Book Reviews

Dauvergne, Peter, and Jane Lister. 2013. *Eco-Business: A Big-Brand Takeover of Sustainability.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Reviewed by Stephen E. Van Holde
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As Peter Dauvergne and Jane Lister's important new book makes clear, business is the new "green." But while "eco-businesses" may share many interests with environmentalists, in the end even the greenest businesses are "fundamentally aiming for the sustainability of big business, not… of people and the planet" (p. 2). When contemplating the merger of business and sustainability, we should proceed with caution.

Strangely, many environmentalists don't see it that way. Disillusioned with half-hearted "commitments" to sustainability, more and more of them have begun abandoning states and international organizations for the private sector. In the hope of jump-starting the stalled movement for sustainability, non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—including the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), the Sierra Club, and Greenpeace—have allied themselves with corporations such as Nike, Starbucks, Procter & Gamble, and Walmart. While such alliances may seem surprising, environmental strategists increasingly see them as preferable to working with posturing or politicized states and international organizations. Moreover, the urgency of the problems we face demands pragmatism. As one NGO leader puts it, "right now, we need every weapon in our armory to deal with the challenges we're facing… we don't have time to get moral about this and question the integrity of using brands…." (quoted on p. 160).

And, as boosters in the environmental community point out, working with the private sector has advantages. Money, for one: the big brands are well heeled and ready to share their wealth with like-minded NGOs. In 2010, the WWF reaped about $20 million by partnering with Coca-Cola. Power, for another: by partnering with Walmart, EDF gets the opportunity to help shape the sustainability policies of a company with over 2 million employees, 100,000 suppliers, and annual sales of almost half a trillion dollars. As one environmentalist observes, "We could spend 50 years lobbying 75 national governments to change the regulatory framework for the way… commodities are grown and produced. Or these folks at Coke could make a [sustainability] decision… and the whole global supply chain changes overnight" (quoted on pp. 19–20). Compared to states and international organizations, businesses have an unparalleled command over resources, suppliers, commodity chains, and consumers that gives them the nimbleness, flexibility, and reach necessary to rapidly effect environmental reforms.

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It's an appealing deal for businesses as well. By partnering with NGOs and retooling their sourcing, production, marketing, distribution, and public relations processes, they can reap a variety of benefits, from increased legitimacy and credibility with environmentalists, consumers, and the wider public, to real and sometimes spectacular gains in resource and energy costs, sales, and market share. Green business turns out to be good business, as company after company finds it can cut costs by reducing resources, energy, toxics, materials, and packaging and by forcing its own suppliers to do the same. And green business is also *safer* business, as increased control over supply chains not only cuts costs but reduces risk, liability, and the chance of exposure as an "environmental villain"—all important considerations in an increasingly linked and litigious world.

So what's not to like? If the big brands are increasingly greening their products and production processes, and getting their own sources and suppliers to do the same, isn't this real and meaningful progress towards sustainability? And if they have both the means and the motivation to effect such change rapidly, thoroughly, and profoundly, why not let them? Considering the evident failure of states and international organizations to produce, implement or enforce any effective sustainability policies, why not just turn the whole business over to business?

This approach entails real risks, as Dauvergne and Lister rightly stress. The notion of sustainable business involves a fundamental contradiction, as even the greenest businesses are and must be driven by the need to sell *more*. And, until we move to cradle-to-cradle economies and ecologies, such sales will and must threaten real sustainability, since they require resources and energy and produce waste. Worse, by convincing us that we're "buying green," eco-businesses can help us fool ourselves into thinking the sustainability challenge has been met. Of course, eco-business practices can also produce desirable social and environmental effects, as Big Brands monitor and police their suppliers' sourcing methods and labor practices, push for more efficient use of materials and energy, and insist on responsible waste disposal. In the end, however, corporations' commitment to environmental sustainability is and must be conditional on their continued financial success.

But it is the political consequences of eco-business that most trouble Dauvergne and Lister. And it is here that the book makes its most important contribution to our understanding of how sustainability practices are changing today. As states and international institutions have failed to formulate and implement effective sustainability policies, corporations are stepping in to do just that, "setting rules, establishing monitoring and reporting mechanisms, and punishing non-compliers" (p. 16). They are, in a very real sense, governing, and over an ever-broader area, as they combine to form consortia that consult and co-regulate with states and international organizations. Equally worrying, such governance has allowed them to define sustainability in ways that best accord with their own interests. How that "branded sustainability" will shape global environmental governance is still unclear. But as Dauvergne and Lister correctly insist, we should not assume that the Big Brands will ever put real sustainability first. Their business *is* business, after all. It would be a mistake to blithely hand over our search for sustainability to them. *Caveat emptor.*

Gallagher, Kelly Sims. 2014. *The Globalization of Clean Energy Technology: Lessons from China.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Reviewed by Erika Weinthal
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When it comes to tackling climate change, no other country than the United States garners as much attention as China. A rapid increase in energy consumption in China has coincided with growing economic prosperity. China is not only the world's largest consumer of energy but also its largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions.

Kelly Sims Gallagher's book seeks to debunk this image of China as an environmental laggard. She has written an upbeat and optimistic book about the steps China has taken to build a more sustainable economy by moving away from a resource-intensive economy to a more diversified one. Through the globalization of cleaner energy technologies—defined as "more efficient, renewable, and low-carbon energy technologies" (p. 15)—China is transforming its energy sector, developing new industries, and reducing its carbon intensity.

Gallagher offers a compelling argument about the mechanisms through which China has become a world leader in the development and deployment of cleaner energy technologies. She puts forth a theory about the barriers and incentives that explain the international transfer of cleaner energy technologies, highlighting the importance of domestic government policy, intellectual property, and available financing. At times the argument is repetitive, owing to the book's organization around three hypotheses concerning barriers to the international transfer of technology. However, the main crux of the book comes through clearly: "There are no insurmountable barriers to the global diffusion of cleaner energy technologies" (p. 176). Gallagher demonstrates the ease of accessing capital in China to support cleaner energy industries; while the infringement of clean energy intellectual property is a concern, it is not a serious impediment. In fact, she finds that since the late 2000s, the Chinese government has been bolstering its intellectual property regime. Most importantly, China has successfully developed and deployed cleaner energy technologies mainly because of Chinese government incentives for creating market demand, especially through market formation policies.

The book's strength rests with its rich and well-researched cases. Importantly, Gallagher demonstrates through case studies that technology transfers no longer flow only North to South (whereby an advanced industrialized