ELSEVIER
www.elsevier.com/locate/worlddev

CrossMark

World Development Vol. 91, pp. 53–69, 2017
0305-750X/
http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2016.10.010

Who Governs Socially-Oriented Voluntary Sustainability Standards? Not the Producers of Certified Products

ELIZABETH A. BENNETT*
Lewis & Clark College, Portland, USA

Summary. — Voluntary Sustainability Standards-Setting Organizations (VSSSOs) create standards to improve the social and/or environmental impacts of globalized production networks. VSSSOs are often assumed to have multi-stakeholder governance structures that include the producers of certified products (e.g., farmers, artisans, and workers). This article argues that including producers in governance is desirable. However, analysis of 33 VSSSOs' constitutions shows two-thirds do not even imply intention to include producers. At most, 25% ensure producers have votes/seats and 18% give producers veto power. The discussion examines what is lost when VSSSOs do not bring traditionally marginalized voices to global economic governance.

Key words — private standards, voluntary certification, fair trade

1. INTRODUCTION

Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) are regulations created by non-state actors to improve the social and/or environmental impacts of multinational business, international trade, and/or global production networks. This article is about the organizations that create those voluntary standards, referred to here as Voluntary Sustainability Standards-Setting Organizations (VSSSOs). [1] Specifically, it examines VSSSOs that include social objectives within their mission statements, or "socially-oriented" VSSSOs. VSSSOs have rapidly proliferated and gained market recognition over the past two decades (Bartley, Koos, Samel, Setrini, & Summers, 2015). From 2011 to 2012, the production of sustainability-certified commodities grew by 41%, in contrast with a 2% increase in the production of their non-certified counterparts (Potts *et al.*, 2014, p. 8). Fairtrade International (FI) alone boasts certification of more than 1.4 million farmers and farm workers. [2]

VSSSOs are often assumed to have multi-stakeholder governance structures, a feature which serves to legitimize their authority in global economic governance (Cashore, 2002; Haufler, 2003; O'Rourke, 2006; Schepers, 2010). Such structures may include industry associations, production firms, NGOs, workers' unions, smallholder farmers, academics, or others. However, VSSSOs organize themselves in very diverse ways (Sexsmith & Potts, 2009). This article is concerned with whether and how VSSSOs invite the poorest, most vulnerable, and often marginalized members of their value chains to participate in high-level governance. These are the smallholder farmers, farm workers, factory workers, artisans, crafters, miners, and others who contribute to the production of certified products (e.g., unroasted coffee beans) primarily through their physical labor (as opposed to management or capital) on farms or in factories, typically in the Global South. In this study, these groups are collectively termed "producers." [3]

This article first draws on extant literature to describe why VSSSOs—especially those aiming to benefit producers—should include producers in their highest governance bodies. It then investigates whether producer inclusion is the norm among VSSSOs. It finds that producer inclusion is not typical—*at most*, only 25% ensure that producers have votes/seats in the most important bodies of governance. This study calls into question the widespread assumption that VSSSOs are inclusive multi-stakeholder organizations, and argues, more broadly, that VSSSOs do not necessarily bring traditionally marginalized voices to bear on issues of global economic governance.

This study is distinct from typical accounts of VSSSO governance in two ways. First, instead of describing power dynamics within a single organization (e.g., Dingwerth, 2008) or a small group of organizations (e.g., Meidinger, 2011), it examines a broad group of 33 socially-oriented VSSSOs. This allows the study to draw conclusions about governance norms across industries and sectors, and discuss this form of economic governance as a whole. Second, instead of focusing on how power dynamics, institutionalization, or bureaucratic processes play out in practice (e.g., Conscione, 2014; Gendron, Bisaillon, & Otero Rance, 2009; Nelson & Tallontire, 2014), this study examines how the founders and/or leaders of such organizations decided that their organization *should* be structured, as is documented in their constitutions. This allows the study to describe what VSSSO founders (and subsequent constitution reformers), consider,

* I would like to thank my colleagues Maryann Bylander, Martin Hart-Landsberg, Ronan Le Velly, Bob Mandel, and Sarah Warren for feedback on earlier drafts. I am also greatly indebted to three anonymous reviewers and the World Development editors for their invaluable comments and suggestions. The project could not have been completed without the talents of several research assistants: Maggie Sholar helped with case selection; Adrian Austin-King aided in gathering governance documents; Tamar Shuhendler assisted in coding data; Sophie Owens was integral to literature review, data analysis, and write up; and McLane Harrington, Benjamin Beecroft, and Ellen Schwartz helped with writing and revision. Additional thanks to Alissa Cordner for offering sage advice on data collection and a pleasant place to write; Lewis & Clark College for research funds; and the Department of International Affairs for great support and a provocative intellectual home. Finally, I am profoundly grateful to the VSSSO staff members who graciously engaged me in conversations about governance and are doing the difficult work of making supply chains more sustainable. Final revision accepted: October 9, 2016.

in theory, to be appropriate forms of governance. By answering and discussing the question "Do the architects of VSSSO organizational structures typically decide to include or exclude producers in high-level governance?" this study contributes to the literatures on multi-stakeholder governance and private regulation, which have, especially in recent years, been actively aiming to determine whether and how VSSSOs challenge or reify extant power relations (e.g., Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014, esp. 410).

The article is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the diverse origins and objectives of VSSSOs, illustrates the widespread expectation of multi-stakeholder governance, explains why including producers is so important (though not without challenges), and highlights the findings of related studies. Section 3 describes the concepts and measurements, case selection process, data collection, and analytic methods. It discusses the assumptions and limitations of this methodology and the biases they may introduce to the findings. Section 4 presents the results, showing which VSSSOs include producers and to what extent. It also examines NGO inclusion, showing that this, too, is not the norm. Section 5 discusses these results. It sets several thresholds for "inclusion" and argues that even when the threshold is quite low, VSSSOs do not fulfill the expectation of appropriate multi-stakeholder governance. It discusses what is lost, what can be done, how this situation could have come to pass, and what future research is needed. The overall argument is that VSSSOs' legitimacy should be contingent on producer inclusion, that this is not the norm, and that VSSSOs cannot be considered a vehicle for bringing marginalized voices to the fore of global economic governance.

2. BACKGROUND

(a) *Diverse origins and objectives of VSSSOs*

Since the 1970s, liberal capitalist states have been shying away from regulatory endeavors, in a massive retrenchment of the state. Simultaneously, the United Nations and NGOs have been working on ways to limit the ills generated by unfettered globalized production networks (Sagafi-nejad, 2008). The third wave of globalization extended the scope and deepened the impact of this trend at the end of the 20th Century, and multinational corporations grew in size, capacity, and ambition (Cutler, Haufler, & Porter, 1999; Evans, 1997; O'Rourke, 2003; Schmidt, 1995; Strange, 1996). The social outcomes were not entirely positive:

> *Rapid growth of cross-border trade and capital flows since 1990 has not led to improved employment conditions in developing countries. Instead, fragmented and globally dispersed production, multiple tiers and actors within supply chains, suppliers producing for multiple brands, short lead times, tight margins, and all of the other changes that have come with increased global supply chains have generated low pay, poor working conditions, long hours, and injustice to a huge percent of the world's population—most of it already living on the margins.*
>
> [Locke (2013, p. 8).]

> *In addition to the gamut of workplace issues, we saw that companies were alleged to have harmed health related rights; rights to land, housing, and access to safe drinking water; the physical security of the person; the rights of indigenous peoples; and even such classic civil rights as free speech, privacy, peaceful assembly, and a fair trial.*
>
> [Ruggie (2013, pp. 34–35).]

States failed to pass robust legislation on business and human rights, and those who did were either unable or unwilling to enforce it (Ruggie, 2013, pp. xxv–xxvi). Likewise, the World Trade Organization downplayed linkages between human rights and trade, minimizing its own responsibility to respond (Aaronson & Zimmerman, 2006, pp. 1004–1005). As the globalization era stretched into the new millennium, journalists, activists, scholars, and public intellectuals joined in chorus to highlight the need for more stringent regulation of international trade and business. As Keohane (2006) warned, interdependence without accountable governance could be a "deadly" mix (78).

Within this context, voluntary sustainability standards emerged as a new form of market regulation (Gereffi, Garcia-Johnson, & Sasser, 2001; Haufler, 2001; O'Rourke, 2003). These initiatives are diverse (Hatanaka, 2010, p. 707; Sexsmith & Potts, 2009, p. 3). Their objectives are varied, and include: redistributing wealth, protecting people and the planet, ensuring consumer safety, mitigating supply chain risk, securing access to commodities, attracting green consumers, and challenging hegemonic control over global economic governance (Angel, Hamilton, & Huber, 2007; Bartley, 2007; Conroy, 2007; Haufler, 2001; Locke, 2013; Mayer & Gereffi, 2010; O'Rourke, 2003; Reich, 2007).[4] While some VSSSOs aim to challenge and change mainstream business practices, others opt to create alternative economic systems outside the capitalist market (Raynolds & Murray, 2007, 224). They also vary in their relationships with social movement organizations and industry actors. For example, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) was originally conceived by industry actors to counter the influence of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) in the area of forest certification (Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2009, p. 727). Fairtrade International (FI), on the other hand, was established by social movement organizations, church groups, and alternative trade networks (Bennett, 2015; Raynolds & Bennett, 2015). While paying more for ethically sourced, certified products seemed a tenuous proposition at the end of the 20th Century, today robust evidence suggests that VSSSOs have succeeded in convincing a great number of shoppers to "vote with their pocketbook" (e.g., Brown, 2015; Hainmueller, Hiscox, & Sequeira, 2015; Kimeldorf, Rachel, Monica, & Ian, 2006).

(b) *The assumption of multi-stakeholder governance*

Despite their diverse origins and objectives, VSSSOs are often described as having much in common. For example, all VSSSOs are expected to support companies in meeting rigorous social and environmental standards (Hatanaka, 2010; Sabel, O'Rourke, & Fung, 2000); aid in the enforcement of legal standards (Bacon, Rice, & Maryanski, 2015); deliver desirable outcomes for social groups and the environment (Conroy, 2007); and reinforce existing efforts by workers to organize and educate themselves (O'Rourke, 2006). VSSSOs' organizational features are also assumed to be somewhat standardized (Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2009, p. 724). For example, most have separate rule-making and rule-implementing bodies (Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2009, p. 724).

A common expectation of VSSSO governance is inclusion of multiple types of stakeholders. Stakeholders are groups or individuals who can affect or who are affected by the achievement of an organization's purpose (Freeman, 1984). VSSSO stakeholders may include producers, NGOs/civil society, workers' associations and unions, industry organizations, the private sector (e.g., companies and corporations), or academic researchers (see Potts *et al.*, 2014, p. 60). Being included in governance affords stakeholders the opportunity to affect organizational change at the highest levels (Blagescu, de Las Casas, & Lloyd, 2005). As Dingwerth and Pattberg (2009) argue, it is typical for VSSSO decision-making procedures to follow a "multi-stakeholder approach" (724). Likewise, Raynolds, Murray, and Heller (2007) note that certification organizations are "generally characterized by their participatory structures" (149). At times, the term "multi-stakeholder initiatives" is even used as shorthand for voluntary standards-setting organizations (e.g., Dingwerth, 2008, pp. 53–54).

VSSSOs are assumed to not only include *multiple* stakeholders but a *broad range of stakeholders* (e.g., Brown, 2008; Collingwood, 2006; Haufler, 2003; O'Rourke, 2006; Slaughter, 2012). For example, Dickson and Eckman (2008) describe the Fair Labor Association (FLA) as "multi-stakeholder in character" because its board includes companies, NGOs, and universities. Dingwerth and Pattberg (2009) refer to this as "guaranteed inclusiveness" (724). Often it is stated or implied that governance includes global production network actors themselves. As the 2014 Sustainability Initiatives Review notes,

> *In a very real sense, voluntary sustainability standards allow the very actors implicated in the processes leading to sustainable development impacts to identify and implement the appropriate corrective measures while integrating them directly within their business models.*
> [(Potts, 2014, 4, emphasis added).]

Diverse multi-stakeholder governance and producer inclusion are not only defining features of VSSSOs but also a source of moral legitimacy in the international sphere (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007; Cashore, 2002; Dingworth, 2007; Huybrechts, Mertens, & Rijpens, 2014; Marx, 2014). Paradoxically, this widespread assumption does not always reflect reality. For example, the Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA) is assumed to "*represent* aquaculture producers" (Tran, Bailey, Wilson, & Phillips, 2013, 326, emphasis added) even through over 75% of its current board members are corporate representatives and the organization's constitution does not even imply an intention of including the people whose labor produces GAA-certified products.

(c) *Why is producer inclusion in governance important?*

Including producers in VSSSO governance is critical. Not only is the capacity for self-determination a human right (UN, 1948) and a cornerstone of sustainable development (UN, 1992) but it can also improve the democratic deficit at the international level, generate spillover benefits to producers, produce policies that privilege producers, create advantages for the VSSSO, and contribute to legitimacy. Cosmopolitan democrats and advocates of deliberative democracy argue that the non-hierarchical nature of an increasingly prominent transnational civil society helps to level the playing field (Beckfield, 2003; Risse, 2002). In this way of thinking, democratization of a globalized world requires international actors of all types—including private standards-setting organizations—to adopt democratic norms of representation and accountability in order to be considered legitimate sources of authority (Collingwood, 2006; Haufler, 2003; McGrew & Held, 2002; Sending & Neumann, 2006). Thus, by systematically excluding particular groups, VSSSOs may compromise the potential to achieve democracy in a multi-layered global order. Second, producer inclusion may generate benefits—such as empowerment and skill building—to producers (Cohen, Figeroa Kupcu, & Khanna, 2008), and foster a sense of fairness and justice in the workplace (Bain, 2010, p. 367). Because many VSSSOs (including all of the organizations included in this study) explicitly aim to support producers, including them in governance supports their mission. Conversely, excluding producers may generate outcomes counter to the mission. Third, excluding producers may reduce the benefits that VSSSO policies create for producer groups, as other groups shape policies to their own benefit (Brown, 2008; Jaffee & Howard, 2009). Fourth, for VSSSOs with social missions, producer inclusion can, itself, contribute to achieving the mission. Doing so may increase producer investment in the organization (Salmen, 1992), transform compliance into productive co-leadership (Peel, 1998), enhance competitiveness and improve working conditions (Locke, 2013), and increase effectiveness in achieving the organizational mission (Hudock, 1999). More specifically, broad participation in agenda-setting can increase sensitivity to local dynamics and generate broader support (Wong, 2012, pp. 57, 74). Likewise, good accountability systems can encourage better alignment of stakeholders with their missions and core values, making organizations more sensitive to conflicts in stakeholder demands and less vulnerable to slip into the pattern of prioritizing the demands of more powerful stakeholders (Brown, 2008, p. 65). By maintaining inclusive conversation about contentious issues, VSSSOs may avoid governance crises, fading support, or irrelevance (Brown, 2008., p. 65; Wong, 2012, p. 57). Finally, as noted above, including producers may serve to legitimize the certification system (Carmin *et al.*, 2003, p. 530; Huybrechts *et al.*, 2014, p. 165; O'Rourke, 2006, p. 906; Raynolds *et al.*, 2007, pp. 151, 154, 159). Inclusive governance does not always come without tradeoffs. Increasing the number and diversity of decision makers can slow decision-making time, increase the risk of gridlock, and make already difficult tasks—such as agreeing on a unified vision, negotiating strategic plans, and setting clear parameters around the organization's objectives—even more challenging (Blagescu *et al.*, 2005, p. 65; Conroy, 2007, pp. 294–295; Mason & Doherty, 2015; Potts *et al.*, 2014, p. 62; Wong, 2012, p. 57).

(d) *Challenges to building inclusive governance structures*

Simply including producers in governance is not, of course, sufficient for ensuring accountability or better outcomes (Dingwerth, 2008). For VSSSOs that aim to create diverse, inclusive multi-stakeholder structures, the decisions about who to include and how to balance various constituencies are rarely straightforward (Brown, 2008; Brown, Ebrahim & Batliwala, 2012, p. 1100; Sending & Neumann, 2006, p. 655). This section highlights four challenges and provides examples of how multi-stakeholder organizations have aimed to address each: achieving an appropriate balance among different stakeholder groups, selecting individuals able to best represent diverse interests, creating processes that level the playing field between representatives of varying capabilities, and limiting the conversation to expressions that reify the values of market competition and industrial efficiency.

First, multi-stakeholder organizations face the challenge of balancing various stakeholder groups. In the context of the Forest Stewardship Council, for example, the idea to balance Northern and Southern interests was implemented by dividing countries into two categories, according to United Nations criteria: 50% of the votes went to UN High Income Countries (the North) and 50% went to UN Low, Middle, and Upper-middle income countries (the South). This is not a perfect solution—the 15% of the global population living in the North has 50% of the votes, for example (Dingwerth, 2008, p. 61)—but creative solutions like this one can help push complex governance problems closer toward equitable solutions. One option might be for VSSSOs to support producer organization and assembly at the local, national, and regional levels, such that an international representative might develop a more nuanced understanding of their constituency's diverse interests and better advocate on its behalf. Another example comes from the European Commission, which has developed a "represen tativeness" criterion to identify the management and labor actors with whom it must consult in the social dialog process. Social dialog is another model of multi-stakeholder governance. It facilitates decision-making among various industrial actors (Eurofound, 2016) and implies a clear commitment (among participants who recognize one another's legitimacy) to resolve conflicts and establish policies through dialog rather than physical or legal force (Stevis, 2010, p. 6).

Second, it is challenging for a small number of individuals (sometimes a single person) to represent the perspectives of a diverse population. An election process is costly, both in terms of human and material resources, but a process of appointment risks the perception of corruption. Either way, the danger is that the represented groups' priorities and policy preferences will actively disadvantage or perpetually exclude other groups. This has been a concern for Fairtrade International, which must balance representation of smallholder farmers and farm workers—groups that may advocate for very different policies and at times are in competition with one another (Conscione, 2014; Sutton, 2013). VSSSOs must find creative ways to aggregate the perspectives of large numbers of producers spread over vast regions, who speak different languages—and they must do so without relying on digital solutions or even the assumption of literacy. [5] But here, too, creativity can push governance toward inclusive solutions. Fairtrade International aims to address some dimensions of producer diversity by dividing its 1.4 million producers into three regions, and guaranteeing each a seat on the Board (FI, 2014). The Network of Asia and Pacific Producers (NAPP) is charged with representing more than 250,000 producers in a region where over 3,200 languages are spoken. The NAPP admits, "The cultural diversity of the region is... an operational challenge," but strives to be inclusive within this context by working in 14 different languages and rotating meeting locations among member countries (NAPP, 2014, pp. 5, 68). One way to relieve some of this pressure is, of course, to increase the number of producer representatives in governance bodies.

Third, after a VSSSO determines how many votes/seats to give each stakeholder group, and develops a process for who will fill each seat, the challenge is creating discussion and decision-making processes that balance the influence of more powerful stakeholders against the interests of less powerful ones (Blagescu *et al*., 2005; Brown, 2008). Stakeholders with greater material resources and experience in lobbying, such as corporations, may co-opt less experienced or less wealthy stakeholders, such as small NGOs, pushing through weak regulations while touting NGO participation as a signal of legitimacy (Busch & Bain, 2004; Jaffee, 2012; Jaffee & Howard, 2009; Nelson & Tallontire, 2014; O'Rourke, 2006). Several VSSSOs aim to mitigate these discrepancies by offering training to specific representatives or hosting pre-conference meetings in which delegates are assisted in preparing for the main event (Mason & Doherty, 2015, p. 462).

As these challenges illustrate, giving producers a seat at the decision-making table by no means ensures their perspectives affect policy outcomes (Amoore & Langley, 2004; Barnett & Finnemore, 1999). [6] The fourth challenge is the limitation inherent in adopting a political model that depends on a process of stakeholders defending their specific interests, bargaining and balancing interests against one another, in order to generate outcomes for the public good. Drawing on Boltanski and Thévenot (2006)'s conventions theory, Cheyns and Riisgaard (2014, pp. 411, 414) argue that this system privileges narratives around market competition and industrial efficiency, crowding out alternative value systems, and reifying traditional power relationships (see also Cheyns, 2014: Nelson & Tallontire, 2014). This challenge calls into question the extent to which an interest-based model can achieve deliberative and democratic ideals and suggest more radical transformations of multi-stakeholder decision-making than described above (see Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014, pp. 419–420).

(e) *Previous findings about VSSSOs' inclusion of producers*

Extant scholarship makes clear that voluntary standards-setting organizations are not neutral entities, but instead highly contested and politicized spaces (see Bacon, 2010; Busch, 2014; Cheyns, 2014; Meidinger, 2011, p. 407, Nelson & Tallontire, 2014; Renard & Loconto, 2012, p. 407). This raises concerns about representation and accountability—in particular, how stakeholders are balanced against one another (Bartley & Smith, 2010, p. 370; Busch & Bain, 2004; O'Rourke, 2003, p. 338; O'Rourke, 2006; Rochlin, Zadek, & Forstater, 2008, p. 5). Single case studies have aimed to describe and explain how organizations have balanced the tradeoffs and challenges of inclusive and exclusionary reforms over time (e.g., Bennett, 2016; Dingwerth, 2008), while comparative studies suggest that some VSSSOs are more inclusive of producers and NGOs than others (e.g., O'Rourke, 2006; Raynolds *et al*., 2007, appendix B). Carmin *et al*. (2003) show that third-party standards-setting organizations (compared to industry associations and government standards-setting agencies) have less diversity in stakeholder consultations, and give industry actors the greatest access to decision-making opportunities. Several studies show how organizational pathologies can result in structures that privilege elite stakeholders (such as industry associations, government aid agencies, philanthropic donors, or corporations with massive buying power) over less powerful groups (such as producer cooperatives and grassroots advocacy organizations)—even when doing so contradicts the organization's intentions or jeopardizes achieving its mission (Blagescu *et al*., 2005, p. 20; Brown, 2008, p. 62; Hammad & Morton, 2011, p. 4). An empirical study similar to the research presented here found that industry groups and the private sector play a prominent role on most VSSSO boards, compared to producers, NGOs/civil society, workers' associations and unions, and other actors (Potts *et al*., 2014, p. 60). The study also found that developed country stakeholders make up the majority of board members in almost all of the systems reviewed (exceptions being SAN and RTRS) (Potts *et al*., 2014, p. 61). In short, the "subjects" of voluntary sustainability standards are not always invited to participate in governance (Fransen, 2012; Hatanaka, 2010; Merk, 2007, pp. 712–713; Meidinger, 2011, p. 412).

Despite these findings, little research has examined norms of producer inclusion across a large number of VSSSOs (Dingwerth, 2008, p. 55). This gap in the literature can be illustrated by anecdote. In 2011, Fairtrade International, the VSSSO that manages the worldwide Fairtrade certification system, announced that it would give the producers of Fairtrade's certified products half of the votes in its General Assembly (FI, 2011). In the flurry of press coverage that followed, [7] none of the scholars or practitioners who commented could compare its new governance structure with that of other sustainability standards-setting organizations. Was including producers in high-level governance typical of VSSSOs? Revolutionary? Behind the curve? This article fills that gap by examining how 33 VSSSOs intend to include producers in their two highest governance bodies.

3. DATA AND METHODS

(a) *Concepts*

This study aims to describe whether and how socially-oriented VSSSOs include producers in their highest governance bodies. This section describes how each concept was defined and operationalized. VSSSOs, as described above, have diverse origins and objectives yet share much in common. This study examines fair trade and sustainability standards together—although they are often disaggregated—for three reasons. First, various types of sustainability standards are, substantively, drawing closer to one another, as fair trade certifications increasingly focus on environmental issues, and environmental certifications increasingly address social issues. Second, and interestingly, fair trade organizations (e.g., IMO) are *not* more likely to be inclusive than other types of VSSSOs, so including them does not bias results toward overestimating inclusion. Third, consumers, practitioners, and industry actors do not always disaggregate their expectations of different "types" of VSSSOs. For example, when the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) created an educational document for the specialty coffee industry titled "Sustainable Coffee Certifications: A Comparison Matrix" (2010), they included Fair Trade Certified, Rainforest Alliance, 4C Common Code, and Utz (among others). Thus, this project reflects the empirical reality that, regardless of labels' origins or missions, those who *interact with* sustainability standards consider them at once—practitioners do not necessarily discriminate between fair trade and other VSSSOs. This study *does*, however, exclude the few organizations that have absolutely no social objectives in their mission statement, as is discussed in the case selection section.

This article is concerned about the inclusion of poor, vulnerable, and marginalized groups within VSSSO value chains. These are the small farmers, artisans, miners, and workers at sites of agricultural production and manufacturing, typically taking place in the Global South—the groups this study refers to as "producers." What producers—as defined in this study—typically share in common is that they are among the working or poor classes, live in the Global South, and face limited socio-economic mobility. Producers are often among the most vulnerable actors in the supply chain: commodities farmers face volatility in the futures market; factory workers depend on a highly mobile manufacturing sector; and migrant laborers face exploitative production expectations (Fridell, 2013). Compared to many other actors within the supply chain, producers have both the most to lose and gain from VSSSOs' interventions in the supply chain (Dingwerth, 2008, p. 60). Producers are, of course, not a homogenous group. Their incomes, challenges, privileges, and lifestyles are diverse. Some, for example, are members of large cooperatives or powerful unions, while others are not. Producers, as defined in this study, are conceptually distinct from the owners, executives, or managers of large-scale operations, whose contributions may be capital intensive or who may have more socio-economic mobility than the individuals working directly in the fields or on the factory floor. They are also distinct from other value chain actors, such as traders or importers, or "industry actors" who may be relatively more well-off.

Although there is a conceptual distinction between producers (more labor-oriented) and industry actors (more capital-oriented), VSSSO governance documents were not always as clear about which groups were included or excluded. References to unions, cooperatives, and workers' associations seem to clearly indicate producer inclusion. However, references to "producers" or "farmers" could refer to either laborers or owners. This creates some internal inconsistency in the use of the term "producers"—the argument is for including the most vulnerable groups, but the data reports inclusion of vulnerable groups plus some additional groups. As discussed in 3 (d), "assumptions and limitations," counting these groups as instances of producer inclusion means the results likely over-report the inclusion of vulnerable groups.

VSSSOs sometimes include other standards-setting organizations, conservation groups, human rights organizations, and research centers in their governance. Although such NGOs might reach out to producers or (though rarely) include them in their own governance, they are not explicitly by producers and for producers and are thus not considered producer organizations. Although this article argues that VSSSOs should invite producers to represent themselves (Cheyns, 2014; Nelson & Tallontire, 2014), it also examines whether and how VSSSOs include NGOs, as their interests at times may align. The analysis of NGO inclusion is intended to answer what I believe would be a common follow up question to the finding that VSSSOs typically exclude producers. Here, the term NGO refers to non-governmental, non-business organizations. It does not include industry actors, such as corporate executives, international traders, importers, processing companies, and retailers. In reality, not all actors fit neatly into a category of producer, NGO, or industry. While single case studies and small-n comparative projects have done much to uncover how these categories and dynamics play out in specific cases (e.g., Hatanaka, 2010), this study uses these three coarse categories in order to compare across many organizations and identify trends in the sector.

Governance bodies are the arms of the organization responsible for overall strategy, organizational structure, and policy-making. They have supreme authority over the organization and are distinct from the secretariat (which implements policy), from standards-setting committees (whose responsibilities are limited to defining standards), or consultative bodies (whose decisions are not typically binding). Examples of governance bodies are the board of directors, general assembly, advisory council, assembly of delegates, or governance board. Governance bodies do more than set standards. They are authorized to decide which stakeholders should have a voice in standards-setting processes; they develop long-term strategies to balance and optimize growth (including more producers) and impact (delivering deeper benefits to those producers involved); they reform governance structures to alter the balance of stakeholders (such as corporations and producers); and decide how to approach competition with other VSSSOs (such as cutting costs, watering down standards, or demonstrating impact) (see Brown *et al*., 2012; Tandon, 1996).

Why study governance bodies? For producers and potential producers of ethically certified products, the policies created by governance bodies are as impactful as the standards themselves. The standards-setting committee might alter producers' practices and pay structure, but the governance bodies decide whether or not specific types of groups—such as contract workers, smallholder farmers, or cooperatives—are even eligible to participate. Some organizations bestow these rights and responsibilities on one governance body, while others divide them into two bodies to create a system of checks and balances.[8] While each VSSSO's governance structure is unique, who is represented in these bodies provides an indication of ownership, buy-in, and participation of stakeholder groups in day-to-day organizational management (Potts *et al.*, 2014, p. 60).

Finally, the term "votes/seats" refers to the number of votes and/or seats that are allocated for a specific stakeholder group. In some VSSSOs, in which decisions are taken by vote, "votes" would be the most appropriate term. In other VSSSOs, in which decisions are made by consensus, "seats" would be a more appropriate term. Since both terms are meant to reflect the amount of influence allocated to a specific group, they are referred to together as "votes/seats."

This study investigates how founders or leaders who design VSSSO governance structures believe producers *should* be included. It does so by examining the documents that VSSSOs use to capture these founders' decisions and communicate them to internal and external actors—the written statutes, by-laws, and articles of association provided by the VSSSOs themselves. Unlike an analysis of governance *in practice*—which likely reflects temporary circumstances, special contexts, or other constraints—this study examines the conclusions that founders and/or previous leaders reached about which groups *should* be leading the organization, and which groups *should not*.[9]

(b) *Case selection*

Case selection and data collection took place between November 2014 and August 2015. The author reviewed academic literature (e.g., Dragusanu, Giovannucci, & Nunn, 2014, p. 218) and the ISEAL[10] membership list to identify a group of VSSSOs often studied together and considered to be the "core" of the VSSSO community, such as Fairtrade International and Forest Stewardship Council. Using these cases, ten criteria were developed to evaluate whether additional organizations were similar enough to be included in the study. They are summarized in Table 1 and described below. Next, the author reviewed books, articles, reports, and websites of auditing companies, green marketing networks, and progressive brands to identify potential qualifying VSSSOs. The objective was to include as many cases as possible that were fundamentally similar to the core cases. Of the 184 cases considered, 34 met the ten criteria, and 33 of those provided enough data to be studied.

The first six criteria relate to the VSSSO's structure, objectives, and certification system. First, it has certified at least one supply chain actor. Second, it is a non-profit or for-profit—not a government agency such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which sets standards for the Dolphin Safe Certification. Third, it sets criteria, establishes auditing procedures, and manages use of a label that welcomes participation from qualifying companies. This excluded own-brand standards such as Starbucks' CAFE (Coffee And Farmer Equity) Practices. Fourth, standards are applied to the producers, processors, and/or manufacturers of consumer products. This eliminated organizations creating standards for land management (e.g., The Climate, Community & Biodiversity Alliance Standards); infrastructure projects (e.g., Global Infrastructure Basel's Sustainable Infrastructure Grading), financial services (e.g., The Smart Campaign's Client Protection Certification); tourism (e.g., Global Sustainable Tourism Council); and corporate management (e.g., the Society for Applied Ethics in the Economy). It also eliminated accreditation programs for other standards-setting organizations (e.g., International Organic Accreditation Service). Fifth, the VSSSO's standards are independently audited (verified) by a third party, which is a best practice in standards-setting according to ISEAL and ISO. Organizations in which third-party auditors relied fully on applicants' self-reported data were also eliminated (e.g., the European Chemical Industry Council's Together for Sustainability initiative). Sixth, companies typically use the label in consumer marketing. This eliminates schemes intended for internal use (e.g., to mitigate risk or collect data).

Table 1. *Case selection criteria for Voluntary Sustainability Standards-Setting Organizations (VSSSOs)*

1	Is currently operational (not in the start-up phase)
2	Non-governmental (for-profit or non-profit)
3	Sets standards for consumer products
4	Certifies a supply chain
5	A third-party audits supply chain actors against the standards
6	Companies use certification/label/proof of meeting standards to demonstrate ethical commitments to consumers and end users
7	Have production sites in at least two regions/continents
8	Are consumed in at least two regions/continents
9	Production and consumption are at least sometimes in different countries
10	Pursues a social objective

The next three criteria specify that VSSSOs operate globally. This ensures that, to some extent, they face similar challenges and opportunities, especially in marketing, cross-cultural communications, economic conditions, and funding. All of the VSSSOs included in this study have production sites in at least two regions or continents. This eliminated the Pacific Organic and Ethical Trade Community, which restricts participation to countries in the Pacific region, for example, but did not exclude the Fundación de Pequeños Productores Organizados (FUNDEPPO) whose current production is in Latin America but aims to expand. Each VSSSO's labeled products are marketed to consumers in at least two regions, and their sites of production and consumption are (at least sometimes) in different countries. These criteria aim to eliminate national/regional VSSSOs whose governance structures may reflect local context.

Finally, the VSSSO states a social objective, such as increasing income for farmers, in the mission statement. While any type of VSSSO (socially-oriented or not) could contribute toward closing the participatory gap in global economic governance by including producers, this study is limited to socially-oriented VSSSOs for two reasons. First, it aims to hold VSSSOs accountable to their own missions: If a VSSSO intends to benefit producers and inclusion is beneficial to producers, it is contradictory to exclude them.[11] Second, environmentally-oriented organizations may consider producer interests to be in opposition to the objective, providing some justification for producer exclusion. In this way the study aims to evaluate VSSSOs on their own terms. Thus, environmental standards-setting organizations that do not aim to benefit such groups are not included (e.g., the Marine Stewardship Council). While "social sustainability" qualified, the following goals did not: sustainability; making specific types of products more readily available; providing information to consumers; or ensuring consumer safety. Additionally, the social group could not be limited to children, as this would introduce the question of whether or not a VSSSO could be expected to include minors (or their representatives) in governance.

To evaluate VSSSOs against the criteria, the author used website data and publicly available documents, and corresponded with the organization if required. The selected cases are introduced in Table 2.

(c) *Analysis*

The author contacted each of the 34 VSSSOs to obtain the current by-laws, articles of association, statutes, terms of reference, or other official documents describing the organization's governance structure. Thirty-three of those organizations generously provided the documents required to be included in the study.[12] This project evaluates the structure formally negotiated and decided upon by the organization's founders or previous governors—not the current governance practices. These documents determine who would have decision-making power over intensely controversial issues, when legal structures could be called upon to determine who should have a seat at the decision-making table.[13] The author and two research assistants each independently analyzed each VSSSO's governance documents to answer the following questions: What is the highest governance body? What is the second highest governance body (if one exists)? What role (if any) are producers and NGOs intended to play in these governance bodies? For example, are some votes reserved for representatives of NGOs? If decisions are taken by consensus, are a specified number of seats designated for specific stakeholder groups? Do producers have veto power?[14]

The results were used to create three categories of inclusion: (1) "Reserved" indicates that a portion of votes/seats will always be reserved for this group. For example, Bonsucro (which sets standards for sugar cane production) lays out in its "Articles of Association" and "Membership Governance Framework Rules and Regulations" that "civil society" and "farmer" members may each appoint one voting member to the Membership Assembly, and up to two members in the Board of Directors. "Reserved with veto" means the stakeholder group can prevent a motion from passing, either because approval is required from this group, or because they hold enough votes to oppose it. In Bonsucro's structure, for example, both governance bodies pass motions by majority vote. Since neither producers nor farmers constitute a majority, neither has veto power. (2) "Implied" indicates the organization intends to include the stakeholder group, but it would be possible to exclude them without being in violation of the constitution. The analysis of the Responsible Jewellery Council (RJC) provides an example of implied inclusion of producers. The RJC mandates in its "Articles of Association" and "Governance Handbook" that members of its Board of Directors (the organization's only governance body) may represent "various stages of activity within the jewellery supply chain," including "production," but the documents do not specify that the board's composition *must* include such groups. This implies producer inclusion, but does not guarantee it. The analysis of the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) provides an example of implied inclusion of NGOs. ASC's "Deed" and "Supervisory Board Regulations" state that its highest body, the Supervisory Board, must reflect "a balanced representation of societal backgrounds, areas of expertise and disciplines, such as technical, financial and economic, legal, political, *social* and/or business backgrounds and involvement

Table 2. *Voluntary Sustainability Standards-Setting Organizations (VSSSOs) that meet the ten criteria*

	VSSSO	Acronym	Social certification/program/label
1	4C Association	4C	4C Code of Conduct
2	Alliance for Responsible Mining	ARM	Fairmined Standard
3	Aquaculture Stewardship Council	ASC	ASC Farm Certification and Supplier Certification
4	Better Cotton Initiative	BCI	Better Cotton Standard System
5	Bonsucro	Bonsucro	Bonsucro Standard
6	Equitable Origin	EO	EO100 Standard
7	Ethical Tea Partnership	ETP	Ethical Tea Partnership Global Standard
8	Fair Labor Association	FLA	Workplace Code of Conduct
*	Fair Trade USA	FTUSA	Fair Trade Certified
9	Fairtrade International	FI	Fairtrade
10	FairWild Foundation	FairWild	FairWild Standard
11	Florverde Sustainable Flowers	Florverde	Florverde Sustainable Flowers
12	Forest Stewardship Council	FSC	Forest Management Certification and Chain of Custody Certification
13	Fundación de Pequeños Productores Organizados	FUNDEPPO	Small Producers Symbol
14	Global Aquaculture Alliance	GAA	Best Aquaculture Practices Certification
15	Global Organic Textile Standard International Working Group	GOTS	Global Organic Textile Standards
16	Global G.A.P.	Global G.A.P.	(16 different standards)
17	International Council on Toy Industries, CARE Foundation Inc.	ICTI CARE	ICTI Care Process
18	Institute for Marketecology	IMO	Fair for Life Social & Fair Trade Certification
19	International Analog Forestry Network	IAFN	Forest Garden Products Label
20	International Council on Mining and Metals	ICMM	Sustainable Development Framework
21	International Sustainability in Carbon Certification	ISCC	ISCC Certification
22	Naturland	Naturland	Social Responsibility Standards
23	Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification	PEFC	Chain of Custody Certification
24	Responsible Jewellery Council	RJC	Chain of Custody Certification
25	Round Table on Responsible Soy	RTRS	Standard for Responsible Soy Production
26	Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials	RSB	RSB Certification
27	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil	RSPO	RSPO
28	Social Accountability International	SAI	SA8000
29	Soil Association	SA	Ethical Trade Standard
30	Sustainable Agriculture Network	SAN	Rainforest Alliance Certified
31	Union for Ethical BioTrade	UEBT	Ethical BioTrade Standard
32	UTZ Certified	UTZ	UTZ Certified
33	Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production	WRAP	WRAP Certification

*VSSSO did not provide data and is therefore not included in analysis.

in responsible aquaculture" (emphasis added). While it does not explicitly reserve votes/seats for NGOs, it *implies* that such groups should be included. (3) Finally, "not specified" is the designation for organizations that do not express an intention or commitment to including the stakeholder group.

Each VSSSO's governance bodies were categorized as reserving votes/seats, implying inclusion, or not specifying a role for producers and NGOs, as displayed in Table 3. The results were shared with each VSSSO, and each organization was invited to identify errors or raise concerns. Twenty-three organizations responded, and eight of those conversations generated edits to the results. In some cases, the organization provided additional documents that clarified how structures were arranged. In other cases, they clarified terms used for various stakeholder groups, or pointed to nuances that had been overlooked. Often, they highlighted current practices that are more inclusive than what is mandated by governance documents, which is further discussed in the section "theory *versus* practice." When there was an explicit discrepancy between data from formal documents and personal correspondence, documents were privileged. The purpose of this methodological decision was to maintain the project's objective of comparing (across organizations) the decisions that founding members or official governance bodies reached after debating various organizational structures. This methodological approach allows these findings to be used in a future comparative study of governance *de jure* and governance *de facto.* Finally, VSSSOs were invited to give feedback on the overall analysis by providing comments on a draft of this article. The eleven responses, along with comments from a representative of ISEAL (the accreditation organization for social and environmental standards-setting organizations), generated two edits to the results and several important insights into the analysis and discussion.

(d) *Assumptions and limitations*

The interpretation of documents and categorization of results required several assumptions, which were universally applied. Each assumption generates a systematic bias toward *over*estimating the inclusion of producers in governance, such that the results can be read as a (very unlikely) best-case scenario. This section describes five assumptions and then discusses two additional limitations of this methodology.

First, as discussed in 3(a), on concepts, although the objective is to understand how the most vulnerable groups in the supply chain are included in VSSSO governance, many VSSSOs do not provide enough descriptive information to determine whether the groups they include are producers (more labor-intensive groups) or industry actors (more capital-intensive groups). Interviewing each VSSSO to gather more information about the size and organization of producer

Table 3. *Do VSSSOs include producers and NGOs in their highest and second highest governance bodies?*

	VSSSO	Producers in 1st	NGOs in 1st	Producers in 2nd	NGOs in 2nd
1	4C	Implied	Reserved	Implied	Implied
2	ARM	Reserved	Implied	N/A	N/A
3	ASC	Not specified	Implied	Not specified	Implied
4	BCI	Reserved with veto	Reserved with veto	Reserved with veto	Reserved with veto
5	Bonsucro	Reserved	Reserved	Reserved	Reserved
6	EO	Not specified	Reserved	N/A	N/A
7	ETP	Not specified	Not specified	N/A	N/A
8	FLA	Implied	Implied	N/A	N/A
*	FTUSA	*no data*	*no data*	*no data*	*no data*
9	FI	Reserved with veto	Reserved with veto	Reserved	Reserved
10	FairWild	Not specified	Reserved	Not specified	Not specified
11	Florverde	Implied	Implied	Implied	Implied
12	FSC	Reserved with veto	Reserved with veto	Implied	Implied
13	FUNDEPPO	Reserved (100%)	Not specified	Reserved with veto	Not specified
14	GAA	Not specified	Not specified	N/A	N/A
15	GOTS	Not specified	Reserved (100%)	N/A	N/A
16	GlobalG.A.P.	Reserved with veto	Not specified	N/A	N/A
17	ICTI CARE	Not specified	Not specified	N/A	N/A
18	IMO	Implied	Implied	Implied	Implied
19	IAFN	Not specified	Not specified	N/A	N/A
20	ICMM	Not specified	Not specified	N/A	N/A
21	ISCC	Not specified	Not specified	Reserved	Implied
22	Naturland	Reserved	Not specified	Implied	Not specified
23	PEFC	Implied	Implied	Implied	Implied
24	RJC	Implied	Not specified	N/A	N/A
25	RTRS	Reserved with veto	Reserved with veto	Reserved	Reserved
26	RSB	Reserved	Reserved with veto	Reserved	Reserved
27	RSPO	Implied	Implied	Reserved	Reserved
28	SAI	Not specified	Not specified	N/A	N/A
29	SA	Implied	Implied	N/A	N/A
30	SAN	Not specified	Reserved (100%)	Not specified	Reserved (100%)
31	UEBT	Implied	Implied	Implied	Implied
32	UTZ	Reserved	Reserved	Implied	Implied
33	WRAP	Not specified	Implied	N/A	N/A

N/A indicates the VSSSO does not have a second highest governance body.

groups initially seemed to be a way forward, but not all organizations were willing to provide such details, and it was unclear whether reporting was biased. Complicating matters further, the distinction between different types of actors can vary across commodities and regions. Thus, there was a trade-off between a systematic bias toward including some producer groups who should not be considered "traditionally marginalized" and reducing the sample size or introducing self-reported data. Because the results are already disappointing (VSSSOs rarely include producers), the decision was to maintain the larger number of cases, continue studying only decisions that had been formally documented, and introduce a systematic bias toward over-inclusion.

A second (and similar) assumption that introduced a bias toward overestimation is that the category of "NGO" includes not only NGOs that have the potential to promote producer interests, but also other types of NGOs, which might work against them. The study is also unable to distinguish between NGOs that exclude producers from their own governance and the few that may include them. Very unfortunately, most of the constitutions do not provide enough descriptive information to determine which types of NGOs they are likely to include, and self-reported data introduce new biases and may reflect governance *practices* instead of *plans*. Thus, the results of the study of NGO inclusion must be read as an unrealistic overestimation of how VSSSOs may include producer interests.

Third, in cases where a stakeholder group is given "up to" a specified number of votes/seats, it was assumed the group would fill this maximum. However, an organization would not be in violation of its constitution if it did not include members of the group. This also overestimates producer and NGO inclusion.

Fourth, if a stakeholder has reserved votes/seats in the first body, and the first body appoints the second body, it was implied that the group would hold votes/seats in the second body. For example, Utz Certified, which sets standards for the production of coffee, cocoa, and tea, reserves seats for producers and NGOs in its highest body—the Supervisory Board—and the Supervisory Board appoints the second highest body, the Board of Directors. Although the composition of the Board of Directors is not specified in the organization's Articles of Association, it is *implied* that the body will include producers and NGOs. This assumption also overestimates producer and NGO inclusion.

Fifth, when a specified number of votes/seats was reserved for multiple stakeholder groups (e.g., traders, producers, and university experts), it was determined that inclusion was implied (since the group was mentioned), but not reserved (since the group would not necessarily have to be included). For example, the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT) reserves half of the votes/seats in its highest governance body, the General Assembly, for "Affiliate" members who are "trade associations, NGOs, community producers/collectors, National BioTrade Programmes, and any other organization active in BioTrade." This implies that producers/collectors will be included, but does not reserve seats for them specifically. Since the specific group in question (producers or NGOs) may not actually hold a seat, this is also over estimating their inclusion.

In addition to the introduction of bias, there are two limitations of the methodology. First, it only describes what the founders and other authors of VSSSO constitutions agreed to lay out in writing. The governance documents do not reflect what happens in practice, but instead what authors *hoped would happen* in governance or what they *wanted others to believe would happen* in governance. Thus, this is a study about what VSSSOs believe are appropriate practices or think others will believe are appropriate practices in governance. These ideas may be very disconnected from what *actually happens* on the ground. Therefore, this study cannot evaluate how VSSSOs are actually governed in practice. It says nothing about the informal customs, cultures, and norms that are critical in shaping how actors operate within the formal structures (Koppell, 2010, p. 150). As other studies have shown, important decision-making may actually take place in the bureaucracy, the secretariat may not implement governance bodies' policies, and CEOs may retain more influence than is documented (e.g., Conscione, 2014). In this study, for example, the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB) noted that the voting rules outlined in the governance documents were rarely evoked, as the governance took seriously the constitutional mandate that decisions be reached by consensus whenever possible. If giving producers a seat at the table is a necessary but insufficient condition for producer empowerment, this study is only able to determine which organizations *state an intention to* meet that precondition. This study does not evaluate whether VSSSOs are *actually* empowering producers.

The second limitation relates to comparative case analyses, more generally: letting go of individual case details enables a better understanding of the broad, cross-case organizational field (e.g., Brown *et al.*, 2012; Koppell, 2010). By categorizing actors as "producer," "NGO," or "industry," and classifying VSSSOs' structures as "implying," "reserving," or "not mentioning" their intentions to include producers, some of the nuances are lost, but the ability to compare across cases with different types of documents, structures, supply chains, and certification systems is gained. This trade-off reflects the objective of this study: to better understand whether and to what extent it is typical for VSSSOs to formally state that they will include producers in their highest levels of governance.

4. RESULTS

(a) *Producer inclusion*

As noted in the section above, the interpretation of governance documents required several assumptions, each biasing the results toward an overestimation of producer inclusion. Thus, these results should be interpreted as the most inclusive governance structures possible. The results for VSSSOs' inclusion of producers are displayed in Table 4 and Figure 1. Of the 33 VSSSOs analyzed in this study, eight reserve votes/seats for producers in both of the highest governance bodies (if there are two) or in the single highest governance body (if there is one). Three reserve votes/seats in the highest body but only imply inclusion in the second body. Two VSSSOs reserve votes/seats in the second highest body but in the first body only one implies inclusion while the other does not mention an intention to include producers. Eight VSSSOs imply inclusion in the first and second bodies (if there are two) or in the highest body (if only one). And 12 VSSSOs do not express an intention or commitment to include producers in either of the highest bodies (if there are two) or in the highest body (if there is only one). Of the 12 VSSSOs that reserve votes/seats for producers, six give them veto power in at least one governance body. To summarize, 61% of VSSSOs (20 of 33) do not reserve votes/seats for producers on either of their two highest governing bodies. Of those VSSSOs, 40% (8 of 20) *do* imply (some more emphatically than others) that producers will be represented, while 60% (12 of 20) do not express, in their formal

Table 4. *How do VSSSOs include producers (e.g., farmers, workers, artisans, and miners) in their governance, according to official documents?*

Highest body	**Reserved**	**Reserved**	**Implied**	**Not specified**	**Implied**	**Not specified**
Second body	**Reserved (or no 2nd body)**	**Implied**	**Reserved**	**Reserved**	**Implied (or no 2nd body)**	**Not specified (or no 2nd body)**
	ARM+	FSC*	RSPO	ISCC	4C	ASC
	BCI**	Naturland			FLA+	EO+
	Bonsucro	UTZ			Florverde	ETP+
	FI*				IAFN	FairWild
	FUNDEPPO***				PEFC	GAA+
	GlobalGAP*+				RJC+	GOTS+
	RTRS*				SA+	IMO+
	RSB				UEBT	ICTI CARE+
						ICMM+
						SAI+
						SAN/RA
						WRAP+
Total = 33	8	3	1	1	8	12
Results	11 reserve votes/seats for producers in the highest governance body		2 reserve votes/seats for producers in the second highest body, but not the first		8 imply that producers will be included but do not reserve votes/seats for them	12 do not imply that producers will be included or reserve votes/seats for them
Results	13 reserve votes/seats for producers in one or both of the highest governing bodies				20 do not reserve votes/seats for producers in either of the two highest governance bodies	

No data: Fair Trade USA.
* Veto power in the highest body.
** Veto power in both bodies.
*** 100% of votes/seats in first; veto in second.
\+ No second body.

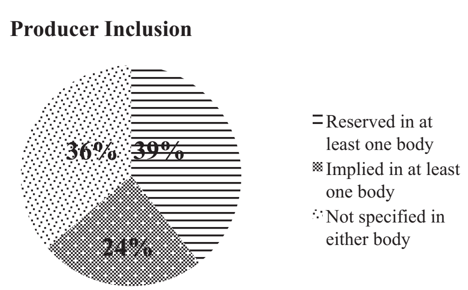

Figure 1. *How do VSSSOs include producers in their highest governance bodies?*

governance documents, an intention to include producer groups.

(b) *NGO inclusion*

While NGOs are not a substitute for producer groups, in some cases, they may advocate for producer interests or bring producer perspectives to bear on governance issues. As noted in the previous section, this analysis is based on several assumptions that systematically overestimate the number of NGOs included. Thus, the results presented here should be considered an unlikely, best-case scenario—an overestimation of NGO inclusion. The results for VSSSOs' inclusion of NGOs are displayed in Table 5 and Figure 2. Of the 33 VSSSOs analyzed in this study, eight reserve votes/seats for NGOs in both of the highest governance bodies (if there are two) or in the single highest governance body (if there is one). Four reserve votes/seats in the highest body but only imply inclusion or do not mention inclusion in the second body. One reserves votes/seats in the second highest body, but only implies inclusion in the first. Ten VSSSOs imply inclusion in the first and second bodies (if there are two) or in the highest body (if only one). And 10 VSSSOs do not express an intention or commitment to include NGOs in either of the highest bodies (if there are two) or in the highest body (if there is only one). Of the 13 VSSSOs that reserve votes/seats for NGOs, seven give them veto power in at least one governance body. To summarize, 61% of VSSSOs (20 of 33) do not reserve votes/seats for NGOs on either of their two highest governing bodies. Of those VSSSOs, 50% (10 of 20) *do* imply (some more emphatically than others) that NGOs will be represented, while 50% (10 of 20) do not express, in their formal governance documents, an intention to include NGOs.

(c) *Producer and/or NGO inclusion*

Eight VSSSOs (24%) reserved votes/seats for *both* producers and NGOs (BCI, Bonsucro, FI, FSC, RSB, RTRS RSPO, Utz). This suggests that the authors of their constitutions did not consider producers and NGOs the same stakeholder group. Additionally, four reserved seats for producers but not NGOs in the highest body (ARM, FUNDEPPO, GlobalGAP, and Naturland), also suggesting that the authors felt producers should be directly represented, or that the structure

Table 5. *How do VSSSOs include NGOs in their governance, according to official documents?*

Highest body	**Reserved**	**Reserved**	**Reserved**	**Implied**	**Implied**	**Not specified**	**Not specified**
Second body	**Reserved (or no 2nd body)**	**Implied**	**Not Specified**	**Reserved**	**Implied (or no 2nd body)**	**Implied**	**Not specified (or no 2nd body)**
	BCI**	4C	FairWild	RSPO	ASC	ISCC	ETP+
	Bonsucro	FSC*			ARM+		FUNDEPPO
	EO+	UTZ			FLA+		GAA+
	FI*				Florverde		GlobalGAP+
	GOTS***+				IAFN		IMO+
	RTRS*				PEFC		ICTI CARE+
	RSB*				SA+		ICMM+
	SAN/RA****				UEBT		Naturland
					WRAP+		RJC+
							SAI+
Total = 33	8	3	1	1	9	1	10
Results	12 reserve votes/seats for NGOs in the highest governance body			1 reserves votes/seats in the second highest, but not first	10 imply that NGOs will be included but do not reserve votes/seats for them		10 do not imply that NGOs will be included or reserve votes/seats for them
Results	13 reserve votes/seats for NGOs in one or both of the highest governing bodies					20 do not reserve votes/seats for NGOs in either of the two highest governance bodies	

No data: Fair Trade USA
* Veto power in the highest body.
** Veto power in both bodies.
*** 100% of votes/seats in first.
**** 100% of votes/seats in both bodies.
+ No second body.

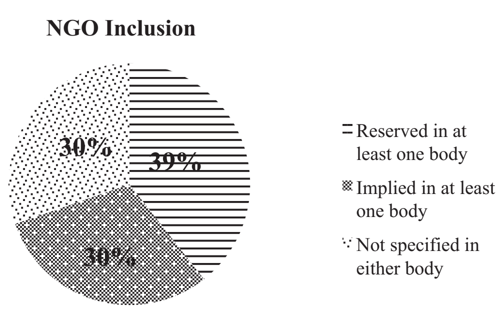

Figure 2. *How do VSSSOs include NGOs in their highest governance bodies?*

should be made to appear producer-inclusive. At the other end of the spectrum, six VSSSOs (18%) did not specify an intention to include producers *or* NGOs (ETP, GAA, IMO, ICMM, SAI, ICTI). This suggests that the authors of their constitutions did not find it necessary to bring producers into governance or give the appearance of doing so. The following section discusses these findings and their implications.

5. DISCUSSION

(a) *Do VSSSOs meet governance expectations?*

This study examined how VSSSOs typically describe producer inclusion in their constitutional documents, and evaluated the degree to which VSSSO norms meet the widespread expectation of producer inclusion. What it means to "include" producers can vary. One perspective is that producer inclusion requires seats/votes to be reserved for producer groups. According to this definition of inclusion, only 39% (13 of 33) of VSSSOs meet the standard for inclusive governance. Some might argue that this is too rigorous a threshold for inclusion. But even if the standard for "inclusion" is reduced to *implying* in a constitution that producers will be included in either of the two highest bodies, barely more than half of VSSSOs would meet expectations (64%, or 11 of 33). What if the bar for inclusion was raised instead of lowered? How would VSSSOs measure up if the standard "inclusion" meant holding veto power over other stakeholder groups in the highest governance body? Such a practice would ensure that producer inclusion is not "tokenism" but instead a real opportunity to influence outcomes. When the threshold for inclusion is increased in this way, only 18% (6 of 33) VSSSOs meet expectations. In other words, VSSSOs *fail* to meet expectations of producer inclusion 82% of the time if the bar is high, 61% of the time if standards are lowered, and 36% of the time if they are further reduced. Regardless of how one defines "inclusion," VSSSOs are not widely inclusive of producers.

Even if one were to consider NGOs a viable substitute for producer representation—as I have argued against—VSSSOs still do not universally meet expectations. Only 82% meet the most basic standard, 55% meet a rigorous standard, and 27% meet the highest threshold. Recall that, as described in

Table 6. *Do VSSSOs meet expectations for inclusive multi-stakeholder governance?*

Threshold for inclusion	Lower Implies inclusion or reserves votes/seats in at least one governance body	Moderate Reserves at least one vote in at least one governance body (must do more than imply inclusion)	Higher Veto power in highest governance body
Inclusion of producers	64% (21 of 33)	39% (13 of 33)	18% (6 of 33)
Inclusion of producers or NGOs	82% (27 of 33)	55% (18 of 33)	27% (9 of 33)

the methods section, several assumptions made in the analysis bias these results toward *over* estimating producer inclusion and NGO inclusion. Thus the numbers presented here represent a best (most inclusive)-case scenario. These findings are summarized in Table 6.

(b) *What is lost?*

At the VSSSO level of analysis, the most obvious consequence of exclusion is that VSSSOs relinquish all the advantages of inclusive governance. As described in Section 2, this includes not only empowerment, skill building, and favorable outcomes for producers, but also benefits to VSSSOs, such as becoming more sensitive to local contexts, deepening stakeholder investment, broadening the base of support, bolstering impact, and fostering a sense of empowerment and fairness among stakeholders. Additionally, exclusion may generate further adverse consequences such as diminished credibility (Schepers, 2010 on PEFC); compromised accountability (e.g., Bain, 2010 on GlobalGAP); diluted standards (Renard, 2015 on FI); structures that reflect the ideas of traditional elites (Dingwerth, 2008 on FSC); and reduced benefits for intended beneficiaries (e.g., Bacon, 2010 on FI). [15]

At a broader level, these findings also have implications for global economic governance. At the end of the 20th Century, as the third wave of globalization began to unfold, some scholars began to cite VSSSOs as part of the potential solution to the "democratic deficit" (Nye, 2001) in global economic decision-making. The idea was that by bringing diverse stakeholders to the fore of private standards setting, VSSSOs would help to close the "participatory gap" between the "transnational capitalist class" and groups typically excluded from global economic governance (Conroy, 2007, pp. 38–39; Levy, 2008, p. 852; Reinicke and Deng, 2000). [16] Scholars and practitioners alike expected that VSSSOs would not only adopt multi-stakeholder structures, but also include traditionally marginalized groups among those stakeholders. "Traditionally marginalized groups" refer to populations (such as farmers and workers) that have typically not been invited to participate in negotiating global economic policy (such as states and international organizations), and do not have funds or power to push decision-makers to act in their interests (such as business associations and large corporations) (Haufler, 2003, p. 239; O'Rourke, 2006; Slaughter, 2012, p. 5). As O'Rourke (2006) writes, VSSSOs are part of an "effort to make global governance more democratically accountable to those most directly impacted" (900). In a more general sense, many scholars consider VSSSOs members of transnational civil society and global social movements, and argue that in this capacity they are bringing new voices to international affairs (Beckfield, 2003; Florini, 2000; Kaldor, 2003; Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

Thus, the finding that the founders and leaders of VSSSOs do not universally—or even *usually*—plan to include producers in their governance turns on its head the notion that VSSSOs are a democratizing force in global governance. The groups traditionally marginalized from high-level decision-making—such as smallholder commodities farmers in the Global South—have once again been relegated to advisory and consultative positions, their perspectives taking a back seat to more traditional elites. If the success of the VSS movement depends on the organizations that comprise it becoming more transparent, accountable, and democratic (O'Rourke, 2006, p. 912), the standards movement is failing. When VSSSOs govern without participation of the governed they not only lose their capacity to make unique contributions to global governance, but they also become complicit in a broader hegemonic project (Friedrichs, 2005; Levy, 2008).

(c) *Governance plans versus practice*

This study of governance documents is a first step in understanding the broader question of how VSSSOs approach producer inclusion. Without a doubt, governance documents are important: they provide insights into how founders believe VSSSOs should be governed; communicate internal processes to external actors; and can be used to hold organizations accountable for inclusion. Yet, many constitutions are ambiguous or do not reflect what is happening on the ground (see Fransen, 2012). In practice, VSSSO governance may be less inclusive of producers than is indicated in the results of this study. For example, seats reserved for producers are not always filled (e.g., Fransen, 2012, p. 183). Likewise, seats reserved for either producers or industry actors may be filled by the latter. In many ways, even the most "inclusive" organizations may not bring producers to the fore.

On the other hand, when the results of this study were shared with VSSSOs, many responded by pointing out ways in which their practices are actually more inclusive of producers than what their formal structures demand. The ICTI (International Council of Toy Industries) CARE Foundation Inc., for example, does not specify in its by-laws that NGOs should be included in its Governance Board. However, its current board includes representatives from the International Youth Foundation and the International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies—both NGOs. Likewise, the Soil Association, which sets standards for organic production, only implies that producers should be included, yet four of its nine board members are farmers. In other words, VSSSOs can be more inclusive or less inclusive than their governance documents suggest.

Future research should examine the gaps between governance *de jure* and *de facto*. Why does this gap exist? In cases where practices are more inclusive than plans: What are the sources of resistance to revising formal governance structures to reflect new values or realities? Do bureaucratic protocols make key documents difficult to amend? Or, are incumbent leaders fearful of formalizing power-sharing practices? What does it mean when an organization adopts more inclusive practices than are required? Is it a sign of progress or a cosmetic adjustment intended to communicate an ethos of inclusion? A longitudinal study might adjudicate between these interpretations by examining whether documents are eventually revised (reflecting progress), or the formal structure remains exclusionary (suggesting a more superficial form of inclusion). In cases where plans are more inclusive than practices: Did VSSSOs ever intend to follow the plans, or are inclusive documents an example of "legitimation politicking" (Fransen, 2012)? In cases where founders intended to follow through with plans of inclusion but did not, were the challenges more material or cultural? An initial query into these questions might compare this study's findings with those presented in the 2014 "State of Sustainability Initiatives Review" which examines actual stakeholder distribution on the boards of 15 organizations, 13 of which are also included in this study (Potts *et al*., 2014, p. 60). Further research may require in depth fieldwork in organizations with various types of gaps between governance on paper and governance in practice.

(d) *Other forms of inclusion*

VSSSOs were quick to highlight that reserving votes/seats in the highest governance bodies is not the only way to include producers and NGOs in voluntary certification systems. For example, the Union for Ethical BioTrade (UEBT), which sets standards for biomass production, does not reserve votes/seats for producers or NGOs in its General Assembly or Board of Directors but does include producers and NGOs in its Standards Committee, which has full authority over standards-setting. This is illustrative of a broader trend—it is more common for VSSSOs to engage a broader range of stakeholders in standards-setting than in governance (ISEAL, 2015; Potts *et al*., 2014).

Yet, alternative forms of inclusion should not be understood as satisfactory vehicles for bringing producer voices to the most important decision-making tables. While Fung and Wright (2003) note that "empowered participatory governance" can take many shapes, such as "popular participation, decentralized decision-making, practical focus, continuous deliberation and engagement, or co-operation…" (263), alternative forms of inclusion are not *substitutes* for allowing stakeholders to vote on a VSSSO's most far-reaching, fundamental decisions (Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2009). Producers should have a voice in the most important decisions, such as: eligibility requirements (which producers to include), benefits (what producers will gain), and growth strategies (how many producers the system can support before diluting benefits). Furthermore, empirical studies illustrate that follow through on other forms of inclusive consultation processes can be woefully inadequate (Suiseeya & Caplow, 2013). Further research on the relationships between governance and standards-setting bodies might determine the degree to which this arrangement (of relegating producers to peripheral bodies) is problematic. A standards-setting committee with full authority to approve standards content, for example, is less concerning than one serving only as an advisory body, making suggestions that may be approved or rejected by higher powers.

(e) *Explaining inclusion and exclusion*

What explains variation in how VSSSOs include producers? Koppell (2010) argues that undemocratic governance features, such as excluding key stakeholder groups or limiting their participation, should not be understood as random attributes but instead as key elements of organizations' strategies for survival and effectiveness (6). How might VSSSOs see producer inclusion or exclusion as key to survival and effectiveness?

Several studies suggest that some VSSSOs use inclusive governance to support their processes of legitimation, because they believe legitimacy is key to survival (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007, p. 351).[17] They may boast inclusion of marginalized groups (Bernstein, 2004), a diverse range of stakeholders (Schepers, 2010, p. 281), NGOs (Nikoloyuk, 2009; Schepers, 2010), or a significant cross-section of the supply chain (Nikoloyuk, 2009). Inclusive structures aim to build "moral authority" by signaling independence from corporate or state rule (Raynolds *et al*., 2007). For example, Taylor (2005) argues that the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) reformed its governance structure to address critiques that industry representatives and powerful retail actors exercised too much power in governance, relative to social interests (141–142; see also Schepers, 2010, p. 284). As a result, Schepers (2010) argues that the FSC "is perceived as stronger and stricter" than competing VSSSOs "due to its greater degree of input from NGOs" (280). Other organizations have also reformed their structures to become more inclusive over time, responding to the non-inclusive nature of previous private sustainability standards regimes (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014, p. 410). These include the Fair Labor Association (Dickson & Eckman, 2008), Fairtrade International (Bennett, 2015), the FSC (Taylor, 2005), and GlobalGAP (Henson, Masakure, & Cranfield, 2011).

Yet, several of the VSSSOs in this study have survived for over a decade (or two), despite their exclusion of producers. Thus, it appears survival is not dependent on legitimacy; or that legitimacy can be pursued by means other than producer inclusion. In what other ways can VSSSOs use producer inclusion or exclusion as part of a strategy for survival and effectiveness? Brown *et al*. (2012) suggest that organizations' strategies reflect their primary accountabilities. Organizations are driven to serve a constituency group, a mission, or the members. Since the governance structure will reflect this priority, variation in producer inclusion may be a reflection of variation in primary accountabilities. For example, a VSSSO accountable to its constituents may be more likely to include that group in governance than an organization that prioritizes the mission of generating public goods (1106). This explanation and other post-structural approaches focus on the ways in which organizations privilege different ideas, narratives, and discourses about the organization's mission and strategic objectives. A more material explanation for variation in producer inclusion is that governance structures are designed to facilitate access to the resources the organization requires (Campi, Defourny, Grégoire, & Huybrechts, 2012), such as funding, information, or major contracts (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). This may generate governance structures that privilege stakeholders who are gatekeepers to such resources (Brown, 2008; Howard & Jaffee, 2013; Huybrechts *et al*., 2014). Scholars should be open to understandings of governance structure outcomes that combine insights both post-structural and interest-based explanations (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014).

Future research should focus on how VSSSOs understand and leverage governance structure in their strategies for survival, effectiveness, and legitimacy. What determines whether producer inclusion is part of such strategies? The objective of this agenda is to identify the strategic beliefs, priorities, and resource opportunities that are shared among VSSSOs that include producers, and those shared among those who exclude them. A cross-case comparative study using qualitative methodologies, such as non-participant observation of high-level meetings and interviews with board members, may be an effective approach. Some studies of this kind are already taking place. van der Ven (2015), for example, finds that organizations that (a) partner with environmental NGOs; (b) have non-profit structures; or (c) have a broad transnational reach are more likely to follow best practices, including good governance. Future research might compare the findings of this study (of socially-oriented VSSSOs) with the findings of an additional study of environmentally-oriented VSSSOs in order to better understand how the decision to include producers is (or is not) related to the goal of impacting producer communities. A second phase of research might aim to better understand how various governance structures actually affect survival, legitimacy, and effectiveness. Such an effort may examine failed or failing VSSSOs, or those critiqued as ineffective. For example, Auld (2014) finds that certification programs lose support (actors exit) when there is greater opportunity for them to be effective outside of the organization than potential to influence (have voice) within the organization. By generating knowledge about how VSSSOs use producer inclusion as part of a larger strategy, researchers can equip advocates of producer inclusion to better champion their cause.

6. CONCLUSION

Voluntary sustainability standards-setting organizations (VSSSOs) are assumed to have multi-stakeholder governance structures that incorporate a diverse variety of actors—including the farmers, workers, miners, artisans, and others who produce the sustainability-certified products. Producer groups typically contribute physical labor to globalized supply chains, live in the Global South, are vulnerable, face few opportunities for social mobility, and have traditionally been marginalized from global economic governance. For all VSSSOs—but especially those with a social mission to support producer groups—including producers in governance can create diverse and important benefits. Yet, research suggests that there is great diversity in whether and how organizations intend to give voice to such groups.

This study shows that when the founders or leaders of VSSSOs design the organization's governance structure, they often decide to exclude these producers from the highest governance bodies. Producer inclusion is not, in fact, the norm. While planning to give producers a vote or seat in governance does not *ensure* their perspectives will influence policy outcomes, having a seat at the table *is* necessary for meaningful, accountable inclusion. This finding calls into question the notion that VSSSOs are vehicles through which traditionally marginalized voices are brought into global economic governance. It suggests that actors interested in diversifying global economic governance take on VSSSO governance reform as an opportunity to bring fresh perspectives to the decision-making table.

NOTES

1. The term "Voluntary Sustainability Standards" (VSS) has become a common way to refer to this phenomenon, and thus the acronym VSSSO aims to create a terminology for the class of organizations that creates those standards. Note that this phenomenon is studied under many different names, including: "experimentalist governance" (Sabel & Zeitlin, 1997), "non-state, market-driven" forms of governance (Cashore, 2002), "social regulation of the market" (Haufler, 2003), "transnational private regulation" (Bartley, 2007), "non-state certification systems" (Bartley, 2007), "new governance jurisprudence" (Alexander, 2009), "transnational alternative agrifood networks" (Hatanaka, 2010), "competitive supragovernmental regulation" (Meidinger, 2011), "voluntary sustainability initiatives" (Potts *et al.*, 2014), and "multi-stakeholder initiatives" (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014).

2. To put that in perspective, if we thought about FI as a corporation, and considered FI-certified farmers and farm workers to be akin to employees (since FI sets their minimum wages and regulates working conditions), FI would be the third largest private employer in the world (following McDonald's and Walmart), in terms of number of persons employed (Taylor, 2015). The employee count for McDonald's and Walmart does not, of course, include the producers of the goods it sells, such as farmers and farm workers. If that were the case, their number of employees would increase exponentially and be much, much greater than FI's number of farmers and farm workers.

3. Note that this definition differs from other common uses of the term "producer."

4. On the diversity of initiatives aimed at transforming global food systems, see Barrientos and Dolan (2006).

5. Note that over 10% of people in the world lack basic reading proficiency, and over half (nearly 3.1 billion people) do not have access to the Internet—even through mobile phones (CIAgency, 2015; Fitzsimons, 2014).

6. VSSSOs are, of course, not alone in their struggle with inclusion. Other types of organizations and other social movements similarly find that advocating for some means excluding others (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008). At the movement level of analysis, even the most diverse, progressive social movements, such as human rights, become dominated by a single institution that is not representative of the movement as a whole (Bennett, 2012, p. 804).

7. See, for example, Michael Sheridan's (2012) "Fair Trade and Governance, Revisited" on the Catholic Relief Services "Coffeelands" Blog and journalist Marc Gunther's (2012) piece "A Schism Over Fair Trade" on his website.

8. In this study, 19 VSSSOs have two governance bodies and 14 VSSSOs only have one.

9. The question of *why* and *how* VSSSOs decide upon the structures they do, and whether their exclusionary practices should be understood as intentional or inadvertent, is taken up in Section 5.

10. In 2002 a cohort of VSSSOs established ISEAL (International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling), an independent NGO that provides guidance for international social and environmental standards-setting organizations. In 2004, it launched a Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards, which has become the global reference for good social and environmental standard-setting processes. ISEAL is now a central actor in developing a cross-domain certification community (Bartley & Smith, 2010, p. 369).

11. On organizational pathology, see Barnett and Finnemore (1999, esp. 719).

12. Fair Trade USA was the only organization that did not respond to the author's four queries.

13. For an example of this, see Bennett (2015, 2016) on the history of Fairtrade International's governance structure.

14. When discrepancies occurred, the researchers used each other's notes to re-evaluate their findings, identifying any implicit assumptions that accounted for inconsistent findings. The team then agreed on which assumptions to adopt, and applied the same logic to all of the cases. The resulting set of assumptions is discussed in the subsequent section.

15. Several of these findings are based on analyses of governance structures that have since been reformed. Nonetheless, they provide insight into the types of problems that may be caused by exclusionary governance.

16. The question of whether non-state regulators (in theory or practice) *democratize* world affairs or *threaten democracy* by circumventing elected national governments is beyond the scope of this article.

17. On how this argument plays out in the forest sector, see Cashore (2002) and Meidinger (2011); on RSPO, see Schouten and Glasbergen (2012).

REFERENCES

Aaronson, S. A., & Zimmerman, J. M. (2006). Fair trade? How oxfam presented a systemic approach to poverty, development, human rights, and trade. *Human Rights Quarterly, 28*(4), 998–1030. http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2006.0039.

Alexander, L. (2009). Stakeholder participation in new governance: Lessons from Chicago's public housing reform experiment. *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy, 16*(1), 117.

Amoore, L., & Langley, P. (2004). Ambiguities of global civil society. *Review of International Studies, 30*, 89–100.

Angel, D. P., Hamilton, T., & Huber, M. T. (2007). Global environmental standards for industry. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources, 32*(1), 295–316. http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev.energy.32.031306.102415.

Armstrong, E. A., & Bernstein, M. (2008). Culture, power, and institutions: A multi-institutional politics approach to social movements. *Sociological Theory, 26*(1), 74–99.

Auld, G. (2014). Constructing private governance: The rise and evolution of forest, coffee, and fisheries certification. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Bacon, C. (2010). Who decides what is fair in fair trade? The agri-environmental governance of standards, access, and price. *Journal of Peasant Studies, 37*(1), 111–147. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03066150903498796.

Bacon, C. M., Rice, R. A., & Maryanski, H. (2015). Fair trade coffee and environmental sustainability in Latin America. In L. T. Reynolds, & E. A. Bennett (Eds.), *The handbook of research on fair trade* (pp. 388–404). London: Edward Elgar.

Bain, C. (2010). Structuring the flexible and feminized labor market: GlobalGAP standards for agricultural labor in Chile. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 40*(1), 343–370.

Barnett, M. N., & Finnemore, M. (1999). The politics, power, and pathologies of international organizations. *International Organization, 53*(4), 699–732.

Barrientos, S., & Dolan, C. (Eds.) (2006). *Ethical sourcing in the global food system*. London: Earthscan.

Bartley, T. (2007). Institutional emergence in an era of globalization: The rise of transnational private regulation of labor and environmental conditions. *American Journal of Sociology, 113*(2), 297–351.

Bartley, T., Koos, S., Samel, H., Setrini, G., & Summers, N. (2015). Looking behind the label: Global industries and the conscientious consumer. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Bartley, T., & Smith, S. (2010). Communities of practice as cause and consequence of transnational governance: The evolution of social and environmental certification. In M.-L. Djelic, & S. Quack (Eds.), *Transnational communities: Shaping global economic governance* (pp. 347–374). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Beckfield, J. (2003). Inequality in the world polity: The structure of international organization. *American Sociological Review, 68*(3), 401–424.

Bennett, E. A. (2012). Global social movements in global governance. *Globalizations, 9*(6), 799–813.

Bennett, E. A. (2015). Fairtrade international governance. In L. T. Raynolds, & E. A. Bennett (Eds.), *The handbook of research on fair trade* (pp. 80–101). London: Edward Elgar.

Bennett, E. A. (2016). Governance, Legitimacy, and Stakeholder Balance: Lessons from Fairtrade International. *Social Enterprise Journal, 12*(3).

Bernstein, S. (2004). *The elusive basis of legitimacy in global governance. Three conceptions. GHC working paper 04/2, 4(905), 25.* , Retrieved from http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~global/wps/Bernstein.pdf.

Bernstein, S., & Cashore, B. (2007). Can non-state global governance be legitimate? An analytical framework. *Regulation & Governance, 1*(4), 347–371. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-5991.2007.00021.x.

Blagescu, M., de Las Casas, L., & Lloyd, R. (2005). Pathways to accountability: The GAP framework. London: UK: One World Trust, Retrieved from http://www.oneworldtrust.org/component/search/?searchword=gap&ordering=&searchphrase=all.

Boltanski, L., & Thévenot, L. (2006). On justification: Economies of worth. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Brown, D. L. (2008). Creating credibility: Legitimacy and accountability for transnational civil society. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press.

Brown, D. L., Ebrahim, A., & Batliwala, S. (2012). Governing international advocacy NGOs. *World Development, 40*(6), 1098–1108. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2011.11.006.

Brown, K. (2015). Consumer politics, political consumption and fair trade. In L. T. Raynolds, & E. A. Bennett (Eds.), *The handbook of research on fair trade* (pp. 157–173). London: Edward Elgar.

Busch, L. (2014). Governance in the age of global markets: Challenges, limits, and consequences. *Agriculture and Human Values, 30*(3), 513–523. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10460-014-9510-x.

Busch, L., & Bain, C. (2004). New! Improved? The transformation of the global agrifood system. *Rural Sociology, 69*(3), 321–346.

Campi, S., Defourny, J., Grégoire, O., & Huybrechts, B. (2012). Les Entreprises Sociales d'Insertion. In L. Gardin, J. L. Laville, & M. Nyssens (Eds.), *L'insertion l'économique au prisme de l'entreprise sociale* (pp. 72–95). Paris: Descleé DeBrouwer.

Carmin, J., Darnall, N., & Mil-Homens, J. (2003). Stakeholder involvement in the design of U.S. voluntary environmental programs: Does sponsorship matter? *The Policy Studies Journal, 31*(4), 527–543.

Cashore, B. (2002). Legitimacy and the privatization of environmental governance: How Non-State Market-Driven (NSMD) governance systems gain rule-making authority. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions, 15*(4), 503–529. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-0491.00199.

Cheyns, E. (2014). Making 'minority voices' heard in transnational roundtables: The role of local NGOs in reintroducing justice and attachments. *Agriculture and Human Values, 31*(3), 439–453. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10460-014-9505-7.

Cheyns, E., & Riisgaard, L. (2014). Introduction to the symposium: The exercise of power through multi-stakeholder initiatives for sustainable agriculture and its inclusion and exclusion outcomes. *Agriculture and Human Values, 31*(3), 409–423. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10460-014-9508-4.

CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) (2015). The world fact book Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html.

Cohen, M., Figeroa Kupcu, M., & Khanna, P. (2008). The new colonialists. *Foreign Policy, 167*(July–August), 74–79.

Collingwood, V. (2006). Non-governmental organisations, power and legitimacy in international society. *Review of International Studies, 32*(3), 439. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0260210506007108.

Conroy, M. (2007). Branded! How the "certification revolution" is transforming global corporations. Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers.

Conscione, M. (2014). In defense of small producers: The story of CLAC. Winnipeg, Canada: Fernwood Publishing.

Cutler, C., Haufler, V., & Porter, T. (Eds.) (1999). *Private authority and international affairs*. Albany: State University of New York.

Dickson, M. A., & Eckman, M. (2008). Media portrayal of voluntary public reporting about corporate social responsibility performance: Does coverage encourage or discourage ethical management? *Journal of Business Ethics, 83*(4), 725–743.

Dingwerth, K. (2008). North-South parity in global governance-the affirmative procedures of the forest stewardship council. *Global Governance, 14*(1), 53–71.

Dingwerth, K., & Pattberg, P. (2009). World politics and organizational fields: The case of transnational sustainability governance. *European Journal of International Relations, 15*(4), 707–743.

Dragusanu, R., Giovannucci, D., & Nunn, N. (2014). The economics of fair trade. *Journal of Economic Perspective, 28*(3), 217–236. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1246948.

Eurofound (2016). Representativeness studies Retrieved from http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/european-observatory-of-working-life-eurwork/representativeness-studies.

Evans, P. (1997). The eclipse of the state? Reflections on stateness in an era of globalization. *Source: World Politics Fiftieth Anniversary Special Issue, 50*(1), 62–87.

FI (Fairtrade International) (2011). Annual review: Challenge and opportunity Retrieved from http://www.fairtrade.net/annual-reports.html.

Fitzsimons, T. (2014). Why 4.4 billion people still don't have internet access. *NPR*, Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2014/10/02/353288711/why-4-4-billion-people-still-dont-have-internet-access.

Florini, A. (2000). Lessons learned. In A. Florini (Ed.), *The third force: The rise of transnational civil society* (pp. 211–240). Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Fransen, L. (2012). Multi-stakeholder governance and voluntary programme interactions: Legitimation politics in the institutional design of corporate social responsibility. *Socio-Economic Review, 10*(1), 163–192.

Freeman, E. R. (1984). Strategic management: A stakeholder approach. London: Pitman.

Fridell, G. (2013). Alternative trade: legacies for the future. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Fernwood Publishing.

Friedrichs, J. (2005). Global governance as the hegemonic project of transatlantic civil society. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fung, A., & Wright, E. O. (2003). Deepening democracy: Institutional innovations in empowered participatory governance. London: Verso Books.

Gendron, C., Bisaillon, V., & Otero Rance, I. A. (2009). The institutionalization of fair trade: More than just a degraded form of social action. *Journal of Business Ethics, 86*(S1), 63–79.

Gereffi, G., Garcia-Johnson, R., & Sasser, E. (2001). The NGO-industrial complex. *Foreign Policy, 125*, 56–65.

Gunther, M. (2012). A schism over fair trade May 13. Retrieved from http://www.marcgunther.com/2012/05/13/a-schism-over-fair-trade/.

Hainmueller, J., Hiscox, M. J., & Sequeira, S. (2015). Consumer demand for fair trade: Evidence from a multistore field experiment. *Review of Economics and Statistics, 97*(2), 242–256.

Hammad, L., & Morton, B. (2011). Greater influence, greater responsibility: Are INGOs' self-regulatory accountability standards effective? (pp. 1–30). Ottawa: North South Initiative, Retrieved from http://www.nsi-ins.ca/publications/greater-influencegreater-responsibility-are-ingos-self-regulatory-accountability-standards-effective/.

Hatanaka, M. (2010). Certification, partnership, and morality in an organic shrimp network: Rethinking transnational alternative agrifood networks. *World Development, 38*(5), 706–716. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2009.11.001.

Haufler, V. (2001). A role for the private sector: Industry self-regulation in a global economy. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Haufler, V. (2003). New forms of governance: Certification regimes as social regulations of the global market. In E. Meidinger, & G. Oesten (Eds.), *Social and political dimensions of forest certification* (pp. 237–247). Kessel, Germany: Remagen-Oberwinter.

Henson, S., Masakure, O., & Cranfield, J. (2011). Do fresh produce exporters in Sub-Saharan Africa benefit from globalGAP certification? *World Development, 39*(2), 375–386. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2010.06.012.

Howard, P., & Jaffee, D. (2013). Tensions between firm size and sustainability goals: Fair trade coffee in the United States. *Sustainability, 5*(1), 72–89.

Hudock, A. (1999). NGOs and civil society: Democracy by proxy? Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Huybrechts, B., Mertens, S., & Rijpens, J. (2014). Explaining stakeholder involvement in social enterprise governance through resources and legitimacy. In J. Defourney, L. Hulgard, & V. Pestoff (Eds.), *Social enterprise and the third sector: Changing Europe* (pp. 157–175). Hoboken: Taylor & Francis.

ISEAL. (2015). Personal correspondence with staff. July 31, 2015.

Jaffee, D. (2012). Weak coffee: Certification and co-optation in the fair trade movement. *Social Problems, 59*(1), 94–116. http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/sp.2012.59.1.94.

Jaffee, D., & Howard, P. H. (2009). Corporate cooptation of organic and fair trade standards. *Agriculture and Human Values, 27*(4), 387–399. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10460-009-9231-8.

Kaldor, M. (2003). Global civil society: An answer to war? Oxford: Polity Press.

Keck, M., & Sikkink, K. (1998). Activists beyond borders. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Keohane, R. (2006). Accountability in world politics. *Scandinavian Political Studies, 29*(2), 75–87.

Kimeldorf, H., Rachel, M., Monica, P., & Ian, R. (2006). Consumers with a conscience: Will they pay more? *Contexts, 5*(1), 24–29.

Koppell, J. G. (2010). World rule: Accountability, legitimacy, and the design of global governance. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press.

Levy, D. (2008). Political contestation in global production networks. *Academy of Management Review, 33*(4), 943–963.

Locke, R. (2013). The promise and limits of private power: Promoting labor standards in a global economy. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Marx, A. (2014). Legitimacy, institutional design, and dispute settlement: The case of eco-certification systems. *Globalizations, 11*(3), 401–416.

Mason, C., & Doherty, B. (2015). A fair trade-off ? Paradoxes in the governance of fair-trade social enterprises. *Journal of Business Ethics, 11*(2), 451–469. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2511-2.

Mayer, F., & Gereffi, G. (2010). Regulation and economic globalization: Prospects and limits of private governance. *Business and Politics, 12*(3), 1–26. http://dx.doi.org/10.2202/1469-3569.1325.

McGrew, A., & Held, D. (2002). Introduction. In A. McGrew, & D. Held (Eds.), *Governing globalization: Power, authority and global governance*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Meidinger, E. (2011). Forest certification and democracy. *European Journal of Forest Research, 130*(3), 407–419. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10342-010-0426-8.

Merk, J. (2007). The private regulation of labour standards: The case of the apparel and footwear industries. In J. C. Graz, & A. Nolke (Eds.), *The limits of transnational private governance* (pp. 115–125). London: Routledge.

NAPP (Network of Asia and Pacific Producers) (2014). NAPP annual report Retrieved fromwww.fairtradenapp.org/wp.../2015/.../Annual-report-2014_12062015.pdf.

Nelson, V., & Tallontire, A. (2014). Battlefields of ideas: Changing narratives and power dynamics in private standards in global agricultural value chains. *Agriculture and Human Values, 31*(3), 481–497. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10460-014-9512-8.

Nikoloyuk, J. (2009). Sustainability partnerships in agro-commodity chains a model of partnership development in the tea, palm oil and soy sectors. Utrecht, The Netherlands: Utrecht-Nijmegen Programme on Partnerships.

Nye, J. S. (2001). Globalization's democratic deficit: How to make democratic deficit international institutions more accountable. *Foreign Affairs, 80*(4), 2–6.

O'Rourke, D. (2003). Outsourcing regulation: Analyzing nongovernmental systems of labor standards and monitoring. *The Policy Studies Journal, 31*(1), 1–29.

O'Rourke, D. (2006). Multi-stakeholder regulation: Privatizing or socializing global labor standards? *World Development, 34*(5), 899–918. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2005.04.020.

Peel, M. (1998). Trusting disadvantaged citizens. In V. Braithwaite, & M. Levi (Eds.), *Trust and governance* (pp. 315–342). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (1978). The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective. New York: Harper and Row.

Potts, J., Lynch, M., Wilkings, A., Huppe, G., Cunningham, M., & Voora, V. (2014). The state of sustainability initiatives review 2014: Standards and the green economy. Winnipeg/London: International

Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)/International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

Potts, J. (2014). Forward. In J. Potts, M. Lynch, A. Wilkings, G. Huppe, M. Cunningham, & V. Voora (Eds.), *The state of sustainability initiatives review 2014*. Winnipeg/London: International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)/International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

Raynolds, L. T., & Bennett, E. A. (Eds.) (2015). *The handbook of research on fair trade*. London: Edward Elgar.

Raynolds, L. T., Murray, D., & Heller, A. (2007). Regulating sustainability in the coffee sector: A comparative analysis of third-party environmental and social certification initiatives. *Agriculture and Human Values, 24*(2), 147–163. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10460-006-9047-8.

Reich, R. (2007). Supercapitalism: The transformation of business, democracy and everyday life. New York: Knopf.

Reinicke, W., & Deng, F. (2000). Critical choices the United Nations, networks, and the future of global governance. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.

Renard, M.-C., & Loconto, A. (2012). Competing logics in the further standardization of fair trade: ISEAL and the Símbolo de Pequeños Productores. *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food, 20*(1), 491–508.

Renard, M.-C. (2015). Fair trade for small farmer cooperatives in Latin America. In L. T. Raynolds, & E. A. Bennett (Eds.), *The handbook of research on fair trade* (pp. 475–490). London: Edward Elgar.

Risse, T. (2002). Transnational actors and world politics. In B. A. Carlsnaes, W. Risse, & T. Simmons (Eds.), *The handbook of international relations* (pp. 255–274). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rochlin, S., Zadek, S., & Forstater, M. (2008). *Governing collaboration: making partnerships accountable for delivering development*. *Health policy* (Vol. 90). Amsterdam: The Netherlands. Retrieved from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19271395.

Ruggie, J. G. (2013). Just business: Multinational corporations and human rights. New York: WW Norton & Company.

Sabel, C., O'Rourke, D., & Fung, A. (2000). *Ratcheting labor standards: Regulation for continuous improvement in the global workplace*. *Social protection discussion paper series*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

Sabel, C., & Zeitlin, J. (1997). *World of possibilities: Flexibility and mass production in western industrialization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sagafi-nejad, T. (2008). *The UN and transnational corporations: From code of conduct to global compact*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Salmen, L. (1992). *Reducing poverty: An institutional perspective*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

SCAA (Specialty Coffee Association of America), (2010). Sustainable coffee certifications: A comparison matrix Retrieved from http://scaa.org/?page=cert_codes.

Schepers, D. H. (2010). Challenges to legitimacy at the forest stewardship council. *Journal of Business Ethics, 92*(2), 279–290. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10551-009-0154-5.

Schmidt, V. A. (1995). The new world order, incorporated: The rise of business and the decline of the nation state. *Daedalus, 124*(2), 75–106.

Schouten, G., & Glasbergen, P. (2012). Private multi-stakeholder governance in the agricultural market place. An analysis of legitimization processes of the roundtables on sustainable palm oil and responsible soy. *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review, 15* (Special Issue B), 63–88.

Sending, O. J., & Neumann, I. B. (2006). Governance to governmentality: Analyzing NGOs, states, and power. *International Studies Quarterly, 50*(4), 651–672.

Sexsmith, K., & Potts, J. (2009). Voluntary sustainability standards and value chain governance: How sustainability standards affect the distribution of decision-making power in global value chains. *International Institute for Sustainable Development*.

Sheridan, M. (2012). Fair trade and governance, Revisited Catholic Relief Services "Coffeelands" Blog. Retrieved from http://coffeelands.crs.org/2012/10/fair-trade-and-governance-revisited/.

Slaughter, S. (2012). The prospects of deliberative global governance in the G20: Legitimacy, accountability, and public contestation. *Review of International Studies, 39*(1), 1–20. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0260210512000058.

Stevis, D. (2010). International framework agreements and global social dialogue: Parameters and prospects. *International Labor Organization employment working paper no. 47*. Geneva.

Strange, S. (1996). *The retreat of the state*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Suiseeya, K. R. M., & Caplow, S. (2013). In pursuit of procedural justice: Lessons from an analysis of 56 forest carbon project designs. *Global Environmental Change, 23*(5), 968–979.

Sutton, S. (2013). Fairtrade governance and producer voices: Stronger or silent? *Social Enterprise Journal, 9*(1), 73–87.

Tandon, R. (1996). Board games: Governance and accountability in NGOs. In M. Edwards, & D. Hulme (Eds.), *Beyond the magic bullet: NGO performance and accountability in the post cold war world* (pp. 53–63). London: Earthscan Publications.

Taylor, P. L. (2005). In the market but not of it: Fair trade coffee and forest stewardship council certification as market-based social change. *World Development, 33*(1), 129–147. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2004.07.007.

Taylor, H. (2015). Who is the world's biggest employer? World Economic Forum Agenda, 17 June. Retrieved from https://agenda.weforum.org/2015/06/worlds-10-biggest-employers/.

Tran, N., Bailey, C., Wilson, N., & Phillips, M. (2013). Governance of global value chains in response to food safety and certification standards: The case of shrimp from Vietnam. *World Development, 45*, 325–336. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2013.01.025.

UN (United Nations) (1948). The universal declaration of human rights Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/.

UN (United Nations) (1992). United Nations Conference on Environment & Development Agenda 21 Rio de Janerio, Brazil, 3–14 June 1992. Retrieved from http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf.

van der Ven, H. (2015). Correlates of rigorous and credible transnational governance: A cross-sectoral analysis of best practice compliance in eco-labeling. *Regulation & Governance, 9*, 276–293. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/rego.12092.

Wong, W. (2012). *Internal affairs: How the structure of NGOs transforms human rights*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.