as well. Sarkis et al. (2011), when reviewing green supply chain management literature, concluded that power disbalance determines the level of influence on the supply chain. Nonetheless, it needs to be stressed that the amount of literature explicitly focusing on power within sustainable SCM is limited (Touboullic et al., 2014) and most of the papers dealing with power management in SC are descriptive. This indicates a lack of theory-based research, as concluded by Brammer et al. (2011). The following sub-chapters explore the different nuances that have been addressed within previous research – what power dynamics have been observed between different stakeholders, what is their influence on market processes in coffee value chains and, lastly, what tools have been applied to manage them.

### *2.1.1. Power differences between different stakeholders*

As power in supply chain research has been mostly perceived “as the potential to influence” (Meehan and Wright, 2012, p. 669), in the coffee industry, it is usually seen as the ability to bargain (*ibid.*). Due to this, most research has focused on exploring the stakeholders’ market power; specifically, previous papers have primarily focused on the market – bargaining – power of farmers (*ibid.*). Reflecting on this, Tuoi et al. (2022) stress that more research should be conducted on the power of other stakeholders as well. Meehan and Wright (2012) build on this and argue that in SC research, attention should be given to more than just one stakeholder at a time, and they propose a multi-stakeholder perspective. In the recent years, the use of multi-stakeholder perspective has increased and this section introduces the power dynamics that have been observed between the key stakeholders in coffee SCM.

The most often debated power dynamic is within supplier-buyer relationships, primarily between small-scale farmers and large companies. By focusing on their market power, in these studies, farmers are often seen as having little to no power, such as showcased by Tuoi et al. (2022) in their research on 200 coffee farmers in Vietnam. Grabs and Ponte (2019) have drawn similar conclusions regarding farmer and trader relationships.

Additionally, such supplier-buyer power disparities are also a global trend as they can be observed between main supplier countries (usually the Global South) and Northern buyers and consumers (Grabs and Ponte, 2019). Grabs and Ponte (2019), show that this inequality has been present throughout time and Utrilla-Catalan et al. (2022) argue that they have been on the rise. However, it needs to be stressed that there is limited research on how do the changes of power in coffee markets really affect the commodity chains (for exceptions: Grabs and Ponte, 2019 and Zhang et al., 2022). Thus, preventing sound speculation about the effects an intervention such as EoW could have on the coffee SC, and whether it could alter the market dynamics by shifting power asymmetry on a large scale. Nonetheless, it is clear that there are power disparities in buyer-supplier relationships across organisation and country-wide scales.

Furthermore, some studies have highlighted that there can be clashes of power between different farmers or farmer groups. For example, Olsen (1993) showed how the ability to fight for better prices differed between large and small scale farms as the latter were more dependent on the buyers to purchase the produce to gain immediate profits. Moreover, similarly to other agriculture fields, a prominent theme within this has been gender considerations (Farnworth et al., 2020). Farnworth et al. (2020) explored

the role of gender norms and the dynamics between partners both involved in agriculture and concluded that the regime still favours men's agency and norms that limit women's empowerment. It is useful to also mention that some papers have suggested the role of external factors in these farmer-to-farmer power disparities. For example, Bacon (2010) showed that increased demand for specialty coffee can contribute to power disparities as only a few farmers can gain the advantages associated with them. This once again highlights the need for exploring power in relation to the wider market processes and as such, in interaction with other stakeholders.

The last noteworthy dynamic between different stakeholders is the power of consumers, which has been indirectly explored by looking at customer behaviour and how it affects sustainability in the coffee industry. Specifically, the role of customers has been analysed regarding whether they are willing to pay more for more sustainable choices. Hertel et al. (2009) found that customers are willing to pay more for ecologically and fairly grown coffee whilst Lingnau et al. (2019) argue that the willingness to pay is not significantly increased by certifications and instead, consumer influence is seen regarding unsustainable actions which are punished with not buying. However, no papers could be found on the extent to which customer demand influences sustainability in coffee in comparison to other drivers.

### *2.1.2. Impact of power asymmetry on supply chains*

Previous research on SCM has also explored the effect of power disbalance in business relationships. The most often observed influence of exercising power in SC is regarding their coordination – who gets to decide and what is decided (Meehan and Wright, 2012). Regarding sustainable SCM, it has been argued that “a powerful buyer has a greater chance of successfully implementing [sustainable SC] practices because it can enforce sustainability requirements” (Touboullic et al., 2014, p. 11) Indeed, when addressing the implementation of sustainability requirements, Boyd et al. (2007) noted that the presence of power disbalance between different stakeholders results in high-power stakeholders determining what sustainability aspects are favoured, who drives the agenda and what are the results. Building on this, Brockhaus et al. (2013) showed that most often power differences are utilised to impose requirements on suppliers, instead of using more collaborative approaches. Cox, a greatly cited academic that has shaped the power-disbalance debate and driven the development of power-centred typologies, and his colleagues (Cox et al., 2002, p. 3) state that “the ideal

position for a firm to be in to achieve sustainable business success is one in which it has power over others.” Together, these papers indicate that in business-to-business relationships, having power is perceived as an advantage and actors often actively utilise it to drive the agenda and reach their goals.

However, this view has not been ubiquitous as literature also revealed that big power differences can result in negative effects on supply chain stakeholders. Specifically, previous SCM literature has showed that high power disbalance can also lead to negative effects on the dominant stakeholder. For instance, Edirisinghe et al. (2011) concluded that big power differences can lead to decreased profits for the whole SC. Similarly, in SC characterised by high dependence on the powerful actor, McDonald (1999) found that the relationship will eventually become unproductive because the less powerful actor will be eroded too much. This negative impact can further be exacerbated by the decay of the relationship between buyers and producers that is associated with high power discrepancies. Terpend and Ashenbaum (2012) noted that in an industrial setting, power dynamics between suppliers and the buyer directly determine their relationship by shaping the level of trust, commitment, and satisfaction of these stakeholders. They also suggest that addressing power dynamics in a supply chain is important in achieving collaboration and managing conflict levels (ibid.).

Furthermore, the idea that power can be used to drive sustainability is fundamentally challenged when power is seen as the ability to bargain. Research shows that in agro-food sector the most powerful actors are buyers, as also outlined in the previous section (2.1.1.). Touboulic et al. (2014) show that these powerful actors tend to use the power to bargaining lower prices from suppliers. Even in cases where they have purchased from the same supplier for years, high-power purchasers used tools like short-term contracts to ensure opportunities to negotiate lower prices each year (ibid.). As such, they show that the financial sustainability of dependent actors is impaired in cases with high buyer-producer power disparity (ibid.).

As a result, it is not surprising that in social science literature, the power disbalance within supplier and purchaser relationships is usually perceived as negative (Caniels and Gelderman, 2007). Compared to the aforementioned perspective by Cox et al., this suggests that whether using power differences in SC will be perceived as beneficial or not, depends on the expectations of why that is done. Nonetheless, it is clear that the management of buyer-supplier relationships and work to achieve sustainable coffee SC cannot be done without addressing the role of power.

### *2.1.3. Management of power dynamics in supply chains*

As the power dynamics are seen to have mostly negative effect, some researchers have addressed this issue and explored the strategies and tools used by stakeholders to obtain or share power and therefore manage the level of power disbalance in supplier-buyer relationships. Indeed, literature revealed that stakeholders are inclined to work with this power disbalance, usually to increase their own level of power. Nyaga et al. (2013), for example, demonstrated that actors with less power tend to adapt to the requirements set forward by the more influential companies to attempt to increase their own power, which has been translated into prioritising the buyers' requirements and showcasing them, such as by obtaining sustainability certificates. Similarly, Sarkis et al. (2011) suggested that an increased use of certifications has been noticed in cases where actors need to reinforce their legitimacy and, thereby, boost their ability to capture opportunities.

However, market-based solutions have not gained ubiquitous support and instead institution-driven interventions have also been stressed (Grabs and Ponte, 2019). Indeed, more country-driven initiatives have taken place as a response to the increased consolidation of coffee roasters, however, these have been described as insufficient for achieving a more power-balanced coffee SC (ibid.).

Due to the dual relationship of power dynamics, the disbalance can be aided also by the high-power stakeholders. The power of businesses to influence politics and processes 'in the field' has grown significantly as a result of the expansion of corporations and globalisation (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011). At the same time, Scherer and Palazzo (2011) argue that together with this, their responsibility to use this power to make positive change has also increased, especially in areas with low government influence. Therefore, in recent years, more transnational companies have put forward corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to improve sustainability in communities where they operate (ibid.). However, the rise of CSR interventions in marginalised communities has also faced significant criticism, greatly based on the perception that businesses will use them for their own good, hence, limiting the extent of meaningful changes (Ramanna, 2020). Building on this, Klein (2000) argues that these initiatives usually do not address the underlying drivers for inequality and environmental degradation. Some of these criticisms have been rebuked by categorising CSR initiatives into different levels of intention and impact, such as by Westen et al. (2013) who looked at CSR initiatives in agro-food systems. Nonetheless,

these criticisms suggest that the extent to which buyer-supplier CSR initiatives can reduce power disparities and achieve sustainability is often limited.

To overcome the criticisms of CSR, more collaborative approaches have been suggested. In academia, interest in collaboration between stakeholders in a SC arose in the early 90s and since then has gained increased support (Terpend et al., 2008). Instead of relying on power disbalance to implement sustainability improvements, collaborative approaches between suppliers and buyers have been promoted (e.g., Koberg & Longoni, 2019), the benefits of which have repeatedly been shown also in literature (e.g. Vickery et al., 2003). Nonetheless, some potential challenges have also been highlighted, for example “if suppliers share commonly developed knowledge or technology with the buying firm's competitors” (Leppelt, 2013 p. 12 citing Cousins and Lawson, 2007).

Collaborative approaches have also started gaining popularity among competitors. For farmers, this could take the shape of, for example, cooperatives or collaborations to increase the farmers' power (Tuoi et al., 2022). Working in collaboratives has been supported due to benefits like easier capacity building, increased natural conservation, and access to resources. For example, in an extensive, participatory research on two smallholder coffee cooperatives, Luna et al., (2022) showed that working in cooperatives helped to gain access to land. Farmer collaboratives have especially been supported to achieve women empowerment (e.g., zu Selhausen, 2015). At the same time, however, literature also revealed cases where participation in them failed, due to lack of democratical principles (Luna et al., 2022) or specific requirements such as ownership of land prior to joining (zu Selhausen, 2015). For stakeholders who already hold a lot of power, however, initiatives to pool resources to address power inequality are not common as the general consensus is that companies strive to boost their competitive advantage over their competitors. Therefore, literature rarely touches upon forms of partnerships between competitors that go beyond advocacy or common commitments (Steger et al., 2009 and Nasiri et al., 2017).

Literature also revealed that the success of these strategies is greatly facilitated by the recognition of power dynamics. By focusing on relationships between large buyers and small suppliers, Touboulic et al. (2014) demonstrated that understanding power relations and dynamics aids in determining the most effective and appropriate strategies for managing the SC. Benton and Maloni (2005) build on this and argue that to address and change the potential impacts of different levels of power, both the power source as well as the target need to recognise the existence of this disbalance.



Having said that, multiple sources of evidence suggest that the way power is perceived differs between various stakeholders (Meehan and Wright, 2012). This is important to consider as Pettigrew and McNulty (1998) explain how the buyers and sellers see the power relations between themselves actually frames what actions these actors take. There are various explanations for how power asymmetry in supply chains comes to be (see Section 4); and one's perception of power depends on which explanation is preferred. The most often suggested determinant and also understanding of power is one's individual control and market power (e.g., Tuoi et al., 2022). Others have also suggested wider social, cultural, and institutional factors, however, there has been a growing consensus that it is shaped by all of these factors together (Grabs and Ponte, 2019). For more theoretical discussion and information on the theoretical framework used in this paper, see Section 4. Nonetheless, it is clear that power is influenced by the relations, interaction and perception of power from the different stakeholders (Meehan and Wright, 2012). Therefore, this once again highlights the need for the current research to focus on the viewpoints of different stakeholders across the value chain to account for different forms of power that might be missed if only one stakeholder is analysed.

## 2.2. (Disruptive) innovations for sustainability

As previously noted, innovation has been greatly supported in discussions surrounding the development and implementation of sustainable practices. As explained by (Nasiri et al., 2017, p. 2), disruptive innovations (DI) can address sustainability issues “by disrupting existing markets”. According to (Nasiri et al., 2017), four key applications of DI enable sustainability: switching towards closed-loop thinking, transforming supply chains, “leapfrogging” to more sustainable practices without going through a long process of unsustainable ones, and sustainability-oriented partnerships. Additionally, they also stated internal factors, including competition, knowledge, culture and the firm's capabilities, as well as various external factors that function as enablers of DI for sustainability (ibid.). Besides the obvious worldwide importance of addressing sustainability issues, sustainability and innovation are also linked with business benefits, such as unlocking new business capabilities (Hall and Wagner, 2012). As a result, it is not surprising that in practice, organisations have already strived to implement many such innovations to increase their sustainability (Steger et al., 2009).

Power dynamics and shifts in particular play an important role in DI. Various researchers have showcased that transformations are accompanied by changes in power and relations as well (e.g., Avelino and Wittmayer, 2016). However, only lately research trying to link power and disruptive transitions has been conducted but remained on a rather theoretical level (e.g., Ruttning et al., 2022) and even the corresponding academics stress that further research is required (ibid.).

At the same time, DI have experienced criticism for how they are implemented in practice and researched in academia. A key challenge is managing to balance the three sustainability pillars (Nasiri et al., 2017). Hansen et al. (2009) showcased that the attempted improvements of a specific sustainability dimension sometimes lead to a compromised performance in other pillars. Therefore, exploring DI as a tool to drive sustainability is useful.

### 2.3. Knowledge gap

In light of the previously explored literature, this section outlines several literature gaps that can be identified. Firstly, the literature review showed that whilst many papers have been published on SCM, it is still a relatively underresearched field when compared with other business management literature and there is a lack of research focusing on power relations in sustainable SCM. Secondly, the explored literature suggested an underuse of multi-stakeholder perspective to explore the relations and interactions between them. Lastly, some methodological considerations were identified – most of the studies addressing SCM and power are descriptive due to which the field still lacks theoretical contributions whilst DI literature exploring power shifts has remained highly theoretical.

Therefore, this paper aims to take a step in aiding all of these knowledge and methodological gaps. It will contribute to the development of DI management studies by adapting a case-study approach and exploring an upcoming innovation that strives to disrupt the coffee market. And at the same time, it will utilise a theory-centred approach to map the different forms of power present within the EoW platform and coffee value chain, therefore hoping to strengthen the understanding and use of power-centred theoretic frameworks (see Section 3 for theoretical background explanation).

## 3. Theoretical background

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### 3.1. Explanation of power asymmetry in supply chains

#### 3.1.1. *Defining power*

According to Dallas et al. (2017, p. 2), power is “malleable and notoriously open to interpretation” (ibid., p. 2). Therefore, before introducing the typology used for mapping power relations in the coffee value chain, it is important to address which perception of power is utilised in this research.

Multiple understandings and definitions have been proposed for studying power and power dynamics. Meehan and Wright (2012) explain that there are three schools of thought on how power is perceived in academia. Firstly, the understanding that has often dominated the field is that “power is a property of organisations” (ibid., p. 669) and not attributed to specific individuals (supported by e.g., Cox 1999). Conversely, the second school of thought characterises power as individual, dependent on one’s competencies and even personality. The third explanation concerns itself with the existence of power in relationships and actor interactions. Nonetheless, research by Meehan and Wright (2012) showed how not only do participants identify power to originate from individual, organisational and relationship sources, but also all of these three are interlinked. Building on this, (Dallas et al., 2017), stress that research exploring global value chains (GVC) has failed to address the multiple dimensions of power by having instead focused on just one of the aforementioned explanations.

Nonetheless, there is one understanding of power that has most often been applied to research of supplier-buyer relationships. It is based on the resource dependence theory, according to which power disbalance arises when A is more dependent on B than vice versa (Touboulic et al., 2014). According to Rindt and Mouzas (2015), stakeholders directly involved in business-to-business relationships rarely have similar access to resources and, as such, most often these actors possess different levels of power (Siemieniako et al., 2022). As according to the resource dependence theory a firm wants to be in a position of resources, there is a belief that the more powerful actors will continue acting on their power whilst the less powerful ones will keep complying to “continue accessing resources” (Touboulic et al., 2014, p. 8).

However, in GVC literature, the resource-based understanding of power has been criticised as being too narrow (Dallas et al., 2017). This criticism mostly stems from the

observations that GVC are likewise shaped by factors other than resource dependency. These include tools like voluntary standards and certifications, external multi-stakeholder initiatives, CSR, as well as the rise of social movements fighting for sustainability and justice. These approaches do not contradict the resource dependence theory's core thesis that access to resources is an importance source of influence for so called "lead firms" (ibid., p. 7). Instead, it compliments it by also arguing that additional forms of power exist that also influence this relationship, and that these can work as counteractions and diminish the power of a resourceful actor (ibid.). This once again highlights the need for an alternative theoretical understanding of power in GVC research that would incorporate different stakeholder, not just buyer and supplier, individual, organisational and relation forms of power that all can co-exist and can be transmitted through different sources.

### 3.1.2. *Four types of power*

To account for the global nature of coffee value chains and the multi-stakeholder approach, a theoretical framework considering possibilities of the co-existence of different types of power was sought. The typology of Dallas et al. (2017) who describes four different categories that summarise the different dimensions of power (Figure 1) fulfils these requirements. This typology was developed specifically for the analysis of GVC and therefore was seen as the best fit for this research on coffee.

The two dynamics proposed by Dallas et al. (2017) are arenas of actors and transmission mechanisms of power. Each of these has two sub-dynamics. Regarding arenas of actors, there are firstly, *dyadic* forms of power, such as between one purchaser and multiple suppliers. Secondly, they explain how *collective* types of power are also present in value chains, even if less researched in academia. These include, for example, the power that arises from social movements or government interventions. Furthermore, they argue for two different transmission mechanisms. *Direction* refers to exercising influence over other actors through direct interactions. The authors explain that in this transmission type, power is exerted in a relatively straightforward way and actors are seen to possess different tools and methods to intentionally do this. *Diffusion*, on the other hand, is less intentional and even unidentifiable. This type of transmission happens through imprecise mechanisms, such as the dissemination of uncodified "best practices" or through social movements. As a result, the impact of diffuse power may not always be immediately apparent, but it can still have substantive consequences (ibid.). In total, the authors propose four

different categories of power based on how it is exercised – Bargaining Power, Demonstrative Power, Institutional Power and Constitutive Power (Figure 1).

	<b>Direct</b>	<b>Diffuse</b>
	<i>Bargaining Power</i>	<i>Demonstrative Power</i>
<b>Dyadic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operates in firm to firm relations</li> <li>• Exhibits different degrees in hierarchy, captive, relational, modular, and market linkages</li> <li>• Is shaped by the relationship between lead firm/platform owner requirements and supplier competencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operates through informal 'transmission' mechanisms along value chains and/or competitive mimicry among suppliers and would-be platform owners</li> <li>• Is shaped by quality conventions implicitly accepted by the parties of a dyadic transaction</li> </ul>
	<i>Institutional Power</i>	<i>Constitutive Power</i>
<b>Collective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operates through government regulation and/or multi-stakeholder initiatives or other institutionalized forms</li> <li>• Can be leveraged through industrial standards and codified 'best practices'</li> <li>• Helps to build platforms and stimulates their network effects, extending to platform ecosystems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is based on broadly accepted norms, conventions, expectations and best practices, e.g. financialization, 'platform ideologies'</li> <li>• Can be leveraged by social and consumer movements</li> <li>• Arises from user-induced platform adjustments, extensions, and fully open platforms that stretch them beyond established ecosystems and opens up space for new platform owners</li> </ul>

**Figure 1:** GVC typology of power (Dallas et al., 2017, p. 14)

### 3.1.3. Criticisms of the typology used

Whilst this typology is highly appropriate for GVC research and no papers could be found that directly criticise it, the existence of a vast body of research published on power, its origins, and shifts hints toward potential shortcomings. As the perceived origins of power determine the understanding of power as a concept, these theoretical frameworks, whilst some complementary, are fundamentally quite different. Therefore, the use of generic frameworks for researching power-related topics as such has been criticised as problematic (Pettigrew and McNulty, 1998).

Furthermore, this typology can suffer from the same criticism expressed about most power-related theories – the ambiguity of what is understood as individual, in this case, "dyadic" forms of power. Indeed, (Avelino and Wittmayer, 2016) explain that often the

extent of individualism – whether it is each person or also includes, for example, a whole organisation or government – is not clearly defined. In this research, the participants represent a group of stakeholders, and as such dyadic is understood as both individual but also a group of stakeholders that have a similar position in the supply chain and belong to the same group, for example, because of working for the same company.

These criticisms are further heightened by Avelino and Wittmayer (2016) who argue that there are three kinds of power relations – power over someone, more or less power than someone and power of a different kind. However, they also argue that the third kind is usually not acknowledged in research (ibid.), as is also in the case of how this GVC typology of power is applied in this research. Nonetheless, this research is an early outline of the existing power and its shifts due to a specific disruption due to which an additional level of complexity of power analysis would go beyond the scope that can be explored with the limited number of participants.

### 3.2. The concept of Disruptive Innovations

This research is grounded in the assumption that the EoW strives to become a disruptive innovation (DI). However, this concept has not been understood and applied across literature in the same way (Si and Chen, 2020). Due to this, Si and Chen (2020) argue that the benefits of applying this theory have been limited. To avoid contributing to clattering this discussion even more and using this concept as just another buzzword (Nagy et al., 2016), it is important to set the scene for how it is defined in this research.

Generally, four perspectives on how DI can be understood are found across literature (Si and Chen, 2020). Firstly, it is seen as an innovation of established business models or how value creation is understood in the business processes. Second interpretation is innovation of disruptive technology that is not yet valued by the market but with additional improvements gradually enters the mainstream market. This perspective focuses on the process of changing the existing market. Thirdly, disruptive product innovation can be distinguished that focuses on the achieved effect of disruption – a new product. Lastly, the innovation of disruptive strategic models of innovating new products and markets. (ibid.).

The third perspective has been criticised for focusing too much on the end result and therefore recognising only already established DI. However, the innovation does not

have to be successful to be disruptive (Christensen et al., 2016). Instead, DI theory predicts that the incumbent businesses will eventually reply to the DI either by increasing their own innovations or acquiring the DI developer. If the DI manages to take over nonetheless, it has become the mainstream process and therefore is considered as the new incumbent (ibid.).

Therefore, the definition applied for this paper is one by Christensen et al. (2016, p. 36), that disruption in business is “a process whereby a smaller company with fewer resources is able to successfully challenge established incumbent businesses.” They explain that DI usually start in low-end or new markets and can take time to reach the mainstream. Due to this, incumbent companies might not pay attention to them which can end up why DI reach a scale in which they outcompete the regular businesses. (ibid). In the case of EoW, whilst it has not been initiated by the less powerful actor with fewer resources, the goal of it is to spark a disruption of how coffee is traded by these actors. EoW is a process as it motivates new collaborations that are unconventional to the traditional coffee supply chain. Thereby, the platform disrupts the current market processes where most power is held in the hands of the multinational roasters and instead is shifted to producers and consumers.

## 4. Methods

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In this chapter, the methodological considerations are presented. It begins with an outline of ontological and epistemological considerations; this is followed by a description of the research design. Then, a description of sampling and data collection methods is presented. Lastly, this chapter presents a reflection on the ethical considerations and limitations of the chosen methodology.

### 4.1. Ontological and epistemological considerations

Similarly to many other social science studies, this research is based on the relativist assumption that the world is populated by humans who construct the world and the meaning of various processes. It assumes that the coffee stakeholders' knowledge is shaped by their local context and lived experiences. As such, a core goal of this research is to understand the different stakeholders' views and experiences in the context of being part of the same value chain whilst experiencing different realities.

Regarding the creation of knowledge, a constructivist approach is preferred – that one's self, existing processes and how people experience them cannot be separated from the wider social practices, as they are constructed and translated within an essentially social context (Crotty, 2003). As part of this belief, the meaning of things is not present in itself, but instead constructed by the society through interactions (*ibid.*). This ontological approach is adopted, as this study aims to understand how are power dynamics perceived in the context of stakeholder interactions within the coffee value chain. Additionally, this research explores how are these perceptions are impacted directly through the EoW as well as indirectly as a result of this platform.

### 4.2. Research design

Since the early research on power, authors have argued that when exploring power relations, the context needs to be clearly defined (Meehan and Wright, 2012). Therefore, this research is based on a case study that was explored with qualitative research methods. This was chosen bearing in mind the uniqueness of the EoW platform and to be able to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of the different



stakeholders in the unique context of this platform. This method was prioritised as it provides opportunities to get an "in-depth understanding" of the specific case (Creswell, 2007, p. 74), which was important as no research focusing on similar platforms or initiatives could be identified.

### 4.3. Data collection & analysis

#### 4.3.1. *Sampling & collection*

To gather data, a combination of primary and secondary methods was used to gain a more holistic understanding of the sphere of action of the EoW platform (Creswell, 2007).

Secondary data was extracted from texts on the EoW platform to gain an understanding of the platform, its goals and progress so far. This was done prior to collecting primary data to learn about the context and after choosing the participants to learn about their activity on the platform, where possible.

Primary data was obtained through nine semi-structured interviews lasting between 45-60 minutes conducted with stakeholders that have been directly involved in working with the platform. In preparation, an interview guide (Appendix A) was developed to ensure that the most important questions were included in every interview to ensure comparability between the participants (Patton, 2022). However, it was not too detailed to allow space for flexibility to explore sub-topics that are more interesting for the participants (Patton, 2022). As the geographical locations of the participants were so different, predicting the most important issues in advance was not possible; therefore, I wanted to ensure that time was allocated for follow-up and additional questions to learn about the local context. Moreover, before each interview, the guide was revisited to tailor for the specifics of the participant's position and based on lessons learned from the first few interviews. Consequently, some of the guide questions were rephrased and their order was altered to improve the flow of the future interviews.

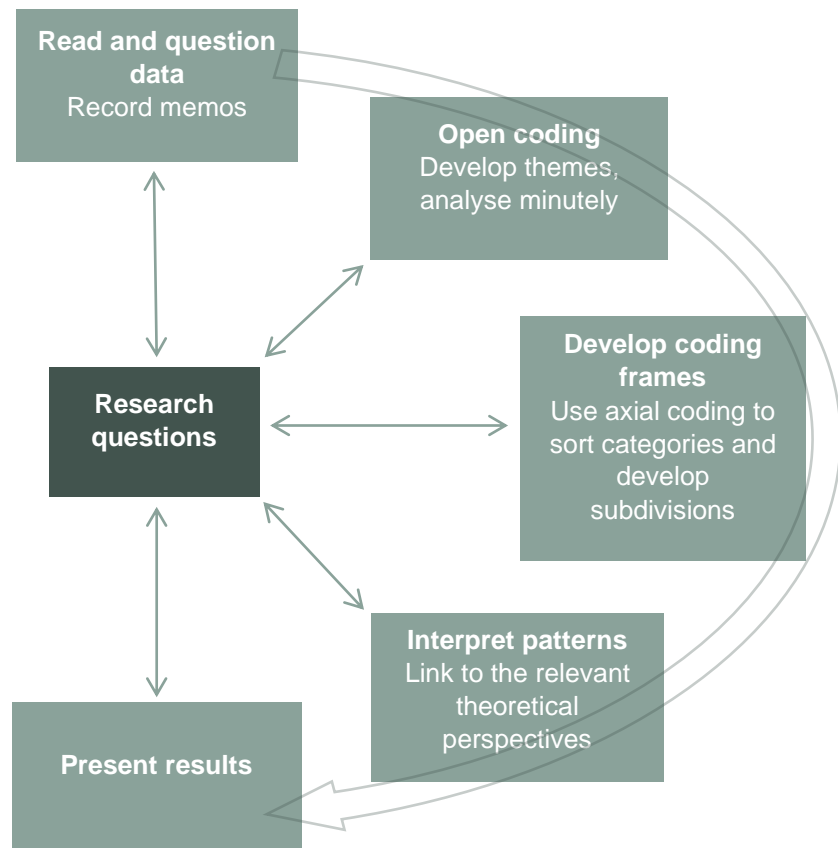
Purposive sampling method was used to recruit all interviewees – individuals that could "have the experience or expertise to provide quality information and valuable insights" (Denscombe, 2014, p. 41) about "the central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Two main criteria were used when approaching participants: the stakeholder group they are representing and whether they are directly involved with working with the EoW platform. I was interested in talking to representatives from four

stakeholder groups: the platform representatives, roasters, farmers, and customers. Due to currently having only one roaster part of the platform and having a close collaboration with it, the roaster and the EoW representatives were merged to represent one – buyers. Customers were chosen from the hospitality sector instead of end-consumers as they procure much larger amount of coffee and therefore hold more influence than one coffee drinker.

I tried to use the platform to gather contact details or reach out directly through it to participants from two stakeholder groups (farmers or their representatives and customers), however, failed to hear back from them. Therefore, the first interviews were conducted with representatives from the EoW to provide background context and their view of the platform and then further participants were chosen based on snowballing method – by relying on a gatekeeper who got us in touch. Whilst this introduces possible limitations (see Section 4.5), using a snowballing method increased my credibility and therefore trust from potential participants, as well as ensured that the participants aligned with the recruitment requirements (Denscombe, 2014). To determine the sample size, a pragmatic approach was carried out, due to the small scale and non-probability sampling strategy of this research.

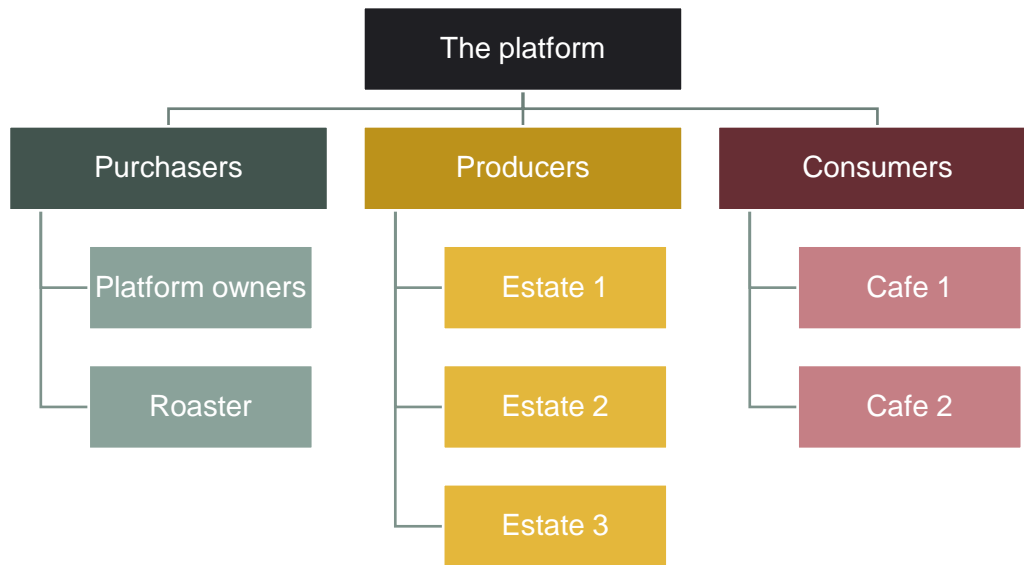
#### 4.3.2. *Data analysis*

To conduct qualitative content analysis of the data obtained, all interviews were transcribed *verbatim* and, by using the NVIVO software, thematically analysed (Figure 2). The analysis was started by reading through the transcript and writing down all thoughts as memos (Kuckartz, 2014). Open coding was done to note all repeated themes. This inductive thinking was applied as it facilitates a higher level of reflection of the topics mentioned by the participants (Patton, 2002). Then connections were established between the different themes. Lastly, the data was deductively analysed according to the theoretical framework used to split the different power examples mentioned in four types.



**Figure 2:** The process of qualitative content analysis

Even though just one case was being examined, the different stakeholder representatives came from unique contexts, therefore, the analysis of the case was layered (Figure 3). As a result, both individual and cross-case analyses were performed (Patton, 2002). This way, I hoped to account for documenting the stories of each interviewee – each single “case” – whilst also comparing them to the experiences of others, as well as positioning them in the context of the platform – the case of this research.



**Figure 3:** The layers and nests of cases explored

#### 4.4. Ethical considerations

##### 4.4.1. *Ethical considerations of data gathering*

Prior to data collection, various ethical aspects of data collection and use were considered. To ensure prior and informed consent, each participant was sent an information sheet (Appendix B) that explains the research goals and biases, data use, storage and anonymity aspects, as well as the expectations of time requirements, costs and benefits that can occur due to participation (Creswell, 2007). This was sent together with a consent form (Appendix C) that stated specific agreements to clarify what exactly is it that the participant is agreeing to by taking part in this research. In cases where the consent form could not be signed and sent back before the interview, these points were re-visited to obtain verbal consent before asking any other research-specific questions. To ensure anonymity, the participants' names, pronouns, and details about their positions, like the names of the estate, were not included in the paper. Recordings were stored only on my computer and deleted after data analysis was finished.

#### *4.4.2. Reflections on positionality*

Throughout the whole research process, it was important to continuously reflect on my positionality. Qualitative research, including interviewing, has been controversial due to the potentially exploitative relationship between the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2007). Inspired by Kvale (2006), Creswell (2007, p.140), explains that “interview is actually a hierarchical relationship with an asymmetrical power distribution between the interviewer and interviewee”. It needs to be stressed that this power dynamic was most likely exacerbated by me contacting all participants through a gatekeeper (*ibid.*). Due to data protection requirements, no contact details of potential participants could be shared with me, and they were approached with a question to participate directly through the gatekeeper, which, however, was from a roaster company that has tight business relations with them. Based on this, one can question whether true consent was achieved or whether the motivation to participate was driven, for example, by the eagerness to stay in the good graces of the purchaser (Nunkoosing, 2005).

It was important to practice self-reflectivity also due to potential biases being introduced as a result of my positionality. Specifically, having lived my whole life and obtained academic training solely in European countries and Canada, my background has shaped how I perceive the world and its processes. I kept reflecting on this in data gathering and analysis to recognise that my background can lead to me not “acknowledging all dimensions of the [interviewees’] experiences” (Creswell, 2007, p. 139). And, in a similar vein, my positionality is potentially problematic regarding whether the participants felt comfortable enough that they could trust me, and I would not misinterpret their history, cultural identity, and the struggles that they experience in their lives and work (Craswell, 2005).

Whilst these considerations lead to thinking that total power balance in interviews is not possible, I implemented some actions to balance the power dynamics between me and the interviewees. Using in-depth, semi-structured interviews allowed to give more voice to the participants to share their views and opinions than more structured methods and surveys (Craswell, 2007). Additionally, I hoped to reduce the power disbalance that arises from the producers being located in countries and contexts that I have never experienced myself by interacting with different stakeholder groups from settings similar to mine and only producers were located outside of Europe. Whilst the cultural and power differences between me and these participants would have never been completely eradicated, I tried to reduce them by talking to farmers in only two

countries and therefore having more time to learn about their backgrounds and local context.

#### 4.5. Limitations

Various limitations can be linked to the chosen research methods. A key criticism is the small sample size of each stakeholder group and the lack of consistency between the number of interviews of stakeholders from different regions. As the interviewed farmers were located in vastly different geographical locations, the depth of data grounding in the local context and therefore quality of analysis was limited. In further studies, researchers could adopt a more purposeful sampling and choose participants from either of the following. Firstly, from similar geo-political contexts to reduce the possibility of such external factors influencing factors, such as their opportunities and preferred farming practices. Alternatively, by interviewing more people from each estate, a more comparative data approach could be used as the representativeness of each estate would have increased. This would have increased the practical use of the research, as further studies could use the findings to contrast or build on them. Instead, this research focuses on the lived experiences of specific stakeholders to provide an outline of power dynamics in a specific case, not systematically compare different stakeholder groups. As such, the generalisability of this study is very slim, which can be seen as a limitation.

Furthermore, I need to stress possible limitations due to the chosen sampling method. Whilst I vocalised multiple times that I am not connected to the platform or the roaster company, by having reached out to farmers through the roaster, a potential bias was introduced. This is because of having gained access to data through the company most likely changes my ascribed identity – how I am perceived by the participants (Hammett et al., 2014). Based on this, as already discussed in positionality considerations, the reliability of the results could have been compromised if the participants did not feel comfortable sharing the aspects that might be perceived as critical towards the roasters. There was also no way to check for this bias as accessing participants through a gatekeeper can potentially lead to the recruitment of like-minded people that either represent specific values that align with the gatekeeper or are in closer contact with them (Denscombe, 2014). As a result, all of these considerations lead to concerns about representability and validity, which, however, further negatively

impact the generalisability of results, which is already relatively low, as the chosen research design is a qualitative case study (Denscombe, 2014).

Lastly, language differences also need to be acknowledged as a limitation. All interviews were conducted in English, which therefore limited the number of possible participants only to ones who felt comfortable speaking the language (Patton, 2002). Additionally, a potential language barrier needs to be recognised regarding the analysis of interview data – as both the researcher and all participants were not native English speakers, the true meaning behind specific words used to describe a situation or feeling could have been lost in translation (Patton, 2002). Whilst this could have been potentially overcome by using an interpreter to translate, the researcher did not have access to resources to ensure that the translators have “special and very precise training” (p. 392) without which new biases could have arisen, such as simplification, loss or modification of meaning that is lost in the process of iteration and translation (Patton, 2002).

## 5. Results and discussion

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This section presents the findings of this study in accordance with the previously proposed research questions (RQ). Chapter 5.1. addresses RQ1: What power dynamics are present in the coffee supply chain? And RQ2: What is the role of different power types in achieving a sustainable coffee value chain? To achieve this, findings are structured accordingly to the GVC typology of power (Dallas et al., 2017). Afterwards, Chapter 5.2 presents findings on the RQ3: How is the EoW platform perceived to influence the existing power dynamics in the coffee value chain?

### 5.1. Power in the coffee industry

The data showed that all four types of power are present in the coffee value chains that the interviewed participants are part of. Nonetheless, the significance of how often they are noticed and interacted with, as well as what is their level of influence on the processes underlining coffee industry differ. This section explores each of the four types of power in more detail.

#### 5.1.1. Bargaining power

Bargaining power of different stakeholders was by far the most often mentioned form of power perceived in the coffee value chain. The bargaining power of farmers in comparison to the purchasing companies was often noted by different participants and the overarching consensus was that producers have less power than the buyers. This difference was highlighted regarding price determination based on the produce that was offered. In most cases the farmers whose produce had high sustainability and other quality aspects could potentially bargain for a higher price. For example, Producer A shared their experience: *“The roaster will tell you ‘please, at this quality I can only pay you this much’ and to me it is just a little bit of a top-down approach.”* Further, they voiced that *“the pie is a little bit determined on what you can present the market in terms of consistency, quality, and also, yes, definitely the fluctuation in the market. But rather the producer cannot decide too much.”* Similarly, Producer C said: *“The higher [in the supply chain] you are, the more value you are harvesting from the coffee.”* This suggests that whilst the farmers can influence the decisions to some



extent, such as by increasing the quality of their produce, the top of the value chain hold most of the power, which has also been repeatedly argued in literature (e.g., Tuoi et al., 2022).

This has direct effects on sustainability – as bargaining power was mostly seen as the ability to determine prices, lack of it for farmers meant reduced financial sustainability. This was also voiced by one interviewee: *“By the time everything comes down to the farmer – the real profit is very small. [...] Very little of the margin trickles down to the farmer”* (Producer C). This confirms the conclusions of the literature review that within SCM one’s bargaining power is central in determining financial sustainability.

At the same time, however, data showed that the power difference is also utilised to motivate sustainability. Some stakeholders were using it to test the producers to increase quality and sustainability. *“If we have a new supplier, they need to of course do a certain assessment that we have [...] to see that they are also capable from the quality [not just taste]”* (Buyer A). Building on this, interviews also revealed that this was used to motivate more sustainable production practices. When doing that, power differences between different roasters were also identified as they could impose additional requirements. *“For some companies, we have a couple of practices, which is for Starbuck mostly, there are a lot of requirements that ideally, do not only benefit the buyer, but also have to have privileges to the producers”* (Producer A). Similar to conclusions in literature (e.g., Sarkis et al., 2011, Meehan and Wrights, 2012), these are clear examples of how roasters use their power to influence the SC according to their values and priorities.

The different stakeholder groups, however, expressed slight differences in the role of the roasters’ power over producers. Namely, a representative from the purchasers linked the roasters’ power with consumers: *“The end consumers, which is very much the most important stakeholders in the coffee industry, which choosing their coffee and valuing the coffee itself when buying and drinking it”* (Buyer C). Because of this position, the participant stressed that the platform is *“focusing very much on roaster brands because they are very central in communicating with the end consumers”* (Buyer C). Hence, whilst they acknowledge the important role of roasters, this suggests that their role is also seen as influencing consumers to invest in more sustainable products which in turn will result in the benefits for farmers being passed through the roaster. Seeing the roaster as an intermediary that connects consumers and farmers was also supported to overcome the barrier of highly fractured SC with many small-scale farmers.

Moreover, bargaining power differences were noted also between different farmers. Importantly, farm size was linked with access to resources and, therefore, increased bargaining power. *“The smaller the farmer, the less bargaining power you have. If you are larger, you might be able to tap into other income streams.”* (Producer C). This also highlights that small farmers are more dependent on the business that purchases their produce as they might not have the means to look for alternative buyers.

Power shifts often happen at the expense of the other actor’s level of power due to which it has been seen as undesirable for the organisation losing their influence (Cox et al., 2002), however, buying from small sized farms was seen to present additional challenges:

*“A very small farm... It may be hard to sell that directly to a roaster because only very small roasters buy that quantities and then it’s a very complex thing to follow the different coffee around and it gets very expensive as well.”* (Buyer C)

Whilst this does not mean that the company was willing to give away their power, this motivates us to think about additional costs and benefits than just one’s ability to bargain for the smallest price.

Some participants touched upon gendered differences of bargaining power of individual farmers. Specifically, women have often had little or no opportunities to gain profits from farming. Even though women were explained to have always been involved in agricultural activities, they do not earn money from it: *“many times that sort of women are just subsistence farmers”* (Producer B). Moreover, women farmers also often had very small plot sizes, which raises concerns about additional barriers, as discussed in previous paragraphs. Some interviewees mentioned directly working with farmers to reduce these gender inequalities and they have noticed that *“there has been a lot of progress”* (Producer B). Nonetheless, this confirms that gendered inequalities in agriculture are a widespread challenge in achieving more sustainable food systems (Farnworth et al., 2020).

Subsequently, a reoccurring theme was the bargaining power of individual farmers and their strategies on how to increase it. Obtaining certification was mentioned as a key tool to communicate quality and sustainability standards and thereby negotiate higher prices. *“The three pillars were already there... just using the certificates help to show this.”* (Producer C). *“We have to pay extra [to the farmers], because the coffee is certified, we have to be the best market price”* (Producer A). The beneficial characteristic of the signalling effect of certificates has been acknowledged also by

other stakeholders. Both interviewed customers mentioned certificates as an easy tool to check for basic sustainability standards. *“You can tick off the boxes of all the important points”* (Consumer A). Notably, the importance for certificates was stressed also in the context of other sustainability aspects beyond just income for farmers. They were seen as a way to motivate and ensure more sustainable practices, such as regarding the aforementioned *“domestic gender issues that need to be handled”* (Producer A).

*“It [obtaining certificates] was important because I was living overseas so it helped me to keep my systems and the people who lived on the right way – the labour and all the people who work to keep them on the right track.”*  
(Producer C)

However, it needs to be recognised that not always did the certificates help to communicate all sustainability achievements as some coffee producers' standards exceeded the requirements. *“Above and beyond what is stated in Rainforest Alliance manuals”* (Producer C). In light with the literature that certifications do not always achieve increased customer willingness to buy (Lingnau et al., 2019), this raises concerns about relying on them as the main source of sustainability signalling, potentially undervaluing the farmers' efforts. Therefore, caution is needed to ensure EoW avoids contributing to these concerns and instead builds these tools' strengths. For further discussion on this, see 5.2.1.

Another key strategy for increasing the bargaining power of farmers was through organising themselves in cooperatives. As a result, these farmers benefitted from a direct, collective type of power – institutional – that enabled the bargaining power of the collective. The specifics of this institutional type of power are explored in Chapter 5.1.2.

As a result, it can be concluded that the results highly aligned with literature on power that in SCM power is mainly felt as the ability to bargain and influence decisions. However, the results also showed that depending on the specific context, the specific power dynamics between individual farmers might differ, such as in a case of being from a context in which women are not usually commercial farmers.

### 5.1.2. Institutional power

The research also revealed an abundance of direct, collective forms of power that shape the coffee industry. Whilst very country-specific, the most significant one was government policies setting specific requirements or the lack of them. The actions of the national government were sometimes criticised for prioritising the interests of the big companies. For example, the structure of the country determined how liberal is the market and as such – what are the opportunities for farmers to bargain for a higher price. As a result, the institutional power of government policies enabled the bargaining power of roaster and traders but reduced the bargaining power of farmers.

Lack of government interventions was also highlighted as a concern by customers. *“If I buy certified, I hope that it is a bit better for them, they get a bit more income [...] in a country with high levels of poverty... if without it they don't have enough government support”* (Consumer B)

Government power also shaped the availability of opportunities for farmers, such as the access to different coffee varieties. This, however, restricted the farmers' autonomy to grow coffee types that they could have preferred better, such as because of higher yield or sustainability characteristics.

*“One [problem] which is not their [the farmers'] own problem is the issues of variety, the variety of coffee that they grow here, because it is regulated by the government. So, for instance, you cannot introduce a variety in Uganda unless it's approved by the government.”* (Producer A).

However, these findings were not ubiquitous as some specific government actions were seen as empowering. By pushing policies, these governments were increasing the farmers' access to resources and, thereby, improving their bargaining position.

*“Fortunately, in India we have a very nicely structured coffee market where farmers can access the credits. And it is not a very exploitative system. Almost a collaborative approach. [...] Indian government has been very strong about labour laws, to the point where the tea and coffee industries are one of the few that have to provide proper living conditions.”* (Producer C)

*“From all four regions in India we have another [national organisation] that tries to bring support to coffee growers. We predominantly have small*

*farmers 1-2ac, so they try to make sure they don't miss our anything. For example, they help get fertiliser.” (Producer C)*

Additionally, the free market was also seen as a potential advantage that drives sustainability for farmers that had the power to choose between different buyers to sell to.

*“Our coffee sector is it is a very liberal economy it is open for any buyer to come on board, come on buy coffee from farmers and our the farmers are motivated [to sell to a company if] number one, are you helping them on extension are you train them to improve their productivity, are you training them to handle pests and diseases, are you training them to ensure that they're putting the right inputs and [...] are you able to give them good market at fair, good price.” (Producer A)*

These findings showcase that depending on the local context, the role of government's institutional power differed. Specifically, the importance of this form of power differed between stakeholder groups as they are influenced by it differently. Nonetheless, this confirms that institutions have a significant role in shaping development processes (Grabs and Ponte, 2019).

Furthermore, another significant form of institutional power was through direct collaborations. The role of farmer collaboratives was highlighted in gaining opportunities that were not available individually. When talking about accessing wet mills, Producer D noted: *“Because the farmers will not manage if they [the coffee beans] were to process at home.”* Both Producers A and B represented a collaborative and explained the benefits of accessing resources, knowledge, and training that allow the farmers to increase the quality and sustainability of the produce and be able to argue for a higher price. *“They have been having a lot of privileges because then their quality is always much more better. So, they get much more better price.”* (Producer A). By being part of a collaborative, the farmers together could sell their produce at prices higher than the average. This was also supported by some purchasers. *“Could be cooperatives, could be other types of clusters for this, for these farms to reach a bigger part of the coffee industry and to sell the coffee”* (Buyer C).

However, being part of a collective was also seen as concerning if not all members of the organisation had high sustainability and quality standards. *“Not all these clusters can be onboarded to the platform. It has to be traced back and so we can argue for different farming methods and so on because different farms in different clusters can be very much using different methods.”* (Buyer B). As such, this shows the different

perceptions of various stakeholders, depending on what are their priorities – to achieve consistent quality or to empower specific farmers.

The benefits of institutional power were captured through collaborations between different stakeholders as well. Interviewers revealed that participants often work with actors like NGOs and across the supply chain to share knowledge and resources and implement sustainability initiatives.

*“If we want to produce coffee from a very happy community, then we need to engage and put resources together and make sure that this guy is able to produce coffee back in a very happy home. So that's how we bring many, many, many partners together”* (Producer B)

As a result, the overarching takeaway from the interviews was that this type of power was highly influential. Notably, the most influence it had was in correspondence with other types of power – by enabling or diminishing the bargaining power of individual actors.

### *5.1.3. Demonstrative power*

Data also showed that there are some indirect (diffuse) types of power relations. These, however, were less often noted by the participants, as was expected due to the less obvious nature of this type of power (Dallas et al., 2017).

Notably, two participants directly voiced examples of where demonstrative power could be observed. They explained how the roaster carefully selects which suppliers to purchase from. And, if an estate does not have high enough quality and sustainability level, they are not officially bought from, but by showing interest and providing feedback, the roaster hoped to motivate the farmers to step up. *“But the quality is not enough, so we are waiting until they will work on it”* (Buyer A). Buyer B expressed similar beliefs of having an indirect positive effect on the farmers' sustainability: *“But we can be a driving positive force by choosing the good ones that are good examples.”*

Lastly, the interviews also suggested that demonstrative power is exercised in collaboratives by sharing best practice. By collaboratively accessing resources and information, as well as sharing their experience and knowledge, the farmers were expected to increase their sustainability and quality standards, even if this was not voiced as an official agreement.

To conclude, the lack of findings of this power suggest that it is either not as influential as more direct types or simply not as visible, as has also been suggested in literature (Benton and Maloni, 2005). However, if this form of power is actually present but not noticed, the influence of it is potentially underestimated.

#### *5.1.4. Constitutive power*

The interviews revealed a few different kinds of constitutive type of power. The most notable form of it was the overreaching awareness that sustainability is something that is desired. *“Those kinds of questions are really much in debate in this society right now and, and in very much of interest.”* (Buyer C).

Some interviewees also expressed the importance of this in driving sustainability in the coffee industry. Producer C even explained that: *“if the consumers could touch and feel... could own some projects beyond just a label on the pack – if they could find a way to engage with consumers could be very powerful.”* This suggests that customers have the desire to purchase sustainable products and that providing them with additional information about the farmers’ stories would tap into this form of constitutive power to further sustainability in the coffee industry. Indeed, the role of public awareness has been argued as highly beneficial in achieving sustainable development goals (Borawska, 2017).

Utilising constitutive power was also suggested to motivate people to take part in coffee growing to ensure the future of the field. Specifically, Producer B stressed: *“we need to do a lot of development, in terms of sensitising the youth, especially because Uganda has a very young population.”* This is especially important as almost 78% of Uganda’s population are under 30 (UBOS, 2023). However, as globally concerns have been expressed about the lack of enthusiastic and skilled youth willing to work in agriculture (Leavy and Hossain, 2014), similar considerations could be extended to different agriculture-dependent countries as well. As such, being aware of the effects of widespread norms is important as they can influence the growth and stability of a coffee market in that specific country.

Moreover, this form of power was revealed in the traditions of the people involved in coffee production. It suggests that the interest in growing coffee and ensuring its sustainability are widely accepted and deemed desirable by coffee-growing communities. *“Coffee ideally is the main that almost literally every household. You*

*must have coffee farm is a traditional just the memory line of, of the region. So, people take coffee very passionately.” (Producer B)*

*“For many centuries the people of Keul the people have been very sustainable. Without using the term, for almost 150 years. [...] Our ancestors believed in sacred forest – even now in every village there are certain pockets where there are forests that no one is permitted to enter and cut, even grass.” (Producer C)*

Lastly, constitutive power could be observed regarding gender dynamics between farmers. Specifically, the issues related to women not being able to participate in commercial farming were facilitated by local beliefs of gender norms. *“Coming from the background that men needed to own everything in the family, you know, women are not you know, they're supposed to listen from a distance, men to decide the use for the money... it has been a problem.” (Producer A).* Nonetheless, the interviews revealed that working with the bargaining power of individual female farmers, such as by providing them with resources and information, over time, has reduced the influence of the conservative gender dynamics.

#### *5.1.5. Concluding remarks on the four types of power*

It is important to note that there are many links between the different types of power. Indeed, the presented findings suggest that the different types of power are interconnected – one form of power might empower or reduce a different type. A noteworthy example of this is the high level of bargaining power of roasters that arose due to the institutional power of the Ugandan policies. As noted by the interviewees, the free market system in Uganda has led to collectively roasters having significant power to determine quality, sustainability requirements and price. A similar power dependence could also be observed in customer-roaster and roaster-producer interactions. The constitutive power of customers demanding sustainability from roasters indirectly shapes the dyadic relationship between roasters and farmers as the sustainability requirements are being passed down the supply chain. It could even be argued that this situation further impacts other power types. In case where the farmers do not have the capability to increase their sustainability, the new pressure to meet the requirements grows the bargaining power of collaboratives as their help is required.

Additionally, the findings illustrate that the four power types in the coffee industry are very fluid – the same power interaction between two individuals or groups can change



from being dyadic to more collective or from direct to diffuse and vice versa. This could be seen in farmers joining together in collectives (using institutional power) to increase their bargaining power by accessing resources, obtaining certificates, and seizing new market opportunities. Working with gender dynamics and inequalities is another example of this. Namely, the participants expressed that they want to achieve wide-scale change – achieve that women’s rights become a form of constitutive power in a group by working with individual people and boosting their bargaining power.

Meehan and Wright (2012) stress that not enough research has focused on the origins of power and as such whether different forms of power are distinct or interlinked has not been addressed. Whilst further research should elaborate on the significance of these interlinkages, this conclusion is an important contribution to literature on power dynamics in business relationships.

## 5.2. The platform

In line with the power relations identified by the participants, they were also encouraged to share their perceptions on how does the EoW platform impact them. This section further explores this by focusing on the motivation to join and future expectations of what the platform has a potential to achieve. Then, this is set in the context of the current progress, as well as the current progress and challenges that, if not addressed, might negatively impact the platform's ability to fulfil this potential.

### 5.2.1. Expectations

When asked about their motivation to take part in the platform, participants mentioned a few different expectations. Of these, the overwhelmingly often mentioned motivation was to increase transparency. This, however, was driven by various end-goals. The common answer stressed by all respondents was to help farmers communicate their sustainability and quality standards to access new markets and get higher incomes. As Producer C put it: *“This is more of a reason why we need initiatives like the EoW. So, farmers can gain a bigger share. So, there is an equitable distribution, to a certain extent.”* Similarly, Producer B, for example, stated: *“Exposure to help them [the farmers] get an even better market.”*

Closely linked with this, the data also showed the importance of sharing the farmers' stories – who they are, what are their values and what is the work that has been put into achieving the level of sustainability that they have. *“Help tell the [farmers'] story. [...] Show that in different regions it could be different sustainability initiatives.”* (Producer C). *“Most important, how it has been, all the values behind the coffee, how it has been grown and how sustainable those methods are [...] in the value chain all the way down to the end consumer drinking the coffee.”* (Buyer C). As such, this suggests that the platform is expected to target one of the most prominent power dynamics in the coffee industry. By providing farmers with opportunities to market themselves better and reach new clients, it hopes to increase their bargaining power.

Having said that, some differences could be observed between the different stakeholders regarding the impact on their respective power. Specifically, the producers hoped to increase their own bargaining power *“hoping to push away the middlemen, the people that exploit them [the farmers]”* (Producer A), whilst some buyers hoped that the farmers' incomes would be increased from the customers paying more, without reducing their own profits: *“lift the prices of the coffee all the way down to the farmer”* (Buyer C). As such, different perceptions of how to reduce poverty could be noticed, which has been an ongoing debate in the development field – whether poverty can be reduced by increasing the income of the wealthy as well, the so-called “trickle down growth” (Aghion and Bolton, 1997).

Hearing the full story of how the coffee has been made was also highlighted for more practical reasons. *“It offers sourcing transparency”* (Producer B) to increase the ability of purchasers and customers to inform themselves about the origins of the coffee and, therefore, improve traceability and decision-making.

*“It's a lot of data and information in the world and also in the coffee world, of course, and this needs to be packaged really, really carefully in an engaging and experiential way so that the consumers can receive it and really find an interest in it to value it.”* (Buyer C)

Interestingly, these findings show that motivation to participate in the platform to a large extent overlaps with the reasons for obtaining certificates (see Chapter 5.1.1 on findings on the use of certificates). One participant even pointed out that the platform is *“complementing certifications”* (Producer C). As such, the platform can play an important role if it utilises already existing tools but also works to mitigate their flaws and build on their strengths.

Moreover, the purchasers outlined expectations that they hope to see from the platform in the future – to expand beyond just marketing and purchasing specific bags of coffee. They hope to add possibilities for customers to also contribute to sustainability programs directly through the platform, not just read about them: *“how do the end consumers and different parts of the end of the value chain can invest and develop things in and around farms”* (Buyer C). Based on the analysis of impact of such programs (Chapter 5.1), this suggests that customers would be able to contribute to farmers’ bargaining power also indirectly by supporting projects that help them obtain resources and opportunities.

### 5.2.2. Progress and challenges

Participants also explored to what extent these expectations have come true. Regarding their experience of being part of the platform, the overall perception was very positive. *“I think a lot many more people want to join in, and they want to be part of the future that EoW can give to the producers.”* (Producer B)

For some, the participation in the platform has already resulted in visible benefits. *“The farmers have had exposure, which is good, it sparks even more passion”* (Producer D). And the increased profits lead to other benefits: *“Now that they're getting better pricing, they're producing better quality”* (Producer C). Therefore, the experiences of these producers are a tangible proof that the initiative has the potential to fulfil the main expectation of increased farmer bargaining power.

Nonetheless, various challenges were also mentioned. Importantly, the participants stressed that, whilst they have had some sales, currently the platform is not bringing in sufficient amounts of sales to have a long-lasting effect. *“The volumes that we've exported are not really a lot”* (Producer B). As a result, the interviews hinted that participation will be more beneficial when the platform has taken off and has become self-marketing. When talking about their estate, Producer A said: *“What the platform requires, it is actually a perfect fit for them. Because of all these farmers [...], I see they're really excelling on the platform, because we will not require a lot of innovation”*. At the same time, however, Producer B expressed: *“Currently, the volumes we have exported is not a lot. We still require a lot of marketing. The platform should be a self-marketing tool.”* This suggests that at current levels, marketing still depends on the producers’ abilities.

Building on this, concerns arise about possible inequalities within the platform. If smaller farmers do not have resources to spare for marketing and brand-building activities, this leads to questions whether they can take full advantage of the platform. Hence, the potential to increase one's bargaining power might be unequal between the different farmer groups. This builds on the previously introduced literature that different farmers experience different levels of competitiveness (Olsen, 1993) by suggesting that the same might be true in eCommerce environments as well.

Furthermore, the data also revealed how potential power differences between farmers might affect their ability to utilise it. This is important considering that to participate in the platform, the farmers need to have significant quality and sustainability standards and a system to prove them, such as through certificates. *"Small scale farmers – at this point not possible. Very difficult to engage with them because of some of the realities they have. [...] they don't have access to finances."* (Producer C). Indeed, this has been a key criticism of the overreliance on certification system as a means to communicate sustainability levels, as they create entry barriers, such as not having enough resources to afford the certification process (Lingnau et al., 2019). Hence, one is left to question whether this platform does not contribute to the same dynamics that the less resourceful farmers are excluded. In the context of the platform's goals to improve the bargaining power of farmers, the most marginalised ones might still be left behind. Based on this, if not all farmers can participate, the potential for this platform to reach a disruptive scale could be compromised.

Lastly, some participants also mentioned country-specific aspects that could negatively affect opportunities for sustainable coffee production in the future. Whilst this is not a direct criticism towards the platform, it currently does not play a role to affect them. This can be seen as a challenge for the platform to reach a disruptive scale. Firstly, a participant mentioned the lack of access to microfinance or loans to improve sustainability standards to be able to join the platform. This once again builds on the criticism whether this platform is inclusive of small-scale and resource-less farmers. Secondly, a different interviewee raised issues of country-specific regulations: *"you cannot introduce a variety in Uganda unless it's approved by the government"* (Producer B). As a result, these farmers' ability to compete with offerings from other countries might be negatively affected if an alternative variety, not available in Uganda, is more demanded. On a similar note, Producer A stressed that the platform does not overcome the instability that arises from Uganda's coffee market structure. Lastly, two producers stressed the changing demographics in a country, namely, that more

attention should be given to inspiring the youth to take part in coffee farming to maintain the industry in the country.

As a result, it can be concluded that there are a variety of challenges that are currently not addressed by the platform. The data showed that the platform developers should pay attention both to direct criticisms, but also indirect challenges that might affect their success, such as country-specific regulations.

## 6. Conclusion

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Through semi-structured interviews, this research explored the power dynamics that are perceived and at the focus of a new innovation – the EoW platform. Dallas et al. (2017) proposed a typology of four types of power relationships that can be divided across four categories – whether it is dyadic or collective and transmitted directly or diffusely. The data showed that four types of power are present in the platform’s sphere of influence, however, they were attributed different levels of influence. As also aligns with literature (Meehan and Wright, 2012), the most often highlighted power relation was the bargaining power between farmers and buyers. This is also the power relation directly targeted by the EoW.

However, the data also revealed that the platform has not had a wide-scale effect yet and various challenges can limit its ability to fulfil the expected positive effect on farmers’ bargaining power. It is important that the platform addressed potential inequalities between farmers, not just in buyer-producer relationships. Additionally, some participants also noted the existence of institutional power of governments. This, however, is highly context-specific and cannot be directly addressed by the platform.

Demonstrative and constitutive forms of power were less often highlighted, perhaps unsurprisingly as they have indirect influences and as such are often less noticed (Dallas et al., 2017). Nonetheless, almost no examples of demonstrative power could be observed, which suggests a unique research gap to explore whether they are not present or are simply dismissed and as such potentially underestimated in shaping market processes in the coffee industry.

The paper also concludes that the four types of power are highly interlinked. As the EoW is actively targeting the bargaining power of farmers by giving them opportunities to build their brand and set prices, this suggests that it needs to be done by also recognising the potential barriers and influences of the three other types of power. Namely, local differences like gender norms and policies need to be kept in mind to ensure that no inequalities are not deepened. Nonetheless, further research would be beneficial to address in more detail how the different forms of power that can be identified as existing across the value chain at the same time interact. This could include looking at the influence of roasters to provide resources and training and the constitutive power of general norms for sustainability to see how they complement and/or compete with each other.

Having applied a multi-stakeholder perspective, this paper also contributed to the power research in coffee value chain settings. It showed that there are some differences between the different stakeholder groups on what forms of power they experience the most. This is an important consideration as the EoW aims to foster connections between different stakeholders, therefore, the platform developers should work in close collaboration with these actors to ensure that the different perspectives are heard and incorporated in platform management. Further research should build on applying the multi-stakeholder perspective and expanding on the sampling size of each stakeholder group to account better for differences between the different countries and estates. Linked with this, exploring the differences between different types of farms, such as one estate and cooperatives could be useful and highly interesting.

Overall, this research provided an insight that the EoW, whilst it phrases itself as disrupting coffee trade processes, currently has not achieved a large-scale effect. However, it also showed high support from different stakeholders, which therefore suggests that if the platform developers are wary of the previously mentioned limitations, EoW has the potential to improve the farmers' bargaining power. If this happens, the farmers would have more opportunities to showcase their unique sustainability achievements and determine coffee prices, therefore helping them achieve economic sustainability as well.

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# List of Appendices

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## Appendix A: Interview guide

### Introduction

- 1) Could you tell me about yourself – how long have you worked with coffee and what is your position now?

### Coffee industry

- 2) What does sustainability in coffee industry mean to you?
- 3) In your experience, which actors are the main drivers that demand sustainability in coffee industry?
- 4) How do you at XXX work with sustainability?
- 5) Do you think your sustainability efforts are recognised by other actors?
- 6) When talking about the coffee industry, what do you think is the role of cooperation with other partners in achieving sustainability?
- 7) Have you observed any power dynamics in the coffee industry today? Could you elaborate what are these?
  - a. In your opinion, how do they impact how companies and farmers work with sustainability?
  - b. Have the power dynamics changed in any way lately?
- 8) What do you see is the role of different stakeholders in managing the power dynamics?

### Era of We (EoW)

- 9) Why did you join the EoW?
- 10) What do you hope to get out of participating in the EoW?
- 11) Can you name any power dynamics that are present within Era of We?
  - a. Any that the platform addresses?
- 12) What has been your experience so far as part of Era of We?
  - a. What has been the progress?
- 13) If you think about the future, what potential challenges do you see within how the Era of We works?
  - a. What might be holding people back from taking part of EoW?
  - b. How are different stakeholders impacted by these challenges?

## **Conclusion**

14) Going forward, what role do you imagine initiatives like Era of We will play in 5-10 years?

**Questions?**

**Thank you!**



## Appendix B: Participant information sheet

Date: 07.04.2023

### Information about participating in interviews

You are invited to take part in a master's thesis research project. Please take time to read the following information carefully and decide whether or not you wish to take part. Feel free to ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

#### About this research

This research is conducted by a University of Lund MSc International Development and Management student. The aim of this research is to explore the supplier engagement methods used by a coffee producer and understand how sustainability and power dynamics is managed through a new innovation – the Era of We project. By doing this, I hope to shine light on the importance of transparency and collaboration between suppliers and purchasers as well as provide insights into the viability of such interventions when driving sustainability across an industry.

#### Participation and withdrawing

You have been chosen as a participant because you are directly involved in the work of Era of We project or are Era of We's partner (roaster, farmer or estate representative, or consumer)

Participants are asked to engage in one interview (approximately 40-60 min), which will be conducted online and recorded. All interview questions will be open ended, and the participant can decide whether or not to reply to the question and how much to elaborate on each. Besides the interview, no other data will be gathered from the participant.

Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary and the participant can withdraw at any time without the need to provide a reason. No penalties are associated with refusal to participate in the research.

### Benefits and risks of participation

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for the people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will build on the existing discussion about supplier engagement and contribute to the de-stigmatization of conversations about power management.

There are no risks associated with participation in the research.

### Data use and protection

The storage and use of data comply with the Data Protection Act (1998), the Human Rights Act, and the University's Code of Practice on Data Protection. If not specifically asked by the participant, the participant's identity will not be revealed in the research. The audio recordings of the interviews will be used exclusively for data analysis in this research and they will be deleted after submission of the assignment. Some citations from the audios will be used in the research, but these will be anonymised.

### Potential bias and funding

The research is not funded. No potential bias has been recognised.

### Contact for further information

In case of additional questions, please contact the researcher:

- Name: Mareta Roze Purviske
- E-mail: [ma7246pu-s@student.lu.se](mailto:ma7246pu-s@student.lu.se) or [marertaroze@gmail.com](mailto:marertaroze@gmail.com)


Alternative contact (thesis supervisor):

- Name: Yahia Mahmoud
- E-mail: [yahia.mahmoud@keg.lu.se](mailto:yahia.mahmoud@keg.lu.se)

## Appendix C: Participant consent form

M. Purviske's master's thesis research on supplier engagement and power imbalance management through stakeholder-linking innovations

	Add your initials next to the statements you agree with
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 7.04.2023 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I agree for the data collected from me to be stored and used in relevant future research in an anonymised form.	
I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by individuals from the University of Lund or from regulatory authorities where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of person taking consent	Mareta Purviske
Signature	
Date	07.04.2023