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SUSTAINABLY PERFORMED: RECONCILING GLOBAL VALUE CHAIN GOVERNANCE AND PERFORMATIVITY*

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ABSTRACT

Merging theories of performativity with Global Value Chains (GVC) analysis, I explore how standards are used within GVCs to govern interactions among actors and to perform a multiplicity of ‘sustainabilities.’ Specifically, this paper presents four case studies of certified tea production in Tanzania (i.e., the Ethical Tea Partnership, Fairtrade, Organic, and Rainforest Alliance) to reveal how visions of sustainability are enacted by different actors in each certified value chain. This analysis reveals that, while the Rainforest Alliance and Ethical Tea Partnership ‘sustainabilities’ are ‘generically’ performed, the Fairtrade and Organic ‘sustainabilities’ are ‘effective’ in enacting multiple versions of sustainability that have facilitated changes to practices in the tea value chain. This attention to the enactment of values in the practice of agrifood production allows for a more nuanced understanding of governance in value chains and suggests a way to shift discussions of GVC governance away from the primary focus on ‘drivenness’.

In 2005, Unilever (PG Tips and Lipton) began an initiative, starting in Kenya and Tanzania, to make its tea supply chain “sustainable” by 2015 (Unilever 2007). Unilever is the main buyer of black tea (*camellia sinensis*)¹ from Tanzania, it is a key player in the global consumer market buying 12 percent of the global black tea supply, and it is perceived to dominate the global tea trade (Bedford et al. 2002). The company’s sustainability will be achieved by sourcing only from tea gardens certified according to the Rainforest Alliance (RFA) standard for ‘sustainable agriculture’, which was extended to include tea in 2007. In 2010, Tetley, Twinings, and Taylors of Harrogate have also made similar commitments (Rainforest Alliance 2010a). However, the RFA standard is the fourth *sustainability* standard present in

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¹Black, green, white and oolong tea all come from the *camellia sinensis* plant. In this paper I use the generic ‘tea’ to refer to black tea. Herbal infusions and rooibos are not made from the *camellia sinensis* plant and therefore are not included in the discussion of tea. Reference to any other type of tea uses an identifying adjective.

the Tanzanian tea industry. The other three are Fairtrade,² Organic,³ and the Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP) and they have been certifying tea estates in Tanzania since 1989.

This multiplicity of sustainability standards has become quite common in several tropical commodity systems, most notably coffee and cocoa. Particularly when talking about these tropical commodities, the distance (both geographic and social) between consumption and production is so vast, understanding how producers and consumers are linked in these networks is important (Lockie and Kitto 2000). The literature suggests a need to consider the symbolic economy of food and the complex and relational nature of power as it is extended through social networks. This is particularly important when we are examining certified products where these products gain their value based on social and environmental concerns. Global Value Chains (GVC) analysis is an approach that responds to the challenges noted above as it attempts to follow a product from point of inception to point of consumption (Bair 2009; Friedland 1984; Gereffi, Humphrey, and Sturgeon 2005; Hopkins and Wallerstein 1986; Raikes, Jensen, and Ponte 2000). For example, the tea value chain has its roots in the colonial empires of China and then Britain. As such, en route from bush to cup, tea traverses numerous geographic and political boundaries. As found in other value chains, this requires a significant level of coordination and 'governance' of transactions (Giovannucci and Ponte 2005; Higgins and Lawrence 2005; Ponte and Gibbon 2005).

Social and environmental standards, such as the ETP, Fairtrade, Organic, and RFA standards, are increasingly being used by value chain actors to govern what practices are considered sustainable in their value chains. Specifically, each written standard codifies values of sustainability that are to govern practices in each GVC. For example, the ETP works "to make this picture transparent – to monitor living and working conditions on tea estates, with the aim of making sure that the tea you

²I differentiate between Fairtrade and fair trade throughout this paper. Fairtrade refers to the standard and organizations affiliated with the Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO), while fair trade refers to the concept and other groups not associated with FLO.

³In this paper I also differentiate between Organic and organic. The capitalized name refers specifically to the certified production while the lowercase word refers to the concept in general. The organic standard that is used in the Tanzanian tea sector is the EU Regulation (EC) N° 834/2007 and (EC) N° 889/2008 (former: (EEC) N° 2092/91). The two certified estates are certified by Ecocert and the Institute of Marketecology (IMO). However, the International Forum for Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM) norm serves as the unifying vision of organic across the national/regional organic regulations.

buy from the members of our Partnership has been produced in a socially responsible way” (ETP 2010a). Fairtrade focuses on “transparency, partnership and participation, representative democracy, and equal exchange” (FLO 2010a); while Organic agriculture is based on the principles of “health, ecology, fairness and care” (IFOAM 2010). Finally, the RFA has created its sustainable agriculture standards based on “economy, ecology and ethics” (Rainforest Alliance 2010b). These four standards systems set out to distinguish themselves, rhetorically and materially, into separate tea value chains based on their visions of sustainability.

While GVC analysis provides a useful rubric for tracing how value chain actors relate to one another, it has not been very successful at explaining how the values that serve as organizing concepts are involved in governing interactions. Performativity analysis, with its attention to justifications and enactments, is suggested as a way to address this shortcoming. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine the competitive market for sustainable tea by analyzing the extent to which each of these four standards networks effectively governs the notion of sustainability in their value chains. To achieve this I will explain how standards are used within GVCs to govern interactions between human and nonhuman actors and to perform a multiplicity of ‘sustainabilities’.

I present both theoretical and empirical evidence that will illustrate how attention to performativity can reveal the dynamics of relational governance in values-based commodity networks. I first explore the literature on governance in GVCs and then link this literature with the role of standards and notions of performativity that emerge from the Science, Technology, and Society (STS) literature. This section has two purposes; the first is to create the conceptual framework for the analysis, and the second is to illustrate how two bodies of literature emerging from different epistemological standpoints can be usefully combined to better capture notions of governance in commodity networks. This is then illustrated through a case study of four social and environmental standards networks working in the Tanzanian tea industry (i.e., ETP, Fairtrade, Organic, and RFA). Data were collected between 2008 and 2010 through document analysis of the four standards and secondary sources, semi-structured interviews (78), and focus groups (20) with actors in the four ‘sustainable’ tea value chains that extend from Tanzania through Kenya to Germany and the United Kingdom (UK).⁴

⁴Formal interviews and focus groups were conducted and audio recorded with informed consent and relevant passages were transcribed. If audio recording was not possible due to noise levels or interviewee preference, handwritten notes were recorded.

Analysis of these data illustrates how performances of sustainability are exemplary of the networks in which they are embedded. For example, the RFA value chain is a buyer-driven, hierarchically-governed value chain and thus the vision of sustainability is also performed according to the vision of the lead buyer in that chain. I conclude this paper with reflections on how performances of sustainability interact with performances of GVC governance, suggesting that those networks that are better able to articulate and interpret their visions of sustainability will be better able to govern processes up, down, and across value chain networks.

GOVERNANCE OF GVCS

The purpose of this section is to provide an understanding of how governing power is articulated in a network of actors, as this has remained an important analytical question in GVC research. The dimensions of power relations in GVCs, as put forth originally by Gereffi and Korzeniewicz (1994), consist of: their input-output structure, their geographical coverage, their form of governance, and their institutional framework. The notion of governance structure highlighted the issues of barriers to entry and chain coordination that are found in the practice of governing GVCs, and thus brought these concerns into the rubric of analysis (Raikes, Jensen, and Ponte 2000). Governance has been described as a network-based system of regulation, which ideally functions through processes of exchange and negotiation (Carnoy and Castells 2001). As such, the GVC approach analyses the role of leading firms in shaping globally-integrated production chains that incorporate a network of sourcing firms and places focus on power relations embedded in the chains. Gereffi et al. (2005) generated five types of global value chain governance – hierarchy, captive, relational, modular, and market – which range from high to low levels of power asymmetry among value chain actors.

There is thus an aspect of ‘drivenness’ to chain coordination where typically a lead firm drives decisions and governs the interactions of participants in the chain. Much of the literature has been dedicated to describing *producer-driven* or *buyer-driven* value chains (Gereffi and Korzeniewicz 1994; 2005; Raikes, Jensen, and Ponte 2000). In fact, many value chains in the current agrifood system have been buyer-driven with high barriers to entry and high profits near the consumption end of the chain; characterized by the protection and promotion of brands by intermediate buyers such as processors, supermarket labeled products, and retailers (Conroy 2007; Dolan and Humphrey 2000; Fold and Larsen 2008; Konefal et al. 2007; Raikes, Jensen, and Ponte 2000).

However, Gibbon and Ponte (2005) have argued that governance cannot be written off merely as coordination of actors, as there are numerous nodes along the chain where negotiation must occur to effectively coordinate actors. Therefore, governance exists when certain actors exhibit different types of power during these negotiations. This can be interpreted not only as the manifestation of direct power of a lead firm over other actors in the chain, but rather as an actor's 'discursive power' within chain negotiations (Tallontire et al. 2009). In other words, those stakeholders who are not necessarily party to the exchange may govern value chains and the standards used by them (e.g., Fairtrade and Organic value chains). Therefore, value chain governance must also consider how the typical aspects of power combine with the "broader narratives about quality circulating within society more generally" (Ponte and Gibbon 2005:3). This has been discussed as a form of cultural or symbolic power in value chains based on embedded and complex social relations (Dixon 1999; Freidberg 2004; Lockie and Kitto 2000).

As such, governing power within value chains can extend vertically (with respect to the relations along the value chain) and horizontally (with respect to stakeholders in the supplier country) among value chain actors and third-party actors who are not necessarily party to the economic transactions in the value chains but are involved in adding 'values' to the products and processes (Tallontire et al. 2009). Put differently, we can see "twin-driven commodity chains" (TDCC) where lead firms govern the supply network, while environmental groups/movements and third-party certifiers/standards developers govern the regulatory aspects of the network, "sometimes both working in an overlapping manner" (Islam 2008:217). Thus, as Foucault (1977) observed, "power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations" (p. 94). In other words, the lens of *governmentality* may be a more meaningful rubric through which to examine the governance of actors in GVCs (cf. Gibbon and Ponte 2008), as it covers a range of practices that "constitute, define, organize, and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other" (Foucault 1997: 300). This allows us to see power as the "outcome of collective actions exercised through networks of associations" (Cheshire and Lawrence 2005:36). Therefore, it is important to understand how these strategies take shape in GVCs. A common strategy adopted by both buyers and producers is that of utilizing standards, and their systems of conformity assessment, as ways of organizing and governing the processes of production.

STANDARDS AS DEVICES FOR ENACTING GOVERNANCE

Increasingly important in the coordination and differentiation of GVCs is the use of standards and specifically certified production and its accompanying consumer labels to add value to agrifood products (Hatanaka and Busch 2008). More specifically, ethically-certified products have become popular with consumers who identify with the value claims they represent. As they are utilized in GVCs, standards act as “rules about what those who adopt them should do” (Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000:4). Yet most standards used in GVCs are not formal laws or regulations. Standards act more like conventions that “determine the content and the form of the production and circulation of commodities” (Wilkinson 1997:317). They can be either “sets of standardized, codified rules and norms that impose conventions across a range of diverse contexts,” or they “may emerge from local, personalized, idiosyncratic sets of relations” (Murdoch and Miele 1999:471). As such, conventions serve as both guides for action and collective systems that legitimize these actions through norms and values, standards of uniformity, and rules and institutions to apply and enforce those standards (Gibbon and Ponte 2005; Ponte and Gibbon 2005).

Increasingly, standards can be viewed as socio-technical mechanisms to classify and establish social and moral order within GVCs (Bowker and Star 1999; Busch 2000a, 2000b). Standards then become “the measures by which products, processes, and producers are judged” (Busch and Bingen 2006:3). In other words, they are socio-technical devices (i.e., outcomes of interactions stabilized and codified) that are reused to ‘objectively’ govern the actions of people and things (Busch and Tanaka 1996; Law 1991). Thus, within the context of GVCs, standards are used strategically by value chain actors to judge and discipline the relations among actors. However, the language of ‘drivenness’ still does not fully capture how these actors who are not part of the value chain are able or unable to integrate their vision of sustainability with that of the value chain actors. To do this we must look at the enactment of standards in GVCs.

PERFORMING VALUES BY ENACTING STANDARDS

The notion of *performativity* has its forerunners in the theories of Mead ([1934] 1962), Schutz ([1932] 1967), Goffman (1974) and Hilgartner (2000), but the use of this notion in the STS literature does not adopt the dramaturgical perspective wherein there is some version of ‘self’ hiding behind the performance. Hacking (1983) suggested that ‘scientific’ representations of the world can only be comprehended by also paying attention to the interventions inspired by, or are

concurrent with, the representations. In other words, the ‘performative idiom’ (Pickering 1995) is more attentive to activity than to knowledge alone. Thus, the notion of performativity suggests that “*realities* (including objects and subjects) and *representations* of those realities are being enacted or performed simultaneously” (Law 2008:635).

Recent research on performativity suggests that abstract or ‘virtual’ representations shape reality (Callon 1998; MacKenzie, Muniesa, and Siu 2007; Muniesa 2007). That is, performativity analysis studies how imaginaries, or virtues, are brought to life in empirical reality through actions and discourse (Law 2008). It thus suggests that materiality, locality, and empirical story are entangled in the enactment of values and virtues (cf. Haraway 2001; Law and Urry 2004). As Law (2004) explained, “enactment is the continuing practice of crafting. Enactment and practice never stop, and realities depend upon their continued crafting (. . .) in a combination of people, techniques, texts, architectural arrangements, and natural phenomena” (p. 56). Using certifications as an example of how standards are enacted, these representations are ‘virtual’ in that their value is not contained purely in their material substance (e.g., paper certificates, labels), but in the claims on future states of the world that they embody and the governance mechanism needed to verify that claim (i.e., organic certification). Thus the interactions that constitute performances include both those who are performing and those who are evaluating the performances (Boltanski and Thévenot [1991] 2006).

As standards are linked to physical objects (e.g., scientific tests, paper certifications), the abstract nature of these values is rendered concrete. Performativity analysis looks specifically at the strategies by which compliance with standards is disciplined and contained, and the tactics deployed by those engaged in GVCs to negotiate this discipline (cf. Bell 2007; Busch 2000a; Butler 1990). It is also used to understand what is being valued through practices, such as audits and market contracts, and how these values play out in the process itself (Power 1997). Thus, the multiple performances that we observe in the coordination of GVCs are the actualization of these values in the empirical world - a process of differentiation. For example, we can note the enactment of quality conventions (e.g., Barrientos and Dolan 2006; Callon, Méadel, and Rabeharisoa 2002; Morgan, Marsden, and Murdoch 2006; Murdoch, Marsden, and Banks 2000; Ponte and Gibbon 2005), barriers to entry (e.g., Daviron and Ponte 2005; Gibbon and Ponte 2005; Giovannucci and Ponte 2005; Henson and Reardon 2005; Trienekens and Zuurbier 2008), supply chain management (e.g., Burch and Lawrence 2007; Busch 2007; Konefal et al. 2007; Ponte 2009; Weatherspoon and Reardon 2003), corporate social

responsibility (CSR) (e.g., Jenkins 2001; Maloni and Brown 2006; Reardon et al. 2001), and regulation (Hatanaka, Bain, and Busch 2005; Loconto and Busch 2010; Ponte 2007).

However, not all performances are 'effective.' Effective performances are distinguished from 'generic' performances by the actors' abilities to make a difference in practice through the abstract representation of a value (MacKenzie 2007). Ponte (2007) illustrated this distinction with a case study from Uganda. In the late 1990s, the European Union (EU) imposed repeated bans on fish imported from Uganda based on the poor performance of Uganda's regulatory and monitoring system. "Only by fixing 'the system' (of regulations and inspections) and performing the ritual of laboratory testing for all consignments for export to the EU did the Ugandan industry regain its status as a 'safe' source of fish" (Ponte 2007:180). Therefore, Ponte (2007) claimed that it was the 'ritual of verification' (cf. Power 1997) that the regulatory structure performed, rather than an effective change in the practices of fish production systems that rendered the fish 'safe' for consumption. In this sense the performance of food safety regulation was generic because it did not enact changes in the material practices. Thus we can summarize the theoretical project of this paper, which is to show how the concept of 'sustainability' is performed in the empirical world, how it shapes and is shaped by the actors and standards involved, and how it is maintained through the interactions involved in producing 'sustainable' tea. These performances can be judged as effective or generic based on the resonance of similar justifications by various actors up, down, and outside the value chain. In other words, are all actors performing a story of sustainability that holds together or are we actually observing multiple 'sustainabilities'?

PERFORMING THE TANZANIAN TEA VALUE CHAIN

First introduced in 1903, tea is a priority crop for Tanzania and the fifth largest export crop after cotton, coffee, cashew nut, and tobacco. The local rural economy benefits by about \$15 million annually. The industry also provides rural social facilities such as dispensaries, day care centers, schools, and hospitals as well as local goods and services (Ndunguru 2001). The tea industry has been providing such facilities since tea was first grown as a commercial plantation crop by Brooke Bond in the 1920s (Mbilinyi 1986). The tea sector in Tanzania is fully privatized (Tea Act 1997), and while the land area is divided evenly between large estates (> 200 hectares) and outgrowers (medium scale averaging 16 hectares and

smallholders averaging 0.37 hectares), outgrowers contribute less than 30 percent of total tea production (Simbua and Loconto 2010).

Tea production is labor intensive. It has a year-round harvest where the leaves must be plucked from the bushes at intervals ranging from 7 to 20 days depending on the season. Processing must also occur immediately as delaying more than 12 hrs from the time the green leaves are plucked to when they arrive at the processing factory will result in substandard tea. This translates into very restricted catchment areas around factories where both estate-grown and smallholder-grown tea is found (Simbua 2006). This ties factories and farmers together in close geographic proximity with little option for competitive markets for green leaf. As a result, contract farming schemes, which link smallholders to processing factories, have long been used. In this system, small-scale farmers have access to inputs, agricultural technology, and markets through contracts that require them to produce according to international market requirements (FAO 2009). All factories in Tanzania use the cut-tear-curl (CTC) method of tea processing for teas that will be sold in tea bags. However, two of the Fairtrade and Organic certified factories are also producing orthodox tea, which means that the tea leaves are rolled rather than cut before the oxidization process that produces black tea. In total, tea production consists of nineteen factories owned by nine companies (three factories are jointly owned by smallholder associations). Eighteen of the nineteen processing factories in Tanzania are known as estate factories, as the company that owns the factory sources most of its leaf from its own estates. There is only one factory, in the Usambara region of Tanzania that sources all of its leaf from smallholder farms.

Traditional tea production falls into the category of buyer-driven commodity chains as buyers dictate prices, quality, and other aspects of governance. However, Simbua (2006) considers the tea-processing factory to be “the anchor of the tea value chain: a stage where the core competence of the entire tea value chain resides” (p. 189). It is a high investment stage where the costs raise the barrier to entry in the chain. Most of the activities upstream (green leaf production) as well as downstream (marketing and sales) are usually controlled by the decisions made at the tea-processing factory (Simbua 2006). Thus, the key certification decision lies at the factory level as it is here that farmers must necessarily sell their green leaf, due to geographic, contractual, and infrastructural constraints.

Market prices are fixed at the Mombasa Auction (Kenya) and certification premiums are based on these prices (Baffes 2003). Tea quality plays a vital role in determining the final value at the auction. Although market forces may affect the general price levels, it is ‘quality’ (based on organoleptic characteristics) which

distinguishes the value of tea across different factories irrespective of demand and supply patterns in the marketplace (Simbua 2006). Most sales of certified tea are conducted through private contracts and do not enter the auction system.⁵ Private contracts of non-certified tea also avoid passing through the Mombasa Auction; however, as a measure of good practice, factories usually sell a “minimum of 30 percent of their tea via the auction” so that they can be assured of the market value of their tea (Interview June, 2008). The use of private, direct-sale contracts has been a common practice in the Tanzanian tea industry for many European markets as well as for the domestic market (TBT 2009). These relationships have been built up over the decades and are deeply embedded in the supply networks that bring tea from Tanzania to the UK and Germany, which are the main destinations for Tanzanian certified tea.

PERFORMING SUSTAINABILITY

As noted in the introduction, four sustainability standards have been in practice in the Tanzanian tea industry since 1994 (RFA, ETP, Fairtrade, and Organic). Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of each sustainability standard as they were described by various value chain actors in this study. This section presents the characteristics of each of those standards and analyses their enactments of sustainability in turn. The cases show an equal split between generic and effective performativity of the values of sustainability. In other words, the utilization of these standards by some value chain actors is enacting change in their practices, but not in all four value chains.

Rainforest Alliance

The RFA-certified seal is awarded to farms that have met the environmental, social, and economic standards of the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN), a coalition of local conservation organizations in Latin America that first set the standard for sustainable farming in rainforest areas in the early 1990s (Willie, Aerts, and Geier 2010). The SAN standards cover ecosystem conservation, worker

⁵As of 2010 a very small amount of FLO-certified and RFA-certified tea were passing through the auction system. However, the use of the auction system is expected to increase as those blenders who have adopted the RFA standard rely upon the auction system and the supply of RFA-certified tea is expected to increase. FLO has also reintroduced its retro-certification process for tea in the 2010 revision of their tea standard; therefore the reliance on the auction system is also expected to increase for FLO-certified tea.

TABLE 1. COMPARISON OF THE FOUR SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS.

STANDARD	EST. TEA	SUSTAINABILITY TYPE	SUSTAINABILITY CRITERIA	CERT. COSTS	ILLUSTRATIVE COMPLIANCE		
					INVESTMENTS	BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
Ethical Tea Partnership	1997	Estate Factory (14)	Good social and environmental conditions that improve the lives of tea workers	N/A	Field toilets & hand washing facilities Provision of health and safety training Protective gear	CSR program for UK blenders Future access to assistance in gaining RFA and FLO certification \$1.60/kg floor price (2010) Fairtrade premium (\$0.50/kg) Community Infrastructural Investments Direct sales Management system	No market benefit Audits have been difficult in the past
Fairtrade (FLO)	1994	Estate Factory (4) Small-holders (1)	Transparency, partnership and participation, representative democracy, and equal exchange No GMOs	\$4,000	Someone who can create budgets, policies, management plans, environmental plans, & meeting minutes Trainings held on environmental plan, FT general awareness Risk assessments of soil erosion, health & safety	Low overall market demand Constraints on use of funds from the premium Use of the Auction system Paper trails	

Organic (EU Regulation, Ecocert, IMO, IFOAM)	1988	Estate Factory (2)	Holistic notion of agriculture based on the values of fairness, ecology, hope and care Low reliance on agrochemicals No GMOs	\$5,000	Separation of organic and conventional tea on farm, in transport, in factory Purchase of composting materials Additional labor for manual weeding	Strong policy level and donor support Organic price premium Direct sales RFA and FLO recognize Organic in their standards	Low overall market demand Paper trails High input costs (labor & composting) Lack of research on organic tea
Rainforest Alliance (SAN)	2008	Estate Factory (2)	Economy, Ecology and Ethics Waste management No GMOs	\$5,000	Soil Analysis Water Analysis Tree barriers between fields Waste Management strategy Conversion of non- tea crops on smallholder farms to RFA compliant crops	Access to Lipton, Tetley, Twinings, Betty & Taylors of Harrogate markets \$0.10/kg premium from Lipton Environmental benefits Management system	Support needed to prepare smallholders for certification Price premium is temporary (phased out in 2010) RFA new to the industry

rights and safety, wildlife protection, water and soil conservation, agrochemical reduction, and education for farm children. In this way the Rainforest Alliance strives to foster the values of 'economy, ecology and ethics' in its certified value chains (Rainforest Alliance 2010b).

Since 2008, the RFA has had one broad agricultural standard for more than 100 crops. Tea-specific criteria were established in 2007 following an audit of the Unilever tea estates in Kericho (Rainforest Alliance 2007). The original audit of tea plantations in Tanzania was conducted in 2008 by the SAN certifiers; subsequent inspections will be done by Africert (a Kenyan agribusiness certifying agency that also certifies against GLOBALGAP, ETP, BRC and Utz Kapeh) or the Institute of Marketecology (IMO, which also conducts organic audits). In Tanzania, to date, the RFA standard has only been adopted by Unilever (on its own estates and in two of its three factories).⁶

Unilever factories in Tanzania source mostly from medium scale growers and 95 percent of green leaf comes from their own plantations. Unilever operates a vertically-integrated value chain where it owns green leaf production, processing factories, and blending and packing facilities. Green leaf that is not bought by Lipton (Unilever's blending company) goes into the traditional market through Mombasa and into non-certified tea (despite being produced according to RFA standards). While most tea is bought directly from factories due to the commitments made and the scarcity of certified tea, there is also no mechanism within the RFA standard to prevent the use of the auction system. In fact, the aim is to "continue to rely upon the auction system" for tea trading (Interview December, 2009).

To date, the cost of certification has been borne by Unilever. However, there is no clear articulation of how the outgrowers in Tanzania will become certified. The RFA has been looking to donors for funds that can be used to provide the training and technical assistance needed for helping small farmers to meet the certification requirements (Interview June, 2009). To encourage other brands and producers to join the Rainforest Alliance system, Lipton was offering a \$0.10/kg premium phased out in 2010. This has helped to create more interest in the system and other large tea blenders (notably Tetley and Twinings) have committed to joining the system. However, the 'demand-driven' approach to certification that the RFA uses translates on the ground into many producers who are interested in becoming

⁶As of 2010, two additional companies were in discussion with the RFA to try to negotiate their involvement in the system.

certified, yet to date have not been able to because of a lack of RFA presence in the region and their policy of first certifying those producers who have an existing demand for their tea (i.e., Lipton, Tetley and, Twinings' preferred producers).

Generic performance. The 'economy, ecology and ethics' focus of the RFA standard fits hand in glove with Unilever's 'people, planet, profit' focus of sustainable agriculture that has been an internal company standard since the late 1990s. The RFA claims that "the tea industry has faced many challenges, from declining prices to poor farming and environmentally damaging practices. The Rainforest Alliance certification program assists farmers in addressing these issues and in reaching new value-added markets as well as focusing on improving productivity and significantly improving their quality of life" (Rainforest Alliance 2010a). Therefore, by focusing on economy, the RFA standard promises to bring improved efficiency, more competitive production, premium prices, access to credit based on an RFA guarantee, and generally improved profitability and competitiveness for farmers. In terms of ecology, the RFA standard focuses on limiting soil erosion, reducing water consumption, protecting wildlife habitats, increasing the efficiency of farm management and waste management, and controlling the use of agrochemicals. In terms of ethics, the RFA standard lays out what is required to improve conditions for farm workers, provide for health and human safety, and promote collaboration between farmers & conservationists (Rainforest Alliance 2009).

The adoption of the RFA standard is clearly perceived by Unilever as a supply chain strategy that draws upon its CSR image of a 'sustainable' company. For example, Unilever (2007) claims that this initiative:

has the potential to reassure consumers about the source of the tea they enjoy drinking so much; to improve the crops, incomes and livelihoods of nearly 1 million people in Africa and, eventually, up to 2 million people around the world; to protect the environment from a further drain on its resource and to provide us with a means by which we can differentiate our brands from those of our competitors (Unilever 2007).

Thus, we could characterize Unilever's GVC as buyer-driven, which is exhibited in its ability to enroll the RFA standard as part of its supply chain management strategy. In effect, Unilever "outsourced" its internal sustainable agriculture program to the RFA; "one of the reasons was the high overlap with the internal system" (Interview June, 2010).

This claim is reinforced by the results of the first audit where the Kenyan estates passed with nearly 100 percent compliance and the Tanzanian estates with about 80 percent compliance. The process was described this way:

It was very easy for us to become certified when RFA came in. Unilever was looking for a partnership for them to say that they were sustainable. We did very little to get certified. (Interview November, 2009)

Overall, the addition of the RFA standard to Unilever's GVC has changed very little, to date, in the enactment of sustainability. The Unilever managers at the estate in Tanzania showed me that one of the few changes that were required of them was to cut down a eucalyptus grove that was planted too close to a body of water and replace it with a mix of less water hungry trees and some local species (Interview February, 2010).⁷

Moreover, the high overlap of Unilever's internal standard and their decision to bring the RFA into the tea sector by their public commitment in 2007 suggest that Unilever has played a large role in determining what sustainable tea production looks like in practice. Thus, the RFA largely functions to legitimate Unilever's practices as sustainable. One manager explained it like this:

The Rainforest Alliance changed not very much about the way that UTEA [Unilever Tea East Africa] operates, except strategy – now we are producing Rainforest Alliance certified tea, rather than just producing tea according to the principles of sustainable agriculture. (Interview November, 2009)

Therefore the enactment of sustainability that is observed throughout the current RFA value chain is effectively the Unilever version. Thus, the RFA efforts to make the Unilever performances into their own are generic at best. However, given the short amount of time that the RFA has been involved in the sector, this is expected. What happens over the next ten years as the RFA establishes itself as a powerful actor in the value chain will most likely result in different performances of sustainability.

⁷This grove was still standing a year after the original audit, as management was waiting for the trees to fully mature so that they could harvest them for firewood, as was the original purpose of the grove.

The Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP)

The ETP began in 1997 as the Tea Sourcing Partnership when “a number of large tea companies made the ground-breaking decision to work together to promote sustainability in the sector, rather than competing on ethics” (ETP 2010b: 1). It currently consists of 20 international tea packers who sell tea in Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. The most notable are Tetley, Twinings, The Republic of Tea, TAZO, Taylors of Harrogate, and Sara Lee.⁸ Founding members Unilever and James Finlay have pulled out of the partnership since 2007 in favor of the RFA and Fairtrade standards (James Finlay has adopted both).

The ETP developed its tea-specific standard from the Ethical Trade Initiative base standard (Blowfield 2004). The ETP looks at five areas: employment (including minimum age and wage levels), education, maternity, health and safety, and housing and basic rights. It also added an environmental component in the 2009 version of the standard (ETP 2010a). The purpose of the ETP standard is “to make this picture transparent – to monitor living and working conditions on tea estates, with the aim of making sure that the tea you buy from the members of our Partnership has been produced in a socially responsible way” (ETP 2010a). In the past, this has been done by ‘monitoring’ producers. As such, the UK-based tea blenders/packers are members of the ETP and ‘monitoring’ (or certification audits) of the producing estates and factories is paid for by the members. Producers are approached by ETP monitors through the buyers to which they sell their tea. Producers begin with a self-assessment questionnaire about their practices. Nonconformances are then identified and monitored by the ETP every three years.

Of the 19 tea processing factories in Tanzania, 13 with estates and one supported solely by smallholder tea were exporting their tea for the international market during the period of data collection. All of these exporting factories in Tanzania have been certified by the ETP at some point over the past ten years, many remembering that the last audit occurred in 2007. In theory, factories should lose certification if they exceed the maximum level of nonconformances, but in practice this is not often the case (Interview July, 2008). Put differently, the ETP members continue to rely on the traditional value chain to purchase tea from the same producers that they usually do, despite the results of ETP’s monitoring efforts.

⁸Sara Lee is actually one of the largest blenders supplying the Dutch market. It controlled 65 percent of the Dutch consumer market in 2008. See: (van der Wal 2008)

Generic performance. The original ‘monitoring’ was completed by Price Waterhouse Coopers (a financial auditing firm), first sending auditors from London and subsequently from Nairobi. However, both the ETP and producers reported numerous problems with the audit process and the 2009 revised standard was also accompanied by a new auditor – AfriCert Ltd., noted above as the new inspector for the RFA audits. Recent developments show the ETP moving into a “capacity building” role within the tea sector (ETP 2009). Within this role, the ETP plans to assist producers in becoming certified according to RFA and UTZ certifications.⁹ The ETP also accepts the Fairtrade standard as evidence of compliance with the ETP standard, but as of 2010 there was no formal agreement. The focus is thus shifting from monitoring noncompliances to identifying core issues in the industry and working with producers to eliminate them. While the ETP has no clear presence in Tanzania, the organization claims to be working hard in Kenya to reduce child labor and sexual harassment in the tea sector (ETP 2010b).

This initiative is wholly driven and governed by the UK-based tea blenders. The Dutch Tea Initiative¹⁰, a nongovernmental watchdog organization, has expressed concern about all of these efforts. For example, in a 2006 report they found that the ETP’s code was unclear as to the standards to which the members were actually committing themselves, and little to no reference was made to environmental standards (SOMO, ProFound, and India Committee of the Netherlands 2006). Moreover, the Tanzanian producers called the ETP standard a ‘CSR exercise’ and they recalled the rather difficult audits that were conducted by Price Waterhouse Coopers, who followed the standard to the letter and were not familiar enough with the tea industry to be able to interpret the standard (Interview October, 2009). A particular point of contention was the latrine requirement. It was explained as follows:

Say in the farm, for instance when you are working with the tea farms, the standard requires every farm there should be a latrine and there should be a washing facility aside. You see all these require a lot of investment, so

⁹In 2008, UTZ Kapeh launched a standard for tea, but by 2010 this was still not being used in Tanzania and therefore was not included in this study.

¹⁰The ‘Dutch Tea Initiative’ is an alliance of Dutch non-governmental organizations, including development organizations and trade unions, working for the improvement of labor, social, ecological, and economic conditions in the tea sector in tea-producing countries.

most of the operators would fail some of these – because of money.
(Interview February, 2010)

The sticking point here is that the standard requires such facilities in each field, but the estate manager explained that due to the plucking rotations, workers went to each field only once or twice a month. In sum, the ETP standard was enacted as a controversy over toilets.

These weaknesses in the ETP standard reduced it to a tick-box exercise, as one of my research participants explained: “you can only get a tick in the box. And if you get a tick in the box, you get a tick in the box. And you can do twice as well and you can still only get one tick (...) you've only got to do well enough to pass that criteria” (Interview June, 2010). This results in a highly captive, buyer-driven GVC as the ability to frame sustainability is being implemented by downstream actors. Thus, the notion of sustainability that is performed in this GVC is wholly driven by the ETP and their members, with little input or participation by producers. Recent developments show the ETP moving into a “capacity building” role within the tea sector (ETP 2009). As one ETP employee put it: “ETP has 80-90 percent of the same criteria as the others. Now the focus is on getting those producers who are not otherwise certified. ETP doesn't replicate” (Interview August, 2009). Within this role, the ETP plans to assist producers in becoming certified against Rainforest Alliance and UTZ certifications. In other words, the ineffective or “generic performativity” of the ETP vision of sustainability has eroded its ability to sustain engagement with stakeholders aligned around this common interpretation of sustainability, thus forcing them to collaborate with other standards systems in order to stay in business.

*Fairtrade and Organic*¹¹

Fairtrade. The Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) standards and certification system was officially established in 1997 to bring together the already existing fair trade marks in Europe and North America. The FLO standard is based on the ideas of “transparency, partnership and participation, representative democracy, and equal exchange” (FLO 2010a). Within the Fairtrade system traders and producers must be certified in the tea value chain. This translates into certification for producers (farms and factories), buyers (international traders), and blenders/packers. Both estate-sourced and smallholder-sourced factories can

¹¹ In Tanzania, the Organic value chain is cross-certified with the Fairtrade value chain.

become certified for tea according to the Hired Labor (HL) standard, while the Small Producer Organization (SPO) standard governs the certification of the smallholder tea growers associations.¹² Fair trade certification in Tanzania began in 1994 with two of the three Mufindi Tea Company (MTC) factories being the first to receive fair trade certification through Tradecraft – “because [they] believed in the ethics that fair trade represented” (Interview October, 2009). There are currently five factories certified against the FLO standards and Fairtrade-certified sales account for an average of 8 percent of total sales. Four of these have estates that are certified via the HL mechanism, while the fifth sources from a certified SPO. The certified SPO, Rungwe Smallholder Tea Growers Association (RSTGA), also owns 25 percent of shares in the Wakulima Tea Company (WATCO), which is the company that owns the processing factory.

Fairtrade-certified tea accounted for 7 percent of UK’s tea sales in 2009, with the top three retailers being Tesco (market share 31 percent), Asda (17 percent), and Sainsbury (16 percent) (van Reenen, Panhuysen, and Weiligmann 2010). Supermarkets’ own brand teas are expected to increase the percentage of Fairtrade certified tea in 2010. For example, Sainsbury has committed to purchasing 6000 tons of Fairtrade tea for its own brand tea, while the Co-op and Marks & Spencer have promised to move toward sourcing 100 percent of their own brand teas from Fairtrade certified tea producers (van Reenen, Panhuysen, and Weiligmann 2010:14). Fairtrade has also indicated the interest of large supermarket brands in their 2010 tea revision document wherein they propose to producers a tradeoff of lower premium funds for higher volumes of sales in order to attract the business of larger buyers (FLO 2010b). However, this reduction in the premium was not approved by the producers and therefore there is “no change in Premium [sic] for now” (FLO 2010c).

FLO certification also allows for the continued use of the traditional value chain via their provision for retroactive certification, which involves a buyer that has bought product from a certified producer or conveyor under ordinary conditions (noncertified), and wants to convert it into a certified product (FLO 2010c). Thus many of the large multinationals and UK supermarkets continue to rely on the auction system for purchasing their tea through the usual channels (cf. Dolan 2008). However, we do see a number of deviations from this model in the Tanzanian case. Most notable are the cases of Cafédirect and the German market where there is a

¹²The Fairtrade Tea standard and statistics cover black, green, white, and oolong tea; they also include herbal infusions (i.e., camomile, hibiscus, mint), spices, and rooibos tea.

long history of direct sourcing and embedded relationships with Tanzanian producers. For example, two factories (owned by MTC and WATCO) are also shareholders in Cafédirect and are involved in a number of additional ‘development’ projects in collaboration with Cafédirect. We also see a large number of nongovernmental and governmental organizations involved in providing policy and capacity building support to the Fairtrade system.

Organic. The organic agriculture system is based on the principles of “health, ecology, fairness and care” (IFOAM 2010). It is a holistic certification system that has been incorporated into law in many countries around the world. Particularly important for Tanzanian tea are the EU Regulations (EC) N° 834/2007 and (EC) N° 889/2008 (former: (EEC) N° 2092/91). However, the International Forum for Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM) norm serves as the unifying vision of organic across the national/regional organic regulations. The Organic certification is also the only certification that covers all stages of the value chain, which is fundamental to its principle of traceability.

Since 1989/90, the Herkulu Estate, owned by Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation Ltd., has been organically cultivated; beginning in 1994 it was certified organic by the Institute of Marketecology (IMO) (Bombay Burmah 2010). Luponde (owned by MTC) received organic certification in 1988 from the Soil Association (Interview November 2009). Luponde is currently certified organic through Ecocert, Madagascar. Decisions to use a specific certification body are made by factory management based on the instructions given by their international buyers who inform them of the certifier that must be used.

Organic tea is currently only bought through direct contracts. It accounted for an average of 25 percent of total sales in 2009. A price premium is paid for organic tea, which is difficult to determine because most certified organic tea that is exported from Tanzania is actually of the orthodox method rather than CTC. This also adds an additional price premium. “Germany is the largest organic food market in Europe and labeled Organic tea accounts for about 4 percent of the German tea market” (van Reenen, Panhuysen, and Weiligmann 2010:14). Also, as mentioned above, 77 percent of the Fairtrade-certified teas are cross-certified with Organic. In addition, the largest organic and Fairtrade specialty blender in Germany, Cha Dô, supplies blended teas to the UK and North American markets as does Kirchner, Fischer, & Co GmbH. Cha Dô is also an agent of the company that markets Herkulu’s tea. In addition to purchasing under both the Organic and Fairtrade labels, Cha Dô provides technical assistance on tea quality (Interview March, 2010). Kirchner, Fischer, & Co GmbH (K, F & Co.) owns the Mt. Everest Tea Company,

which is one of the oldest specialty tea companies in Germany. Specializing in orthodox blends, K, F & Co. only began purchasing Luponde teas in 2010. They first learned of it by tasting a sample that was sent to them from the UK-based wholesaler Thompson, Lloyd, & Ewert, which has a long-standing relationship of buying teas directly from MTC and WATCO (Interview May, 2010).

Organic orthodox teas from Luponde also have a direct route to retail in the UK market. Luponde Tea is a shop in the Burlington Arcade in London, which exclusively sells tea from the Luponde estates. While this retail company is separate from the Luponde estates, they share a common investor, which has facilitated the direct trade route from farm to shop. There is also a domestic value chain for organic tea. Chai TTB and Chai Bora, the two leading tea packers in the Tanzanian market, both offer organic brands for the local market. These include black tea, green tea, mint, chamomile, lemon verbena and hibiscus infusions, which come mostly from Luponde. These are sold in the main supermarkets in the large urban centers in the country, in the airport shops, and in the tourist areas.

Cross-certified sustainability. Fairtrade's notion of sustainability, as articulated by FLO International, focuses on wages, living situation, and working conditions of its pickers and promotes direct purchase of tea from the estate or cooperative factory. The price paid for Tanzanian Fairtrade-certified tea should cover the production costs and not be lower than the FLO floor price of \$1.50/kg in addition to a premium of \$0.50/kg. This Fairtrade premium goes to a community fund which is used according to the interests of the community, such as for building classrooms and health clinics, and bringing electricity to the villages. Producers are evaluated according to specific social, economic, and environmental development indicators and must pay about \$5,000 for the yearly audit. With tea plantations, the focus of the fair trade movement was predominantly focused on eliminating child labor and improving the working conditions of hired labor. In practice, this entailed "devising a contract with the plantation owners to ensure benefits were given to workers, good labor practices were being maintained, and the extra benefits were helping social development objectives" (Auld 2009: 341). To this end, a 'sustainability margin' was added to the Fairtrade tea premium to encourage estate factories to participate in the system. The 'sustainability margin' is a payment of \$0.10/Kg out of the \$0.50/Kg that goes to the estate management to support improvements in working conditions as part of ongoing certification and

compliance with Fairtrade standards¹³ (FLO 2010b). Thus, much of the enactment of the Fairtrade standard concerns the premium funds and how these funds are used. Put differently, there is a distinct enactment of ‘community projects,’ whereby local politics are often involved in determining how these funds are used, as a means to justify sustainability.

Organic agriculture’s notion of sustainability is ecological; it focuses on production and limited use of agrochemicals, and requires a three-year transition from traditional to organic farming. Organic premiums are market premiums paid directly to the producers. Like Fairtrade, Organic producers pay a similar price for certification. In both cases, numerous NGOs are involved in assisting small-farmer certification. Fairtrade and Organic tea are almost exclusively cross-certified in Tanzania. Two estates are certified both Organic and Fairtrade and the other three are certified against only Fairtrade standards. All five estates have also been included in the ETP program and two of the Fairtrade-only certified companies are applying for RFA certification also. This trend of multiple certifications has also been noted in coffee (Parrish, Luzadis, and Bentley 2005; Reynolds, Murray, and Heller 2007).

This means that on the ground, concepts of sustainability are performed as the interaction of these two frameworks rather than each being discretely defined. While producers claimed that their motivation for engaging in Fairtrade was linked to their “belief in the ethics of the fair trade system” (Interview October, 2009), both of the Organic-certified companies claimed that they first joined the system because they had “acquired overgrown fields” and the “costs for conventional rehabilitation were much higher” than for Organic certification (Interviews November, 2009 and February, 2010). Therefore in both cases, the main notion of sustainability was articulated by producers as sustaining the business of tea production, which includes what must be done to ensure productivity of the tea plant itself and sustaining access to marketing channels for the certified product.

The implementation of the Fairtrade certification system on the ground requires a significant amount of investment by both the producers and the Fairtrade system in the form of producer support and capacity building. The complexities of the Fairtrade bureaucracy mean that much negotiation is required to navigate the system. This is illustrated by the presence of full-time administrative employees

¹³ Some Fairtrade buyers (e.g., Cafedirect) will pay the \$0.10/kg to the factory in addition to the \$0.50/kg premium to the SPO.

who deal only with certification issues at two of the three certified companies in Tanzania. A certifier explained it like this:

They have a lot of requirements. The compliance criteria is many. They have to have a lot of policies. For example, child labor. Someone is not engaging children into his work, but he does not have a policy. You see this is a non-conformity. You see such a small thing. Or you have terminated a worker, but you don't have records. So I need to see that, I need to check if you have done it fairly to the worker who has been terminated. But I don't see the record, so I raise it as a non-conformity (...) You can have a number of non-conformities, but they are not major issues. (Interview February, 2010)

This bureaucracy was not noted in relation to the Organic standard. Instead an Organic estate manager noted that the audit was rather simple, “all the inspector has to do is see the weeds and he knows that we are Organic” (Interview January, 2010). In fact, there was little discussion about the Organic standard as a stand-alone technique as the discussions all inevitably returned to the FLO standard. These pointed to the difficulties that producers had in dealing with the Fairtrade bureaucracy and the enactment of the management systems for which Fairtrade has been heralded. However, the Fairtrade and Organic auditor clarified the enactment of sustainability in the cross-certified production systems for me. He explained:

The key benefits of all the certifications is they are forcing the world to go organic. They would all prefer someone who is organic. They are saying: if you are organic, then I don't check this. The move of the world now is to have something that is organic. (Interview February, 2010)

Thus, the definition of sustainability laid out in the IFOAM norm that claims that “organic agriculture develops a viable and sustainable agro-ecosystem” performs a version of sustainability in that certified sustainable agriculture, as the quotation above illustrates, is an enactment of ‘organic’ (IFOAM 2010). Therefore, in these cross-certified performances we can claim that they are ‘effective’ because while they may not be the same performance of sustainability laid out in the standard, the standards are being used together to make changes (some foreseen, many more unforeseen) in the practice of tea production. Thus, we do indeed see an emergence of a twin-driven GVC (Islam 2008) or horizontal governance (Tallontire

et al. 2009), where buyers, FLO, and Organic standards development organizations are exhibiting asymmetrical power in GVC relations. Therefore, cross-certified sustainability is also framed by international discourse on fair trade and organic agriculture and is sustained by producers who can afford to become certified with significant assistance of NGOs, national policy support, bilateral development projects, and public-private partnerships.

CONCLUSIONS

As the above case studies show, one cohesive vision of sustainability is not implemented in each of these four value chains. Rather, we see a contested multiplicity of 'sustainabilities' whereby different actors are influencing how this organizing concept is both discussed and enacted in a variety of ways. Moreover, the way that the value chains themselves are organized suggests the ability of external actors, such as the standards development organizations, to influence these multiple performances. Therefore, an analysis of governance must also pay attention to the social actors that influence decisions made about sustainable production at the various stages of the value chain. These include processing factories, smallholder associations, and the many nongovernmental organizations that attempt to influence both public and private policies and behavior concerning sustainable production (Guthman 2009). Some of these nongovernmental organizations (e.g., Rainforest Alliance) both set standards for sustainable agriculture, and assess and certify compliance with those standards. This shift is congruent with the more general transformation that has occurred in the agrifood system, that is, a decrease in regulation and an increase in voluntary forms of governing value and supply chains.

The recent proliferation of buyer-driven and twin-driven GVCs points to a redistribution of power along the GVC where the consumption end of the chain is increasingly influencing the production end. Konefal et al. (2007) have claimed that the future political arena of food and agriculture is likely to be the retailer-consumer nexus. The case studies reported above support this conclusion. The use of standards as socio-technical devices to perform multiple value chain 'sustainabilities' allows social movements to focus on consumption and production processes simultaneously by supporting movements such as fair trade, organic, environmental, and ethical trade (Barrientos and Dolan 2006). However, I also find that the large-scale blenders in the tea industry, in collaboration with the social and environmental labeling initiatives, are driving this move – rather than supermarkets as happens with the GLOBALGAP standards. What may be emerging is a

competition between supermarkets and blenders over the definition of 'sustainability' as each camp has staked out a claim in the Western European market by being Fairtrade or Rainforest Alliance certified, respectively.

Dolan (2010) noted that the technologies of standards and conformity assessment "increasingly render north south partnerships ever more virtual and depoliticized" (p. 33). However, I would argue that the politics have not been removed, but shifted from competition between buyers and sellers in the negotiation of value within the market, to competition between certification systems as means of 'sustainable' value addition; hence the emergence of politics in the consumption arena. Also, local politics in Tanzania have been fueled by the introduction of additional funds to the community in the form of the Fairtrade premium and other standards-based training that is available from donor funds for certain 'preferred' suppliers. These upstream politics may also reflect the dominant role of companies, such as Unilever, that have vertically integrated value chains and are therefore also competing in the realm of production.

This paper exposes more questions about GVC governance than it can answer. The categorizations of producer-driven, buyer-driven, and twin-driven shed some light on which method of coordination and governance is benefitting which 'lead' actor. However, Gibbon and Ponte's (2005) critique deserves more attention in the literature, as even within buyer-driven and twin-driven GVCs, as shown in these case studies, there are additional power negotiations that standards are keeping in line. For example, Fold and Larsen (2008) claimed that the term buyer-driven is not exactly accurate as there are many transactions at different points along GVCs where buyers drive negotiations. Moreover, the question of who is driving the chain is somewhat misleading in that even the weakest actors can influence its direction. This is the case because the physical objects created/manipulated/modified by actors in the value chain are not infinitely malleable. It is on this point where these case studies attempt to show how performativity analysis can highlight the nuances of value chain governance. Depending on the extent to which actors are involved in articulating and interpreting their visions of sustainability, these changes will be reflected in certain actors' abilities to govern processes up, down, and across value chains. These conclusions further confirm that rather than static vertical chains, value chains are webs of interaction, where negotiations take place between actors (and within institutions) at each node (cf. Gibbon and Ponte 2005; Rocheleau and Roth 2007; Tallontire 2007).

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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