

(p. 1). This highlights how “science” functions as a contested honorific term at the heart of the agency mandate. The lingering question is how Demortain’s analytical tools reflect on the genuine justificatory force of the regulatory frameworks. Or to use the book’s terminology: How do “decisionistic practices” behind a “bureaucratic screen” serve a science-based vocation?

Perhaps this indicates the book’s potential to engage political theorists of a more normative bent. It can certainly be appreciated as an empirical contribution to the bigger project of understanding the prospects of science-based democracy as an alternative to both careless populism and elitist technocracy. The first step is renouncing the possibility of fully apolitical expertise, the next step is to consider the legitimate place for political values in regulatory science. This book helps complete the first step and arguably gestures a direction for the next.

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Selling sustainability short? The private governance of labor and the environment in the coffee sector

Janina Grabs

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Do sustainability certifications contribute to social justice and environmental protection? *Selling Sustainability Short* is a groundbreaking work that draws on extant research to introduce a comprehensive, novel theoretical framework for answering this question. It also offers a compelling response, based on original, rigorous multimethod research in the coffee sector. Grabs argues that the effectiveness of “fair trade” and “eco labels” depends on their ability to offer financial incentives for radical shifts toward deep ecology and social justice. Unfortunately, certifications rarely succeed in internalizing the true costs of production in this way. Certifications could become more effective, Grabs argues, if multiple stakeholder groups implemented expensive and extensive reforms. But such deep transformation may be unrealistic and inefficient. *Selling Sustainability Short* is required reading for students, scholars, CEOs, and certification organizations alike.

1 | CERTIFICATIONS AND GLOBAL ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE

In the 1990s, as the most recent era of globalization began to unfold, labor, and environmental activists fought unsuccessfully to establish a sustainable and equitable global economic order. In the face of defeat, many of these activists turned to the private sector, pressuring companies to voluntarily adopt nonstate regulations and consumers to reward them (Boström et al., 2019).

In her book *Selling Sustainability Short* Janina Grabs asks: does this approach work? If so, how can we know? Grabs studies “eco-labels” and “fair trade”—what academics call transnational market-driven regulatory governance, and I refer to here as “certifications.” Certifications are typically developed by nongovernmental organizations governed by companies with some input from civil society (Bennett, 2017). Factories or farms may adopt standards (e.g., banning child labor), hire auditors to verify compliance, and then sell “certified” products. Examples include the Forest Stewardship Council as well as the Rainforest Alliance. Today, certifications are a US\$15–80 billion industry that extends to many products across the globe (Multi Stakeholder Initiative [MSI] Integrity, 2020).

The question of whether certifications “work” is a matter of survival for many of the millions of workers whose livelihoods are shaped by them. Although scholars have assessed their impact in the past (e.g., MSI Integrity, 2020), differences and/or deficiencies in their theoretical frameworks and empirical methodologies make it challenging to aggregate results (Bennett, 2021). This is precisely why Grabs' book is so important. By offering a rigorous approach to assessing certifications, Grabs makes one of the most important contributions to the field since initial theorizing in the early 2000s (e.g., Hall & Biersteker, 2002). She also demonstrates the analytic power of her framework by applying it to seven certifications in the coffee sector, drawing upon this analysis to offer a jarring conclusion about the role of certifications in supply chain governance.

2 | THE GRABS FRAMEWORK

The Grabs Framework is a microinstitutional rational choice approach, which assumes individuals respond to incentives presented by institutions (Kiser & Ostrom, 2000). It brings together three bodies of scholarship in one framework of analysis.

First, the Grabs Framework develops a concept of “effectiveness” that includes environmental conservation, climate change adaptation, and safe/fair working conditions—outcomes often studied individually. Certifications are considered “effective” when they provide economic premiums that compensate for the increased costs of production, diminished yields, and compromised profits that accompany transitions to sustainable production. Certifications are “ineffective” when simply intensifying environmental production and enforcing basic labor laws. This reflects the crucial (and often overlooked) empirical reality that diluted standards typically ignore social justice goals (Berliner et al., 2015). Second, the Grabs Framework examines five institutional features suggested to influence outcomes: economic goals, implementation strategy, standards content, enforcement, and relationship to other standards. Each is assessed by its “depth” (how stringent it is) and “breadth” (how much it aims to cover) (van der Ven, 2019). Third, it attends to how certifications interact with rules, norms, and market forces, including support for adopting certifications, fit with local marketing, and cohesion with local laws (Bartley, 2018). By bringing disparate insights together, Grabs has developed what is likely to emerge as the gold standard for evaluating whether certifications facilitate sustainable outcomes.

3 | EFFECTIVENESS IN THE COFFEE SECTOR

Grabs uses qualitative and econometric methods to analyze data collected through participant observation, 60 interviews, and a survey of 1900 farmers. With clear writing and

illustrative examples from field notes, Grabs argues that certifications are, largely, ineffective. Although some certifications initially enforced rigorous standards and paid the costs of compliance, as they increased quality requirements and entered larger markets, both began to erode. As volumes of certified product increased, prices fell, and some farmers were forced to sell at conventional prices. Although these results are not surprising (Bacon et al., 2008; Jaffee, 2007; Lyon, 2011), the research-informed framework and reliable data make this a landmark study.

Which institutional features are likely to generate better outcomes? Grabs' findings highlight the importance of supportive local institutions; price premiums; clear, universal compliance rules (as opposed to flexible, graduated arrangements); and strict auditor policies. She also finds local public and private institutions have strong impacts on farmers' behaviors, that certifications struggle to reinforce public regulation, and sectors with low institutional capacity and strong private actors may benefit most. These findings, similarly, are unsurprising yet improve credibility of extant research (Auld, 2014; Bartley, 2018).

4 | CERTIFICATIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY

The coffee market is just one more example of the practice of certifications as a whole: “a cautionary tale of good intentions gone awry...” (p. 16). Instead of covering the true costs of deeply sustainable production (p. 256), certifications have converged on a strategy of producing “sustainable” goods at “affordable consumer prices” (p. 262). Environmentally, this shifts farmers away from deep ecological benefits. Socially, it sidelines even the most basic labor standards. Grabs argues that this cheap sustainability marks the certification movement's shift away from its original redistributive objectives (p. 49).

5 | REPAIR OR REJECT?

Clearly, something needs to change: “If all the institutions and governance arrangements we study do not lead us to greater environmental protection and social equity, what is the point?” (pp. 266). Certifications must provide clear behavioral rules, capacity building, demand, financial incentives, price floors, and inclusive governance. Social movement groups must help producers to leverage opportunities through capacity building. And buyers should reward effective programs with contracts and public praise.

But are these reforms realistic? Grabs implies perhaps not. She suggests ethical consumers might forgo certifications and instead approach common commodities as they would luxury goods—paying higher prices for less volume. This would certainly improve outcomes, but how would consumers be assured that inflated prices reflect internalized costs of production? This is exactly the challenge that ignited the “certification revolution” in the first place (Conroy, 2007; Reynolds & Bennett, 2015).

Grabs has produced a groundbreaking manuscript with sobering implications. Future research should examine: Are reforms realistic? Is replacement recommended? Or should we expect certifications to continue *Selling Sustainability Short*?

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Polarized and demobilized: Legacies of authoritarianism in Palestine

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A growing literature in comparative politics has sought to understand the effects of repression on a wide range of societal outcomes including social cohesion, ideological polarization, and political identity. These arguments emphasize the ways repressed citizens relate to each other