

# The Better Coffee Standard

We don't need permission to do what's right – we  
are the standard born from refusal,  
built for a better world for coffee people.

The Better Coffee Documents  
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## From the Editor



### **I refuse.**

These words founded The Better Coffee Standard. It is written in red ink – a language that names the absence of freedom and equality and exposes cracks in the system.

If you work with coffee, you already know how much harm this system causes. You may feel it directly or sense it around you.

For us, this awareness does not end in reflection or protest.

It demands action – as a form of self-defense.

This document explains for whom, why, and how we refuse – and how we act. It places dignity first. We reclaim it.

You enter a different path: building ethical partnerships without reproducing harm, while meeting your own needs.

You may join our structure, learn with us, seek assessment – or simply support this work in your own way.

Read The Standard. Ring the bell for others.

**Krzysztof Blinkiewicz**

# Chapter 1

## Why The Better Coffee Standard Exists

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We are writing it for you, whoever you are –  
ready to support you when you need it.

We will try to explain why we invest so much collective effort in creating The Standard. Our primary motivation is the recovery and protection of values – first and foremost, dignity. We work with coffee, yet we are stripped of dignity every day. We are paid next to nothing, we lose physical and mental strength, and we cannot afford education, new shoes, a roof over our heads, or food for our families.

We have named our path toward reclaiming these values **The Better Coffee Endeavour**. The idea we present to you is **The Better Coffee**. One of our core aims is to achieve ethical success through cooperation – success for the collective of people working with coffee, and well-being for each individual within it. We break the linear coffee chain and create a circle of circulating values. We share knowledge and

resources. We work at the boundaries of the current C-L-D paradigm, which this document will describe. We aim to build its successor – a future-oriented coffee system. We call for changes that benefit coffee people and speak with a shared voice on our own behalf.

Let us say this plainly: we consider **you a person of dignity**. It does not matter whether you work with coffee or not. This concerns humanity itself.

You are equal to every other person, free to make your own decisions. We assume you make them for your own good and for your family, and we trust you do not intend to harm others.

We assume you treat us the same way. There is a strong chance that this is not fully the case yet.

Every human being is good by nature, yet we have been divided and compelled into unethical actions in our everyday lives. This is no one's individual fault.

Look instead at the systemic mechanisms

behind it. The contemporary world consistently repeats a single message: compete and accumulate wealth. It organizes reality through divisions – between the exploited and the exploiters, centers and peripheries, the majority and a privileged minority.

We do not describe conspiracy theories or ideologies. We rely on scientific analysis and the observation of real social and economic processes. We operate within the dominant paradigm of our time – capitalism, liberalism, and democracy – which, in its current form, produces exploitation, exclusion, façades of equality, and the monetization of values and relationships.

We naïvely wait for relief. We envy those who appear to succeed. The measure of success becomes the balance of a bank account.

We drift through this world, unaware that we are approaching a waterfall. We dream of a comfortable life.

Coffee is not an exception. It is a system that can be seen

in its entirety – and therefore changed in its entirety. The Better Coffee Standard exists to show that it is possible to take a different path while still working with coffee.

**Notice this:** we drink coffee and it seems good to us – yet it is brewed in suffering we refuse to see, even when those who suffer are ourselves.

When we finally realize we are falling into the waterfall, we wait for a hero – for a slow-motion rescue, for someone to save us from catastrophe.

But this is not a movie. And no one is coming.

We must take matters into our own hands.

You arrived here by chance – just in time. You may continue to accept the order we were conditioned into without being asked for consent. Still, we hope this text has awakened your curiosity for change. That change – with or without The Standard, with or without your participation – is just around the corner of the future.

We propose a change in how we act and how we work with coffee: one that places dignity above money. This is neither evolution nor revolution. It is self-defense against exploitation produced by a widely accepted system.

We are confident that we know how to do this, and we describe it openly in this document.

We break away from established modes of operation because they harm people. We distance ourselves from the cynical coffee world commonly labeled "specialty coffee" – a copy of a paradigm built on exploitation, exclusion, and façades. In that world, price is dictated by opportunistic sensory quality, not by the costs borne by producers.

Enough fairy tales about coffee that supposedly helps someone.

We are not concerned with the reactions of those who find our assumptions uncomfortable. We know exactly what to expect: attempts to discredit

us, condemn us, mock us, or ignore us. We are used to this.

There is nothing to fear. This, too, is a cynical game of a system that does not want to be left – because it fears its own collapse.

We do not ask you to believe in our ideals. We ask you to confront them. If you reject this Standard, we will not blame you.

We are counting on you.

You do not need to do anything specific to join The Better Coffee Endeavour. Simply choose your own way of walking alongside us. Tell others. **Ring the bell** to wake more people from the dream of specialty coffee that has become our everyday nightmare.

If you want to engage more deeply, we provide ready-to-use tools: structures for cooperation and trade, frameworks for education and services, and a new way of evaluating the value and price of coffee – green, roasted, and even the machines you use for work. All with a minimal entry threshold, adjustable

to your own capacities. Finally, remember this: you are worthy of not forcing yourself into suffering or submitting to exploitation. You are worthy of having your voice heard and your needs met. You are worthy of being healthy and well. You are worthy of coffee contributing to a life that is stable and free from constant stress and fear of the future.

This is our The Better Coffee Endeavour. **This is our language and our movement.**

This is why The Better Coffee Standard exists – to inspire and to enable.

## Chapter 2

# Language, Definitions, and Communication

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Communication is never neutral – language shapes meaning, power, and responsibility.

Language is not a neutral medium.

Language is infrastructure.

It precedes action, perception, judgment, and coordination. It determines what can be named, shared, and questioned – and what remains unseen.

Every system operates through language before it operates through rules, prices, or institutions.

What cannot be named cannot be defended.

What is named

inaccurately becomes distorted. What is named strategically becomes manageable.

For this reason, The Better Coffee Standard treats language not as an addition, but as a foundational layer of responsibility.

Spoken and written language are among the basic conditions of human cooperation. They enable coordination, disagreement, collective memory, culture, science, and technology.

Writing introduces something additional: distance – between impulse and expression, intention and formulation, the speaker and the reader. This distance matters.

Writing allows revision. It allows hesitation, deletion, replacement, and clarification. It makes responsibility traceable. **A written word remains after its author leaves.** It can be returned to, quoted, questioned, corrected, or held accountable.

This is why written language has always been linked to law, science, contracts, ethics, and power.

The Standard is a written document because it assumes responsibility. It does not rely on charisma, authority, or oral transmission. It relies on definitions that can be read, questioned, and revised.

### **Perception, belief, and cognitive frames**

Human understanding does not begin with neutral observation. Perception is already structured through

expectations and learned distinctions. The brain does not record reality like a camera – it reconstructs meaning from fragments using existing frames. Language provides those frames.

What appears normal, natural, or obvious is rarely questioned. Familiar words reduce uncertainty. Stable narratives protect against doubt.

**This is a cognitive strategy** – and it has consequences.

When language hardens into habit, it becomes invisible. When it becomes invisible, it gains power.

Systems do not need to enforce themselves through violence if language has already taught people how to think within set boundaries.

### **The Authority of Language**

Language and power cannot be separated. Power operates through categories, definitions, and thresholds of legitimacy:

- who is called a producer and who a worker;

- what is labeled quality and what dismissed as a defect;
- what counts as knowledge and what is reduced to opinion or noise.

These distinctions are linguistic before they become economic.

Dominant systems stabilize their vocabulary. Once a term is widely accepted, it stops appearing ideological and starts appearing technical, neutral, professional, objective. This is how language naturalizes hierarchy.

The Better Coffee Standard does not claim neutrality. It claims responsibility.

### **Why language must change first**

The coffee world operates within a paradigm shaped by capitalism, liberalism, and market logic. This paradigm expresses itself not only through contracts and prices, but through language: *profit, productivity, optimization, efficiency, scalability, competitiveness, excellence, innovation, growth, return.*

These words are not inherently false – but they are not innocent. They carry assumptions about value, success, time, and labor. They privilege measurable outcomes over lived conditions. They reduce relationships to indicators. They invite evaluation without accountability.

If The Better Coffee were to adopt this language uncritically, it would reproduce the structures it seeks to question.

A different practice requires a different vocabulary – or at least a redefinition of shared terms.

### **A concrete example: “good coffee”**

In coffee, few expressions appear more self-evident than good coffee. Yet what counts as “good” is not a natural fact. It is a learned perception.

Flavor preferences, quality hierarchies, scoring systems, and sensory vocabularies are socially produced and institutionally reinforced. Training, evaluation forms, certifications, and market rewards stabilize certain

tastes while marginalizing others. What is praised becomes visible. What is penalized disappears.

This does not mean sensory systems are useless. It means they are not neutral.

Language does not merely describe coffee. It decides what is recognized as quality, what is paid for, and what is excluded.

### **Language as operational force in coffee**

In coffee, language has long functioned as an operational tool. Coffee marketing relies on carefully selected words, narratives, and channels – not to describe reality, but to shape it. Certain concepts are amplified, others fade away. Stories are simplified, emotions selectively activated, and complex human relations reduced to readable market signals.

This language teaches consumers – and ourselves – how to think about coffee, what to expect from it, what to value, and what to ignore. It is not marginal. It is one of the main forces shaping coffee as a product, a

practice, and a shared culture.

If language can sell coffee, it must also be capable of carrying responsibility for its human, social, and material consequences.

### **Definitions as responsibility**

The Better Coffee Standard does not create a private or hermetic language. It relies on commonly known words, but assigns them clearly specified meanings. This creates friction – and that friction is not a failure. It is a sign that language is doing real work.

Defining a term is not about dominating a conversation. It is about taking responsibility for clarity.

**Definitions do not close debate. They make debate possible.**

In The Standard, definitions are:

- contextual
- valid within this system of values
- revisable
- shaped through the practice of The Better Coffee Endeavour

If a definition no longer serves dignity, clarity, or fairness, it must change. A language that cannot be questioned becomes dogma.

### **A familiar example: how shared languages already work**

Most people already understand this, even if they have never described it in these terms.

If you play structured games – for example *Magic: The Gathering* – you already operate within a language that temporarily overrides everyday meaning.

Words such as *tap*, *mulligan*, *haste*, or *enchantment* exist in ordinary language, but inside the game they mean something else – something precise, limited, and shared. No one confuses these meanings with daily life, and no one treats this as manipulation. It is simply how the system works.

Players do not endlessly renegotiate these definitions. They learn them, accept them, and use them to act, cooperate, compete, and disagree without confusion. The

shared language makes complex interaction possible.

The Better Coffee works in the same way. We are not inventing a new language. We define how familiar words function inside this system – so people can act together without friction or coercion.

### **Reader, English, and translation**

Every written word assumes a reader – not an abstract audience, but a person with context, limits, and prior assumptions. Responsible writing requires imagining the reader in advance.

The Standard uses English not because it is superior, but because it is the most widely shared working language in the global coffee world.

Accessibility is never neutral.

This choice increases overall accessibility, but also introduces loss, simplification, and unintended meanings.

Abstracts, summaries, and future translations are not supplements. They are extensions of responsibility.

### **Language as a condition of change**

The Better Coffee Standard intervenes at the first level: language. It interrupts automatic meanings embedded in perception and introduces a vocabulary that slows them down.

Without this foundation, no standard can be ethical.

Changing practices without changing language leads to symbolic reform. Old words reproduce old outcomes.

Language is not where change ends. It is where change either begins – or fails.

### **How to Read the Definitions**

For these reasons, the following definitions are not explanations or educational aids. They are shared reference points.

They exist to make cooperation possible, disagreement productive, and responsibility visible – without hierarchy, coercion, or imposed belief.

# Definitions

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This section sets out the meaning of the most commonly used words within The Better Coffee.

They form – but do not fully define – the language we use in our work. Think of them as shared reference points; they are meant to support cooperation and reduce misunderstandings.

We recognize that many of these definitions may surprise you and may at times feel controversial. We cannot promise that this was not intentional.

Still, these words, understood in this way, apply within this Standard and express a conscious responsibility for language – because the way words are defined determines what can be named, questioned, defended, or changed.

## language

For us, language is not a neutral medium of description, but an infrastructure of action. It precedes practice, evaluation, coordination, and conflict by providing the frames within which things can be named, divided, questioned, or ignored.

Language does not merely describe reality; it co-determines it. When meanings harden into habit, language becomes invisible – and begins to operate as power.

Here, language is an area of responsibility: how we speak determines not only the meaning of words, but also the boundaries of cooperation, dissent, and change.

## definition

For us, a *definition* is not an explanation or an educational tool, but an act of responsibility for meaning. Defining a term does not close debate – it enables it, by creating a shared reference point for cooperation and disagreement.

*Definitions* do not claim universal validity. They apply within this Standard and are linked to the practice of The Better Coffee. They may be revised if they cease to serve the values described here.

## better

In The Better Coffee, *better* does not mean “better than” someone or something else. We deliberately remove the hierarchical function of this adjective, which in common usage serves to compare and build hierarchies – to distinguish the “better” from the “worse.”

Our *better* is closer to what is commonly described as ethical. The word *better* also relates to the future, much like the word future itself. We could have spoken of “The Ethical Coffee of the Future” – a play on the name The Better

Coffee, where ethical and future would replace *better* – but we consciously chose *better* instead.

It is one of the most overused words in contemporary language, and we want it to accompany us daily as a reminder of what we are confronting: a world of hierarchy, stigmatization, inequality, and limited chances.

Paradoxically, we believe that the paradigm of the future will be literally better than the one we operate within today.

### **The Better Coffee**

This is a proper name designating an idea or ideology that forms the axis of our actions.

It is a hypothesis of a paradigm, and at the same time a system of concepts, values, structures, methods, and forms of organization. These are developed and articulated further in Chapter 3.

*The Better Coffee* is also the name of the language described in this document. For us, it functions in a way similar to vegan food, zero waste, open-source software, or specialty coffee: as a term that encompasses everyday practice, an ethical position, political action, and an internal language recognizable to those involved – reaching far beyond the literal meaning of the words themselves.

We write it with capital letters and always preceded by The. It is possible that, through the spread of the idea, this expression may in the future take the form better coffee, or even simply coffee.

### **endeavour**

*Endeavour* is a term broader in meaning than a project or projects, processes, or actions. Here, it refers to all activities connected with The Better Coffee, as well as to all the people who practice them. We could equate Endeavour with a movement, but only if we accept that a collective gathered through shared action also pursues closely aligned goals.

If you follow The Better Coffee, the *endeavour* is you.

### **standard**

A *standard* is a shared framework of responsibility that organizes language, values, and practice. It is grounded in values and describes actions that align with them. It sets a reference point for decisions, relationships, and the assessment of consequences, so that what is declared remains consistent with what is carried out.

A *standard* functions as an arrangement of principles and commitments. It is developed collectively within The Endeavour. It is recorded in the form of this document, titled The Better Coffee Standard, referred to in short as The Standard. The document supports the maintenance of shared meaning and serves as a reliable point of reference to which it is possible to return.

### **red ink.**

the language to articulate our non-freedom.

## **refuse**

For us, refuse denotes an act of refusal that becomes possible only once we recognize the absence of freedom to refuse. It marks a moment of awakening within a paradigm – the perception of cracks and an intuition of anomalies before they are fully named. It is the refusal to overlook them unreflectively.

Refusal may develop into protest or even rebellion, both of which are continually sanctioned by existing systems. More fundamentally, *refuse* leads to the creation or co-creation of systems that test paradigm hypotheses and examine anomalies, and it awakens responsibility for informing others that refusal is possible.

## **ring the bell**

In *The Endeavour*, ring the bell means making refusal public: informing others that something is wrong and can no longer be ignored. It turns personal recognition into shared responsibility.

## **wake up**

Wake up names a personal moment of recognition, experienced individually, in which existing explanations and normality stop being sufficient. Without wake up, neither refuse nor ring the bell is possible.

## **coffee people**

*Coffee people* refers to all people whose lives and work are directly

connected to coffee, across all stages of the so-called supply chain. This includes people working under a wide range of conditions, including unpaid labor, labor exchanged for food or shelter, and situations of coercion or strong economic dependency.

The term also includes people who support coffee workers by providing essential services necessary for life and work, such as medical, legal, or financial assistance. *Coffee people* further includes the immediate family members of people working with coffee who depend on that work for their livelihood, in full or in part.

## **human dignity**

For us, *human dignity* denotes the inviolable value of every person, independent of productivity, position within a system, origin, economic status, or market usefulness.

*Dignity* is realized in concrete living conditions: access to safety, healthcare and mental health prevention, rest, time, the ability to speak with one's own audible voice, and real influence over the conditions in which one works and lives.

## **equality**

*Equality* denotes a state of social relations grounded in the abolition of relations of domination and subordination. It does not mean identical roles or identical outcomes of work, but the absence of structural power by which some

control the lives, labor, and time of others.

*Equality* is a condition of freedom: it entails real participation in decision-making and a fair distribution of the fruits of shared work. It is realized through cooperation, solidarity, and mutual aid as durable forms of social organization.

### **freedom**

*Freedom* denotes the absence of coercion by authorities that impose ways of thinking, acting, and living. It is not anarchy or arbitrariness, but the capacity for self-determination and shared decision-making in relation with others.

*Freedom* also includes the possibility of voluntarily submitting to rules, collective decisions, or authorities – provided that such submission arises from conscious consent rather than economic, political, or moral necessity.

### **mutual aid**

*Mutual aid* denotes voluntary, conscious, and non-hierarchical cooperation grounded in solidarity and the sharing of resources.

People support one another because they recognize a shared fate and mutual responsibility, not because they are compelled by the state, fiscal policy, or the market.

It is a relationship among equals, in which support, resources, and knowledge circulate between people,

often closely aligned with cooperative forms of organization.

### **cooperative**

A *cooperative* denotes a form of collective organization and work grounded in equality, shared responsibility, and self-governance. Its purpose is not the maximization of profit, but the fulfillment of the real needs of the people who create and sustain it.

A *cooperative* functions as a tool of mutual support and collective control over the conditions of life and work, rather than as an entity oriented toward capital accumulation.

### **self-defense**

In *The Better Coffee*, *self-defense* denotes the capacity to protect dignity, life, and working conditions through conscious action, expressed both collectively and individually. It often appears as *economic self-defense*, understood as practices that secure autonomy and fair conditions within existing economic relations.

### **exploitation**

For us, *exploitation* denotes a situation in which one party extracts value, labor, or time from others against their will, while depriving them of fair compensation, agency, and influence over the conditions of work and life.

It may involve cynical use or occur unconsciously—on one or both sides

of a relationship—as an effect of how a system functions.

### **exclusion**

For us, *exclusion* denotes the removal of a person from participation in decisions that directly concern their dignity, life, and working conditions. It is expressed primarily as the absence of voice – the lack of real influence, of being heard, and of co-decision.

*Exclusion* often results from the functioning of political and social systems that formally allow participation while effectively restricting or nullifying it.

### **facade**

*Facade* denotes apparent systemic actions designed to preserve a paradigm and its systems at the expense of the well-being of individuals, communities, and societies. Such actions are presented as aid, solidarity, or crisis prevention, while in practice they serve to maintain existing power relations and defer meaningful change.

### **Pointwashing**

*Pointwashing* denotes a facade practice in the coffee market in which SCA points are treated as an objective and sufficient indicator of the quality and price of green and roasted coffee. In practice, sensory analysis – cupping – is often conducted under conditions of bias, with results aligned to the

logic of profit growth.

By assigning scores, *pointwashing* also enables the exploitation of evaluated labor, as the value of people’s work is reduced to a single number, detached from real costs, relationships, and conditions of production.

### **degrowth**

In *The Better Coffee*, *degrowth* denotes a concrete decision and a deliberate stance. We define it as a conscious break with the imperative of unlimited growth as the primary principle organizing the economy, production, and work. It is a practice of setting ecological, social, and human boundaries, and of reducing scale wherever growth produces exploitation, inequality, and environmental degradation, while strengthening dignity, security, relationships, and genuine well-being.

*Degrowth* does not mean reversing development. It means shifting the point of reference from accumulation and efficiency toward sufficiency, justice, and the capacity to live within planetary limits. We explain why choosing *degrowth* matters for coffee people in Chapter 6.

### **paradigm**

We agree with Thomas S. Kuhn that a *paradigm* is a widely accepted set of scientific achievements that, at a given time, provides a research community with model problems and solutions. It includes, among other elements, fundamental theoretical

assumptions, a conceptual apparatus, and examples of problems considered to be correctly solved.

A *paradigm* defines the framework of so-called "normal science": it determines which questions can be meaningfully asked, which methods are considered legitimate, and how observations are interpreted. Facts are not neutral within it – they are seen and understood through the prevailing paradigm.

We also agree with those who extend this definition to socio-political practice. In this broader sense, a *paradigm* denotes a set of fundamental values and assumptions through which the surrounding reality becomes intelligible and capable of being ordered.

It encompasses ways of perceiving the world, the language of description, criteria of meaning, and the boundaries of what is regarded as rational, possible, or obvious. It applies to culture, politics, the economy, and social relations.

A *paradigm* is a cognitive framework of the world. The reality it describes is not truth in itself – a *paradigm* is only the best available way, at a given historical moment, of describing reality.

It appears timeless, natural, obvious, and unchanging, yet it possesses both a history and a limited future. *Paradigms* emerge through specific processes or events described as scientific revolutions.

For The Better Coffee, a *paradigm* is a consensus sustained by all

people – including those who are aware of its temporary nature.

In every domain of human life, *paradigms* or "sub-*paradigms*" can be identified, coherently subordinated to and serving a dominant paradigm.

In Chapter 6, we describe the prevailing *paradigm* and explain what it means to call The Better Coffee a *paradigm* hypothesis.

### **cracks**

In every paradigm – sooner or later, more or less frequently – *cracks* appear. These are areas in which contradictions accumulate and phenomena emerge that seem unsolvable within the paradigm's framework.

Their presence may lead either to attempts at improving the theory of the existing paradigm or to the transformation of these contradictions into anomalies.

### **anomalies**

When a contradiction revealed within a crack is scientifically confirmed as inexplicable within the paradigm, it becomes an *anomaly*.

Sometimes a single *anomaly*, and sometimes only their accumulation, leads to a paradigm change.

### **Paradigm Shift**

Paradigms do not change gradually, but abruptly. They maintain coherence as long as they can explain reality and resolve contradictions emerging within cracks of the system.

The emergence of anomalies leads to a radical change in how reality is experienced and understood. This results in the collapse of the existing paradigm and its replacement by a competing theory that takes over the role of shared explanatory consensus.

Thomas S. Kuhn referred to this moment as a “scientific revolution”; in the language of The Better Coffee, we call it *Paradigm Shift*.

### **collapse**

By *collapse* we mean the breakdown of a paradigm or of the climate. We generally use this word only in these two contexts; notably, there are hypotheses suggesting that they are causally interconnected.

We speak of *collapse* both in the present tense – as an ongoing process of breakdown – and in the future tense, as the distinct moment of final *collapse*.

### **system**

In our understanding, *a system* is not a neutral arrangement of elements or a purely technical structure.

We define *a system* as a way of organizing relationships, decisions, and responsibility that produces repeatable social, economic, and material effects – regardless of individual intentions.

*Systems* usually operate within a prevailing paradigm. They can also be deliberately constructed to model structures, relations, or the

operation of theoretical hypotheses – what we may call pre-paradigmatic systems, or more precisely, paradigm hypotheses. Such *systems* exist to analyze, test, correct, and continuously refine those hypotheses.

This is how The Better Coffee functions: when we say we are testing our hypothesis, we mean that we are building *a system* capable of examining, adjusting, and improving the hypothesis itself.

*Systems* operate through their own internal structures, which organize roles, processes, and responsibility in a durable and observable way.

### **structure**

In The Better Coffee, *structure* refers to concrete, organized forms of action operating within systems developed as part of The Better Coffee Endeavour.

*Structures* organize roles, processes, and responsibility, enabling continuity of action, coordination, and the assessment of the consequences of decisions over time.

*Structures* include, among others, The Places, the work of trainers, The Better Coffee Curriculum, The Ranking Method, and other clearly defined arrangements of practices and tools through which the values of The Better Coffee take on an operational form.

Individual structures are presented and developed in subsequent chapters of The Standard.

## **threshold**

For us, threshold refers to a reference point that marks entry into alignment with a system and its values. In The Ranking Method, it is used to evaluate production practices in relation to their alignment with the values of TBC. Threshold helps us identify areas that require support, correction, and partnership. In this sense, it functions as a tool that activates mutual aid and enables further work toward alignment in the future.

## **dichotomy**

For us, *dichotomy* refers to fundamental divisions operating within a paradigm that polarize reality and help stabilize the prevailing consensus.

*Dichotomies* define what appears opposed, incompatible, or mutually exclusive, and in doing so shape how a paradigm functions and reproduces itself.

*Dichotomies* operate as elements of a system: positions within them are often assigned by material, social, or economic conditions rather than chosen intentionally, even when the paradigm promotes narratives of free choice.

A classical example is the left-right division in political life. In coffee, a comparable *dichotomy* appears between underpaid producers and wealthy corporations, structuring how value, responsibility, and visibility are distributed within the current coffee paradigm.

## **neutrality**

In The Better Coffee, *neutrality* is a word we hear often – most commonly from those who declare that they do not want to stand “on either side” of an existing dichotomy. We understand it not as a real state, but as a belief in the possibility of remaining outside conflict, consensus, or relations of power.

In practice, *neutrality* is not possible: everyone operates within a prevailing order and, consciously or not, participates in sustaining it. One may refuse to actively support one side of a dichotomy, yet mere presence within a system entails participation in its effects.

In this sense, *neutrality* describes a moment of awareness of this contradiction rather than an actual suspension of responsibility.

## **adaptive**

*Adaptive* denotes the capacity to adjust to a prevailing paradigm in order to function within its limits.

*Adaptation* does not equal affirmation or consent; it is a strategy of survival and action under conditions of constrained alternatives.

The term is often used to describe liberalism and human rights, but it also applies to us: *we adapt* to the paradigm in order to practice self-defense, build support structures, and maintain the capacity to act until a paradigm shift occurs.

## **capitalism**

*Capitalism* denotes the dominant logic of the paradigm, one that subordinates other systems of values and forms of social organization. It is not merely an economic model, but a force that structures language, labor relations, notions of success, and criteria of rationality.

In this sense, *capitalism* has subordinated liberalism and democracy, rendering them adaptive to its own needs. It operates globally as the default background of decisions, norms, and expectations, often presented as natural or inevitable.

Over time, capitalism takes different forms and undergoes "improvements." We work with the intuition that we are living in a late stage of *capitalism*, and we treat utopistics as a method for imagining post-capitalist societies.

## **improvement**

*Improvement* is understood in close relation to better. What becomes improved is ethically oriented and directed toward the future.

*Improvement* does not mean optimization within the existing order, but readiness to endure change – either to function within a next paradigm or to remain in tension with it.

## **implementation**

Here, *implementation* refers to the attempt to act in accordance with

The Standard and its values. It describes a practice of trying to apply them in real conditions, with full awareness of limits, constraints, and partial outcomes.

*Implementation* is a process, never a finished effect: it names continuous alignment in action rather than achieved compliance.

## **efficiency**

*Efficiency* denotes action directed toward achieving a real effect. Within *The Endeavour*, an action is efficient when it makes coffee better and exposes anomalies that contribute to paradigm collapse.

## **quality**

*Quality* denotes the outcome of a simultaneous sensory analysis and ethical analysis. It concerns both how coffee tastes and is perceived sensorially, and the conditions under which it is produced – with regard to people and the planet.

## **specialty**

*Specialty* denotes something defined as "special" only in relation to a broader whole in which it operates. Its meaning is not independent; it is produced and validated by the system that frames it.

In this sense, *specialty* often functions as a narrative device: it highlights a selected part of a system and presents it as exceptional, frequently to elevate or conceal façade practices embedded in the wider structure.

## **formula**

*Formula* refers to fixed patterns of thinking about coffee – ready-made phrases, claims, and habits that are repeated rather than examined. They may take the form of simplified scientific truths, industry myths, or habitual ways of speaking.

A *formula* functions as a cognitive frame: it organizes perception while simultaneously limiting critical inquiry. In our education, the focus lies on recognizing formulas and questioning them rather than reproducing them.

## **trust**

*Trust* denotes the recognition that human beings act from ethical intentions and possess an inherent capacity for good.

*Trust* is not an assumption or a hypothesis, but the starting point of relationships and cooperation.

Within our structures, trust is applied as the primary criterion for building cooperation, rather than control mechanisms.

## **coordination**

*Coordination* denotes supporting and serving collective action without holding power or authority. It consists in facilitating cooperation, organizing processes, and removing obstacles rather than issuing commands.

Support provided through *coordination* is accepted voluntarily and rests on trust rather than hierarchy.

## **place**

Within *The Endeavour*, *place* denotes the location where coffee people live and work – both in a literal sense, as land and infrastructure, and in a social and cultural sense. *Place* includes material conditions, relationships, access to resources, and the everyday environment of life and work.

This understanding of *place* is reflected in the structures of *The Endeavour*, particularly through *The Place* framework.

## **utopistics**

*Utopistics* denotes a serious and material evaluation of historical alternatives. It is a sober, rational assessment of possible social systems, the constraints they impose, and the spaces they leave open for human creativity. It concerns historically plausible and measurably better alternatives rather than perfect or inevitable futures. *Utopistics* operates at the intersection of science, politics, and ethics.

## **utopia**

*Utopia* denotes a consciously selected and articulated alternative system. It is not a paradise or illusion, but a historically possible configuration of social, economic, and political relations judged to be preferable under material criteria. Within this framework, utopia is examined through utopistics and expressed in systemic language.

## **curriculum**

In *The Better Coffee*, *curriculum* denotes education understood as a process of learning how to think rather than reproducing ready-made formulas.

Within such a *curriculum*, learners develop the capacity to understand, ask questions, and draw independent conclusions.

## **university**

*University* denotes an educational community in which people learn from one another, regardless of age, experience, or formal status. This model of education is associated with people's universities rather than academic institutions.

A *university* is based on dialogue and the exchange of knowledge rather than a teacher-student hierarchy. Education is open and free, as knowledge is treated as a common good rather than a commodity.

## **lab**

Here, *lab* denotes a place where coffee people conduct research on paradigm anomalies and explore discoveries that support efficiency. It is a space for testing hypotheses, observing consequences, and verifying which actions produce meaningful change.

## **ranking**

For us, *ranking* denotes a result rather than a hierarchy. It is

singular, non-comparative, and does not serve ordering or competition.

*Ranking* evaluates while simultaneously enabling mutual aid: it identifies a state and opens space for support, correction, and further work.

## **hórreo**

Here, *hórreo* denotes a place where coffee quality is assessed in both sensory and ethical terms, in line with the definition of quality used in this document. It is a space for evaluation, reflection, and responsibility toward coffee and its conditions of production.

The term comes from Spanish and originally means a granary.

## **office**

In *The Endeavour*, *office* denotes a function of support and coordination rather than the exercise of power. Its role is to enable cooperation, organize information, and connect actions carried out by others, without taking control over their work.

An *office* operates in the logic of service: it strengthens the capacity of people and structures to act instead of subordinating them. In this sense, an office is not a tool of exploitation or domination, but a form of organizing responsibility, coordination, and mutual aid.

# Communication

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Now we can understand each other better.

A shared language is the foundation of every system. Equally important, however, is the ability to communicate safely and in a real, practical way. Within The Better Coffee Endeavour, we have created a space that enables both.

Full independence in the 21st century is difficult to achieve. Most communication tools today are owned by multinational corporations. We have used them and will continue to use them— for practical and organizational reasons.

At the same time, we wanted to provide one shared, stable communication environment for all participants of The Better Coffee Endeavour — regardless of role, country, or position.

That is why we chose a solution that allows us to reduce dependence on platforms operating solely within the logic of profit.

## **That solution is Matrix + Element (M+E).**

We followed the path of organizations for which security, data sovereignty, and infrastructural independence are essential, including the Bundestag, the European Commission, the European Space Agency, NATO, as well as organizations such as the Wikimedia Foundation, the Fedora Project, and communities in Africa, South America, and Asia.

All of these entities consciously choose Matrix + Element as a secure and independent infrastructure for communication.

By using the Matrix infrastructure together with our own server located in Germany, we provide a coffee-focused communication platform that is open and free of charge for everyone who has access to the internet and a mobile device or computer.

At the same time, we recognize that lack of access to the internet constitutes a real structural exclusion for many coffee people — especially in rural regions. For this reason, we also encourage maintaining contact indirectly, through people active in The Places, who connect local communities with the wider The Endeavour.

Communication within M+E is based on an organized thematic structure, divided into spaces and rooms. There is one shared, public area available to all users, operating in accordance with internal rules.

Matrix enables communication without tracking, through a server owned by The Better Coffee. Private 1:1 communication is encrypted end-to-end. No one—including The Better Coffee Office — has the technical ability to read or analyze this communication.

Public communication is moderated based on trust and the values of The Better Coffee. Interventions take

place only in justified cases, in line with The Better Coffee Standard—for example, in situations involving violence or discriminatory behavior.

Matrix is the infrastructure. Element is the application that enables everyday communication: messages, files, photos, documents, video calls, and webinars.

There are also private spaces dedicated to specific structures of The Better Coffee, including projects and licensed The Place partnerships.

Element works in a web browser and on devices running Android and iOS—free of charge. Access to the system is provided via the server endeavour.thebettercoffee.org. A link to download instructions on how to join the M+E communication platform can be found in the footer of this document.

#### **IN SUMMARY:**

M+E provides The Better Coffee with real communication security: control over infrastructure, the

absence of commercial tracking, and the possibility of code auditing. This is why it is chosen by institutions and organizations that cannot rely on closed, corporate communication tools.

Communication within The Better Coffee also takes place openly and publicly.

**We run Red Ink Coffee at redinkcoffee.com** — an English-language editorial platform, open to anyone interested in writing about coffee in the spirit of the values and ideas of The Better Coffee.

Red Ink Coffee operates as an open blog: anyone may submit a text—whether a loose, personal reflection or an in-depth systemic, critical, or research-based analysis. The only requirement is consistency with the values of The Better Coffee.

The blog has its own editorial team, led by the editor-in-chief — Krzysztof Blinkiewicz, founder of The Better Coffee.

The blog is complemented by the Red

Ink Coffee newsletter on LinkedIn.

We encourage reading, writing, and following Red Ink Coffee and the newsletter — this is the simplest way to stay in active contact with the thinking and practice of The Better Coffee Endeavour.

**We also run thebettercoffee.org** — the informational and sales website of The Better Coffee.

The site provides access to The Better Coffee Standard and its abstracts in multiple languages, enabling shared reference to the same principles and operational frameworks across different cultural and legal contexts.

thebettercoffee.org also offers educational offerings, documents, tools, and services related to the functioning of the system — available in both free and paid forms. The website enables operational decisions: purchasing, commissioning services, supporting activities, or entering into relationships with The Better Coffee structures.

The site additionally serves as an **aggregator of offers and The Places**, making it easier for potential clients, partners, and service users to establish direct contact with entities operating within the system.

It also provides the possibility to contribute to and benefit from the **Pay-It-Forward solidarity fund**, which supports access to knowledge, tools, and services in a structured way.

thebettercoffee.org functions as a clear access point – organizing information, relationships, and decisions, without marketing narratives and without expanding on system definitions, which are addressed in subsequent chapters.

The Better Coffee Office, in cooperation with other structures, also conducts **direct communication** with:

- political and local government entities,
- media,
- non-governmental organizations with aligned goals,

- sponsors and potential investors, in matters related to infrastructure, education, and the long-term sustainability of the system.

**Podcasting** is treated as an optional form of communication within The Better Coffee.

When available, audio conversations may be used to share reflections, interviews, and discussions related to the values, practices, and structures of The Better Coffee.

This includes both audio content initiated within the system and participation in external podcasts.

Podcast communication remains complementary: it does not replace documentation, direct communication, or operational channels, but offers an additional public layer of exchange when conditions allow.

An additional and equally important form of communication in The Better Coffee is **documentation**.

The Standard, guidebooks, agreements,

offers, and operational documents do not serve merely as records or archives. They are active communication tools—shaping action, structuring relationships, assigning responsibility, and enabling shared reference. In The Better Coffee, a document does not describe the system from the outside—it operates within it. Communication also takes place through activities related to The Places, The Curriculum, and The Ranking Method (TRM)—described in more detail in the following chapters.

## Chapter 3

# The Better Coffee — Purpose and Orientation

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Without The Better Coffee, we only reproduce the practices that cause suffering and deny coffee people a future.

The language of The Better Coffee in practice.

### Orientation

This chapter establishes the orientation of The Better Coffee.

It defines what The Better Coffee is to a degree sufficient to act, cooperate, and take responsibility within The Standard.

The Better Coffee serves as a shared point of reference for coffee people who choose to work on the basis of dignity, equality, mutual aid, and the other values

articulated in The Standard.

In this sense, The Better Coffee functions as an ideological orientation: not as a dogma or doctrine, but as a shared axis for thinking, acting, and taking responsibility.

In this chapter, we describe The Better Coffee through a catalogue of perspectives which together constitute its functioning as a framework for thinking and action – prepared

for you and for coffee people.

Taken together, these perspectives form a complete operational definition of The Better Coffee.

If you compare this description with the linguistic definition provided in Chapter 2, you will notice that it is not expanded here, but specified.

If, while reading further, anything appears non-obvious or unclear, return to the glossary of definitions in the previous chapter. It exists to reduce misunderstanding and to stabilize shared reference points.

The orientation of The Better Coffee is future-directed. It is not a promise, but a decision to act now in line with what we define as better.

When reading about The Better Coffee, assume that you may use this concept in the same way as other terms of a similar kind.

Such terms include *specialty coffee*, *sustainable*, *land rewilding*, or *climate change* – each of them operates across

multiple perspectives and requires no permission, contract, or authorization to become part of thinking and practice.

### **The Better Coffee Is an Idea / Ideology**

The Better Coffee is an idea and an ideology understood as a cognitive orientation and a framework for action.

It constitutes a way of ordering reality: it enables the understanding of the world, the interpretation of relationships, and decision-making within the everyday practice of coffee people.

As an idea, The Better Coffee establishes shared frames of thinking and acting.

As an ideology, it organizes these frames into a coherent arrangement of values, assumptions, and directions that structure social, economic, and ethical practice around coffee.

The ideology of The Better Coffee is grounded in the real conditions of work and life of coffee people.

It brings together philosophical, social, political, economic, and cognitive orientations, allowing reality to be interpreted both within coffee and beyond it.

In this sense, The Better Coffee functions as a universal orientation framework: it enables phenomena to be named, responsibility to be recognized, and action to be taken in alignment with the values articulated in The Standard.

### **The Better Coffee Is an Ethical Compass**

The Better Coffee functions as an ethical compass grounded in the 20 Core Values.

It establishes a direction in which decisions, relationships, and practices remain coherent with the values of The Standard.

An ethical compass operates under conditions of incomplete information, tension, and systemic constraints.

It supports orientation where no ready-made solutions or

unambiguous choices exist.

In this sense, The Better Coffee offers a framework for responsible action – a shared point of reference for thinking, cooperation, and decision-making by coffee people.

### **The Better Coffee Is a Paradigm Hypothesis**

A paradigm hypothesis is the role The Better Coffee assumes within The Standard. This means that it poses a question using utopistics: whether the world as it exists constitutes the best possible reality for coffee people.

It assumes that the prevailing paradigm is not final and that reality is subject to improvement.

As a paradigm hypothesis, The Better Coffee describes a world as it could be. It is oriented toward better – an ethical future.

In this sense, it refers to a future paradigm, including the paradigm of coffee, in which the recovery of values and degrowth

define the framework of change.

A paradigm hypothesis requires a system. The Better Coffee locates and documents cracks and identifies anomalies that reveal the limitations of the prevailing paradigm.

The Better Coffee prepares for a Paradigm Shift by creating structures that are ready to operate within its framework.

### **The Better Coffee Is a System and Structures**

The Better Coffee organizes relationships, decisions, and responsibility, thereby producing repeatable social, economic, and material effects.

It exists independently of individual intentions.

Within this system, structures emerge as concrete, organized forms of action operating as part of The Better Coffee Endeavour.

These structures organize roles and processes, enabling continuity of action, coordination, and the assessment of the

consequences of decisions over time.

### **The Better Coffee Is a Method of Work for Coffee People**

The Better Coffee functions as a method of work grounded in responsible action under real-world constraints.

It organizes ways of thinking, decision-making, and cooperation among coffee people in everyday practice.

This method enables action aligned with the values of The Standard in ambiguous, conflictual, and systemically conditioned situations. It supports economic self-defense.

### **The Better Coffee Is a Set of Values**

The Better Coffee is grounded in a coherent core of values articulated in The Standard.

These values form a durable foundation for orientation, decision-making, and action within The Better Coffee.

They are a commitment practiced according to

capacity and understanding, becoming an ambition for The Better Coffee Endeavour.

### **The Better Coffee Is an Endeavour**

The Better Coffee exists as an endeavour encompassing all activities, relationships, and people connected with its practice.

The endeavour brings people together through shared action grounded in values and responsibility.

Every person who follows The Better Coffee and relates their actions to it becomes part of The Better Coffee endeavour.

### **The Better Coffee Is Good Practices**

The Better Coffee constitutes a set of tested and continuously analyzed good practices derived from values, endeavour, and the system.

These good practices translate ethical orientation into concrete actions in everyday work.

They are accessible to anyone who chooses to act in alignment with The Better Coffee and The Standard.

### **The Better Coffee Is a Language**

The Better Coffee is a language understood as an infrastructure of action.

It precedes practice, evaluation, coordination, and responsibility by determining what can be named, shared, questioned, and defended.

Through definitions, The Better Coffee organizes meaning in a way that enables shared action, disagreement, and collective memory.

This language functions as a layer of responsibility upon which the system, values, and practices of The Better Coffee rest.

### **The Better Coffee Is Refusal**

The Better Coffee is an act of refusal understood as a collective form of wake up. It marks the moment when existing

explanations and normality stop being sufficient, and cracks within the paradigm become visible.

Refusal activates responsibility for further action, for testing the paradigm hypothesis, and for informing others that refusal is possible.

### **The Better Coffee Is Political Action**

The Better Coffee constitutes political action understood in the sense of politiká – as care for the common good and responsible cooperation among people.

It is expressed as reflection on mechanisms of power, responsibility, and relationships, grounded in knowledge, skills, and the capacity for collective action.

In this sense, The Better Coffee develops the art of governing The Better Coffee Endeavour, caring for the well-being, dignity, and shared interests of those who participate in it.

It remains open to dialogue with authority.

### **The Better Coffee Is Open**

The Better Coffee is an opening to participation, cooperation, and shared responsibility.

It invites entry into its language, values, and orientation without intermediaries or entry thresholds.

This openness enables joining The Better Coffee Endeavour through action.

### **The Better Coffee Is for You**

The Better Coffee is yours, about you, and for you.

It concerns your work, your decisions, and your responsibility.

It exists in relation to you and through your action.

### **Mission of The Better Coffee**

Better coffee from coffee people for humanity.

The mission of The Better Coffee is to provide an ethical orientation for actions aimed at ensuring that coffee does not go extinct and that coffee people can meet their needs with dignity.

The Better Coffee operates through refusal, utopistics, improvement, and the restoration of agency to those excluded—treating these as methods of ethical, future-oriented action. These actions are gathered within The Endeavour.

It implements a shared language, values, and practices that enable coffee people to recognize exploitation, expose facades, and engage in collective efficiency while adapting to the limits of the capitalist paradigm.

It calls for degrowth and for ending the exploitation of people, health, biodiversity, and ecosystems.

It denounces dichotomies and

hierarchy, replacing them with equality that supports quality.

It carries out its own implementation, including through scientific practice and the development of curriculum.

### **Utopia The Better Coffee**

The Utopia of The Better Coffee takes place after the collapse of the old order, but not after total chaos and devastation.

It is a reality in which nation-states, markets, and classical institutions of power have lost their capacity to organize life and have been replaced by dispersed, local forms of cooperation.

There is no single decision-making center. Power takes the form of coordination: it is situational and grounded in usefulness. Peace has emerged.

The logic of growth as the prime directive of capital has been abandoned. The paradigm of capitalism has collapsed, and profit has ceased to function

as a measure of human value collectively.

Through equal sharing, access to resources, and technological progress, work has become an optional activity—both a source of pleasure and an effort undertaken for the common good.

Trust is a daily practice, built through repeated action, predictability, and adherence to the rules of the new paradigm. Dignity is the primary measure.

Food distribution in this utopia is based on local systems of production and allocation rather than trade. There is no money and no equivalents of value—only distributed management of scarcity. There is no global authority exercising control; instead, individual cooperatives communicate with one another and form stable, long-term relationships.

In this utopia, food and drink are not rights but strategic resources—practices of sustaining life.

What changes is not only the scale of

production, but above all the purpose, logic, and relationships through which food comes into being. This also applies to contemporary coffee cultivation, its processing, and hospitality.

Coffee is a good created for pleasure, for health, and for the strengthening of values, meaning, and relationships.

The goal is no longer the maximization of yields and profits, but sufficiency, stability, system resilience to climate crises, and the fulfillment of the real needs of local communities.

In coffee cultivation, agroecological, regenerative, and permaculture methods dominate—grounded in biodiversity, crop rotation, and the coexistence of species. The use of chemicals, deforestation, monocultures, and intensive mechanization belong to the past.

In the Utopia of The Better Coffee, land ownership has been abolished. Coffee cultivation, like the production of other

food, is carried out by cooperatives.

Work in coffee cultivation is shared fairly according to willingness and need and is recognized as socially essential. The farmer is not a “raw material producer,” but a steward of the ecosystem and the community.

Shared knowledge, lived experience, and intergenerational transmission matter. Ethnic, cultural, and religious differences are cultivated and respected.

The Utopia of The Better Coffee does not eliminate the contradictions of the material world—scarcity, distribution challenges, differences in needs, or the limits of nature. It changes how they are lived: contradictions are recognized early and organized collectively, before they transform into new forms of exploitation, power hierarchies, or facades.

In this utopia, local cooperatives are responsible for the cultivation and processing of green

coffee for regions whose climatic conditions make coffee production impossible or extremely difficult minimize the carbon footprint of transport by curtailing extended logistics. In other cases, including coffee roasting, these processes take place close to the site of consumption.

Coffee surpluses—stored in food banks—are not an end in themselves. Those that can be accumulated serve as safety buffers. Maximized residue use, including coffee biomass waste, and the absence of waste are shared norms.

If nature allows, no one who wishes to drink coffee is left without it. And when coffee is scarce locally or globally, there is social consent for drastic yet fair limitations of availability, in service of survival and regeneration.

Coffee is a living gift of nature—valued, shared, and cared for.

Technology serves the planet and people. It is openly accessible and supports, among

other things, the reduction of heavy labor and the maintenance of closed cycles of water, nutrients, and energy.

In the Utopia of The Better Coffee, those who lived under the oppression of exploitation—whose rights were a facade and whose voices were unheard—have freed themselves.

They live in safety, without fear for their own future or that of their families.

This is the world of utopia that emerged from a transformation of the former order—not through the effort of a single endeavour, but through thousands of endeavours collectively aligned with it.

### **What This Chapter Does – and Does Not Do**

If you expected this chapter to function as an instruction manual for The Better Coffee, this is an appropriate moment to recall that The Better Coffee Standard is a constitutive document.

Within The Standard, there exist – and will be progressively

introduced – executive documents. These will support good practices, outline paths into structures, describe educational roles, and explain methods for evaluating products and actions.

This chapter serves a different function.

It establishes The Better Coffee as an entity situated within appropriate cognitive frameworks. It positions it in relation to the prevailing paradigm – including the paradigm of coffee. In the following chapters, the reasons for this positioning will become clear.

The Better Coffee awaits your use.

You may choose the planes of action closest to you, engage selectively, or follow the framework in its entirety. Each of these choices is valid.

The moment you begin to relate your actions to The Better Coffee is your entry into The Better Coffee Endeavour – which we establish and describe in the following chapter.

# Chapter 4

## The Better Coffee Endeavour

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Take the future of coffee into your own hands.  
You will never act alone.

The Endeavour is us – and everything we do for The Better Coffee.

If you have read the previous chapter, you already understand how broad endeavour is.

It is oriented toward implementation, directed at improvement, and concerned with efficiency.

It reaches beyond systems, extends past formal structures, and cannot be coordinated in any central way.

The Endeavour is a movement articulated here, yet operating autonomously.

What, then, is the threshold of being part of The Endeavour?

Is it enough to read these words? To have read an article on Red Ink Coffee or explored our work in the Matrix + Element space?

Encountered a post or a reel on social media, or heard about us through a podcast elsewhere?

Language confusion?  
Refer to Chapter 2:  
Definitions.

One thing is certain: you do not need to belong to our system or our structures to be part of The Endeavour. If you pursue similar goals and act in alignment with the values of The Better Coffee, you are already part of it.

Why does The Endeavour include actions, processes, projects – and people?

Because without people who recognized that something was fundamentally wrong in today's coffee market, nothing would have begun.

The Better Coffee starts with people and ends with people. It is a human-centered endeavour, grounded in a paradigm hypothesis in which human dignity forms the axis of value around which all actions converge.

This chapter describes The Endeavour as collective action.

It is not coordinated. It depends on you, just as it depends on others.

There are no individual obligations, but there is individual responsibility toward

the collective.

Through action, people gradually enact the mission – and the utopia – of The Better Coffee, each according to their own capacity and circumstances. This does not mean that The Endeavour will appear as a futuristic community ethically producing and distributing coffee. That is not the point.

The Endeavour is not a mission completed or a goal fulfilled. It is a pathway we can walk together – imperfectly, making mistakes – toward realization. In this sense, it is our tool for efficiency.

This chapter also addresses what sustains a sense of unity within The Better Coffee Endeavour: moments in which we learn to distinguish facts from cognitive frameworks formed over years. Wake up. Refuse. Ring the bell. Red ink. Any of these can be used as tools for becoming better.

### **The Endeavour as Collective Action**

You cannot be a movement on your own.

You also cannot change the world alone. It is true that even without others, you may carry out a historical act or make a scientific discovery.

That is not what we ask of you.

What we offer is an invitation to collective action – to an informal cooperative of coffee people seeking to restore lost values and give them real, material impact. Many of these values have never functioned as living elements of the coffee system. Others are routinely used as façades and justifications for inflated prices and suppressed wages.

Together, they can be implemented within our own companies, among colleagues in the industry, at local and regional levels, and sometimes even nationally. Friends and strangers alike can be invited to join. Consumers can be encouraged to look for us, to interrupt the coffee chain, and to close a circle of circulating values.

Being part of The Endeavour allows for

countless forms of engagement.

Some of them are immediately available to you. You can read this standard, select what is relevant, and put it into practice – for yourself, for your neighbors, for colleagues at work, for your manager. If you are the manager, your employees will benefit as well. You can learn with us, read best practice, and examine our values: which you already enact, which remain challenging, and which must, for now, remain aspirations.

For those who lack the time to act directly, there are other forms of participation. You can share a post or a blog note by or about The Better Coffee, leave a comment, or react. You can post a few words about The Endeavour on social media, showing others how to find it and how to join.

You can meet a friend for coffee and say that there exists a way of working with coffee that removes exploitation and restores values.

You will not be alone

in this. The Endeavour is a collective. If you choose not to enter our structures, no one will demand anything from you. It is a loose bond – yet one that matters for change, including a change you may feel in yourself, even if you do not take part in bringing it about.

### **Wake Up**

In everyday language, wake up refers to a moment of sobering clarity – the point at which automatic patterns fall away and things begin to appear as they are. This kind of perceptual shift is familiar from personal life, work, politics, and history: moments when what “has always been this way” suddenly stops making sense.

Wake up is neither a theory nor an ideology. It is a response to a rupture between narrative and reality. It often follows a crisis, a conflict, or the slow accumulation of warning signs.

It does not yet offer answers – but it makes continued avoidance impossible. Frequently, it leads to action, and sometimes to protest.

Wake up is always individual. It happens to a specific person.

For collective action – such as The Better Coffee Endeavour – this matters. Collective change begins by reaching people who have already experienced wake up, and by offering them systems and structures they can use to reorganize their reality – emerging from a refusal to continue participating in what once appeared timeless and unquestionable.

### **Refuse**

Recognizing that something is wrong is one thing. Consciously refusing to participate – and choosing different values and attitudes – is far more difficult. More truthful? More ethical? Better? Simply different? We know this difficulty well; we have gone through it ourselves.

Refusal is not easy. It means leaving the comfort zone. It means giving up – paradoxically – the fragile comfort of a fractured landscape of ideas from which wake

up first emerged. It means stepping into the unknown.

When circumstances reach a point where they can no longer be ignored, we instinctively look for allies. We do not want to leave a system on our own, nor do we want to step into a void.

As a result, we often try to stay, to adapt, or to pretend that nothing has happened – as if wake up had never occurred.

This is where the role of The Better Coffee Endeavour begins: taking responsibility for those who refuse, so that refusal does not become wasted energy, nor turn into extremism or new false oppositions.

Remember: neutrality is not possible.

What is possible is a conscious decision not to take sides within an existing conflict of ideas.

This is why The Endeavour formed around The Better Coffee. It does not position itself as a mirror image of the current paradigm, its antithesis, or its

inverted reflection. Instead, it operates as a hypothesis of a future paradigm – offering those who refuse an alternative to fighting. It shows that instead of looking backward, one can look from above; instead of accepting imposed dichotomies, one can recognize the unacceptability of the condition being refused.

### **Ring the Bell**

We encourage you to take one step further – not only to refuse personally, but to show others that after refusal, a different life for coffee people is possible. At this point, anyone can become an ambassador of a paradigm shift.

Not of its adaptation.

Not of its cosmetic repair.

Not of its adjustment.

But of a change in the conceptual framework through which the world is understood.

### **red ink.**

We write that framework together. Like many movements that call for

wake up and refusal, we do not invent anything new. We reclaim what has been carefully obscured by the current paradigm: the language needed to articulate non-freedom.

Through red ink., we learn how to notice that something is wrong. It teaches us how to say: I am not free – before we are able to recognize it as enslavement.

You may use red ink.

The choice is yours.

### **Acting Together**

Acting together in The Endeavour does not mean an obligation to act.

One may simply be part of it – by recognizing a shared direction, values, and language.

Action emerges when it becomes possible, necessary, or safe.

Acting together never requires consent.

It may make use of structures when they serve the mission, but structure is neither a condition nor a source of legitimacy.

Within The Endeavour, structures are secondary to people and their decisions.

Action may be visible or quiet.

In many parts of the world, quiet activism – discreet, dispersed, and cautious – is the only viable form of change.

Such actions also belong to The Endeavour, as long as they remain aligned with its values.

Acting together does not rely on synchronization or coordination.

It occurs when decisions taken separately begin to interlock in meaning, direction, and consequence.

At that point, they are no longer merely individual.

The Better Coffee exists wherever this interlocking is sustained – regardless of visibility, scale, or form.

### **Responsibility**

Responsibility in The Better Coffee Endeavour rests with each of us and extends toward other coffee people.

Caring only for one's own needs and "interests," in a

cynical and isolated way, leads nowhere but to the reinforcement of power and the reproduction of the same problems: exclusion, exploitation, and the victory of façades.

Responsibility is always distributed across the entire endeavour, yet no one can cast it off and still claim to cultivate shared values.

It cannot be delegated upward, dissolved in structures, or postponed until others act first.

What is shared is not the burden alone, but the consequence of action and inaction alike.

This is not a social contract enforced through penalties, as prescribed by the current paradigm, which disciplines every deviation.

Responsibility here is not imposed; it is assumed. It is a voluntary commitment to hold the community of coffee people in view when making decisions, even when doing so carries a cost.

### **Beyond the Text**

This chapter does not close the matter.

It leaves it open – in time, in practice, and in everyday decisions that cannot always be named or justified.

The Endeavour does not take place in text or in declaration.

It takes place in what you do, what you refuse, what you omit, and what you no longer accept as self-evident.

This is where the description ends.

A direction once recognized is rarely forgotten.

The Endeavour is already alive.

Its future cannot be written in advance.

What can be done is to establish frames – values and structures – that allow a loose connection to The Better Coffee, when needed, to evolve into a more conscious, cooperative network grounded in mutual responsibility.

# Chapter 5

## Core Values

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Do not count how many stand beside you;  
ask whether you have acted justly toward others.

Twenty values form the core of The Better Coffee. They set the direction as an ethical compass and provide the honest foundation for The Standard.

As people, we need cognitive frameworks to make sense of the reality we observe. We invite you to try orienting yourself by the values below, in place of those that may have seemed self-evident until now. And if some of them – or many – already feel

close to you, that is a good sign. It means you are in the right place.

These values concern every human life, relations of power, our autonomy, economic, social, ecological, and cultural realities.

They reflect our everyday life – and also the pathway toward a new global order for coffee people.

Rather than choosing among them, try to understand and appreciate each one.

## **Dignity**

Human dignity describes the conditions in which life can unfold. It includes safety, agency, and the recognition of personhood in work, relationships, and everyday decisions. It exists where a person has voice, time, and space to participate in the world and shape their own life with others.

## **Meet Needs**

Unconditional meeting of needs defines a social order in which human needs – beyond mere survival – are the starting point of collective life. This	enables action without fear, allows care for quality and the future, and the pursuit of dreams. Necessary work becomes a choice, once needs are met.
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## **Well-being**

Well-being describes a state of life in which joy and health are lasting elements of everyday experience. It refers to the physical and mental condition of life, as well as a sense of comfort, calm, and meaning. Well-being recognizes quality of life and the capacity to be present within it as values in themselves.

## **Radical Equality**

Defines a social order in which every person holds equal value, equal access to collective life, resources, and shared decision-making.	It allows for individual coordination while keeping strategic resources under common control. This enables collective action without domination.
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## **Radical Democracy**

Defines a social order where every person has a real and audible voice in decision-making. Being human grants the right to participate.

Participation is open to all, without obligation to speak. Decisions emerge through dialogue, guided by a rational majority.

## **Naming Power**

Taking responsibility for naming the forces and relations of power that shape reality. It recognizes that participation is not neutral and that failing to name power sustains the existing order. It enables movement beyond dichotomies and reveals the mechanisms governing the distribution of resources, labor, and visibility.

## **Freedom from Authority**

Defines freedom from external coercion, imposed authority, and the obligation to live, cooperate, or act according to another's will or power. This

freedom rests on people's capacity for self-organization and shared responsibility, built through relations of trust, equality, and voluntariness.

## **Refusal**

Allows anyone to notice cracks and problems and consciously refuse participation in systems that produce them while preventing their recognition. Refusal requires no permission – we grant it to ourselves. It includes conscious protest, deliberate non-compliance, and, above all, the creation of alternatives.

## **Cooperation**

Cooperation is a mode of action based on equality, trust, and coordination. At its core is collective action: acting together without hierarchy or domination. Here, competition no longer organizes relationships and is seen as a mechanism that reproduces exclusion and injustice by design.

## **Mutual Aid**

Mutual Aid describes a relationship arising from the nature of human coexistence. It rests on solidarity and the sharing of common goods: resources, knowledge, and support among equals. Mutual aid grows from recognizing the shared fate of coffee people and sustains long-term cooperation.

## **Economic Self-Defense**

Protects dignity, life, and working conditions within the existing paradigm through conscious action. Treats exploitation as daily reality and moves toward Anti-Exploitation. Affirms the right to attempt self-protection, recognizing that failure is not a given, and helps coffee people preserve autonomy until Paradigm Shift.

## **Labor and Collective**

We require systemic protection of labor and workers. We reject seasonal work exchanged for shelter or food, labor imposed through debt or promised benefits, unpaid and servile labor, and contemporary forms of slavery. Collective organization limits exploitation as a systemic effect.

## **Efficiency**

The effort of The Endeavour is work toward Paradigm Shift. Striving for a state in which coffee becomes better is a value in itself. Efficiency sets

temporal boundaries for action, encourages de-escalation of economic growth, and enables continuous testing and correction of the system in practice.

## **Shared Knowledge**

Knowledge is not a product. We reject gatekeeping of scientific discovery, patenting, trade secrets, and the enclosure of coffee varieties and processing methods. In place of educational elitism, we build open-source documents and education as a shared commons of knowledge and lived experience.

## **Sensory Justice**

We introduce sensory justice in place of exploitation rooted in sensory language. We reject pointwashing and specialty as practices that deepen inequality.

A shared language and perceptual honesty support quality and better, enabling sensory analysis as a scientific basis for ranking.

## **Truth-Seeking**

Bitter truth is better than sweet lies. We refuse to be deceived or to deceive ourselves. We critically examine sources of narratives, flows of money, working conditions, and the power behind processes. We expose facades, seek scientific confirmation, and remain aware of cognitive bias and limits.

## **Planetary Care**

We cease industrial exploitation of Earth's resources, including food systems. Protecting and restoring biodiversity means living within limits set by the planet. Rewild supports quality. We move away from monocultures and soil depletion in coffee cultivation. Veganism and similar diets are not treated as obligatory.

## **Cultural Plurality**

We oppose all forms of discrimination. We respect cultural differences, diverse attitudes, religious belief or its absence, cultivated traditions, and the right to live one's life in a chosen way. Better does not require unification, but the care and protection of difference in practice.

## **Non-harm**

This is a pacifist endeavour. Social coexistence requires Consent: only a person aware of risk can agree to compensated effort, including use of their image. Trust, alongside care for others—not only the weaker—forms the foundation of a social order that does not harm its members. We reject war and violent struggle over natural resources.

## **Sufficiency**

Enough is enough. Human life does not require endless growth, overproduction, or accumulation. Sufficiency shifts the reference point from profit maximization to the stability and security of life. We say enough to paradigms where work and ambition consume people instead of serving them.

# Chapter 6

## Structure of The Better Coffee System

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Find your place within the structures,  
and choose to join one or many.

### How to Work and Earn with The Better Coffee Endeavour

### Introduction to the Structures of The Better Coffee

The Better Coffee operates as a system composed of structures. This system constitutes the operational dimension of actions undertaken within The Better Coffee Endeavour, enabling their implementation, evaluation, and ongoing improvement.

Structures serve as formal and legal points of entry into the system. Each structure defines a distinct scope of engagement, a different level of formality, and a specific mode of responsibility toward other participants. Through this, it becomes possible to move from individual action or interest

to participation that is recognizable, repeatable, and embedded within shared frameworks.

Participation in the structures enables the assumption of responsibility for implementation and improvement on behalf of coffee people, while also providing access to tangible material benefits within the prevailing economic paradigm. The structures open pathways to more stable income models, repeatable work formats, and forms of cooperation that support predictability and long-term economic viability.

Shared frameworks of action make it possible to offer and access services, products, and education at a sustainable price level, while also enabling free access through the structures and the active support of others when resources are limited. This translates into durable revenue streams, greater stability of economic decisions, clearer conditions of cooperation, and shared responsibility for access within the system.

The structures also support conducting economic activity aligned with the values of The Better Coffee, as well as accessing goods—such as coffee or machinery—based on verifiable information, shared knowledge, and mutual support. They further create space for collective actions oriented toward meeting needs and the systemic improvement of practices.

This chapter organizes The Better Coffee system at a constitutional level. Its purpose is to indicate which structures constitute the

system and how they are positioned in relation to one another. The chapter provides a map of the system's arrangement, without developing the functions, roles, or practices of individual structures. Individual structures are developed in the chapters that follow.

## **The Places**

The Places are established as a structure that enables real, durable, and responsible action within The Better Coffee Endeavour. As a constellation of actions, decisions, and initiatives, The Endeavour requires material and organizational grounding. The Places respond to this need by organizing roles, processes, and responsibility in a way that allows the values of The Better Coffee to operate within social, economic, and material reality.

The Places constitute a formalized collective structure grounded in equality among participants, their autonomy, and the shared use of resources, knowledge, and opportunities. They function according to a cooperative logic—not as a mechanism for concentrating power or capital, but as a form of collective organization of work and responsibility. Participation in The Places can be entered into and exited from, and the structure remains open both to existing entities and to new initiatives formed within it from the outset. Participation in The Places means entering a system of shared responsibility and access to

coordinated collective action. It guarantees equal rights to the use of the structure's frameworks, tools, and relationships, while simultaneously requiring responsibility for the consequences of decisions affecting other participants, people outside the structure, the environment, and the system as a whole.

The Places are a multidisciplinary structure. Their scope encompasses the full range of work carried out by coffee people, as well as activities indirectly connected to coffee that support, enable, or stabilize that work. The structure remains open to non-coffee entities, provided their activities align with The Better Coffee Standard and contribute to the shared goals of the system.

The Places serve as the point at which the values of The Better Coffee are translated into practice. Within this structure, ideas, declarations, and directions take the form of organizational decisions, economic relationships, and concrete actions. Interactions among participants in The Places follow a logic of collective implementation and efficiency: mutual support, solidarity, and the rational use of resources oriented toward meeting real needs.

The structure of The Places enables the material circulation of goods and services within The Better Coffee Endeavour, based on the principle of sufficiency. This refers to a circulation of labor and goods designed to ensure stability, continuity, and dignified

conditions for participants in the system. Membership in The Places not only preserves economic autonomy—it strengthens it. The structure provides access to stable trading relationships, recurring customers, trusted suppliers, and predictable conditions of cooperation. As a result, participants can pursue their own economic objectives within the values of The Better Coffee, while exercising economic self-defense by reducing market risk and limiting the costs of instability typical of isolated operation.

The Places function as a tool of collective control over conditions of life and work within the system. Through transparency, recognizability, and shared frameworks of responsibility, they enable the assessment of outcomes and their adjustment over time. The structure remains open to external observation, critique, and dialogue, treating them as elements of systemic improvement rather than threats to stability.

The establishment of The Places does not create hierarchy—neither among participants nor in relation to other structures of The Better Coffee. Each The Place exists as a locally initiated form of action, connected to other elements of the system through interdependence rather than dominance.

The structure may grow, transform, pause, or conclude its activity, while maintaining coherence with the system as a whole through shared values and common frameworks of responsibility.

The operational principles of The Places are developed in *The Places Guidebook*, which specifies requirements and practices without altering their constitutional position within The Better Coffee system.

### **The Better Coffee Curriculum**

The Better Coffee Curriculum is established as the core educational structure of The Better Coffee system. It provides a coherent and durable framework for learning processes, knowledge exchange, and shared reflection on practice, embedding education within the system itself.

The Better Coffee Curriculum organizes relationships between students, Trainers, and course content in a way that supports cooperation, responsibility, and continuity of experience. Education within this structure may take many forms and occur in diverse contexts—on site, online, in workplaces, and in temporary spaces—using infrastructure adapted to local realities, available resources, and actual needs. The quality of learning arises from intention, relationships, and method, rather than from technological sophistication.

The Better Coffee Curriculum is grounded in collective experience. Education within this structure connects theory with practice and reflection with action, strengthening relationships among students. Cultural rituals, shared practices, and collective forms of work play an essential role,

fostering trust, attentiveness, and shared responsibility, while reinforcing The Better Coffee values through lived experience.

The structure of The Better Coffee Curriculum remains open to diverse backgrounds, roles, and points of entry. It includes people working with coffee at different stages and in different roles, as well as those outside direct coffee work who seek a deeper understanding of the system, its values, and its practices. Education functions here as a space of encounter, dialogue, and shared learning, accessible regardless of formal professional status.

Within The Curriculum, education may also take the form of working modes described as university and lab. Community-based knowledge exchange among alumni, without teacher-student hierarchy, together with research-oriented and experimental work, strengthens the capacity of The Curriculum for current, critical, and practice-based learning.

The Better Coffee Curriculum grows out of existing educational traditions and communal practices. Its inspirations include Nordic folk high schools, Basque culinary schools, Japanese apprenticeship models, Pan-African community schools, and South American cooperative learning spaces. Knowledge is also drawn from outside formal education: from kitchens and fields, from movement archives and oral histories, from indigenous knowledge, and from non-institutional forms of mastery.

The Better Coffee Curriculum is oriented toward recognizing and questioning formulas, treating education as a space for critical inquiry rather than the repetition of fixed narratives about coffee.

Through The Better Coffee Curriculum, the system gains the capacity to transmit knowledge, language, and values in a coherent and adaptable way. Education becomes a tool of implementation and improvement, supporting the development of competence, critical thinking, and the co-creation of practices responsive to real conditions and needs.

The Better Coffee Curriculum is one of the key carriers of continuity within the system. It is within this structure that the experience, knowledge, and values of The Better Coffee are practiced, developed, and passed on as a living process of shared learning.

The operational principles of The Better Coffee Curriculum are developed in *The Curriculum Architecture*, which specifies the structure and scope of educational content without altering its constitutional position within The Better Coffee system.

### **The Trainers**

The Trainers structure establishes the roles through which The Better Coffee system is carried into practice. It anchors The Better Coffee Curriculum in lived educational work while extending beyond it to support The Places, to carry out evaluative work within

The Ranking Method, and locally situated activities of The Office. Through this structure, the system gains continuity, legibility, and presence across contexts.

The Trainers act as stewards of the system's language and meaning. Stewardship denotes responsibility for clarity, care for shared frameworks, and attentiveness to how values are translated into action. Within this structure, language functions as an infrastructure of action: it supports reflection, creates space for questioning formulas, and enables others to learn and act within common structures.

Within this structure, trainers also operate in the role of guide, which articulates the practical dimension of stewardship.

The guide role situates responsibility in lived presence, continuity of practice, and relational engagement, allowing learning and coordination to unfold within shared frameworks. Through this role, alignment, trust, and the intelligibility of the system are sustained across contexts, without recourse to authority or hierarchy.

The Trainers structure is inherently representative. Trainers function as relational points of contact between The Better Coffee and its social, professional, and public surroundings. Through educational practice, dialogue, and presence, they embody the values of The Better Coffee in action and contribute to the system's intelligibility beyond formal

structures.

The Trainers operate across contexts and scales. Their work connects education with coordination, supports cooperation among structures, and reinforces shared responsibility without hierarchy. In this way, The Trainers structure strengthens the system's capacity for implementation and improvement while maintaining openness, adaptability, and mutual aid.

The operational principles governing training roles, pathways, and responsibilities are developed in the following documents: *The Trainers Pathway – Code*, *The Curriculum Architecture*, and *Running The Curriculum Courses*. These documents specify procedures and practices without altering the constitutional position of the Trainers structure within The Better Coffee Endeavour.

### **The Ranking Method**

The Ranking Method constitutes an evaluative structure within the The Better Coffee system. Its role is to enable shared orientation around quality wherever it operates as a real consequence of choices, relationships, and the conditions under which a product is made. The structure establishes a coherent point of reference for decisions undertaken within The Endeavour.

Within The Better Coffee, quality functions as a decision-making category. The Ranking Method enables quality to be recognized as a condition of the product embedded

in a system of responsibility and practice, rather than as a narrative, a communicative shortcut, or a market signifier of value. Through this, the structure allows work with quality to take place in a repeatable manner aligned with the values of the system.

The subject of The Ranking Method is always a specific green coffee, which serves as the material carrier of the evaluation. The quality of the assessed coffee emerges as the simultaneous outcome of two inseparable dimensions: the sensory characteristics of the product and the conditions and practices of its production. Practice Review and Sensory Analysis operate in parallel and lead to a single outcome, without dividing the evaluation into autonomous parts.

The green coffee producer constitutes the reference subject of the Practice Review. The analysis of production conditions and practices is conducted in relation to real operating capacities, the production context, and the structural conditions within which the assessed product is created. In this way, Practice Review reveals the state of practices without formulating judgments about intentions or moral standing.

The Ranking Method operates through a set of reference categories referred to as thresholds: Below the Red Line, Essential, and High-End. These categories describe different states of quality within

the The Better Coffee system. Assignment to a given threshold situates the assessed product within the system and indicates directions for further work, improvement, cooperation, and possible forms of support. Ranking functions here as a singular result relating to a specific product at a specific point in time.

The structure of The Ranking Method grows out of the rejection of a point-based epistemology of quality and the specialty versus non-specialty dichotomy. Rather than reducing quality to numbers, market categories, or prestige, The Ranking Method introduces a logic of reference thresholds that enables the visibility of production conditions and product characteristics in a manner coherent with the language and values of the system.

In this sense, The Ranking Method functions as a structure of resistance to pointwashing. Its design limits the marketing appropriation of quality through simplified messages, one-dimensional classifications, and narrative facades. Quality remains a condition of the product, not a label.

Use of The Ranking Method remains open. Its outcomes may function as a shared point of reference within the system, supporting coordination of actions and further work within The Better Coffee Endeavour.

The operational principles of The Ranking Method are developed in the executive document The Ranking Method (with forms). This document

specifies tools and procedures while preserving the constitutional position of The Ranking Method within the The Better Coffee system.

### **The Office**

The Better Coffee Office denotes a structure of coordination and support within The Better Coffee system. It aggregates, organizes, and connects information, signals, and actions carried out across The Endeavour, without executing them.

The Office operates at the level of language, definitions, and shared orientation, safeguarding the coherence of The Standard and ensuring that better remains a practice rather than a slogan.

The Office functions as a point where signals of cracks are gathered, anomalies are recognized, and collective readiness for paradigm shift is maintained. It works with language as an infrastructure of action, supporting clarity of meaning and continuity across the system, while remaining attentive to how values are translated into practice.

The Office does not create systems or structures on its own. Instead, it supports their interaction and functioning by facilitating coordination understood as service: enabling cooperation, connecting efforts, and sustaining continuity across the system, without exercising authority or control over implementation.

A core function of The Office is the reduction of fragmentation. By

holding and maintaining shared language, communication frameworks, reference documents, and system-level narratives, The Office limits the need for each structure to independently reproduce explanations, definitions, or representations of The Better Coffee. This supports continuity, intelligibility, and public clarity, while preserving autonomy of action and local adaptation within individual structures.

The Office coordinates the system-wide communication described in Chapter 2 of The Standard. In this role, it acts as the official body responsible for maintaining consistency of language, definitions, and public meaning.

The Office holds the mandate to issue clarifications, corrections, and official statements on behalf of The Better Coffee when necessary, including the responsibility to address misrepresentation or inaccurate use of language within or around the system. This function is oriented toward coherence and accountability, not toward discipline or control.

The Office maintains ongoing contact with coffee people, grounded in trust, mutual aid, cooperative practice, and forms of economic self-defense. Its role is visibility and coordination, not the replacement of actions undertaken by other structures. Through this function, The Office contributes to safeguarding the full set of values articulated in The Standard, while helping expose exploitation, exclusion, facade,

and pointwashing as systemic effects of the prevailing paradigm.

The Office does not manage execution and does not function as a decision-making center. While The Office is not a commercial entity, it aggregates and administers shared financial flows generated within the system—such as licensing fees, coordination contributions, and allocations to the shared solidarity fund Pay-It-Forward—solely for the purpose of access, redistribution, and system continuity.

Its role is coordination as a system property: service, connection, and the sustaining of collective capacity to act.

# System Dynamics

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## Relations Between Structures

The structures of The Better Coffee function in relation to one another as elements of a single system developed within The Better Coffee Endeavour. These relations enable shared action without centralization, subordination, or hierarchy, and are grounded in shared values, recognizable roles, and functional interdependence.

Each structure retains its own autonomy of action while remaining legible and compatible with the others. Relations between structures define the conditions of their coexistence: they enable cooperation, the

circulation of knowledge, mutual support, and coherence of responsibility across the system, without generating relations of power or execution.

The relational arrangement of structures is neither linear nor sequential. It does not assume a central authority or a single decision-making axis. Systemic coherence arises from shared language, values, and orientation toward implementation and improvement, rather than from control or management. In this way, relations between structures form a durable, flexible, and non-hierarchical architecture of action within The Better Coffee system.

## Coordination as a System Property

Coordination in The Better Coffee is a property of the system as a whole, not a separate structure or an operational tool. This means that the capacity for cooperation, coherence, and shared direction does not arise from

central management, but from relationships between structures grounded in shared values, language, and responsibility.

The Better Coffee system has no overarching hierarchy. At no level does a relation of dominance exist between structures, nor is there a central locus of power. At the same time, the system recognizes the existence of functional roles, positions, and responsibilities arising from work, competence, and scope of action.

Such hierarchy is operational and adaptive in character: it responds to the realities of the prevailing paradigm and enables effective action without violating the principles of equal dignity, agency, and protection from exploitation. Difference in role does not imply difference in human value.

Management exists in The Better Coffee at the level of individual structures. Each The Place is internally

managed by its owners, collectives, cooperatives, shareholders, or other organizational forms appropriate to its context.

The Better Coffee Curriculum, Trainers, and The Ranking Method each possess their own forms of operational management, encompassing programmatic, organizational, financial, and licensing decisions. This management is local in nature, embedded within the respective structure, and subordinated to the values of The Better Coffee.

Coordination does not replace management. It operates alongside it and between it. Its role is to enable cooperation where the activities of different structures intersect, overlap, or require shared orientation. Coordination allows the system to maintain coherence without interfering in the operational autonomy of individual structures, and also enables the voluntary delegation of selected areas of management to other

actors within the system—including The Office—while preserving responsibility and decision-making autonomy on all sides.

Coordination in The Better Coffee functions on two primary levels. The first is internal coordination, carried out within a given structure as part of its everyday operation. The second is cross-structural coordination, encompassing relations between structures, carried out through The Office as the carrier of this systemic property.

The Better Coffee Office does not constitute a decision-making center of the system. It serves as the carrier of coordination: supporting communication between structures, safeguarding the coherence of language, values, and reference frameworks, and enabling the resolution of tensions arising from their interdependence. In specific areas—such as education, licensing, or The Ranking Method—The Office may perform management functions resulting from

entrusted responsibility, always within the framework of shared values, transparency, and a clearly defined mandate.

The boundaries of coordination are clearly defined. Coordination does not mean control over the actions of other structures, nor the exercise of power over their decisions.

Its function is to support the system's capacity for collective action, continuity of direction, and responsiveness to change, without infringing on freedom of action, autonomy, or individual responsibility.

In this sense, coordination in The Better Coffee constitutes a practical expression of values such as dignity, equality, freedom from authority, cooperation, and mutual aid.

It is a form of adaptive order that enables effective action within the existing paradigm, while limiting structural violence, exploitation, and the concentration of power.

### **Delegation of Actions and Structural Interdependence**

The structures of The Better Coffee may voluntarily delegate to The Office the management or co-management of selected areas, such as communication and marketing, international sales, course organization, production coordination, long-term planning, or other fields in which system-level support increases efficiency and reduces fragmentation.

Acceptance of such a task by The Office is not automatic and depends on its capacity, competence, and alignment with the values of the system.

In cases where The Office declines to assume management responsibility, it retains a coordinating responsibility by supporting the identification of alternative solutions within the system, in accordance with the logic of mutual aid and shared responsibility.

Relationships between structures and their participants may also

take the form of task delegation, operational cooperation, sales, purchasing, or the entrusting of responsibility within specific areas of activity.

Delegation may occur both toward The Office and between The Places, Trainers, and other participants within the structures, in accordance with their competencies and willingness to assume responsibility. These relationships do not establish hierarchy or subordination; rather, they express interdependence and cooperation grounded in the values of The Better Coffee. Each party retains decision-making autonomy, including the right to refuse, alongside a system-level commitment to seek alternative solutions within a framework of shared responsibility.

Within this arrangement, The Office fulfills a particular coordinating role. Beyond accepting or executing selected tasks, it supports the identification of delegation needs across the system, connects

structures that possess resources with those that require them, and assists in finding solutions where direct delegation is not possible.

In this way, The Office reduces fragmentation of action, strengthens the flow of responsibility, and enables the system to function as a network of interdependent yet autonomous structures.

### **Why Participate in the Structures**

Participation in the structures of The Better Coffee enables real action within The Better Coffee Endeavour.

The structures constitute the operational layer of The Endeavour – the place where values, decisions, and intentions can be translated into practice, evaluation, and durable relationships.

Being part of a structure provides formal recognizability of actions within the system. This means that the work, decisions, and responsibilities of

participants are legible to other actors and can be taken into account in cooperation, coordination, evaluation, and the further development of the system.

Participation in the structures of The Better Coffee is an economically rational choice. The structures are designed to enable participants to earn income more easily, more stably, and under fairer conditions than outside the system.

Through shared frameworks of action, coordination of commercial relations, and mechanisms of quality assessment, solidarity, and redistribution, the structures reduce the costs of market isolation, asymmetries of bargaining power, and the price pressure typical of individual operation. Within the structures, selling, purchasing, cooperation, and the exchange of labor do not require constant justification of ethical boundaries or individual defense against exploitation. The values of The Better Coffee are not

an addition to economic activity – they constitute its infrastructure. As a result, participants can earn income and meet their needs without entering into relationships that contradict dignity, consent, equality, or the long-term interests of themselves and others.

The structures of The Better Coffee do not exist as a prestige-based industry club or a symbolic form of organizational affiliation.

They exist so that it is materially worthwhile for their participants to operate within them: by gaining access to the internal circulation of goods and services within The Better Coffee, greater predictability of relationships, real support in times of crisis, and the ability to plan long-term without abandoning the meaning of work. In this sense, the structures function as tools of economic self-defense and as a condition for real paradigm change, rather than as a social experiment.

The structures clarify scopes of responsibility and authority.

Participation determines the area in which a person or entity operates, what they are responsible for, and which decisions they may take on their own behalf, on behalf of a structure, or within the system. This enables action without arbitrariness and without the need for continual renegotiation of the basic terms of cooperation.

Operating within the structures makes it possible to rely on system-level mechanisms rather than acting in isolation. This includes access to coordination, shared decision-making frameworks, mechanisms of evaluation, solidarity, and redistribution, which reduce risk, the costs of fragmentation, and the effects of instability characteristic of individual action.

The structures enable long-term cooperation instead of one-off relationships. Through

durable organizational forms, it becomes possible to build continuity of action, commercial, educational, and operational relationships, without dependence on temporary market conditions or personal resource constraints.

Being part of the structures also means participating in the development of the system. Experiences, decisions, and practices carried out within the structures feed The Endeavour as a whole, enabling adjustment, learning, and the continuous improvement of the system in response to real conditions and tensions.

The structures do not guarantee success or specific economic outcomes. They do, however, create conditions of action in which work, cooperation, and decision-making can have systemic meaning, be evaluated coherently, and be developed without contradiction with the values of The Better Coffee.

### **Systemic Mechanisms of Access and Redistribution**

Alongside the structures of The Better Coffee operate systemic mechanisms whose role is to define the conditions of participation, access, and responsibility within the system. These mechanisms do not function as sites of action; they establish the constitutional frameworks within which action becomes possible and remains coherent with the values of The Better Coffee.

The mechanisms of access and redistribution serve all structures of the system. They shape how participation in The Endeavour is made possible, articulate solidarity as a form of shared responsibility, and stabilize the relationship between values and the material conditions of action within the prevailing economic paradigm. By operating at the constitutional level, they provide shared reference points for diverse forms of activity across the system.

Through these mechanisms, participation becomes possible for individuals and entities with differing economic, social, and organizational capacities, while maintaining dignity, equality, and collective responsibility. They render actions legible and recognizable at the scale of the entire system by defining the conditions under which those actions take place, rather than by directing or managing them.

The core systemic mechanisms of The Better Coffee are: Three-Tier Pricing, Pay-It-Forward, and Licensing.

### **Three-Tier Pricing**

Three-Tier Pricing operates within The Better Coffee as a systemic mechanism that structures access to economic participation. It establishes a coherent framework for aligning economic practice with the values of the system, differentiating access without collapsing it into one price logic.

The mechanism differentiates levels of access according to the real economic capacities of participants, while stabilizing shared responsibility for the continuity of the system. It forms part of the access infrastructure, structuring the relationship between price, the value of work, and the conditions under which participation takes place within the structures of The Better Coffee.

Three-Tier Pricing applies wherever economic exchange occurs within the system, including products, services, licenses, and educational activities. By embedding access principles directly into economic practice, it eliminates the need for ad hoc negotiation and provides a stable reference point across diverse contexts of action.

The model consists of three access tiers:

- **Sustainable Tier**  
The standard and reference price. This tier covers the

real costs of production or delivery and accounts for the actual needs of the provider or producer. It constitutes the baseline for the economic sustainability of activities carried out within the structures.

- **Supporter Tier**  
A higher contribution chosen by individuals or entities with greater economic capacity. Contributions at this level support access across the system and directly sustain the Pay-It-Forward mechanism, reinforcing solidarity and redistribution.
- **Solidarity Tier**  
A reduced-cost or free form of access, available upon request where the Sustainable Tier is not economically feasible. This tier enables participation without compromising dignity and without fixing permanent economic positions.

The application of Three-Tier Pricing holds the status of a systemic recommendation. As a shared point of reference for organizing access, it supports participation, limits exclusion, and reinforces collective responsibility for the durability of The Better Coffee system.

### **Pay-It-Forward**

Pay-It-Forward operates within The Better Coffee as a systemic mechanism of solidarity and redistribution. Its role is to organize shared responsibility for access across the entire The Better Coffee Endeavour and to translate solidarity from a declared value into a material condition of participation.

The mechanism supports participation within the structures of The Better Coffee across differing economic capacities. It strengthens equality of action by circulating resources in a way that secures conditions of access consistent with the values of the system.

Pay-It-Forward is funded primarily through conscious contributions made within the Supporter Tier of the Three-Tier Pricing mechanism, as well as through grants, donations, and other forms of support. It draws on traditions of communal funds and cooperative solidarity, relying on voluntary co-participation rather than automatic extraction from all economic activity within the system.

Pay-It-Forward operates under the coordination of The Office, which is responsible for its continuity, integrity, and alignment with the values of The Better Coffee.

Resources gathered through Pay-It-Forward may be directed toward access to education, licenses, activities, and shared resources, as well as toward activating support where systemic responsibility indicates a need, including emergency situations. Allocation follows a logic of shared responsibility, not discretionary authority or fixed hierarchy.

Pay-It-Forward operates according to a logic of circulation.

Participants may, at different moments in their lives and work, both contribute to and draw from the mechanism, depending on real conditions of life and labor. In this way, Pay-It-Forward avoids fixing permanent economic positions and enables fluid movement between forms of participation over time.

### **Licensing**

Licensing operates within The Better Coffee as a systemic mechanism that anchors formal responsibility and participation within the structures.

Its role is to stabilize the continuity of action, to order the scope of responsibility, and to render participation recognizable over time.

The Better Coffee Endeavour remains open in its orientation, while participation within its structures requires relations that enable coordination, the attribution of responsibility, and

durable cooperation. Licensing constitutes one of the instruments through which this ordering is established, alongside agreements or regulations appropriate to specific contexts of action.

Licenses define the scope of participation, the relationship between autonomy of action and the shared frameworks of the system, and the conditions of responsible action over a long-term horizon.

Through licensing, involvement shifts from declared alignment to continuous, legible, and accountable presence within the structures of The Better Coffee.

The licensing mechanism remains coherent with the access principles operating across the system.

It follows the logic of Three-Tier Pricing and may be supported through Pay-It-Forward, enabling stable participation across differing economic capacities while preserving the autonomy of the entities involved.

## **Emergence and Phasing Out of System Elements**

The Better Coffee operates as an open system. Structures may emerge in response to real needs of action, provided they align with the definition of a structure, as well as with the values and language set out in The Better Coffee Standard.

Structures may also transform, be suspended, or be phased out. Change in organizational form is an inherent property of the system and does not require revision of its constitutional frameworks.

System coherence is maintained through the stability of mechanisms, the responsibility of participants, and the capacity to evaluate actions in relation to The Standard. In this way, The Better Coffee remains a living system, capable of both adaptation and continuity.

## **From Framework to Action**

The structure of The Better Coffee system establishes the frames within which action becomes possible – not

through instruction, but through orientation. At this stage, the system moves beyond defining the conditions of its existence and toward engaging with forms of action grounded in those frames.

The subsequent chapters of The Standard operate within this orientation, examining how the system is enacted in practice through the logics of efficiency, education, evaluation, knowledge, and coordination.

## Chapter 7

# The Places – Efficiency and Improvement

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Where values take form.

Action makes the system real.

### **The Places as Sites of Action**

The Places situate action within the relational field of The Better Coffee system, where decisions enter a circulation of consequences recognizable over time.

Their position emerges through the linkage of language and values with practice, allowing responsibility to remain referable within shared orientation.

As a structure of action, The Place orders the relation between decisions and their consequences in a way that sustains continuity. Action becomes observable and legible to others, while its effects can be related back to a shared language.

In this dynamic, the position of The Places is expressed through coordination and cooperation.

Action remains embedded in place as defined in Chapter 2: the conditions of life and work of coffee people, including material environment, relationships, access to resources, and everyday practice. This embedding situates decisions within real social, economic, and cultural contexts, making their impact perceptible.

Within this positioning, The Place operates in the logic of implementation as an ongoing alignment with The Standard under real conditions. Action remains oriented toward effect and learning, capable of adjustment over time while maintaining coherence with the language and values of The Better Coffee.

### **Eligibility: Who May Become The Place**

The Place remains accessible to entities and initiatives capable of acting in alignment with The Better Coffee Standard and of assuming responsibility for the consequences of decisions.

The criterion of entry

is systemic in nature: it concerns orientation toward the values, language, and practice of The Better Coffee, rather than legal form, scale of operation, or prior history.

Participation includes both entities directly connected to coffee and initiatives outside that field, provided that their practice supports the life and work of coffee people and remains coherent with the direction of the system.

The range of possible participants reflects the diversity of roles involved in coffee and avoids hierarchical ordering. The following list is presented alphabetically, as an indicative map of participation rather than an exhaustive or ranked enumeration.

Examples of participants in The Places may include, among others:

- agronomists, botanists, and climatologists
- baristas, and participants and champions of coffee competitions
- bloggers,

podcasters, and coffee content creators

- coffee laboratories, sensory lab technicians, and food chemists
- coffee plantations, smallholders, and coffee agribusinesses
- coffee researchers, scientists, and research teams
- coffee roasteries, cafés, and mobile coffee points
- coffee shops, retailers, and e-commerce
- consumer cooperatives
- cooperatives producing green coffee
- dry mills hulling, sorting, and preparing coffee for shipment
- entities outside the coffee sector whose activity remains related to the life, work, and dignity of coffee people
- exporters, importers, traders, and coffee brokers
- individual coffee people, including pickers, seasonal workers, and

- roastery workers
- judges of cuppings, auctions, and coffee competitions
- magazine editors, authors of books, and coffee newsletters
- manufacturers of machinery for agriculture, processing, and coffee brewing
- manual green coffee sorters
- marketing teams and designers of labels and communication materials
- mobile coffee points
- organizations and individuals providing medical and psychological support
- people's universities
- post-harvest coordinators
- quality controllers of coffee lots
- software developers and data systems used in coffee
- trainers, instructors, and coffee consultants operating across different systems and programs
- universities and

- academies conducting coffee research
- volunteers and social initiatives operating in coffee regions
- wet mills processing coffee berries

Likewise, new initiatives may take shape as The Place from the outset, entering a structure of action grounded in place as defined in Chapter 2.

The capacity to become The Place is expressed through readiness for implementation under real conditions, acceptance of coordination grounded in trust, and participation in relationships in which responsibility circulates among people, structures, and local context. In this sense, eligibility does not constitute selection, but the recognition of a capacity for cooperation within The Better Coffee Endeavour.

### **Entry, Licensing, and Registration**

Entry into the structure of The Places takes place through a

license, understood as a mechanism of access to the system and of mutual recognition within The Better Coffee. The license establishes a relationship grounded in responsibility, trust, and readiness to act in alignment with The Better Coffee Standard.

The license is granted for a period of three years. Its financial conditions are organized within a three-tier model, allowing the level of contribution to reflect the real capacities of a given entity. Within the Solidarity Tier, The Better Coffee Office may, in justified cases, waive the license fee. The remaining tiers—Sustainable and Supporter—reflect different forms of shared responsibility for sustaining and developing the system. The Standard does not specify monetary amounts, leaving them to executive documents.

The process of entering the structure is coordinated by The Better Coffee Office, which serves as the point of contact and support for

establishing licensing relationships.

Multiple forms of initiating this relationship are possible, including direct contact as well as independent initiation through the official channels of the system.

Each licensing relationship begins with an initial recognition process (pre-audit), whose purpose is to establish a shared understanding of context, place, and readiness for implementation of The Better Coffee Standard. In exceptional cases, where serious and non-remediable contradictions with The Standard are identified, it may be appropriate to refrain from entering into a license agreement. As a rule, however, the system prioritizes mutual aid, support, and work toward alignment, rather than refusal.

After the three-year licensing period, alignment of practice with The Better Coffee Standard is expected. This alignment may be confirmed through a shared review of

actions, oriented toward reflection, correction, and further adjustment rather than sanction. In this sense, audit functions as a tool of responsibility and improvement, grounded in trust as its starting value, rather than as a mechanism of control.

The registry of The Places and the principles of naming constitute elements of public recognizability for the structure and its participants. They enable the identification of actions carried out within the system and strengthen the transparency of both internal and external relationships of The Better Coffee.

### **Naming and Use of "The Place"**

The Places designate the name of a systemic structure.

**The Place** refers to an individual participant within that structure—a legal entity, initiative, or person acting within The Better Coffee Endeavour in a recognizable and responsible manner,

grounded in place as defined in Chapter 2.

Participation in the structure involves the use of the designation The Place as an element of systemic identification. This designation may function in two equivalent ways, depending on context and the needs of the participant.

The first option is to adopt The Place as the primary form used in public communication, complemented by an identifier that enables clear public recognition—such as the name of an initiative, a surname, a city, a district, or a region.

Within the system, the use of the lowest adequate level of locality is preferred, supporting relational clarity and a posture of modesty toward other The Place participants operating within the same geographical context.

The second option is to use The Place as an additive designation alongside an existing name, without changing the entity's legal name, identity, or branding. In this form,

The Place functions as a relational qualifier applied within The Better Coffee system, rather than within trademarks, logos, or formal market-facing identity. This option enables participation in the structure without rebranding, preserving continuity of operation and recognizability outside the system.

The chosen form of using The Place, and its relationship to an existing name, is subject to coordination with The Better Coffee Office, which serves a coordinating role in maintaining linguistic coherence, public recognizability, and relational clarity among participants of the structure. Naming remains an element of responsibility for the shared language of the system and its intelligibility to other coffee people.

### **Conditions of Participation**

Participation as The Place is grounded in the recognition of dignity as a point of reference for action. To be The Place means

practicing in a way that accounts for the conditions of life and work of coffee people—their voice, time, and capacity for real influence. Participation assumes that action remains in relation with people, rather than abstracting from them.

A condition for remaining The Place is transparency, understood as readiness to make the direction, intentions, and consequences of action visible to other participants in the system. Transparency enables truth-seeking, shared orientation, and the building of trust, without reliance on formal criteria or control mechanisms. Through it, relationships remain legible and responsibility recognizable.

Participation presupposes cooperation and mutual aid as primary modes of action. This entails the capacity to act together without domination, to share knowledge, resources, and support, and to recognize radical equality as a condition

of a shared space of action. In this logic, participation strengthens the collective rather than individual position.

An essential condition of participation is readiness for improvement. It involves learning from the consequences of decisions, adjusting practice, and exercising refusal toward actions that undermine dignity, lead to exploitation, or depart from the system's direction.

Participation as The Place thus means remaining in motion, capable of change, and practicing freedom from authority through responsible shared decision-making. Participation as The Place also entails responsibility for continuity of alignment.

A license may be withdrawn during its term or not renewed after the three-year period. The system is built on trust and on the conviction that such situations should not arise within value-grounded practice. At the same time, The

Standard recognizes the reality of serious and recurring violations of the Core Values.

When grave breaches are identified through practice, coordination, or instruments such as The Ranking Method, and are accompanied by a persistent lack of will to repair and improve, this absence of determination—rather than the violation itself—constitutes grounds for intervention.

In such cases, The Better Coffee Office retains responsibility to act in defense of the integrity of the system and the dignity of those affected.

### **Scope, Autonomy, and Local Context**

The Place operates autonomously within its own place—the conditions of life and work, social relations, culture, and local realities in which it is situated.

This autonomy covers organizational decisions, forms of action, and modes of implementation, insofar as they remain coherent with the language,

values, and orientation of The Better Coffee.

What is shared systemically follows from The Standard: values, responsibility, transparency, and the relational nature of action.

The limits of autonomy arise from responsibility toward other The Place participants, coffee people, and the consequences of decisions that enter the circulation of the system.

Autonomy and local context thus remain in a relationship in which freedom of action coexists with consequence and shared responsibility.

### **Benefits of Participation**

The benefits of participation in The Places are functional in nature rather than promissory. They arise from embedding action within a structure that enables continuity of practice, recognizability of relationships, and the ability to relate decisions to the shared language and values of

The Better Coffee.

Participation creates conditions of stability through access to shared frameworks of action, coordination, and systemic knowledge. Action ceases to be isolated and gains the capacity to endure over time, to be adjusted in relation to other participants, and to respond to the consequences of decisions.

In this sense, participation also strengthens self-defense, understood as the capacity to protect dignity, autonomy, and working conditions within existing realities.

A key benefit is the reduction of isolation. The Place operates in relation to other The Place participants and to the structures of the system, enabling cooperation, mutual reference, and the circulation of responsibility.

Participation opens a space for cooperation and mutual aid, without hierarchy and without pre-defined outcomes.

The benefits take the form of frameworks for action, and their

significance emerges in practice—through modes of participation, relationships, and the consequences of decisions taken.

Participation in The Places supports the capacity for continued action and shared responsibility within The Better Coffee Endeavour.

### **Interaction Between The Places**

Relationships between The Places constitute a norm of operation within the system. Participation in the structure assumes co-presence and reference to other The Place participants as equal points of action, situated in different local contexts and connected through a shared language and orientation of The Better Coffee.

Interactions between The Places take a horizontal form. Cooperation is grounded in coordination, trust, and mutual aid, enabling joint initiatives, the exchange of knowledge, work, and resources in response to the real needs of coffee people.

These relationships organize the circulation of responsibility and experience across the system.

Relationships between The Places also include economic exchange. The Places may trade with one another, cooperate in the distribution of goods and services, and shape buying and selling relations within shared values.

Within such relations, the three-tier mechanism may be applied as a tool for adjusting terms of exchange to the real capacities, needs, and contexts of participants, while maintaining relational equality.

Shared responsibility between The Places arises from relationships rather than position. The common space of action supports learning, adjustment, and coordination of practices, while respecting autonomy and local diversity.

### **Relations With External Actors**

Relations between The

Places and actors outside the structure situate the system's action within a broader social, economic, and cultural context. They include relations of selling, purchasing, and needs, as well as contacts with clients, partners, and other external actors, through which decisions taken by The Place enter a circulation of consequences extending beyond the system.

Responsibility toward the "external" is expressed through coherence of practice with the language and values of The Better Coffee. These relations remain legible, grounded in dignity, transparency, and truth, and treat the needs of the other party as an element of relationship rather than merely a transactional impulse.

In its engagement with the surrounding environment, The Places also function as points of reference for paradigm change. Through modes of action, communication, and decision-making, they disseminate the language, orientation, and structures of The

Better Coffee Endeavour, inspiring reflection, cooperation, and entry into the system. This influence unfolds through the example of practice rather than through declaration.

### **Coordination and the Role of The Office**

In its relationship with The Place, The Better Coffee Office coordinates ongoing systemic interactions and supports everyday action arising from participation in the structure.

This coordination includes communication, system orientation, and connecting The Place with other participants and structures wherever their activities intersect.

The Office proposes and supports, rather than managing the actions of The Place.

Consultations remain voluntary and relational in character, and their purpose is to strengthen the capacity of The Place to act independently in alignment with the language, values, and

orientation of The Better Coffee.

Within this relationship, The Office may accept delegated tasks or assignments arising from systemic needs, as well as redirect them to other structures or The Place participants that hold the appropriate resources or competencies. Such delegation is grounded in willingness and responsibility, rather than subordination.

Specific points of interface between The Place and The Office include licensing, onboarding, and processes of evaluation over time. The Office signs license agreements, conducts onboarding of new The Place participants, and coordinates activities related to audit and alignment with The Better Coffee Standard, acting as a carrier of systemic responsibility.

This relationship strengthens the capacity of The Place to act within the system while preserving local autonomy and clarity of roles. Coordination carried by

The Office supports coherence and continuity of the Endeavour, functioning as a form of support rather than control.

### **Transparency, Evaluation, and Critique**

Transparency of action constitutes a condition of trust within The Better Coffee system. Transparency means readiness to make practice, decisions, and their consequences visible as part of ongoing action, so that practice remains legible and referable to the shared language and values of the system.

Evaluation and critique are relational and systemic in character. They enable continuous reference to the effects of decisions and support the stability of the system through conscious engagement with consequences. In this sense, critique strengthens the system's capacity to act under real conditions and remains part of shared responsibility.

Transparency and evaluability also play a key role in the relationship between The Place and The Ranking Method. They enable the assessment of quality alongside the legibility of exchanges involving products and services, through which decisions made within The Place enter systemic circulation. Through this, evaluation and exchange remain coherent with the values and orientation of The Better Coffee.

### **Role of The Places Guidebook**

This chapter establishes the constitutional framework for the functioning of The Places within The Better Coffee system. It defines their position, scope of responsibility, and relations with other structures, remaining at the level of systemic orientation.

The Places Guidebook is established as the executive document in relation to this framework. Its role is to support the practice of The Places across

the areas described in Chapter 7, through orientation of action, coordination, and support for implementation under real conditions.

The Guidebook functions as a working document, developed over time together with the lived experience of The Places. Its content remains grounded in the language and values of The Better Coffee Standard, as well as in the conditions of life and work of coffee people.

The relationship between Chapter 7 and The Places Guidebook rests on complementarity: this chapter sets the constitutional frame, while the Guidebook supports its application in the everyday practice of The Places.

## Chapter 8

# The Curriculum – Education and End of Formulas

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Education lives through people;  
The Curriculum gives it form.

### **Education Within The Better Coffee System**

The Better Coffee Curriculum occupies the position of a structure in which education functions as situated, recognizable, and accountable action.

Positioned here as an operational field, it is where knowledge, experience, and reflection enter a circulation of consequences referable to the system's shared

language and values.

The position of The Curriculum is realized through its relations with other structures of The Better Coffee, in particular through its connection with The Trainers.

The Trainers carry educational continuity and enable the presence of The Curriculum in practice, translating its frameworks into concrete contexts of action, cooperation,

and learning. Through this relation, responsibility for meaning, language coherence, and the recognizability of education is organized. Educational processes remain situated within conditions of life and work of coffee people, including material environment, social relations, access to resources, and everyday practice. Within this context, education can respond to consequences and adjust action over time. In this position, The Better Coffee Curriculum operates within a logic of implementation and improvement, strengthening the system's capacity for learning, coordination, and development.

### **Pedagogical Assumptions**

Grounded in the values of The Better Coffee, The Curriculum adopts an approach distinct from coffee education systems operating within the current paradigm. The differences concern the type and mode of knowledge transmission, pedagogical assumptions, working

methods, and the attitudes adopted toward knowledge, practice, and responsibility. The characteristics outlined below define how The Curriculum operates and organize its approach to education.

**No formula** – we do not unreflectively reproduce cognitive frameworks that explain coffee through established myths, beliefs, and habits. We work to correct flawed understandings of concepts and experiences, and to make their consequences visible.

Uncritical, repetitive, and template-based thinking about coffee, characteristic of other education systems, stands within The Curriculum in conflict with Truth-Seeking and with the other values of The Better Coffee.

**End of embargo** – we aim to provide participants with up-to-date scientific knowledge. The Curriculum draws on research published by scholars in peer-reviewed journals as well as on open scientific sources. As

described in Chapter 11 of this document, The Better Coffee develops practices that support broad access to research outcomes, reduce publication barriers, and release knowledge from closed patent regimes.

For this reason, The Curriculum works with the most current data, theories, hypotheses, and observations available at a given moment.

At the same time, it recognizes the real conditions of access to scientific knowledge and treats currency as an ongoing process that requires continual revision, supplementation, and responsible updating over time.

**No exams** – The Curriculum does not include any form of knowledge examination during its courses. Drawing on unschooling as an educational method, we hold that learning does not require control or formal assessment, and that knowledge emerges through shared work during the course, curiosity, its impact on everyday action, and

real needs. The Trainers do not evaluate a “level of learning” or determine whether it is sufficient.

**No diploma** – within this structure, coffee people are not certified. Completion of a course may be formally confirmed for the purposes of institutions financing education, but it does not involve the issuance of a diploma. Such a document would not adequately reflect the knowledge and skills actually acquired by participants.

**Guidebooks** – drawing on practices such as non-validated learning, we treat curricular frameworks and exercise sets as supportive tools that do not require examinations. In The Curriculum, guidebooks serve an operational and orienting role: they structure the scope of educational work, define minimum curricular content, and propose exercises, while remaining open to adjustment in practice. These frameworks are developed and updated

by The Trainers and The Office through collective review. Detailed rules for their organization and use are specified in executive documents. Participants’ input is also included, with feedback and proposals gathered during courses and via the M+E infrastructure.

**Rituals** – one of the roles of The Curriculum structure is to support the integration of coffee people. During courses, Rituals are used as voluntary, collective actions, activities, and exercises whose purpose is not only learning, but also bringing participants and guides closer together.

Rituals support relationship-building and shared practice, while embodying equality, solidarity, and the other values of The Better Coffee.

**Trainer-student relationship** – The Trainers act as guides and stewards of the learning process. Their role is not based on authority understood as hierarchical power. Trainers teach, advise, and consult without

issuing commands. Students understand that a trainer may decline to answer a question, make mistakes, or invite the student’s perspective as a source of learning.

**Paradigm shift** – the structure of The Curriculum supports processes of implementation and efficiency. Through education, we disseminate knowledge about the prevailing paradigm, its cracks and possible anomalies, and we examine the hypothesis of The Better Coffee paradigm.

**Value-based grounding** – we teach in alignment with the values of The Better Coffee and with the practice of improvement. Their application within The Curriculum shapes the character of this educational structure and the relationships formed through it.

**Creativity** – The Curriculum courses cultivate thinking about coffee oriented toward problem-solving in a non-formulaic and truth-based way. The learning process includes a conscious

practice of moving beyond established cognitive frameworks.

Building collectives – The Curriculum develops not only the capacities of individual coffee people, but also collective capabilities that support the mission of The Better Coffee.

### **Fields of Necessary Education**

The Curriculum brings together fields of education that are necessary for responsible action within The Better Coffee system.

These fields arise from the real conditions of work of coffee people, from coffee itself across its life cycle—from cultivation and processing to trade and consumption—and from the wider social, economic, and environmental contexts in which this work takes place.

The catalogue is intentionally open. The fields listed below function as a shared point of reference for The Curriculum, offering an open and evolving framework for educational work.

**Perception, cognition, and language**, including sensory science and perception studies, cognitive science, linguistics, cognitive and social psychology, and behavioral sciences.

**Material, natural, and technological sciences**, including physics, food chemistry, microbiology and fermentation science, materials science, agricultural sciences and agroecology, climate and environmental systems science, systems biology and ecology, geography, geology, and hydrology.

Health, life, and populations, including health sciences and public health, epidemiology, population nutrition and dietetics, demography, and statistics.

**Systems, infrastructure, and production**, including systems theory, economics, power analysis in economic systems, management, logistics and infrastructural systems, appropriate technology studies, and artificial intelligence

studies.

**Society, power, and culture**, including sociology, anthropology of food, culture, and ritual, political science and international relations, labor and work relations studies, marketing studies, communication and dialogue studies, and the history of economic systems, colonialism, and labor.

**Law, ethics, and responsibility**, including international law, labor and social law, ethics and moral philosophy, business ethics, human rights and dignity studies, and cooperative economics and mutual aid studies.

Place and the conditions of life and work, including urban studies and spatial design.

**Knowledge, education, and the future**, including education theory and pedagogy, learning design and facilitation, science and technology studies, epistemology, critical research methodologies, and futures studies.

## **Core Courses and Their Knowledge Anchors**

The Better Coffee Standard establishes an open catalogue of core courses and defines their meaning, values, and structural framework. These courses function as a shared educational orientation of The Curriculum and may evolve over time. Any changes to their structure introduced in educational practice are updated post factum in The Standard, ensuring coherence between the document and the system's real operation. The detailed scope, delivery, tools, and formats of the courses are described and developed in operational documents that translate the framework of The Standard into educational practice.

**Coffee Atlas** – climate and environmental systems science; systems biology and ecology; geography; the history of economic systems, colonialism, and labor; futures studies; degrowth; biodiversity; population nutrition; health sciences.

**Common Name** – linguistics; marketing studies; sociology; behavioral sciences; statistics; economics.

**Compound** – food chemistry; physics; systems biology and ecology; materials science; research methodology.

**Conversation & Consultation** – the thematic scope is chosen by the participant, across any area related to coffee, the work of coffee people, or The Better Coffee.

**Fermentation Feels** – microbiology and fermentation science; food chemistry; agricultural sciences and agroecology; coffee processing techniques; climate and environmental systems science.

**RAW** – agricultural sciences and agroecology; geography; climate and environmental systems science; economics; power analysis in economic systems; coffee processing; The Ranking Method.

**The Better Coffee Blueprint** – systems theory; economics; power analysis in

economic systems; science and technology studies; The Better Coffee Standard; The Better Coffee Endeavour and its structures.

**The Profile** – physics; food chemistry; sensory science and perception studies; cognitive science; roasting and brewing technology; analysis of consistency and repeatability.

**The School of Percept** – sensory science and perception studies; cognitive science; linguistics; cognitive and social psychology; behavioral sciences; communication and dialogue studies; marketing studies; analysis of language and market power.

**Two Leaves** – ethics and moral philosophy; business ethics; labor and social law; cooperative economics and mutual aid studies; food safety; responsibility within food systems.

## **The Trainers within The Curriculum**

The Trainers structure constitutes the executive dimension of The Curriculum. Through The Trainers, The

Curriculum operates as education in action. Members of The Trainers deliver The Curriculum courses as guides and stewards, translating its language, values, and orientation into real learning processes for coffee people.

The role of The Trainers is to give The Curriculum the form of educational practice. Through presence, continuity of work, and relational responsibility, The Trainers make the character of The Curriculum visible and enact it in practice.

Entry into the role of The Trainer takes place through a license, which establishes responsibility for conducting education within The Curriculum.

The license provides access to The Curriculum's materials, tools, and operational frameworks and confirms readiness to act in alignment with The Better Coffee Standard. It also enables other roles assigned to The Trainers.

Licensing mechanisms are specified in executive documents.

### **Relationships, coordination, and responsibility**

The relationships between The Trainers and The Better Coffee Office constitute one of the key mechanisms through which The Curriculum takes shape in its living, practical form. Through these interactions, The Curriculum remains coherent, current, and grounded in real educational practice.

The Better Coffee Office licenses members of The Trainers, conducts the onboarding process, and integrates them into the structures of The Endeavour. The license establishes a relationship of responsibility, coordination, and trust, and defines the conditions under which it may be concluded, as specified in the operational documents.

The Better Coffee Office is responsible for approving, maintaining, and publishing official and current versions of the Guidebooks for The Curriculum, as well as other operational documents. Their content develops through an ongoing

process that includes active participation by members of The Trainers, whose practical experience serves as a meaningful source of knowledge, correction, and the continued development of educational language.

The Office fulfills a coordinating role in relation to The Trainers and The Curriculum, ensuring coherence of language, structures, and operating principles. This coordination supports continuity of work and system-level responsibility, while remaining rooted in the realities of training practice.

One area of this coordination is the collective publication of a course calendar, including the ability for participants to reserve places and complete payments. The Trainers retain autonomy in individually announcing and selling courses, with the condition that each course is reported to The Office and obligatorily listed in the shared calendar, which serves as the

reference space for the existence and recognizability of educational activities within The Curriculum.

The shared calendar functions as a tool of responsibility, coordination, and transparency. Courses are recognized as part of The Curriculum exclusively within this shared publication structure. Both sales models operate in parallel and remain equivalent forms of delivering The Curriculum, situated within one shared space of coordination.

The Office collects from each course a defined fee or percentage allocated to operational costs and the solidarity fund. Rates and rules for their application are set out in the operational documents. This mechanism forms one of the key relationships between The Curriculum, The Trainers, and Pay-It-Forward, ensuring infrastructural continuity and access to education.

When a course is sold by The Office, the applicable amount is

collected automatically prior to the payment of remuneration to The Trainers. When a course is sold directly by a member of The Trainers, the agreed fee or percentage is transferred in a timely manner in accordance with the rules defined in the operational documents.

Both settlement models secure the resources required to conduct a course, including access to infrastructure, educational materials and teaching aids required by the Guidebooks, the costs of rituals, and other elements that constitute the real cost of delivery, including trainer remuneration.

In each case, The Trainers receive remuneration for delivering a course, with the possibility of voluntary waiver in justified circumstances.

When a participant attends under the Solidarity tier, the trainer receives full remuneration calculated according to the Sustainable tier rate. The difference is

covered by The Office through the Pay-It-Forward mechanism coordinated by this structure.

The relationship between The Trainers, The Curriculum, and The Office also includes a formal feedback loop. Educational experience, interpretive tensions, and needs for adaptation are incorporated into the process of updating documents and practices, reinforcing the evolutionary character of The Curriculum.

All relationships, processes, and mechanisms described in this section are further developed and specified in dedicated executive documents. This chapter establishes their systemic and relational role within The Better Coffee Standard.

Changes to the structure of courses within The Curriculum fall within the agency of The Better Coffee Office and are undertaken through responsible dialogue with training practice and the values of The Better Coffee.

## **Access, capacity, and solidarity**

The Curriculum is designed as an accessible structure that strengthens the capacity of coffee people to act, regardless of their capital, origin, market position, or prior experience. Access to education is treated as a condition of dignity, agency, and long-term ability to work with coffee. The Better Coffee recognizes that barriers to entry based on financial capital, geographic conditions, symbolic capital, and hierarchies of experience actively shape exclusion from education, and responds to them through systemic solutions that enable participation in line with the real economic and life capacity of a given person or entity.

The primary mechanism organizing access to The Curriculum is Three-Tier Pricing. Differentiation of access to courses is based solely on the ability to bear costs, while the scope of content, participant status, and quality of education remain

unchanged. The Pay-It-Forward mechanism enables participants and entities with greater financial capacity to co-create conditions of access for those operating under constrained resources. Together, these mechanisms support continuity of education, structural stability, and the practical equalization of participation opportunities, remaining grounded in relationships of responsibility and mutual trust. Their principles and rationale are developed further in Chapter 6.

Accessibility within The Curriculum is understood broadly, dynamically, and contextually, extending beyond the price of participation. It includes course formats, pace of work, local context, and the ability of participants to integrate education with life and work. The Trainers deliver courses in multiple languages, adapted to context and participants, while English remains the language of system documents. Online

courses frequently include simultaneous interpretation. Accessibility also encompasses consideration of the needs of people with disabilities, including Deaf participants, blind participants, and those with limited mobility, in line with the possibilities of a given course format and local infrastructure.

Access to The Curriculum is grounded in the 20 Core Values of The Better Coffee, which determine its scope, form, and mode of implementation in educational practice.

## **Where Education Happens**

Infrastructure requirements within The Curriculum depend on the form in which a course is delivered. Courses may take place in person, online, or in shortened formats, such as lectures that popularize the educational areas associated with specific courses.

For courses delivered in person, infrastructure requirements are specific to each course and are defined in the

relevant Guidebook. As a principle, both minimum and optimal infrastructure conditions are identified. Education has the right and responsibility to take place wherever there is a willingness to learn, including in contexts of infrastructural scarcity. At the same time, depending on the nature of a given course, failure to meet the technical minimum may limit or prevent the achievement of its assigned educational outcomes.

These limitations arise from technical conditions rather than from the logic of The Curriculum. For example, the absence of a coffee roaster makes education in roasting impossible. Conversely, the availability of a roaster constitutes a sufficient condition for delivering the course, regardless of the manufacturer, model, or specific parameters of the equipment, provided it enables the exercises defined in the Guidebook.

Courses within The Curriculum remain adaptable to the available

infrastructure. The Office and The Trainers are encouraged to place emphasis on providing participants with technological support at the highest feasible and appropriate level for the given course format.

For courses delivered online, a prerequisite for delivery is the participant's ability to complete all exercises specified in the Guidebook independently, using minimum required infrastructure and appropriate samples and educational materials, which may be provided to participants. Where these conditions cannot be met, the course cannot be delivered in an online format.

### **Education in universities**

The Curriculum may pursue its educational aims also outside the framework of courses, in the form of a university. University denotes an educational community in which people learn from one another, regardless of age, experience, or formal status.

This model of education draws on the Grundtvigian tradition and understands learning as a communal process rooted in dialogue, shared presence, and lived experience. In this form of delivering The Curriculum, its aims, principles, and conditions of access remain unchanged.

What changes is the character of educational relations. The relationship between those who teach and those who learn becomes horizontal, with each participant learning from others. Education takes place through conversation, shared living, everyday work, and reflection on daily experience, with knowledge functioning as a common good.

Education in the form of a university is realized through gatherings and takes place in places prepared for this mode of learning, inspired by the tradition of folk high schools. This form enables educational work to unfold in rhythms and dimensions aligned with the real conditions of coffee people's work,

while remaining coherent with the values and method of The Curriculum.

### **The role of the Lab in the development of The Curriculum**

Labs play a supportive role in the development of The Curriculum, particularly in the preparation and ongoing revision of Guidebooks. They support The Curriculum, The Trainers, and The Better Coffee Office by providing current scientific knowledge, especially in the areas of paradigm research and other fields of inquiry referenced in this chapter.

The role of the Labs is to strengthen the cognitive and methodological quality of education without assuming decision-making or coordinating functions. Knowledge generated or aggregated by the Labs functions as a shared resource, contributing to the refinement, deepening, and development of educational practices within The Curriculum.

Lab teams remain in ongoing contact with The Better Coffee

structures through the Matrix + Element (M+E) communication infrastructure or operate as a licensed part of The Places, maintaining coherence with the values, language, and method of The Better Coffee.

### **Executive Educational Documents**

The implementation of The Curriculum is supported by a set of executive documents that organize its structure and its functioning in educational practice. These documents do not alter the constitutional role of The Curriculum as defined in The Better Coffee Standard; rather, they enable its coherent implementation across different contexts.

The executive documents include:

**The Trainers Pathway – Code** defines the framework of roles, responsibilities, and licensing for members of The Trainers.

**The Curriculum Architecture** describes the structure of The Curriculum as a whole,

comprising ten equal courses.

**Running The Curriculum Courses** regulates the official pathway for preparing and delivering courses as activities embedded within the structure of The Curriculum.

**Course Guidebooks** constitute a collection of individual course guides; each course has its own Guidebook, which serves as the direct point of reference for its delivery.

The executive documents function as tools of coordination and continuous updating of educational practice, remaining coherent with the values, language, and method of The Better Coffee.

## Chapter 9

# The Ranking Method – Ethical Evaluation

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Quality does not rank people;  
it situates products in responsibility.

### Why The Ranking Method Exists

The Ranking Method exists as a structure that enables the practical application of The Better Coffee Core Values in decisions concerning coffee quality.

Its role is to provide a shared and responsible point of reference wherever quality operates as a real consequence of choices, relationships,

and the conditions under which a product is made.

In The Better Coffee, quality is understood as a decision-making category rather than a narrative one.

It requires a tool that allows quality to be named in a coherent, repeatable, and value-aligned way, without reducing it to a single parameter, a marker of prestige, or a communicative shortcut.

The Ranking Method responds to this need by structuring how quality is understood as a condition of a product within a system of responsibility.

The Ranking Method emerged from the growing need to make visible the conditions under which coffee is produced, and to connect the sensory dimension of coffee with the practices and relationships that enable its existence. This structure supports decision-making under conditions of complexity, asymmetry, and limited access to information, offering an orienting reference rather than a simplified hierarchy.

The purpose of The Ranking Method is to enable shared orientation around quality understood as responsibility toward people, labor, and the future of coffee.

The structure strengthens the agency of coffee people by providing information that supports fair choices, continued work, and cooperation within The Better Coffee Endeavour.

### **What The Ranking Method Is**

The Ranking Method is a structure for evaluating coffee quality within The Better Coffee system. It operates through a shared logic of reference that enables the quality of an assessed green coffee to be determined in relation to the values of The Better Coffee.

The TRM method is based on two inseparable dimensions of evaluation: Practice Review and Sensory Analysis. Practice Review addresses the practices and conditions under which the assessed product is made. Sensory Analysis concerns the characteristics of the product as revealed through sensory analysis. Both dimensions operate simultaneously and lead to a single outcome.

The outcome of applying The Ranking Method is a ranking understood as a systemic frame of reference. In TRM, ranking functions as a non-comparative structure. It consists of categories that relate to different

states of quality within The Better Coffee system and that organize subsequent actions, responsibilities, and possible forms of support.

A threshold assigns a given assessed green coffee to one of the ranking categories. It determines which point of reference within The Better Coffee system the product relates to, indicating its current state as well as the direction for further work, improvement, and partnership.

The Ranking Method functions as an orientational method whose role is to enable further action, improvement, and mutual aid within The Better Coffee Endeavour.

### **Green Coffee and the Subject of Evaluation**

In The Ranking Method, the object of evaluation is always a specific green coffee. It constitutes the material reference point of the entire TRM process. The assessment concerns the quality of that coffee, understood as the combined outcome of the characteristics

revealed through Sensory Analysis and the conditions and practices of its production addressed in the Practice Review.

The subject of reference in TRM is the green coffee producer. It is in relation to the producer's actual operating conditions, decisions made within available possibilities, and structural constraints that the outcome of the Practice Review and the assigned threshold are interpreted.

TRM does not assume full agency or freedom of choice; instead, it treats production practices as embedded in specific economic, social, and environmental contexts.

This distinction structures the logic of TRM: the product remains the carrier of the evaluation, while the producer serves as the reference point for interpreting quality and for determining further actions within a logic of efficiency and improvement. This approach makes the conditions of green coffee production visible without

attributing simplified agency or formulating moral judgments toward producers.

In this sense, The Ranking Method connects the materiality of the product with a relational and contextual understanding of practices, remaining coherent with the values of The Better Coffee.

### **Quality as a Simultaneous Condition**

In The Ranking Method, quality is understood as the outcome of a simultaneous sensory analysis and ethical analysis. It concerns both how coffee tastes and is perceived sensorially, and the conditions under which it is produced, with regard to people and the planet.

Quality does not arise from separate or sequential evaluations. The sensory and ethical dimensions function together as one condition, forming a single frame of reference for naming

quality within The Better Coffee system.

Through this understanding, quality becomes an integrated expression of product characteristics and production realities, enabling responsible orientation, further work, and alignment with the values of The Better Coffee.

### **Practice Review**

Practice Review constitutes one of the two inseparable dimensions of quality assessment within The Ranking Method.

It covers a review of the practices and conditions under which the evaluated green coffee is produced, understood in relation to the values of The Better Coffee and the real operating conditions of coffee people.

The review addresses how production is organized across its key dimensions: relations with people, working conditions and safety, process hygiene, environmental impact,

and everyday decisions made within existing constraints. These practices are approached as processes embedded in specific economic, social, and ecological contexts. The Practice Review process is conducted using a structured form based on the producer's declarations.

The form organizes information about production practices and includes a simplified economic snapshot of production, enabling an assessment of coherence, decision-making context, and the identification of areas that require attention.

Within Practice Review, mechanisms of limits and flags are applied, determining the assignment of the evaluated product to a specific threshold. Limits structure the aggregation of responses in the form, defining how exceeding set values in particular categories leads to the assessment outcome. They serve a

methodological function, ensuring consistency and repeatability of the process.

Flags indicate serious issues revealed during the review, referring to violations of Best Practices and the values of The Better Coffee. The presence of a flag results in a Below the Red Line outcome, regardless of other responses in the form.

The process operates on a trust-based basis, complemented by selective and sample-based verification of the actual state of affairs.

These checks are random or justified by the internal coherence of the material and serve primarily to confirm the reliability of the presented practices rather than to reconstruct them in full.

The Practice Review may be carried out on a periodic basis when relevant, and while it may be reused across multiple evaluations within a

limited time frame, it is not considered valid beyond a period of one year.

Through this approach, Practice Review makes the conditions under which green coffee is produced visible in a relational and contextual manner, forming the foundation for a responsible interpretation of quality and for further action within The Better Coffee Endeavour.

The technical conduct of the Practise Review is defined in the operational document The Ranking Method (with forms).

### **Sensory Analysis**

Sensory Analysis constitutes the second, inseparable dimension of quality assessment within The Ranking Method.

It involves a technical analysis of the evaluated green coffee as a material product, conducted under controlled conditions and according to a coherent sensory

analysis methodology. The sensory analysis addresses the characteristics of coffee as revealed at different stages of work with the sample: as green coffee, after reference roasting, and in the beverage.

It includes both observable physical properties and raw material defects, as well as sensory attributes identified during evaluation, treated as a descriptive account of the product rather than an expression of market preferences.

Conducted under blind conditions, Sensory Analysis employs measurement, discriminative, and descriptive methods, complemented—auxiliarily—by an affective component.

The affective component does not influence the ranking outcome; it serves to support producer orientation and further work on product efficiency.

The analysis is performed on independently

obtained samples as part of green coffee control, limiting the risk of material manipulation.

The technical conduct of the Sensory Analysis is defined in the operational document The Ranking Method (with forms).

### **Thresholds**

In The Ranking Method, thresholds serve as shared reference points that organize the relationship between the assessed green coffee, its producer, and the structures of The Better Coffee.

They represent different states of quality understood as the relation between the product and the ethical practices of its production in relation to the values of the system.

Thresholds function as an orientational tool for cooperation and mutual aid.

Each threshold indicates what kind of support, coordination, and shared responsibility is appropriate in a given case, both on the side of the

producer and within the structures of The Better Coffee.

**Below the Red Line** denotes a state in which the revealed conditions of production or product characteristics indicate significant misalignment with the values of The Better Coffee.

This threshold signals the need for structural support, protection of basic working conditions, and actions aimed at stabilization and correction of key areas. It functions as a reference point for systemic intervention.

It does not express a judgment of the producer's intentions or effort.

**Essential** denotes a state in which the overall direction of practices and product characteristics remains coherent with the values of The Better Coffee.

This threshold indicates the potential for further work focused on efficiency, improvement, and the

implementation of solutions that support long-term stability and quality.

Essential functions as a reference point for cooperation, learning, and coordination across system structures.

**High-End** denotes a state in which both production practices and product characteristics remain close to full alignment with the values of The Better Coffee.

This threshold points to the need for protection of existing conditions, care for repeatability, and resilience against external pressure. Systemic actions focus on maintaining and safeguarding the achieved state.

A threshold organizes further action, support, and shared responsibility within the system, and its meaning may be taken into account in pricing and economic coordination processes, alongside real production costs.

## **Roles and Integrity of the Process**

The Ranking Method is carried out through a clearly defined distribution of roles that safeguards the integrity, coherence, and trust-based character of the entire process. The key participants in TRM are The Better Coffee Office, The Trainers, and the producer of the evaluated green coffee.

The Ranking Method may be initiated by any person belonging to coffee people or acting in a direct relation to the evaluated coffee. The commissioning party of TRM may be any entity or individual interested in the assessment of quality, regardless of their position within the circulation of products and values, form of employment, or involvement in a commercial relationship.

The Better Coffee Office acts as the coordinator of the entire TRM process. It receives the request for evaluation, remains in contact with the commissioning party, conducts communication

with the producer of green coffee, and commissions authorized The Trainers to carry out Practice Review and Sensory Analysis. Depending on the scale of the lot, the nature of the case, and operational needs, The Office may engage between one and four The Trainers within a single evaluation, in accordance with the principles defined in the executive documents of The Ranking Method (with forms).

The Trainers are responsible exclusively for performing the evaluative components of TRM. Authorization to conduct Practice Review and Sensory Analysis requires completion of dedicated TRM onboarding and the signing of an annex to the trainer license, in accordance with The Trainers Pathway – Code. Only trainers holding such authorization may conduct TRM within the structure coordinated by The Better Coffee Office.

The producer of green coffee constitutes the subject of reference in Practice Review and a necessary participant

in the process. When the producer is not the commissioning party of TRM, they retain the right to refuse participation in the evaluation. When participating, the producer is required to provide a structured production statement describing production practices and conditions. This production statement serves as input material for Practice Review and remains distinct from the final TRM Report, which synthesizes the outcomes of Practice Review and Sensory Analysis.

The integrity of the TRM process rests on a strict blind process. The Better Coffee Office is the only structure holding identifying information regarding the producer, the commissioning party, and the participating The Trainers.

Before any materials are forwarded for evaluation, The Office anonymizes all identifying data. Materials for Practice Review, coffee samples, and supporting information are provided to The

Trainers exclusively in coded form.

Where verification of producer declarations or sample collection is required, The Trainers operate exclusively through The Better Coffee Office. The Office may conduct verification directly or commission it to other authorized actors, including other The Trainers or The Places, without disclosing the identity of the parties to the evaluating trainers. Likewise, samples for Sensory Analysis are distributed in coded form, without information on origin or commercial context.

The Ranking Method may be applied outside the structure coordinated by The Better Coffee Office and The Trainers for purposes of self-orientation or internal reflection. Such use remains outside the formal system and carries a risk of bias and cognitive distortion.

The Better Coffee Standard allows such practices, while reserving recognition of TRM outcomes within the system to processes conducted in accordance

with the defined roles and safeguards.

The Better Coffee Office consolidates all elements of the evaluation and is responsible for issuing the TRM Report, in accordance with the principles described in the following section.

### **The TRM Report**

The TRM Report is the sole formal carrier of the outcome of The Ranking Method. It integrates the results of Practice Review and Sensory Analysis, expressing quality as the combined outcome of ethical and sensory evaluation and assigning the evaluated green coffee to a specific threshold.

The Better Coffee Office is responsible for compiling, finalizing, and issuing the TRM Report. The report is based on materials provided by The Trainers TRM and on information supplied by the producer within the Practice Review process. It functions as a shared reference point for further actions within The Better Coffee system.

Once the evaluation process is completed and the outcome is closed, The Better Coffee Office coordinates the signing of the TRM Report by the evaluating The Trainers and by the producer of the green coffee or their representative. At this stage, the parties become mutually known, and the report attains its full formal status. The TRM Report marks the beginning of further dialogue and action. It provides the basis for subsequent decisions, cooperation, and system-level responses, which are addressed in the following section.

### **Use of Outcomes**

The outcomes of The Ranking Method may be used by coffee people as an orientational tool for decision-making, relationship-building, and planning further actions related to the assessed green coffee. TRM provides a shared reference point for discussing quality understood as the combined outcome of sensory and ethical dimensions, without

prescribing a single mode of use.

Responsibility for how TRM outcomes are applied rests with the user of the information. The Ranking Method offers orientation and a structured frame of reference, while decisions regarding subsequent actions, communication, and consequences remain with the parties engaging with the report.

Following the completion of an assessment, The Better Coffee Office may support follow-up actions, including mediation, partnerships, and the initiation of further collaboration around the assessed coffee. These activities may take commercial, partnership-based, or educational forms and operate within the logic of mutual aid and the coverage of system operating costs.

The threshold assigned within TRM may be taken into account in pricing processes and economic coordination, in relation to real production costs and

the logic of Three-Tier Pricing. TRM does not replace these mechanisms; it provides additional orientation for economic decision-making.

TRM outcomes are useful for The Places as a reference for practice and transparency, for The Curriculum and The Trainers as material for educational work, and for The Better Coffee Office as a tool for system-wide orientation and coordination. In this way, TRM functions as a living structure, operating in relation to other elements of The Better Coffee Endeavour.

The Ranking Method operates within the existing economic paradigm and does not presume its suspension or circumvention. It functions under real market, legal, and economic conditions, focusing on correcting informational asymmetries and increasing the visibility of green coffee producers and production conditions. By making production practices and product characteristics visible

in a coherent, system-level form, TRM strengthens the position of producers in commercial and decision-making contexts, without attributing simplified agency or transferring responsibility for structural constraints under which they operate.

At the same time, The Ranking Method remains aware of its own limits. It does not manage markets, guarantee fair relations, or replace economic decisions made by coffee people. Its role is to provide orientation that may support more responsible decisions and actions within existing possibilities, without claiming full systemic agency.

### **Executive Document**

The Ranking Method is supported by a single executive document: The Ranking Method (with forms).

This document operates between the constitutional layer and its practical implementation. It contains the operative instruments of TRM,

including forms, protocols, and procedural specifications required to conduct Practice Review and Sensory Analysis.

The executive document functions as a living framework. It enables iterative updates of tools and practices while preserving the constitutional stability of The Better Coffee Standard and the systemic coherence of The Ranking Method.

## Chapter 10

# Paradigm, Power, and Change

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Paradigms shape coffee long before  
coffee is named, evaluated, or traded

Understanding the paradigm in which we live precedes any attempt to confront its consequences and any effort to change it – or perhaps to replace it. Equally important, however, is understanding the context within which our cognitive frames operate – that overarching layer that situates a paradigm within the history of our species.

As Immanuel Wallerstein wrote, “most revolutionaries intended to be revolutionaries, at least at the beginning. Most revolutionary regimes intended to change the world. They [...] discover, as individuals and as regimes, that they are constrained by the structures of the world-system,

which force them to behave within certain parameters [...]. Thus sooner or later they adapt to this situation."

The Better Coffee is not a revolution and does not intend to become one. It adjusts its scope of action to those "parameters." Like Wallerstein's revolutionaries, we recognize constraints and understand how the existing system shapes the behavior and possibilities of coffee people.

The American philosopher and political scholar emphasized that systems always have limits. Even when those limits shift, systems operate according to rules that evolve over time, and even relatively significant deviations from the norm tend to produce only relatively minor medium-term changes. Through internal contradictions, systems move away from equilibrium and eventually lose the capacity to continue functioning. They reach a point at which they are transformed or replaced by other systems – a Paradigm Shift occurs.

When enthusiasm turns into disillusionment.

When cracks can no longer be repaired.

When Pandora's box is opened and social aspirations and hopes are released.

"Then nothing will stop the change."

Let us listen once more to Wallerstein's words: "We are living in a transitional period between the present world-system, the capitalist world-economy, and

another world-system. We do not know whether that system will be better or worse. We will not know until it arrives." In 1998 he predicted that this transformation would last "some fifty years." We are already past the midpoint of that period.

The Better Coffee follows the dynamics of change within the system. It looks for cracks and observes anomalies – not out of fear of change, but in order to prepare coffee people for it.

A Paradigm Shift will have unpredictable consequences for coffee people, for work with coffee, and for coffee itself. This is why the structures of The Endeavour exist: to build economic self-defense against what exists now and what may come later. They form a seed of a future world-system, possibly entirely unnecessary after the shift. They are designed to support coffee people now as they navigate – in Fernand Braudel's words – the "opaque zones" of capitalism, and to provide cognitive frames for orientation after the transformation.

In this chapter, we will present the paradigm as an operating system of normality – a set of assumptions and language that determine what can be recognized as rational. We will show that power operates as a structural relation embedded in markets, standards, metrics, and narratives of neutrality, and that coffee functions as a laboratory of late capitalism, where narratives of quality and progress normalize

exploitation and expose systemic cracks.

We will define degrowth as a constitutional orientation of The Better Coffee, distinguish optimization – “repair” – from paradigm change, and describe cracks and refusal as conditions of alternative possibilities.

The subject matter of this chapter introduces The Better Coffee White Paper. The White Paper has educational and structural significance. It develops and expands the analyses presented in The Better Coffee Standard, supporting them with examples and scientific polemics. The White Paper captures a specific state of the paradigm at the time of its writing and editing, and therefore requires updating in accordance with the rhythm and pace of change in the world.

### **Paradigm as an Operating System**

Before continuing, return to Chapter 2 and refresh the definitions of paradigm, Paradigm Shift, collapse, cracks, and anomalies.

As you already know, a paradigm is a consensus that our cognitive frames most often do not perceive. They are fused with our experience of reality. They are normality.

“That is just how it is,” even when it is harmful and scarcity is felt.

You have no choice – you participate in it. Every single coffee people, as well as The Better Coffee, participates in it.

It is not merely that you cannot be neutral; neutrality does not exist. You may attempt to escape the paradigm – to become an outsider, treated with indulgence or bearing the consequences of insubordination toward the paradigm.

Most often, you move within its dichotomies, from wall to wall of the box you inhabit, because no one asked for your consent. This is how paradigms (and the system or systems operating within them) function – they have boundaries and determine what is permitted and what is not. They create norms, standards, and law. They shape interpersonal relations. They influence the life of each of us, even in the domains of family, intimacy, and religion. Recognized as consensus – by us or by those before us – they endure as long as they explain reality.

These consensuses determine what is visible, what is named, and what is rational. They have their own language – used daily, as if it were the only language in history. Through it, we name what is measurable (e.g., growth rates), what is manageable (e.g., the “global village”), what is visible (e.g., economic success), and what is real (e.g., poverty rates). This is the vocabulary of the prevailing paradigm. It precedes practice and intention in our actions.

The current paradigm, as Immanuel Wallerstein described it, has its “strongest element.” It is capitalism – a system “enabling and facilitating the endless accumulation of capital.”

Competition and profit are its foundational logic. Capitalists require a state or states that not only sanction markets but also construct political power capable of influencing others – a geopolitical entanglement of mutual pressures and positions. Alongside capitalism, democratization and liberalism hold strong positions within these cognitive frames, adapted to the needs of capitalism.

Characteristic of “late capitalism” appears to be the historical drive to minimize production costs and maximize profit, often through the widespread relocation of production to countries with significantly lower – systemically acceptable – labor costs. This intensifies a historically familiar problem within this paradigm: the balance between cutting production costs and the individual and collective demands of workers for higher wages and improved working conditions.

“This is the result of class struggle waged in the workplace and in the political arena,” wrote Wallerstein. Coffee people are one of the gears within this struggle.

This system has linked human health and physical capacity to the productivity of production.

The paradigm also operates within what has been called the “fiscal crisis of the state” – capitalists and workers demand ever greater services and redistribution from states, while states raise taxes and are simultaneously pressured to lower them. This generates political tensions and visible contradictions.

At the same time, serious and often irreversible environmental destruction and the depletion of natural, economic, and social resources have intensified in recent decades alongside the acceleration of capitalist production. Environmental destruction frequently appears not as a cost of production, but as a saving on costs. It is cheaper to pollute a river than to pay for waste disposal. The demand to counter environmental destruction grows, as does political pressure exerted on states as geopolitical actors.

Thus, the paradigm functions as the operating system of the contemporary world. It creates frames of obviousness so natural to us that they lull the impulse to contest its operations – even when they harm us, our loved ones, our neighbors, and the environment around us. It is subject to change and replacement by another paradigm, as has occurred many times in the history of our species – and the mechanism of this change is described in the following part of this chapter.

### **Power Without Villains**

The paradigm disposes of power. Not only over our ways of thinking and acting, but also in a literal sense – it enables people to exercise power over other people, systemic processes, legislation, and morality.

Power can be examined from many philosophical and political perspectives. It is understood as the capacity to govern and maintain

order, linked to reason of state and the common good; as the effect of a social contract in which a community delegates authority to govern; as the ability to impose one's will despite resistance, legitimized by tradition, law, or charisma. In other approaches, power appears as a class relation, as domination by a minority with cyclical replacement of elites, or as a dispersed arrangement among competing interest groups. It may also be seen as embedded in institutions and rules, as a network of relations operating through discourse, knowledge, and normalization, as hegemony based on consent, as an instrument for managing population, health, and productivity, as a mechanism of subordination, or as a relation of domination that requires constant justification.

Regardless of perspective, the answer to whether power arises from the paradigm or the paradigm arises from power remains ambiguous. If we think structurally, paradigm and power co-constitute one another: power produces discourses, and discourses stabilize the paradigm. There is no causal primacy here – there is circulation. If we think materialistically, relations of power emerge from the material structure of the system (e.g., ownership and production), and the paradigm functions as superstructure. In a more idealist approach, the paradigm as a set of ideas, imaginaries, and norms establishes the framework within which power is formed – functional and legitimized.

The Better Coffee Standard does not resolve this dispute. It nevertheless holds that the paradigm is the overarching frame of normality within which relations of power become possible, visible, and recognized as rational – while relations of power simultaneously reproduce and stabilize the paradigm, forming a feedback loop.

This means that the character of power does not arise solely from the will of those who hold it, but from the cognitive frames within which they operate in a given paradigm. From this perspective, conclusions follow that are relevant for implementation and efficiency within The Endeavour.

It also means that the negative consequences of political decisions do not necessarily imply that those who govern are villains who wish for those governed to live in poor conditions, to be unable to meet their needs, or to realize well-being. This stands in alignment with the recognition in The Standard that every human being is good by nature and worthy of dignity.

Finally, it means that in order to change the way power is exercised, one must first change the paradigm. For this reason, The Better Coffee as both idea and political action awaits Paradigm Shift as the foundation for transforming the living conditions of coffee people shaped by political structures, and expresses the hope that such change may limit environmental damage and slow climate change.

## Coffee as a Paradigm Laboratory

Historically, coffee has consistently revealed the operation of successive paradigms. The territorial expansion of coffee cultivation and the use of enslaved labor belong to the period of mercantilist dominance, emerging from the breakdown of feudal order and the consolidation of centralized states. In that phase, states—especially colonial powers—acted as economic agents seeking bullion accumulation, trade control, and monopolies over colonial goods. Colonialism functioned, in this sense, as a mechanism of expansion for the emerging world-system. Some scholars already identify proto-capitalist features in this stage.

It is not possible to determine unequivocally when capitalism became the dominant paradigm. Some argue that its roots reach back to antiquity; others situate its formation in the era of colonial expansion from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries; still others point to the nineteenth century and the Industrial Revolution as the moment of structural dominance, or to the postwar period, when capitalism shifted from an economic system into a broader framework of rationality and a measure of success. After 1989—as suggested by Francis Fukuyama—liberal democracy together with capitalism appeared as a global horizon without a viable alternative. Regardless of the adopted periodization, coffee as a commodity has always functioned within the dominant paradigm, which has left—often

still visible—marks on the ways coffee is cultivated, produced, and circulated.

The expansion of coffee cultivation and its increasing accessibility—from elites to progressively broader social groups—were driven by trends arising from successive paradigm configurations. The coffee plantation became a model of organizing labor and space: a site of dispossession, production discipline, and export-oriented monoculture embedded in a center-periphery relation.

Today, speaking in the language of the paradigm, the “coffee market” is one segment of the global commodity market. The current paradigm, drawing on capitalism, liberalism, and democratization of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, forms a coherent cognitive framework that appears obvious and natural. Although it is not eternal, it continually optimizes itself—adapting to technological change, scientific discovery, and geopolitical shifts.

Within the coffee sector, the capitalist-democratic-liberal paradigm assumes the form of the specialty sub-paradigm. As defined in Chapter 2, specialty denotes something “special” only in relation to the broader whole in which it operates. It distinguishes a segment of the market characterized by relatively higher quality, understood as the result of analysis through specific tools and sensory protocols established by institutions exercising definitional and normative authority

in the coffee field. This produces a dichotomy between coffee and specialty coffee, polarizing prices, market access, and prestige in relation to lot quality. Quantitatively, however, coffee defined as commodity remains dominant in global production and circulation.

Coffee has thus become one of the narrative instruments of the current paradigm. In the dominant framing, it is defined through trade relations embedded in capitalism: capital concentration, oligopolization of processing and trade, competition in cultivation and supply, and hierarchical relations between owners and workers. At the same time, coffee is presented as democratized and liberal—a product grounded in formal freedom of enterprise, property rights, and declared respect for human rights.

Within specialty, additional variables consistent with the paradigm are reinforced: the belief that coffee production is environmentally sustainable, that it generates prosperity for coffee people, and that it is fairly compensated. Even when many of these practices yield real, though limited, effects, they also function as elements of a narrative stabilizing the system—responses to cracks and tensions the system itself produces.

In this perspective, the coffee market becomes a laboratory of the paradigm. In the ongoing process of explaining the world, patching cracks, and neutralizing potential

anomalies, technological, social, and commercial innovations emerge—rapidly absorbed by the market and often linked to narratives of higher quality. Blockchain solutions, new processing technologies, environmental regulations, and AI-based tools can all be integrated within the same logic. The question of to what extent these “laboratory” solutions alter the living conditions of coffee people, and to what extent they represent optimization within the existing paradigm, requires separate analysis in The Better Coffee White Paper.

### **Degrowth Among Post-Capitalist Proposals**

In the twenty-first century, reflection on the possibility of a paradigm shift is not confined to a single school of thought. Philosophers, political theorists, and social researchers analyze both the crises of contemporary capitalism and the scenarios of its transformation or transcendence.

The Better Coffee, as a paradigm hypothesis, follows and examines these discourses, relating them to coffee and coffee people in alignment with the 20 Core Values described in The Standard.

Alain Badiou considers the possibility of radical change through an “event” that interrupts the continuity of the existing order and opens space for new frameworks of meaning. Such an event is not an automatic consequence of crisis but requires subjective fidelity to a new truth.

Within this horizon, the role of coffee and the subjectivity of coffee people may prove irrelevant. This, however, does not release us from responsibility for the continued existence of coffee and the possibility of working with it in accordance with the values represented here.

Bruno Latour and Isabelle Stengers argue that the escalating climate crisis undermines the ontological foundations of modernity and destabilizes the nature-society divide. Jason W. Moore and the world-ecology current interpret capitalism as a historical mode of organizing human-nature relations whose expansion now encounters structural limits. The ecological crisis is therefore not an external problem of the system but the exposure of its internal constraints.

Slavoj Žižek analyzes the mounting ecological, technological, and social contradictions of global capitalism, arguing that the system produces its own conditions of destabilization. He does not offer a ready-made alternative model but emphasizes the need to think beyond the horizon of crisis management.

Nancy Fraser describes a multidimensional crisis of capitalism encompassing social reproduction, ecology, and finance. Byung-Chul Han interprets late capitalism as a system of self-exploitation and psychopolitics, whose crisis has an existential dimension. Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams propose the use of advanced technologies to move

toward a post-capitalist order rather than merely stabilizing the existing model. Paul Mason likewise considers the possibility of a post-capitalist transformation grounded in technological and institutional change.

Parallel to these debates, post-growth currents (degrowth), well-being economics, commons theory, and various post-capitalist proposals develop analyses that combine technological, economic, and ecological perspectives with attempts to imagine alternative models of collective life. They share the conviction that the present order is neither final nor stable, though they differ regarding the dynamics of change—from gradual transformation to radical rupture.

The search for alternative paradigms is not marginal. Throughout modern history, it has re-emerged at moments of crisis in forms such as socialisms and anarchisms, cooperative movements, solidarity economy, commons-based practices, ecofeminism, agroecology, climate movements, Buen Vivir, and post-growth concepts. They are united by an attempt to depart from the logic of unlimited accumulation and growth, while differing in ambition—from reforms within the system to its transcendence.

Many of these initiatives seek to shift the center of gravity: from competition to cooperation, from private property to common goods, from profit maximization to the satisfaction of needs, from

domination over nature to interdependence. Yet they vary in scale and scope, from institutional reform to structural rupture.

Some alternatives are absorbed by the dominant paradigm and reformulated as its "sustainable" variants. Others function as cracks and anomalies, testing new practices at a micro scale.

In the coffee sector, initiatives described as alternative take diverse forms, yet their relation to the dominant paradigm remains ambiguous. Producer cooperatives often function as instruments of volume consolidation within the global market rather than as structural alternatives. Direct trade models shorten the chain of intermediaries but do not necessarily alter the logic of accumulation. "Short supply chains" and localism frequently operate as narrative elements rather than as a rupture with center-periphery relations. In the field of quality redefinition, dominant point-based systems retain their hegemony, and attempts to move beyond them remain dispersed and marginal.

Among the currents closest to selected values of The Better Coffee is degrowth.

Degrowth (post-growth) is a critical current that challenges economic growth as the primary objective of social organization. It does not signify recession or collapse but a deliberate departure from the imperative of continuous GDP expansion, production, and consumption. Its point of departure is the recognition that infinite

growth is impossible on a planet of finite resources.

Authors associated with degrowth (including Serge Latouche, Giorgos Kallis, and Timothée Parrique) argue that economic growth is not synonymous with improved quality of life and that maintaining it requires increasing exploitation of labor, nature, and the peripheries of the world-system. They also criticize the myth of "green growth"—the belief that technological progress can permanently decouple GDP growth from energy and material use. Empirical research has not confirmed the existence of full and lasting decoupling at a global scale.

Degrowth calls for reducing material and energy throughput in the economy, shortening working time, expanding commons, strengthening local communities, and redistributing resources. It implies redefining well-being beyond quantitative and growth-based metrics. In this sense, it is a political and cultural project that questions the ontological status of growth as "normality."

From a degrowth perspective, the climate and ecological crises are not external problems of the system but consequences of its expansive logic. Change therefore does not consist in optimizing growth, but in reformulating the very purpose of economic and social organization.

Selected elements of this reflection resonate with the values of The Better Coffee Standard, particularly Sufficiency.

## **Change Is Not Optimization**

From the perspective of The Better Coffee, further adjustments to capitalism—whether regulatory, technological, or narrative—do not address the structural divergence between the dominant paradigm and the hypothesis and values of The Better Coffee. History shows that this system has repeatedly “reformed” itself: liberalizing markets, introducing mechanisms of redistribution, and absorbing social and ecological demands. Each correction, however, has ultimately stabilized its underlying logic of accumulation, competition, and growth.

Optimization is not paradigm change. It is the system’s capacity for survival. Improvements may soften tensions or reduce certain social and environmental costs, yet they do not resolve the structural contradiction between the growth imperative and values such as Dignity, Sufficiency, Radical Equality, or Planetary Care.

For coffee people, this means that better living conditions cannot be equated with another phase of “sustainable growth” or with technological modernization of supply chains. Constitutional change requires redefining the purpose of production, labor, and exchange—not merely increasing their performance.

It does not advocate refining the existing system; it analyzes the possibility of a Paradigm Shift. As long as the paradigm remains intact, adjustments stay within the same logic.

## **Coffee Cracks and Anomalies**

Cracks and anomalies, as defined in Chapter 2, are moments when the paradigm ceases to appear self-evident. A crack reveals tension between declaration and outcome. An anomaly indicates a phenomenon no longer fully explained within the prevailing logic. They do not yet constitute a Paradigm Shift, but signal its limits.

In the coffee sector, cracks appear in the persistent gap between the narrative of quality and the living conditions of coffee people; between declared planetary care and mounting climatic and resource pressures; between promises of transparency and structural asymmetries of information, capital, and bargaining power; between the language of equality and the entrenched center-periphery relation. They are also visible in the tension between high point scores and unstable producer incomes, and between rising retail prices and the vulnerability of crops to climate risk.

Potential anomalies emerge when mechanisms meant to stabilize the system – certifications, scoring systems, traceability technologies, processing innovations – cease to explain reality and begin to smooth it over. An anomaly may take the form of innovations that increase productivity and market value, yet fail to alter producers’ structural exposure to price volatility, cost pressure, and environmental degradation. In such cases, optimization does not resolve the tension – it only postpones it.

Recognizing cracks and examining potential anomalies takes place within concrete structures and practices. In The Better Coffee, this occurs through the structures of The Endeavour: The Places as sites of practice, The Ranking Method as a tool for making quality visible in both sensory and ethical terms, The Office as coordination of language and meaning, and The Trainers as an educational and reflective dimension. Within these structures, it becomes possible to observe systematically whether a given phenomenon constitutes a temporary adaptation of the paradigm or an indication of deeper transformation.

### **The Better Coffee White Paper**

The analyses presented above do not exhaust the subject; they serve only as an introduction, outlining a background consistent with the values, character, and mission of The Better Coffee. The Standard assumes their systematic deepening, development, and scientific grounding through The Better Coffee White Paper.

The role of The White Paper is to popularize these issues among coffee people, monitor the state of the paradigm within which we currently operate, and conduct analyses while indicating potential directions for action in the areas of efficiency and implementation.

The White Paper does not have the authority to alter the foundations of The Better Coffee Standard. It develops them through research practice, particularly within the

humanities and other disciplines relevant to the issues addressed. It may also adopt an editorial or essayistic form.

The editorial responsibility for The Better Coffee White Paper lies with The Better Coffee Office. This structure should provide remuneration for appointed authors and secure funding for the research and analyses necessary to fulfill its purpose. The document itself may be made available according to the logic of Three-Tier Pricing, with the use of the Pay-It-Forward mechanism.

### **Acting Under a Non-Final Paradigm**

The Better Coffee operates within a paradigm that is neither final nor stable. It acknowledges existing legal, economic, and political frameworks while treating them as historical and transitional.

Acting within this horizon entails a dual responsibility. First, responsibility for the real living conditions of coffee people here and now, within the limits of the current system. Second, responsibility for avoiding the reproduction of its contradictions and power relations that constrain subjectivity and agency.

The Better Coffee does not stand outside the paradigm. It participates in it as an economic, educational, and linguistic actor. It uses its instruments—law, markets, institutions—while recognizing that they are embedded in specific configurations of power. The boundary of action appears

where adaptation would reproduce those configurations in ways incompatible with constitutional values.

Power within the paradigm is not merely the will of individuals but a structural relation sustained through norms, standards, metrics, and language. For this reason, improving the conditions of coffee people cannot be reduced to operational adjustments; it requires reflection on which power relations are stabilized by particular solutions.

The risk lies in the absorption of any implementation into the dominant logic of accumulation and growth, along with its existing power arrangements. The structures of The Endeavour therefore serve both practical and prefigurative functions: they improve conditions within the present system while cultivating competencies, relationships, and language capable of operating after its transformation.

Acting under a non-final paradigm means navigating uncertainty consciously. A Paradigm Shift functions as a historical horizon rather than an implementation timeline. Its direction and form remain open.

The Better Coffee does not design a future order. It maintains readiness by building structures of resilience, orientation, and cooperation. In this way, it acts between the present and the possibility of change—aware of power relations, without illusions of neutrality or permanence.

# Chapter 11

## Knowledge, Science, and Lab

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Protect knowledge as a common resource,  
and test every claim before you trust it

The Better Coffee, in every one of its perspectives, is grounded in scientific knowledge. It forms the foundation for reflection on the paradigm, on the need and possibility of its transformation, on the fate and condition of coffee people, and on work with coffee at every point in the circulation of value, goods, and services. It is through scientific knowledge that The Standard has been able to define the role and

operational processes of the structures within The Better Coffee Endeavour.

This process is not complete.

Implementation – as defined in Chapter 2 – requires continuous action aligned with the values of The Better Coffee and within the framework established by The Standard.

Implementation does not lead to improvement without a scientific foundation for our

actions. Scientific knowledge therefore remains a shaping force: it influences what we do, how we act, and how we evolve as a system – just as it influences the lives and work of coffee people.

At the same time, we encounter constraints that must be named. Access to scientific knowledge is often limited, and its results are concealed or restricted behind gates governed by the logic of the prevailing paradigm. These mechanisms generate profit for their creators, yet they frequently deprive coffee people of opportunities to improve their conditions and well-being, deepen inequalities within the coffee market, and shape the relationships that sustain it.

### **Knowledge as a Common Resource**

In alignment with the values of The Better Coffee—especially through the lens of Shared Knowledge and Truth-Seeking—we take the position that knowledge, and the

results of scientific research, are not a product subject to profit logic or a simple calculation of production cost. They are not a commodity whose access is regulated solely by markets, capital advantage, or institutional position. At the same time, we recognize that within the prevailing paradigm, knowledge and scientific achievement—often in opposition to our values—are shaped by market processes, in both the private and public sectors. This is not a moral judgment; it is a description of conditions that creates our obligation to reduce their harmful effects, especially where access to knowledge and science is restricted.

There are also infrastructural and organizational processes that block research initiatives and subordinate them to academic or corporate power. These mechanisms narrow research agendas, slow scientific work, and enable exploitation of researchers—especially those positioned on the

lower rungs of institutional hierarchies. As a result, knowledge stops functioning as a common resource and becomes an asset controlled by small decision-making groups. The complexity of this problem is discussed in greater detail in The Better Coffee White Paper, yet its consequences are directly visible within the coffee sector.

Focusing on coffee and coffee people—and in line with the value of Naming Power—we identify specific processes that violate the values of The Better Coffee in the domain of access to knowledge and science. These include agrarian “development” projects that deepen inequality; the creation of coffee processing methods—especially at the fermentation stage, including those involving other food products—that remain outside controlled research; the lack of access to research results and the inability to subject them to scientific critique; and the publication of studies in journals that

restrict access for non-academic communities. Knowledge that concerns the living and working conditions of coffee people is often placed behind paywalls, subscriptions, and databases accessible only to privileged institutions.

In parallel, we observe the patenting of processes, technologies, and botanical varieties, which limits free use of research outcomes. Research funded by commercial actors shapes what gets studied and how results are interpreted.

Language barriers—driven by the dominance of English in scientific publishing—further narrow who can participate in the circulation of knowledge. In producing countries, research infrastructure, laboratories, and access to analysis remain limited, reinforcing dependence on knowledge centers located outside the places of production and outside the lived experience of coffee people.

Institutional gatekeeping, academic hierarchies, and closed networks of grantmakers restrict participation in the production of knowledge. Knowledge is often reduced to industry certifications that replace critical inquiry with repeated formulas, while research on well-being, mental health, and real working conditions remains unseen or marginalized. Sensory and agronomic data is commercialized and treated as competitive advantage, rather than operating as a common resource that supports dignity, cooperation, and real improvements in living conditions.

The Better Coffee recognizes knowledge as a common resource, belonging to people and created for their benefit. For this reason, The Standard introduces an **anti-patent policy** as an explicit recommendation for participants within the structures of The Endeavour. We recommend refraining from patenting scientific research outcomes and encourage coffee people to take a similar stance.

At the same time, we call on institutions and other holders of coffee-related patent rights to share research results while respecting existing copyright and commercial rights.

The Better Coffee Standard expresses opposition to the enclosure of knowledge and the commercialization of access to it by academic institutions and scientific journals.

We call for the removal of embargoes imposed by prestigious journals on published research articles, especially in areas related to coffee and in the fields identified in the section Fields of Necessary Education in Chapter 8 of this document.

Unrestricted access to scientific knowledge is a component of the well-being of coffee people and one of the conditions that enables the realization of Meet Needs and Economic Self-Defense. It is also an expression of Dignity and Radical Equality, and a factor that builds Cooperation around Planetary Care.

We recognize that every coffee person has the right to access research results that concern them, as well as the right to speak and to share their own experience and observations with researchers.

At the same time, The Better Coffee identifies a widespread educational elitism within the coffee sector: the certification of superficial or unearned knowledge, the creation of closed pathways to education, and teaching grounded in outdated or non-scientific formulas. These practices do not strengthen Shared Knowledge or Truth-Seeking; they reproduce hierarchy and the appearance of competence.

Such dynamics reinforce the prevailing paradigm and its consequences, negatively affecting coffee and coffee people. Rather than opening space for critical reflection and collective development of knowledge, they confine it within narrow structures of recognition and control.

### **The Better Coffee as Researcher**

The Better Coffee is a paradigm hypothesis. Like any hypothesis, it is subject to testing, and that testing takes place through the operation of The Better Coffee Endeavour and is developed within its structures. The system exists to analyze, test, correct, and continuously refine its own hypothesis under real social, economic, and environmental conditions.

Within the prevailing paradigm, we exercise the right to conduct scientific research, a right that in most countries is not fundamentally restricted by legislation. At the same time, research operates under constraints shaped by funding logic, selective visibility, and biases embedded in what is treated as "obvious."

The orientation point for research carried out within The Endeavour lies in the cracks within the theory of the current paradigm, especially those that directly or

indirectly affect coffee people. Each crack marks a potential site of anomaly. The horizon of this research remains Paradigm Shift, while simultaneously supporting the everyday realities of coffee people through concrete findings and outcomes.

As a system that tests its own paradigm hypothesis, The Better Coffee draws both on its own research work and on the contributions of entities outside The Endeavour that make their findings available without patents, trade secrets, or other forms of access restriction.

As outlined in earlier chapters, The Places conduct research at a scale available to them and share their results within and across structures. Members of The Trainers also carry a research role. The Office coordinates these activities and supports their funding through internal and external sources. A significant source of knowledge is the collective and statistical dataset generated through the evaluation processes of The Ranking Method,

providing insight into coffee quality, environmental conditions, and the realities of work.

### **Lab as Research Practice**

Any places where scientific or research work is conducted—even indirectly—on potential anomalies within the paradigm are referred to as lab.

Lab designates a space where knowledge is examined, critiqued, and developed in relation to the real conditions of life and work of coffee people. It may take the form of a physical laboratory, a research team, a collective of practitioners, or an organized process of data analysis.

Within The Endeavour, professional laboratories—Labs—may emerge or collaborate. They conduct research transparently, in a methodologically grounded and rigorous manner, open to critique both within academic environments and beyond.

In the spirit of Cooperation and Shared

Knowledge, we recommend that they voluntarily share their results, especially in paradigm research and the fields referenced in this chapter.

Labs strengthen the research role of The Better Coffee as a system refining its paradigm hypothesis and support the education carried out within The Endeavour. Open sharing, collective analysis, and critical discussion build a shared body of knowledge that informs practice, systemic orientation, and the continued development of the structures.

### **Knowledge, Information, and Marketing**

Within the coffee sector, a clear distinction must be maintained between scientific knowledge, operational knowledge, and marketing narrative. Scientific knowledge rests on methodology, verifiability, critique, and reproducibility. Operational knowledge emerges from practice, experience, and testing solutions under real working conditions.

Both are significant and may complement one another, yet each operates under distinct standards of responsibility.

Distortion arises when marketing adopts the language of science without its conditions. In coffee, this appears in pseudoscientific fermentation language, claims of “innovative” processes without research oversight, narratives of “micro-lot science,” and technological storytelling that uses scientific terminology without methodology, data, or critical evaluation. Such communication builds image and advantage, but it does not constitute scientific knowledge.

The Better Coffee recognizes that conflating these orders distorts our values and weakens the integrity of knowledge. Marketing informs; research investigates; practice contributes lived experience. In our system, only what is methodologically grounded, open to critique, and verifiable qualifies as scientific knowledge.

## Chapter 12

# Best Practices – Shared Recommendations

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Values define the direction.

Practice organizes action.

The Better Coffee functions as an ethical compass. The Better Coffee Endeavour – as a living system enacted by coffee people and its structures – requires the operational translation of values into practice.

The Standard hereby establishes The Better Coffee Best Practice as a system document.

Its coordination and editorial

responsibility are entrusted to The Better Coffee Office, acting in service of coherence and alignment with The Standard.

The Better Coffee Best Practice is grounded directly in the 20 Core Values and in the assumptions of this document. It does not extend, replace, or redefine them. Its role is to translate values into shared recommendations for

action under real working conditions.

Best Practices are adaptive and context-based. They operate within a non-final paradigm, acknowledging tensions between what is desirable and what is presently attainable. Operational compromises may occur; compromises concerning dignity, non-harm, health, life, and Planetary Care may not.

Best Practices do not constitute a universal moral authority or a single path of improvement. They are system-recognized recommendations – structured support for decisions made in concrete working conditions, taking into account well-being and economic realities.

Within The Better Coffee system, The Better Coffee Best Practice strengthens coherence across structures. It informs evaluation processes within The Ranking Method, including Practice Review and the framework for conducting Sensory Analysis.

The role of The Better Coffee Best Practice is

systemic and subordinate to The Better Coffee Standard. This document functions as a mechanism of support, fully bound by its values.

### **Status and Scope**

The Better Coffee Best Practice does not constitute a code, a body of binding rules, or a set of enforceable legal regulations.

Within The Better Coffee structures, its implementation is recommended as a tool to strengthen efficiency understood as value-aligned, responsible effectiveness in practice. The document provides no sanctions for non-compliance; its application is not mandatory, but advisory and guidance-oriented in nature.

The Better Coffee Best Practice functions as a document supporting the implementation of The Better Coffee Standard. It offers a structured set of recommendations indicating how, in everyday coffee work, alignment with the system's values and principles may be pursued in practice.

The scope of the document includes the development and organization of protocols and guidelines across common areas of coffee work, including infrastructure, agriculture and harvest, green coffee processing to shipment readiness, grading and defects, logistics and storage, roasting, packaging design and usability, brewing, water, GAP/GMP, sensory analysis, hospitality, ethical business, ethical marketing, and other relevant domains for coffee people. The catalog remains open.

The document also includes analyses of selected standards, protocols, certifications, and educational systems operating outside The Better Coffee Endeavour, provided they explicitly relate to coffee and coffee people. The purpose of these analyses is not to condemn or reject external recommendations, but to assess them rigorously and in alignment with the 20 Core Values, in order to determine their usefulness for

coffee people – whether full, partial, or marginal.

The Better Coffee Best Practice may also include case studies – examples from different points in the circulation of value, goods, and services within coffee – illustrating possible pathways for implementing recommended practices. The Places constitute a natural and primary source of such examples.

### **Relationship to Structures**

The Better Coffee Best Practice maintains a supportive relationship toward the system's structures.

In relation to The Places, the document supports operational decision-making and the organization of work in alignment with The Better Coffee Standard, without infringing upon the autonomy of each The Place.

In relation to The Better Coffee Curriculum, it serves as a complementary source of practical references that may

strengthen the learning process and the translation of theory into action.

In relation to The Ranking Method, it provides contextual frameworks for evaluating practices, particularly within Practice Review and the interpretation of working conditions and quality.

In relation to The Better Coffee Office, the document functions as a tool for structuring communication, recommendations, and support processes within the system.

The Better Coffee Best Practice holds no decision-making authority over the structures and does not replace their operational documents. Its function is to strengthen coherence across structures through a shared reference to the 20 Core Values and The Better Coffee Standard.

### **Implementation and Funding**

The implementation of The Better Coffee Best Practice takes into

account the real financial and organizational capacities of coffee people. The document does not assume that alignment with values requires costly solutions, advanced technologies, or institutionally difficult-to-access systems.

Priority is given to practices that are proportionate, accessible, and feasible without imposing excessive economic burden. The primary criterion for selection remains alignment with the 20 Core Values and a tangible improvement in working conditions, quality, and well-being – not prestige, certification status, or the costliness of a solution.

The Better Coffee Best Practice does not create barriers to entry or capital thresholds. Its purpose is to support the implementation of values in a manner that is feasible, gradual, and responsible, while upholding the principle of economic self-defense.

## **Responsibility and Updates**

The Better Coffee Best Practice is a dynamic document. Its coordination and editorial oversight belong to The Better Coffee Office, acting within its responsibility for system coherence and alignment with The Better Coffee Standard.

Updates to the document arise from the experience of the structures, changing working conditions, and the development of practices within The Better Coffee Endeavour. Amendments to The Better Coffee Best Practice do not modify or reinterpret The Better Coffee Standard, but remain subordinate to it.

## Chapter 13

# Open Access, Formal Scope, and Coordination

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Openness requires protection.

Integrity gives direction to shared action.

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The purpose of this chapter is to protect the integrity, continuity, and

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# Ring the bell.



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