

Book Reviews

Auld, Graeme. 2014. *Constructing Private Governance: The Rise and Evolution of Forest, Coffee, and Fisheries Certification*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Reviewed by Andrea M. Collins
University of Waterloo

See that fair-trade sticker on your coffee? That dolphin-safe emblem on your tuna can? The certificate of sustainability that comes with your new wooden furniture? Plenty of consumers have, too, and in recent years, the environmentally and socially conscious shopper has become a fixture of retail in North America and Europe. Many of us seek out ethical and environmentally sustainable products, and are willing to pay a premium for such products. But where do those labels come from? What drives their creation and evolution? And who decides the scope of certification?

Graeme Auld's book, *Constructing Private Governance*, works toward a more complete understanding of private certification and its place in contemporary discussions of global governance. Situated within the emerging literature on private governance and environmental politics, Auld impressively explains why some certification programs have organized faster than others and accounts for variation in certification schemes across industries. By uncovering the contested political histories of private certifications, Auld begins building a theory of private governance that explains why and how certain types of certification emerge. He traces the histories of certification across three industries—forestry, coffee, and fisheries—and tests ten hypotheses about market and political structures and the design and reproduction of certification programs.

Auld's hypotheses are built upon a brief but accessible review of path dependence literatures in both economics and political science. Conventional approaches in both fields are found to be ill-equipped to deepen our understanding of the new challenges of private governance: "Certification programs occupy the middle ground between political authority and market exchange; they give more options for exit than the former and more options for voice than the latter" (p. 221). Indeed, though many scholars of political science have shifted to analyzing private governance as a global phenomenon, understanding the actions and decisions of private firms and NGOs requires a broader understanding of both market and political structures and the options available to various actors.

Auld thus begins his analysis of each industry from an understanding of its respective market and political structures, specifying how barriers to entry

and market concentration might favor either local or global certification. From there, he maps the initiation of certification programs and how early preferences can dictate later consolidation or fragmentation. Each study provides an in-depth history of private certification experiences in the industry. Auld convincingly demonstrates the effects of market demand for certification, its policy scope, and the degree of inclusiveness in certification programs. Indeed, he succeeds in showing how initial conditions and early decisions are important, as are the “mechanisms of reproduction and change” (pp. 51–52) that follow.

The book has many strengths. It makes a significant contribution to the literature on private governance, illustrating the many elements shaping the emergence of these certifications and the various actors and interests involved. Auld’s review of the path dependence literature is also clear and insightful. Indeed, a strong case is made for political scientists and economists to be in closer conversation with each other. Auld adroitly notes how important it is to look at several factors in relation to the broader structures and dynamics at work, and demonstrates the limits of trying to isolate any single element to explain the complex nature of private governance. In addition, the treatment of each industry and its certification programs is comprehensive. Each industry is analyzed over the course of two chapters, providing empirical depth that scholars of private governance and environmental politics will find useful.

The weaknesses of the book are mostly matters of style. At times, the histories of certification are a bit cumbersome. Though the complicated story of coffee certification effectively contrasts with more streamlined certifications, such as in the forestry sector, it may be worthy of a book of its own. And while the exercise of testing hypotheses highlights the complexity of the issues at hand and ties the analysis back to the book’s theoretical foundations, the social science methodology may be inaccessible to nonacademic audiences. Moreover, in pursuing the testing of hypotheses, Auld must sacrifice broader attention to the social and environmental issues in these industries and the effectiveness of private certifications. This is not to say that he pays no attention to these issues, but in studying the emergence of certifications, his attention is focused only on those issues identified and addressed by private governance certifications.

That said, there is much to learn from these detailed histories of certification. Of particular interest are instances of conflict and collaboration between firms and NGOs, as well as the opportunities afforded by the presence or absence of intergovernmental forums. In identifying these points of conflict, Auld hints at several issues that simmer just below the surface and suggest future courses of research. Questions about industry power, influence, and money—particularly, who can initiate private governance schemes and control them—emerge from the details. Moreover, Auld illustrates how and why some firms and NGOs might branch off and develop alternative certifications—some noble and others self-serving. In concluding, Auld briefly highlights some of these elements that require further study, and unfortunately his overview ends too soon. Nonetheless,

this book makes important contributions to our understanding of private governance and uncovers the complex relationships at work therein.

Duit, Andreas, ed. 2014. *State and Environment: The Comparative Study of Environmental Governance*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Reviewed by *Javiera Barandiaran*
University of California, Santa Barbara

The role of the state in public life has been a highly contested issue. During the 20th century, states took on many responsibilities, from assuring access to education to policing workers' fair compensation. Starting in the 1970s, however, the idea that the state should play a large role in public life was challenged, and small government, market mechanisms, and deregulation became guiding principles across many states. Against this history, environmental policies and politics seem to be an exception: since the 1970s the role of the state in regulating the environment has exploded. The state has not always been effective, nor has it acted alone on environmental problems, but it has been central to regulating environmental life. *State and Environment*, edited by Andreas Duit and with work from nineteen contributors, explores these dynamics. The book "bring[s] the state back into environmental governance" (p. 3), after years of scholarly neglect. The ten essays in the book achieve this goal by comparing across countries, while the introduction and conclusion develop a comparison between the emergence of the welfare state and the (hopefully) emerging ecostate.

The strengths of *State and Environment* lie in its methodological and conceptual variety as well as its accessibility. Unlike other edited volumes that test one framework through multiple single-country case studies, Duit's book explores a number of issues in cross-cutting ways to identify patterns in how societies are responding to global environmental change. Together, the essays demonstrate that environmental governance has improved overall but remains in flux. New environmental policy leaders are emerging and falling behind all the time, norms around sustainability and citizenship are evolving, and the state is constantly experimenting with new policies in new ways. State capacity is important to how environmental policies perform in forestry, fisheries, and conservation. How to measure environmental performance is an open debate, full of interesting, challenging questions regarding what makes a good indicator, as the volume demonstrates. Methodologically, the book provides students with examples of how game theory, survey data, case studies, or satellite images can be used in studies of comparative environmental politics.

Perhaps the most interesting conceptual contribution of the volume is the comparison between the welfare state and the possible emergence of an ecostate. Building on the research collected in the book, Duit argues that, although the ecostate remains a hypothetical possibility, the concept might be useful for integrating