

# Book Reviews

Andonova, Liliana B. 2017. *Governance Entrepreneurs: International Organizations and the Rise of Global Public-Private Partnerships*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reviewed by Thomas Hickmann  
University of Potsdam

Global partnerships between public and private actors have become a key feature of contemporary international governance and politics. Such partnerships aim at tackling a wide array of pressing problems, among them infectious and non-infectious diseases, human rights abuses, environmental degradation, social inequality, and child mortality. They differ tremendously with regard to their organizational character, proclaimed goals, and participation by the public and private spheres. In *Governance Entrepreneurs: International Organizations and the Rise of Global Public-Private Partnerships*, Liliana Andonova examines the recent growth of global partnerships across different policy domains. Her main focus is on the political agency behind partnership governance and the underlying shift from the traditional structure of the multilateral system towards the increasingly collaborative nature of global policy-making. In particular, she asks: “[W]ho are the entrepreneurs of such change, what are their motivations, and what kinds of political conditions must they put in place to convene new mechanisms of governance?” (p. 26).

Andonova puts forward the argument that international organizations, together with a number of large donor countries, have become the driving force behind this institutional change, leading to a new quality of collaboration between governmental bodies, civil society groups, private companies, and foundations. While acknowledging the salient role of non-state actors in transnational networks, Andonova contends that “public actors and particularly IOs and governance finance have remained at the core of new partnership governance” (p. 12). According to her, the active role and function of international organizations as governance entrepreneurs and enablers of change are astonishing and stand in contradiction to traditional understandings of international politics as an arena exclusively dominated by nation-states and their central governments. Andonova’s book joins the wave of studies in the field of global politics that emphasize the increasing autonomy, capacity, and influence of international public agencies, including international organizations, specialized intergovernmental bodies and programs, as well as relatively small secretariats of multilateral agreements.

Andonova’s claims about the activist role of international organizations, and the engagement of state and non-state actors into collaborative partnerships,

*Global Environmental Politics* 19:2, May 2019  
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are grounded in a theory of dynamic institutional change. This theory builds on the principal-agent model, which perceives international organizations as agents and nation-states as principals, but adds a dynamic element. In particular, Andonova argues that in addition to the “clear vertical hierarchy of authority and delegation of variable autonomy from states to international agencies, it is also important to recognize the opportunities for coalition building horizontally between agents and principals on the one hand and external constituencies on the other” (pp. 193–194). In other words, she highlights the contextual embeddedness of the relations between international organizations and nation-states, and adopts a more encompassing perspective that does not only take formalized delegated authority into account. Instead, she also looks at the brokering role of international organizations in relation to individual member states and the broader institutional environment comprising various non-state actors.

Andonova formulates five propositions that emphasize different conditions for international agencies to engage with states and non-state actors in collaborative partnerships. They range from structural features of the international system and diverging state preferences, to organizational turbulence in form of budgetary constraints and legitimacy pressures, as well as institutional expertise and the salience of transnational actors and epistemic networks in different policy areas. From this set of propositions, Andonova conducts a comparative empirical analysis of the growth of global partnerships over time and across institutional domains. She focuses on the UN Secretariat, UNEP, the World Bank, UNICEF, and the WHO, and investigates their particular entrepreneurial role in partnership governance and related outcomes. The variation across these international agencies and the diversity of analyzed partnerships allow for a profound evaluation of the derived propositions. In the empirical analysis, Andonova uses a mixed-methods approach and draws on the Global Partnerships Database, which is briefly explained in the annex to the book, as well as primary and secondary source analyses, and a series of expert interviews.

All individual case studies offer rich empirical insights how international agencies have assumed different entrepreneurial roles to foster global partnerships that engage states and non-state actors in a policy dialogue. International organizations, specialized UN bodies and programs, as well as secretariats, act as drivers of the recent expansion of partnership governance in world politics. Andonova concludes that the increasingly collaborative character of global policy-making is “at least partially endogenous to the multilateral system” (p. 193). Her findings challenge conventional accounts of international politics that attribute only limited leeway to international agencies. At the same time, the case studies question assumptions on the privatization of global governance, as they stress the key role of international public institutions in shaping global partnerships.

Despite the rich empirical evidence from numerous case studies, Andonova does not look closely at the inner workings of international agencies. She treats international organizations synonymously with bureaucracies and offers no deeper insights into the motives of the staff members of international agencies to

collaborate with state and non-state actors. To what extent are the outreach activities of international agencies solely driven by some executive leaders? Are they instead sometimes rather the result of initiatives and social networks at lower bureaucratic levels? Such questions remain unanswered. Nevertheless, Andonova presents a theoretically well-informed comparative analysis of the emergence and spread of global public-private partnerships. Her book convincingly shows that the rise of partnership governance cannot be explained by structural factors alone, but has been substantially promoted by international public agencies.

Bullock, Graeme. 2017. *Green Grades: Can Information Save the Earth?* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

*Reviewed by Tim Bartley*  
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What can be learned from examining hundreds of eco-labels and environmental ratings? Quite a lot, it turns out, though probably not enough to answer the question in this book's subtitle. *Green Grades* provides an "information realist" account of environmental claims about products and companies, with a particular emphasis on how these square with the values of conscientious consumers and citizens. As a scholar of environmental policy and co-founder of the rating body GoodGuide, Graeme Bullock is especially attentive to the content of green grades, the transparency of rating procedures, and the ways in which a higher-quality "information marketplace" could be crafted.

At the core of the book is a database of 245 labels and ratings focused on the environmental implications of products and companies. These include multi-stakeholder initiatives like the Forest Stewardship Council, government-sponsored eco-labels like Energy Star, company- and industry-sponsored labels for food and household products, and various ratings and scorecards issued by NGOs. Rather than study a few cases in detail, as much of the prior research has done, Bullock examines this larger set of cases to show what is most and least common when it comes to issues covered (e.g., pollution, biodiversity, etc.), foci of claims (e.g., products or companies), sponsors (e.g., public, private, or civil society), signals of credibility (e.g., independence and expertise), transparency, and forms of information provided (e.g., positive or negative; certification, rating, or ranking). These attributes are mostly examined individually in different parts of the book, generating a series of descriptions but few attempts to make sense of relationships between variables or clustering of attributes.

Bullock makes sense of the findings mainly by comparing the positions of what he calls "information optimists," "information pessimists," and "information realists." Optimists tend to believe in the power of information to perfect markets, empower advocates, and create more objective bases for choice. Pessimists fear that green grades easily shade into greenwashing, "shallow transparency," and

the legitimization of overconsumption. In between, Bullock's realist position recognizes wide variation in the quality of information provided and argues that "sunlight" can be a useful though not complete disinfectant, especially to the extent that it is delivered in prominent and intelligible ways, clarifies the procedures behind particular claims, and speaks to public benefits that consumers and citizens value. The realist position does not boil down to a simple set of guidelines, but Bullock convincingly shows that pessimists and optimists are both seeing only part of the picture.

Several striking findings and insightful tips emerge from Bullock's analysis. For instance, most labels and ratings focus on products and (to a somewhat lesser degree) companies as a whole, but only 16 percent cover the production facilities where manufacturing or harvesting occur. Roughly 13 percent of labels and ratings make only vague claims of greenness, and nearly half make no reference to independence or expertise. Nearly 30 percent do signal credibility by referring to external generation or verification of data, but the meanings of "third party" verification can vary significantly—leading Bullock to a useful recommendation about standardizing these definitions. Roughly 40 percent of labels and ratings provide only simple and positive information (such as a seal of approval), while almost none provide only negative information (such as a list of worst offenders). This is perhaps not surprising, given that many initiatives rely on voluntary participation of companies, though another 40 percent of cases provide a mix of positive and negative information. To improve the power of information, Bullock ultimately argues for some combination of modest "choice editing" that excludes the worst product options, pathways for effective information strategies to be incorporated into public policy, and a more consolidated information marketplace that weeds out the weakest claims.

Other parts of the book are less satisfying. Rather than trying to consider the actual validity or reliability of particular labels or ratings, Bullock simply looks for whether their websites mention validity or reliability. A chapter based on interviews with rating/certification practitioners, companies in the electronics industry, and consumers does highlight some important advances in green electronics, but it also has a vague account of "perceived effectiveness" that needs, at the very least, to be connected to particular labels or ratings.

Bullock is a realist when it comes to acknowledging high- and low-quality information, but he could be characterized as an optimist when it comes to consumer behavior. Although he finds that many ratings and labels (nearly half) emphasize private benefits like health and cost-savings, he argues that consumers actually hold a range of "self-transcendent" values that can act separately or along with "self-enhancement" values to promote environmentally beneficial behaviors. He draws on psychological theories of values and survey research to make this point, but he pays less attention to experimental evidence about consumer behavior or data on sales of products with labels emphasizing private or public benefits. There is a danger that Bullock's vision of a well-functioning information marketplace is too reliant on a values-driven account of consumer

behavior that downplays self-interest, social status, and situational influences. Notably, after GoodGuide (which Bullock co-founded) was sold to Underwriters Laboratories in 2012, the organization dropped its ratings of environmental impacts and labor conditions to focus exclusively on consumer health.

Despite these criticisms, *Green Grades* should certainly be read by scholars and practitioners of information-based environmental governance. It provides useful critiques of optimists and pessimists alike, some thoughtful recommendations for stepwise improvement, and a systematic approach that reveals a highly varied world of ecolabels and ratings.

Toke, David. 2017. *China's Role in Reducing Carbon Emissions: The Stabilisation of Energy Consumption and the Deployment of Renewable Energy*. London: Routledge.

Reviewed by Rajiv Ranjan  
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A great challenge for China is attempting to convince the world that its intentions and plans are genuine. One such intention is reducing carbon emissions. No one denies that modern China is one of the largest carbon emitters in the world. China has begun to feel the heat of environmental problems and is earnestly designing and rolling out policies to check the deteriorating environment. But Western media, environmentalists, and academics all question whether its intentions are genuine.

David Toke investigates the intentions and realities of China's role in reducing carbon emissions. He cautions that one shouldn't belittle China's efforts in this war against environmental pollution simply because Beijing follows a different model of government. He bases his arguments around ecological modernization (EM) theory, arguing that Beijing's efforts to reduce carbon emissions go hand in hand "with 'core' EM objectives and methods, including moving away from a 'productionist' economy and towards a more service-oriented one, and also in prioritizing technological means of achieving carbon abatement through renewable energy deployment" (p. 7). Toke refutes the allegations that EM is a top-down imposition of technology. He thinks that technological changes must be supported by requisite behavioral changes, in which people demand change and the political process and market support technological change.

For Toke, China's conditions resemble those of some European countries than more than those of the United States. He blames the productionist model of development, as well as the unsustainable nature of economic growth itself, for ecological disaster. He asserts that China is recalibrating its developmental drive and rebalancing its economy, even if doing so slows down the growth rate.

*China's Role in Reducing Carbon Emissions* busts three myths about China's environmental governance. First, Toke argues that the change in China to shift

towards more sustainability was triggered not primarily by the wisdom of its leadership, but rather by acceptance of pressures from its people. That includes the realization that the unsustainability of the building boom has created environmental near-havoc. By showing that pressure from people and civil society do influence the course of environmental policy in China, Toke contributes to the debate about the role of civil society in a communist state. He argues that a key aspect of ecological modernization is that the government has to negotiate with established policy networks of NGOs. At the same time he notes that environmental NGOs in China are dependent on state approval in order to participate in discussions about environmental or climate policy, and thus will be always be looked upon with suspicion.

Second, the book attempts to clarify China's carbon profile. According to statistics the author cites from Greenpeace and the United States' Energy Information Agency, China's carbon emissions may have levelled off or even fallen in 2014–15. Toke suggests that the current method of calculating carbon emissions by country ignores historical emissions, which are important because carbon dioxide is long-lasting in the atmosphere. Is an individual Chinese person any more or less responsible for carbon emissions than average US citizen? For Toke, carbon emissions must be calculated on a per capita basis, which would put China far behind the United States, Russia, and the UK. He warns, however, that this doesn't mean that China's share of carbon emissions should be ignored. He suggests that American politicians are worried that without limitations on China's emissions, Beijing could easily gain an economic edge over US businesses.

Third, Toke examines the changes in China's energy consumption portfolios. He suggests that China's investment in renewable energy is more than the combined total investment made by the United States and the EU, which will help China in its efforts to reduce carbon emissions by two-thirds or more by 2050, compared to 2015. Although coal accounted for 66 percent of China's primary energy consumption in 2013, coal constitutes a falling proportion of China's energy basket. Toke examines China's ambitious efforts in generating energy from wind, water, solar, and the ever-increasing share of nuclear energy, as well as growing use of electric cars. He argues that rather than differentiating between the amount of renewable energy used by state and private-sector companies, the competition between them to achieve a target for sustainable energy is key.

Toke applauds China for achieving two of the four criteria of ecological modernization that he outlines in the book: services are now its largest sector, and its non-fossil fuel energy profile has increased. Nevertheless, the restricted role of the market in economic governance hinders healthy competition to produce more efficient outcomes. In addition, career progression of officials largely depends on pursuing economic development rather than combating pollution. These conflicting roles and responsibilities of officials in environmental governance prevent China from fully achieving ecological modernization.

The book contains clear and concise arguments, and it is relevant reading for environmentalists, policymakers, and those in academia concerned with environment protection. Toke appreciates China's role in addressing environmental challenges and its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a way that will benefit humankind.