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The rise of territorial eco-certifications: New politics of transnational sustainability governance in the fishery sector

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ABSTRACT

Eco-certifications have become an important site of power struggles in commodity sectors such as forestry, fisheries, aquaculture, palm oil, and soy. In each, multiple eco-certification initiatives have been developed and resisted through interactions among non-governmental organizations, governments, and commercial actors. This paper contributes to understanding how power is embodied in certifications by exploring how territoriality manifests in the international struggle over defining what products are 'sustainable' and which producers will have access to markets that require 'sustainable' products. Focusing on the wild capture fisheries sector in which the non-governmental Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) administers the preeminent eco-certification initiative, we explore the emergence of new fisheries eco-certification initiatives in Japan, Iceland, Alaska, Canada, and the US that insist there is no transnational monopoly on judgments over fisheries sustainability. We argue that these new eco-certifications attempt to defend and embed territorial social and regulatory relations of production *within* the contested domain of transnational sustainability governance. The initiatives accommodate both the territorially embedded material interests, institutions, and discursive strategies of producers (and their state supporting agencies) *and* transnationally embedded governance norms for assessing and communicating sustainability. They also counter the globally applicable institutions of the MSC in favor of making space for state and non-state actors to contend with demands for sustainability in the global seafood market by combining place-specific attributes with transnational governance norms.

1. Introduction

This paper examines an apparent puzzle in the trajectory of eco-certification as an instrument of transnational sustainability governance: the rise of new fisheries eco-certification initiatives that are tied to political boundaries following from a period in which the dominant eco-certification initiatives like the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) have been designed to be globally applicable. Like the MSC, these new initiatives are voluntary, they can and do apply to several species types, and tend to be implemented by fishing clients that are based within one country and fish on stocks within a single country's Exclusive Economic Zone. However, while the new initiatives are limited to fisheries that operate in specific jurisdictions, they are not necessarily state eco-certifications, nor domestic industry eco-certifications. Their distinguishing feature is that they are explicitly linked to territorial social and regulatory relations of production on the one hand and transnational relations of governance on the other. They contain both territorial *and* transnational attributes.

In this context, we explore what territoriality means in transnational sustainability governance initiatives and what lessons it lends for understanding the sustainable seafood movement specifically and the global economy more generally. Applying insights from political geography and international political economy (IPE), we explore how and why groups initiating what we are calling *territorial eco-certification* bridge territorial and transnational definitions and practices of sustainable production and consumption. To do so, we have analyzed the motivations, role of non-state and state actors and claims to credibility/legitimacy in five emergent territorial eco-certification initiatives, all from the global North. Our analysis reveals how new eco-certification initiatives are at once embedded in territorial practice and highly responsive to transnational governance norms and market conditions.

The wild capture fisheries sector offers an area ripe for research on the global political economy of eco-certification. The sector is widely cited as requiring better governance and proper incentives

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– which some argue eco-labels offer – to address sustainability problems and, in particular, to correct against the tragedy of the commons (Ward and Phillips, 2009). Within this context, the non-profit multi-stakeholder Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) standard-setting organization and its third-party certification, traceability, and labeling program has become one of the most recognized non-state market driven transnational sustainability governance initiatives (Auld et al., 2009; Gulbrandsen, 2010). Although robust bodies of research have advanced our understanding of state responses to, and hybrid interactions with, the MSC (e.g., Gale and Haward, 2011; Hallström and Boström, 2010; Foley, 2012; Gulbrandsen, 2014), there is far less research on the emergence of initiatives that are competing with, or working in parallel to, the MSC in the capture fisheries sector. This paper will thus contribute to research on the "market for rules" (Büthe, 2010), or "certification wars" (Humphreys, 2006), that have become a defining feature of eco-certification initiatives and interactions (Eberlein et al., 2014) in various commodity sectors, including aquaculture (Havice and Iles, 2015), coffee (Raynolds and Wilkinson, 2007; Raynolds et al., 2007), and forestry (Meidinger, 2007, 2008; Cashore et al., 2004; Gale, 2014; Overdevest, 2010), adding to it heretofore absent considerations of the territorial.

The following section provides theoretical context for our concept of territorial eco-certification, linking the certification literature to broader queries of territory in political geography and IPE. This is followed by a review of how the rapid growth of the MSC eco-certification initiative in the wild capture fisheries sector triggered responses that shaped the development of later territorial initiatives. Then we analyze five territorial eco-certification initiatives in the fisheries sector. The initiatives examined are located in Japan (the Marine Eco-Label – MEL), Iceland (the Iceland Responsible Fisheries eco-label and eco-certification program – IRF), Alaska (the Alaska Responsible Fisheries Management Certification program), Canada (a pilot project), and the US (an in-process proposal). Data for our analysis were collected in two ways. First, data were gathered from a document analysis of the MSC and each alternative eco-certification initiatives' official materials, meeting notes and minutes, publically available presentations, and independent assessments of the history and structure of the initiatives. This data collection was targeted at identifying the motivations, role of key non-state and state actors, and claims to legitimacy and credibility for each initiative. Second, desk based analysis was complemented by participant observation at a variety of industry and environmental NGO conferences and interviews with industry participants. The discussion and conclusion reflect on the theoretical and political implications of our findings.

2. Conceptualizing territorial eco-certification

The rise of eco-certifications tied to particular national and sub-national territories in fisheries offers insights into the dynamic global politics of eco-certification, particularly the nature of power, dominance, resistance, and alternatives there within. Eco-certification programs like the MSC have been critiqued for generating and being premised upon North–South relations of imperialism similar to legal extra-territoriality of colonial empires (Vandergeest and Unno, 2012), not least because they are driven by northern market actors who impose foreign-generated principles and high compliance costs onto southern producers and resource managers (Ponte, 2012). While Southern resistance to Northern-imposed eco-certification observed in other sectors (Vandergeest and Unno, 2012; Hospes, 2014) does not explain the emergence of the initiatives explored below – all of which originate in the global North – they all are motivated by similar reactions *against* pressures exerted from the global-level, including: external discourses that identify local subjects in need of protective governance; narratives that depict local states as inadequate for providing governance (despite that external initiatives often depend on existing national governance structures); and, the obfuscation of geographically constituted, and identifiable, production and regulatory systems in favor of universally applicable sustainability standards. By contrast, the new eco-certification initiatives develop a mechanism for industry and states to demonstrate (or at least claim) that existing, geographically bounded production practices and regulatory institutions are environmentally sound and worthy of international recognition. The new eco-certifications not only espouse geographical specificity that is accessible to and valued by producers, they also compete with and offer an alternative to the dominant MSC by integrating transnational governance norms within geographically organized eco-certifications. Therefore, rather than characterize the new eco-certifications simply as an attempt to delineate, define and control production practices in a particular place, we use our analysis of the cases to respond to the theoretical suggestion that understanding the emergence of new eco-certifications tied to particular jurisdictions requires "new perspectives on state, scale and sovereignty over sustainability in a globalized, networked society" (Hospes, 2014: 435).

To capture both the territorial and transnational dimensions of eco-certification that we examine below, we combine insights from political geography and critical IPE. From political geography, we draw on critical approaches to territoriality that refute the "territorial trap" (Agnew, 1994) by exploring why and how spatial arrangements develop and are shaped by power, iconography, and social relations (Sack, 1986; Raffestin, 1984; Murphy, 2012). In this vein, on one hand, territoriality can be seen as strategic: an "attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area" (Sack, 1986: 19). It can also be seen relationally as an ensemble of mediated relationships rooted in ties to the material environment and other people or groups and mediated by techniques and representations (Murphy, 2012: 162, drawing on Raffestin). These approaches are complementary in contexts where relational aspects of territory produce territorial ity-as-spatial-strategy (Murphy, 2012), as in the case of fisheries certification processes. The new eco-certifications examined below are rooted in and generative of webs of relationships within which territorially constituted social relations of production and trade are "dependent on the *interaction* between global and local (including state-territorial) processes of political economic structuration" (Agnew, 1994: 66–67). This approach shows how the territorial and the global are integrated and co-constituted under specific historical circumstances, rather than separate and always in opposition.

Related queries in IPE on the contradictory processes of the internationalization of the state (Cox, 1987) and associated contradictions between territoriality and globality (Gill, 1992) help to illuminate the integrated relationships between the territorial and the global in new fisheries eco-certifications. These critical IPE perspectives demonstrate that while production, trade and finance are increasingly global in scope, the global political economy is still constituted by economic entities embedded in and constituted by spatially bounded and sovereign areas. This reality necessitates concepts capable of contextualizing the social forces of production and forms of state-society complexes *within* an emerging market civilization world order (Cox, 1987), including the geo-regulatory and geo-institutional differentiation of contemporary capitalism (Gill and Cutler, 2014; Brenner et al., 2014). This kind of integrated approach can capture the variegated character of market-oriented processes and regulatory frames that emerge when governance experiments interact with inherited institutional landscapes (Peck and Theodore, 2007; Brenner et al., 2010). These

theoretical insights are consistent with geo-institutional variation observed in the spread of eco-certification in the fisheries sector as examined below.

Scholarship theorizing sovereignty beyond the traditional conceptions of the geographically demarcated boundaries of the state and highlighting political authority beyond the sovereign construction of territorial space also contends with the relationship between territoriality and globality (Agnew, 1999, 2005; Brenner, 1999; Bulkeley, 2005). When combined with Mitchell's (1991) advancements in conceptualizing the state not only as a bounded, freestanding object or actor, but as an effect of mundane processes of authority organized around the territorial level, the state itself can be seen as having a relative, not absolute, reliance on state institutions and political boundaries and as being formulated through transnational processes and relationships (see also Emel et al., 2011). For example, territoriality can be developed and deployed to externally undermine (Vandergeest and Unno, 2012) or, as we argue, expand, dimensions of state authority transnationally (Agnew, 2005; Brenner et al., 2014). Exploring the emergence and features of territorial eco-certifications offers a fruitful area for exploring not only the changing landscape of competing eco-certification initiatives (e.g., Vandergeest et al., 2015), but also the nature of territoriality in the global political economy more generally.

3. Transnational sustainability governance in fisheries

3.1. The Marine Stewardship Council

Although as many as 29 organizations around the world provide certification or similar forms of standardized recommendations for sustainable seafood at various scales (Parkes et al., 2010), the MSC is the dominant program in capture fisheries (Ponte, 2012). Critical of real and perceived failures of state management of fisheries worldwide and drawing inspiration from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) partnered with Unilever in 1996 to create market-based economic incentives for producing and consuming sustainable seafood. The resulting MSC began by developing a performance standard to measure the sustainability of fisheries, formally became a not-for-profit charity organization in the United Kingdom in 1999 and started granting certification to applicant clients assessed by third-party certification bodies in 2000. By the mid 2010s, the MSC had attracted hundreds of fisheries to its program, authorized the use of the MSC eco-label on thousands of products, and perhaps most importantly, secured commitments from a wide array of major retailers in North America and Europe to procure MSC products. The MSC, and the wide array of certifications in fisheries and aquaculture that have sought to compete with it, are transnational in two ways. First, they are designed to be global, universal standards with criteria that can be applied to any fishery around the world. Second, they are designed to verify and communicate the sustainability of products and commodities that cross national borders through the use of chain of custody mechanisms and eco-labels considered credible by transnational governance and market actors.

The non-state and private dimensions of MSC receive significant conceptual attention because the program is administered by an NGO, oriented towards generating uptake among private commercial actors, and places faith in changing practices through market mechanisms. However, the MSC is intimately connected with governments and international institutions. For example, its environmental standard requires the existence of fisheries management practices that are often initiated by governments and its regulatory structure is aligned with various laws and principles of fisheries management developed in the 1980s and early 1990s by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (Gulbrandsen, 2010; Hallström and Boström, 2010). Moreover, the MSC's relevance has grown *because* states have responded directly to it in at least four ways. Specifically, states have (1) contributed to developing intergovernmental guidelines on best practices for fisheries eco-label processes upon which MSC principles are based; (2) provided technical, data and regulatory support for domestic fisheries under assessment for MSC eco-certification; (3) endorsed eco-certification in seafood policy strategies; and (4) supported the development of eco-certification initiatives that serve as alternatives – or competitors – to the MSC eco-certification (Gulbrandsen, 2014).

In particular, Nordic states and Nordic producer interests played a crucial role in establishing conditions that facilitated the development of territorial eco-certifications. In the late 1990s, as WWF and Unilever worked towards developing the MSC's Principles and Criteria for Sustainable Fisheries, several fisheries interests within Nordic countries cooperatively mounted a response that helped establish international institutional conditions that facilitated the subsequent rise of the territorial initiatives examined below. Wary about the MSC, and considering themselves too passive with respect to external market trends and under threat from external actors (MacMullen, 1998), Nordic fishing interests perceived the MSC "as something of a usurper: a self-appointed judge on the performance of governmental management regimes" (Stokke et al., 2004: 297). Taking action on behalf of the Nordic Council group of countries—Denmark/Faeroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden—Norway submitted a proposal to the FAO Committee on Fisheries in July 1998 "to investigate the feasibility and practicability of developing non-discriminatory, globally applicable technical guidelines for the ecolabeling of fish and fish products which should take into account *inter alia* the specific characteristics of each state and region" (Cited in MacMullen, 1998: 31). The FAO responded by convening a Technical Consultation in Rome that was attended by 45 national delegations, representatives of three intergovernmental organizations, and seven international NGOs, including the WWF and the MSC. The group decided that FAO would have no role in particular eco-certification initiatives and instead would draft guidelines for an "over-arching framework" and "globally applicable minimum criteria" under which specific eco-certification and labeling initiatives could develop. The group also decided that the criteria for any eco-labeling initiative should be based on the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing (FAO, 1995) and stressed that any emergent FAO guidelines should take into account ongoing related work by organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), International Standards Organization, the World Conservation Union, and the MSC.

In addition to sparking FAO action on eco-labels which, in time, yielded transnational governance norms around eco-labeling, Nordic countries also explored the idea of developing a territorial eco-certification. The Nordic Council of Ministers established the Nordic Technical Working Group on Fisheries Labeling Criteria that proposed an arrangement for the voluntary eco-certification of sustainable fishing in the North-eastern Atlantic region. The arrangement was adopted by the Nordic Ministers of Fisheries in August 2001 (Stokke et al., 2004: 296). Attempting to bolster a regional definition of sustainable fisheries, in January 2004, representatives from Nordic countries agreed to examine the possibility of a Nordic initiative for eco-labeling while continuing their engagement in the FAO (NORA, 2005). Plans for a Nordic eco-label effort faltered in 2005, while the FAO's Committee of Fisheries released *The FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabelling of Fish and Fisheries Products from Marine Capture Fisheries* (FAO, 2005) in the same year. The FAO guidelines offered general principles for fisheries eco-labeling initiatives, including that they should include objective third-party fishery assessments using scientific

evidence, have transparent processes with extensive stakeholder consultation, offer opportunities for complaints, rules for adjudication, and have standards based on the sustainability of target species, ecosystems, and management practices (Sainsbury, 2010).

This synopsis is important for our analysis of territorial eco-certification because it illustrates that the emergence of the MSC generated added attention to fisheries and sustainability procedures at multiple regulatory scales. In turn, processes within and between states came to be crucial to the authority and legitimacy of the MSC standards as well as in the formation of challenges to it (see e.g. Hallström and Boström, 2010). The FAO best practice guidelines for eco-labels in fisheries emerged as an established form of global governance *over* fisheries eco-certification and labeling (Foley, 2013: 292) that can, and arguably must for credibility purposes, be used as a blueprint in the development of eco-certification initiatives.

3.2. Territorial eco-certification in fisheries

The rise of territorial eco-certifications coincides with MSC's rise in the global North and the release of FAO best practice guidelines on fisheries eco-labels. By the mid 2000s, the MSC and its environmental NGO allies had successfully persuaded major European and US retailers and food service companies to commit to the MSC in "green" purchasing policies (Ponte, 2012), with a wide range of responses from industry and government whose participation remains central to the MSC process. In some situations, industry and government have supported the MSC, in part to help producers gain or secure market access (Foley, 2013; Gulbrandsen, 2014). In others, industry and government have pushed back against a range of issues associated with the MSC (see below) (Gale and Haward, 2011; Foley and Hébert, 2013; Ponte, 2012). Industry and states have pursued territorial alternatives to the MSC in part to reconcile these tensions.

Following the failed Nordic regional initiative and the successful establishment of FAO guidelines on eco-labeling, beginning in 2007, new territorial eco-certifications emerged in Japan, Iceland, and Alaska and are currently under consideration in Canada and the US (Table 1). They consist of (1) the Marine Eco-Label (MEL) Japan program, established in 2007; (2) the Iceland Responsible Fisheries (IRF) eco-label and eco-certification program, developed between 2007 and 2009; (3) the Alaska Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Certification program, created in 2010; (4) a Canadian pilot project initiated in 2011; (5) and the US National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) certification initiative, which NMFS has recommended moving forward on, but has not finalized. To identify the nature of territoriality in the premises of the initiatives, we analyze each across four main issue areas: motivations, role of non-state actors, role of the state and state actors, and claims to credibility and legitimacy. The analysis demonstrates how the programs incorporate interests, ideas, actors, and institutions that are both territorial and transnational.

3.3. Motivations: Why demarcate around territories?

Our analysis reveals four core, and closely related motivations that develop territoriality-as-spatial strategy: (1) to respond strategically to the MSC, (2) to respond strategically to the transnational sustainable seafood movement, (3) to reassert and demonstrate territorial control over national fisheries management authority and production, and (4) to enhance control over information and communication of territorially-specific regulatory and production practices, manifested as a territorialized brand of eco-certification.

3.3.1. Strategic response to MSC

Developing an alternative to the MSC was a significant motivation – and arguably the prime catalyst – for all of the case studies. Industry and state actors identify three problems with MSC eco-certification that contribute to the logic for creating a territorial alternative to it. The first problem is the costs of eco-certification for industry and the direct and indirect costs for government. These include original third-party certification costs, eco-labeling licensing fees along the supply chain paid directly to the MSC, and periodic third-party audit and re-certification costs. These costs have long been considered exclusionary for small-scale fisheries and developing country fisheries (Ponte, 2008); however, they are also a matter of protest for large firms such as processors that deal in high volumes and therefore stand to pay high aggregate sums of eco-label licensing fees. Costs have become more contentious as price premiums for labeled products have remained elusive at the producer-level even when well-established MSC retail markets capture premiums (Roheim et al., 2011). In Japan, a major motivation for a territorial initiative was to offer a framework in which large and small-scale fishers alike could obtain eco-certification rapidly and at low costs (Moye, 2010). In Iceland, producers sought to avoid expensive verification processes through its program (Bjarnason, 2007; Thórarinsson, 2010). Frustration with costs of MSC eco-certification and eco-label licensing fees were also a major motivation in the Alaska case (Foley and Hébert, 2013). In Canada, a territorial system was explored because it was expected to "serve as alternatives to existing eco-label certifications, such as that of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), which can be complex and costly for some fisheries with otherwise responsible management systems in place" (AAFC, 2011a).

A related problem that producers and government faced with MSC emerges from its transnational nature. MSC has powerful influence over market access. Retailer commitments to procuring only MSC-certified fish has fostered the perception of monopoly within industry circles, motivating actors to consider developing and promoting alternatives. Monopoly in the marketplace was cited explicitly in Iceland (Bjarnason, 2007) and Alaska (Foley and Hébert, 2013). Furthermore, the MSC relies on existing state-based management resources and structures, including access to data that is collected and analyzed by fisheries management agencies in order to assess whether a fishery complies with MSC's requirements for effective management. In some cases, government and industry actors view that they are subsidizing the MSC – and the monopoly-like dynamics that it has fostered – which is profiting from long-standing existing regulatory and production practices while obscuring, or appropriating, the territorial origins of those practices.

3.3.2. Strategic responses to the sustainable seafood movement

The MSC operates in the wider context of market-oriented initiatives to affect change in fisheries and seafood markets; such initiatives draw on both transnational and more place-based demand and supply-oriented strategies. Demand-oriented strategies include consumer information and education cards, restaurants and celebrity chef programs, and efforts to engage retailers directly to shift purchasing policies. Supply oriented initiatives include the MSC and other eco-labels which offer a method to demonstrate products come from a fishery, or a specific and identifiable producer, deemed sustainable (Konefal, 2012; Silver and Hawkins, in press). Producers experience this movement through buyer demands to verify and demonstrate that seafood products come from responsibly managed fisheries. Producers' options for doing so remain limited and mainly involve undergoing third-party assessment for MSC's environmental standard or alternative initiatives, though efforts to identify place-based alternatives and

Table 1
Overview of territorial eco-certification initiatives.

Name (est., type)	Motivations	Non-stateactors	Role of the state	Claims to credibility
MEL Japan (2007, public–private corporation)	– Alternative to MSC – National authority and reputation – Resist external influence	– Fishing industry – Japan Fisheries Association – Civic groups	– Government on Board & Council – Public–private ('public interest') corporation	– FAO – Multi-stakeholder – Independent certification – National history of co-management/cultural practice of sustainable use
Iceland IRF (2007/2009, non-profit foundation)	– Alternative to MSC – Resist external influence – National authority and reputation – Control "sustainability" market access	– Fishing industry – Fisheries Association of Iceland	– Ministry of Fisheries, Marine Research Institute, Directorate of Fisheries – Public–private marketing and promotion body	– FAO – ISO 65 – 3rd party certification – Multi-stakeholder – National history & success of fisheries management
Alaska RFM (2010/2011, public–private non-profit corporation)	– Alternative to MSC – State-level authority and reputation – Control "sustainability" market access	– Fishing industry, especially processors – Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute	– State government – Public–private agency administers program	– FAO – ISO 65 – 3rd party certification – Multi-stakeholder – History of conservation mandate in state constitution
Canada (pilot project, 2011, NA)	– Alternative to MSC – National authority and reputation	– Fishing industry – Fisheries Council of Canada	– State support for pilot – Financial support from Federal Agri-food Department – Federal management agency assisting pilot	– FAO – 3rd party certification – Multi-stakeholder – Fisheries management frameworks & capacity
US (under negotiation 2015, proposed federal program under NMFS)	– Alternative to MSC – Resist external influence – Control "sustainability" market access	– National fishing industry associations	– Public–private committee – US National Marine Fisheries Service – Regional fisheries management agencies	– US federal fisheries legislation – Government agency data considered 'neutral'

alternative markets are becoming more common, albeit usually on a small scale (e.g. Campbell et al., 2014). In all of the eco-certification cases reviewed, pressure from environmental groups and, more importantly, from buyers looking for verification of sustainability was an important factor motivating the push for territorial eco-certification that could be an alternative to MSC while offering equivalent assurances of sustainability.

3.3.3. Control over national authority and production

As demand for eco-certifications has grown, producers and regulators have expressed concern that external assessments (or the lack thereof) could undermine not only market access, but also government authority over fisheries management. For example, a key objective in the Iceland IRF is to "Avoid private monopoly on criteria" (Thórarinsson, 2010). IRF promoters stress that there is "No external private 'guidance' of the development of fisheries management" (Thórarinsson, 2009: 12). One IRF leader describes eco-certification as simply a form of "verification of government fisheries management performance" which facilitates market access for seafood (Thórarinsson, 2009). Alaska actors were similarly motivated by concerns over intrusion by NGOs into the fishery management process and industry's perception that standards can be changed at the discretion of NGOs and thus constitute a "moving target" (Rice, n.d.). They also expressed concern that NGOs have control over what is deemed sustainable which in turn determines whether producers have access to markets (Riutta, n.d.).

3.3.4. Control over territorial representation

Eco-certification provides a means for a certifier to exert control over how state regulation and production practices are identified, evaluated, and communicated. This motivation is related to structural issues of authority and market access as well as ideational and discursive dimensions around territorially constituted (often national) production and values. In Japan (MEL), a key motivation was to create a counterpoint to widely publicized and generalized accounts of fisheries decline. MEL was a way for fishermen to become "activists" and publicize positive fisheries and fishing practices and to give their account of what they see as the "real" situation in their fisheries (Moye, 2010). The MEL eco-label was to enable fishermen to tell their own narrative of fisheries success, rather than to have an outsider (Western) narrative of fisheries crisis being told for them through the need for an MSC eco-label (Hall, 2011). MEL also became a platform in the defense of whaling. Though MEL is not actively undergoing an effort to certify whaling, MEL took up this issue as a part of its national, cultural mission (see below).

Icelandic industry actors, with government support, wished to develop an eco-certification and eco-label to communicate to and inform buyers about how Iceland fisheries are managed responsibly (Bjarnason, 2007). Similar to the MEL case, Icelandic fisheries interests were concerned over international environmental NGOs' influence on tense whaling debates and whether such controversies would spill over into major domestic fisheries such as cod. In Alaska, ASMI wished to maintain Alaska stakeholder control of messaging (Brown, n.d.) and to communicate what it perceived to be a well-established historic reputation of sustainability of Alaska's fisheries (Foley and Hébert, 2013). One of the goals of the Canadian pilot project was to provide a means to recognize the responsible management of Canadian fisheries (AAFC, 2011b). Likewise, a key motivation for US initiative is the argument that federally managed fisheries in the US are already sustainable because of the regulatory terms of and improvements made under the national Magnuson Stevenson Act. An eco-certification program is being explored in part as a way to verify, demonstrate and communicate this claim (Stoll and Johnson, 2015).

Fisheries interest groups perceive growing demand for verification and communication of sustainability as a threat to government authority and market access, but also to territorially constituted industry identities and practices. In Japan, MEL's website invokes the Ancient history of Japanese co-management as differing from Western management practices in which culture, regulation and management are more intertwined than in "American–European" fisheries (Hall, 2011). Control over fisheries is a powerful force in Icelandic culture and identity and the significant pride within the Icelandic seafood industry provided a powerful collective force for resisting the MSC. The Icelandic label combines eco-certification with a logo of origin to maintain, and capitalize on, long-standing reputation of Icelandic seafood products in key markets (Kvalvik et al., 2014). Alaska industry and political leaders regularly claim that long before the MSC and the FAO code of conduct, Alaska's state constitution mandated that fisheries management be conducted on the sustainable yield principle (Brown, n. d.; Sanguinetti, 2014). In a protest against a Walmart policy to support only MSC-certified seafood, fishermen and supporters carried posters with text such as "DON'T LET OUTSIDERS TELL US WHAT TO EAT", "ALASKA SALMON FOR ALASKANS" and "BUY AMERICAN? START WITH ALASKA SALMON" (Demer, 2013). The re-making of sustainability governance in these cases is thus motivated by a desire to support the collective identity of territorially constituted social relations of regulation and production.

In summary, at least four motivations played into the rise of territorial eco-certification initiatives. These motivations illustrate that the new initiatives are responses to an imperative for eco-certification as a condition for market access. They are efforts to generate alternatives to the MSC, the dominant and transnationally legible option, that showcase sustainable practices while specifically being embedded in and highlighting territorial attributes that organize and identify national and subnational actors as important to their vision of sustainability.

3.4. Non-state actors, institutions, and interests

Industry leadership, often through nationally-embedded industry associations in various forms of partnership with government (see below on role of the state), has driven the development of each territorial eco-certifications. The Japan Fisheries Association, a public interest corporation, led the development of the MEL Japan standard, standardizing process, and pays the salary of MEL employees (Accenture, 2009; Moye, 2010). In Iceland, the Fisheries Association of Iceland, which consisted of the Federation of Icelandic Fishing Vessel Owners, the National Association of Small Board Owners, and the Federation of Icelandic Fish Processing Plants, spearheaded program development. The Federation of Icelandic Fishing Vessel Owners, which mainly represents the owners of large-scale industrial fishing vessels, led the process. The Alaska RFM Certification program was led by the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI), a public–private agency created under state law as a public corporation to serve as the state's seafood marketing arm; it represents both fishing and processing interests. The Fisheries Council of Canada led the pilot project to develop separate eco-certification systems for capture fisheries in that country (AAFC, 2011a); the organization is a trade association representing about a 100 member companies engaged in the growing, harvesting, processing, importing and marketing of fish and seafood in Canada (FCC, 2011). In the US, though the proposed initiative would be developed and run by government, much of the process has been driven by industry with the support of government officials and elected politicians.

In promoting the development of territorial eco-certification, industry actors are responding to components of the transnational supply chains of which most are a part. Retailers play both indirect/structural and direct/instrumental role in shaping the process. For example, retail giant Walmart emerged as a critical force in the development of the Alaska RMF program. When the Alaska salmon industry, led by large processors, decided to discontinue support for MSC eco-certification and to pursue an alternative eco-certification program, Walmart initially indicated they would have to stop purchasing Alaska salmon because its seafood policy required MSC or equivalent eco-certification (Foley and Hébert, 2013). After heated negotiation among Alaska industry, political actors and the retailer, Walmart announced in 2014 that it considered the Alaska RFM program as meeting the requirements of its sustainable seafood policy (SeafoodSource.com, 2014). In Canada, the retailer Loblaw has communicated that the MSC is the foundation of their policy and encouraged government to support the MSC (Schmidt, 2012). In 2013, however, the Canadian pilot project reported that the FAO-based Alaska eco-certification was gaining credibility and market acceptance in the US and Europe and that some retailers are looking to alternative eco-certifications due to a lack of MSC-certified supply (AAFC, 2013). Transnational buyers and retailers are assessing whether emerging territorial eco-certifications meet the generalized sustainable procurement policies they have adopted and will be core to the ultimate success or failure of the territorial initiatives.

The role of NGOs within the administrative structures of territorial initiatives varies significantly and is subject to change. Leading international environmental NGOs, such as WWF, are committed to the MSC as the gold standard for certifying fisheries – in part because the MSC is transnational. There is a notable lack of environmental NGO involvement in most of the processes reviewed. In Japan and Iceland, there has historically been distrust of environmental NGOs in the fisheries sector resulting largely from whaling conflicts. MEL Japan has the most diverse societal NGO representation of the initiatives – its Board includes a wide range of community, academic, labor and women's groups, though no environmental organizations – while Iceland has the least with no environmental NGO representation. Though the Alaska program initially did not include environmental NGOs, it has recently moved to incorporate more diverse stakeholder representation. Public discussions surrounding the US initiative include strong statements against the role of third-party certifications and NGOs.

In summary, fishing and processing industry organizations that represent producers operating within specific territories have initiated the eco-certification initiatives. That their efforts intersect with demands from important transnational commercial actors, including buyers and retailers, illustrates how territorial eco-certifications are intertwined with the transnational dimensions of sustainability in seafood markets. Prominent international environmental advocacy groups, many of which are committed to supporting non-place-specific MSC, have been largely outside of the processes; a dynamic that we hypothesize is largely a result of these organizations, often transnational themselves, already being aligned with the MSC or their own demand-driven sustainability guidelines, both of which are designed to be capable of applying to fisheries everywhere.

3.5. Role of the state

In each jurisdiction where territorial eco-certifications have emerged, government fisheries management authorities regulate fisheries production practices. The role of the state in territorial eco-certification initiatives varies and is subject to change, but the following patterns of state action were observed; states: facilitate and/or fund the establishment, administration, and promotion/marketing of new initiatives; provide the legal basis for organizational forms through which initiatives are established and administered; provide stakeholder representation on the

administrative and technical/expertise structures of new initiatives; provide research support/technical expertise capacity; or, in one case (the US), take full responsibility for the development and administration of the initiative.

Each territorial eco-certification was spearheaded by industry but with important forms of state support. MEL Japan was established out of the work of a preparation committee that included government officials (Nishimura, 2008). Its structure consists of a Council, an Audit Committee, and a Board. Among the 20 positions on MEL Japan's Board and Council, there is one representative from the Japan Fisheries Agency, which is a public interest corporation, and as such, must be approved by a government ministry, pursue activities deemed to benefit the public and be inspected by the government every two to three years (Moye, 2010). Representatives of the Fisheries Research Agency, an independent administrative agency, fill two posts. Industry led the creation of the IRF in Iceland, but the process involved continued dialog with and support from government authorities. The formal announcement of the Iceland IRF was made in a 2007 Statement on Responsible Fisheries in Iceland signed by the Minister of Fisheries, a representative of the Directorate of Fisheries (a state agency responsible of implementing fisheries management legislation), the Director of the Marine Research Institute (a government institute under the Ministry of Fisheries), and the Chairman of the Fisheries Association of Iceland. In Alaska, the territorial eco-certification program was mainly an initiative of ASMI, which was established under state law in 1981 as a public corporation. The pilot project for a Canadian eco-certification program emerged in a state venue of the market-oriented federal Agriculture and Agri-food Canada (AAFC)'s Value Chain Roundtables. The Seafood Value Chain Roundtable is co-chaired by a representative from industry and a representative from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Canada's fisheries management agency. The AAFC provided the venue for industry-state consensus building and up to CAN$816,000 to the pilot projects through its Canadian Industry Traceability Infrastructure Program (AAFC, 2011b).

The state also plays a role in the governance—legal, organizational, technical and administrative—functions of territorial eco-certification initiatives. One analysis of MEL described it as government owned and operated (Accenture, 2009), but since it was spearheaded and is largely administered by Japan Fisheries Agency, which entangles the state and firms, it is more accurate to describe it as having a hybrid structure that requires that its activities meet the interests of both states and firms involved in the sector. In Iceland, the IRF Foundation that administers the territorial eco-certification program receives funding from the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture's Added Value for Seafood program and Promote Iceland covers the salary costs for staff (Nøstvold et al., 2012: 6). Promote Iceland, a public–private partnership established to improve competitiveness of Iceland companies in foreign markets, is responsible for marketing the IRF program. The program is also described as an "integrated" program of the seafood industry and authorities (Thórarinsson, 2011), showing the state's active support for creating a mechanism for promoting the sustainable attributes of the fisheries sector. In Alaska, ASMI's board of directors, consisting of industry representatives appointed by Alaska's governor, administers the eco-certification program. The state funds ASMI primarily from state funds, federal grant monies and a tax on seafood processors that process Alaska fish. Like in Japan and Iceland, the Alaska case is characterized by highly integrated relations among powerful seafood industry organizations and regulatory and market-supporting state agencies acting in concert to support the interests of domestic industry navigating the global industry.

The proposed US program has the most direct role of the state. The US federal government has officially declared that it will not participate directly or indirectly in private sector eco-certification and has instead set out to explore a federal eco-label based entirely on existing government management structures. State agencies see this as an opportunity to improve relations with industry without compromising management and conservation goals and bolster its role as an authoritative source of information about sustainability in fisheries (Stoll and Johnson, 2015). This effort will help industry comply with an executive order to encourage markets for territorially produced sustainable products and services that can supply federal contracts, which often require domestically produced products that comply with strict rules of origin (Stoll and Johnson, 2015).

In all cases, state regulatory and marketing actors highlight and support territorial eco-certification. By assisting industry efforts to navigate changing global seafood markets through interventions highlighting territorial attributes of production and existing state regulations, the state in each case stands to actively expand its own footprint and presence domestically and in global seafood markets.

3.6. Claims to credibility

Each territorial eco-certification initiative is designed to provide a new means to credibly document, verify, and communicate sustainability practices. Yet the established programs are not simply self-certification by the state and/or industry (though the US discourse comes closest to this approach). Instead, the dominant trend across the cases is to build infrastructures of credibility (Penders and Flipse, 2014) that are recognized transnationally, but leave open the opportunity for territorial operational features. The infrastructures of credibility in the territorial eco-certification initiatives are largely marked by their compliance with global indicators of legitimacy, including: compliance with international norms and practices; the use of independent, science based expertise; and, their formation through multi-stakeholder institutions.

To build credibility and legitimacy around the technical specifications for eco-certification, almost all cases seek compliance with, and emphasize linkages to, transnational organizations and related norms. All established initiatives invoke the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995) and the FAO Guidelines for the Ecolabeling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries (2005/2009). MEL Japan was designed to align with FAO guidelines in an attempt to ensure legitimacy and integrity of the overall initiative (Nishimura, 2008). In both Iceland and Alaska, the initiatives were designed to ensure consistency with the two FAO documents and both initiatives are promoted as FAO-based eco-certifications. In Canada, the pilot project to test the feasibility of an eco-certification initiative indicated plans to base the project on FAO guidelines. At the time of writing, NMFS in the US was the exception and did not refer to FAO guidelines in its proposed program, instead focusing strictly on the attributes of domestic regulation. In addition to the FAO, several established territorial initiatives use and invoke the ISO 65 – the International Standards Organization's requirements for bodies operating under product certification systems. The Iceland IRF claims to operate in accordance with ISO Guide 65 accreditation from a National Accreditation Body of the International Accreditation Forum. IRF describes its initiative as "FAO-ISO based model" in some promotional documents. The Alaska initiative also fosters and invokes technical and discursive linkages to the ISO and the International Accreditation Forum. The territorial eco-certifications strategically use international institutions to widely legitimize their practices.

Gaining transnational credibility requires the use of independent, science-based expertise to develop and enforce eco-label rules – a recommendation in FAO eco-labeling best practice guidelines. This imperative creates an important role for accredited third party certifiers, auditors, even while the initiatives are designed

around territorial attributes. MEL Japan adopted a third-party certification model, though it has developed its own audit committee that accredits bodies to conduct certification inspections (Moye, 2010). Iceland and Alaska have taken on a more explicit third-party approach. The ISO-accredited Global Trust Certification Ltd., a firm also accredited to carry out MSC assessments, is the approved certification body for the Iceland Responsible Fisheries program. In Alaska, ASMI contracted the same company to establish a third-party approach to provide trade partners with independent verification of Alaska's fisheries management (Brown, n.d.). In Canada, the Fisheries Council of Canada contracted Global Trust Certification Ltd. to assist with pilot project development based on the company's previous work in Iceland and Alaska. The intersections among ideas and practices in each case shows not only how transnational norms come to bear on the formation of the territorial initiatives but also how territorial initiatives contribute to the extension and legitimation of transnational governance norms. The outlier for reliance on third party certifiers may be the proposed US initiative, which to date has explicitly resisted their use.

While the territorial eco-certifications seek to foster transnational legitimacy and credibility, the internal governance of the programs remains territorially embedded and controlled. In each initiative, institutionalized multi-stakeholder collaboration – principally among various seafood industry interest groups and government agencies – foster legitimacy and credibility, which is further enhanced by technical guidance from scientists and experts knowledgeable about the particular territorial production context. In Japan, the MEL Council is unique in including a broad spectrum of interests from the outset, including members representing Japanese producers and consumers of fishery products. It oversees a Technical Committee, which oversees the development and application of the certification standards and the Public Relations Committee, which publicizes the system in Japan and overseas. The Council is composed of experts and academics from various fields, oversees basic administration matters and serves as a general advisory board to MEL. In Iceland, a multi-stakeholder technical committee is responsible for the certification specifications work and communication to the external certification body and public agencies (Nøstvold et al., 2012). In Alaska, no new organization was created to administer the RFM program. Instead, the public–private seafood market agency ASMI administers the program and owns the standard. It has, however, recently established a quasi-independent RFM Conformance Criteria Committee with international representation from science, industry, resource management, trade, and environmental NGOs. The multidisciplinary RFM Conformance Criteria Committee acts as the "standard custodian."

Both territorial and transnational infrastructures of legitimacy and credibility are deployed in the eco-certification initiatives. In most cases, this has involved developing new institutional bodies that operate at the territorial level and are capable of integrating transnational norms and principles, exerting scientific expertise, and providing the legal structures for territorial actors – primarily the commercial sector and state agents – to collaborate in the development of the territorial eco-certification.

4. Conclusion

Identifying a moment in which industry and state actors in multiple contexts have begun to develop eco-certification initiatives and sorting through the attributes of these initiatives, we have identified a recent flourishing of territorial eco-certifications in the fisheries sector. By affirming state regulatory processes and production practices and institutionalizing and communicating a territorial brand identity associated with responsible fisheries management, the new eco-certification initiatives seem, at first glance, to simply *territorialize* a method of sustainability govern ance—eco-certification—that the *transnational* MSC has used to influence market conditions in the global seafood trade. But on closer inspection, it is clear that the territorial eco-certifications also address distinct dimensions of *transnationality* that come to bear on fisheries governance and production networks. They incorporate principles and standards of international authority (particularly United Nations provisions and International Standards Organization (ISO) standards) to make the initiatives globally legible and gain credibility and legitimacy by applying international best practices and using certification mechanisms of chain of custody and eco-labels to verify and communicate product attributes. In doing so, they reflect the importance of authoritative claims to sustainability that are now deeply entrenched in transnational governance and production networks where eco-certification is often a requirement to access global markets.

From this set of findings, we identify the new fisheries eco-certifications examined above as emerging forms of what might be conceptualized as *territorial sustainability governance*. The territorial re-making of transnational sustainability governance works through integrated networks among territorially embedded seafood production interests, state regulatory and marketing institutions, *and* international market dynamics and governance norms. It serves to shore up the territorial, often national, industry identities and features of place-specific production and state-based regulatory regimes, and pushes these features beyond the spatial boundaries of the state by promoting them for recognition in global markets. It is crucial, we argue, to recognize that the outward expansion of territorial attributes is contingent upon being embedded in and navigating through, highly competitive transnational governance and market contexts. The territorial eco-certification initiatives are evolving within transnational commodity networks that are demanding sustainability certification and driving industry and states' interest in developing initiatives that comply with mounting pressures to demonstrate sustainability. The territorial eco-certifications are, therefore, also transnational in that they appeal to, and rely on, international authority, particularly the FAO and ISO, to communicate transnationally legible credibility. In doing so, the territorial eco-certification initiatives confirm transnational meta-governance referents for global fisheries governance.

As such, the cases do not signal a move to narrow parochialism nor a rejection of international authority. They should not be confused as state programs that assert nation-state authority from within territorial boundaries. Reducing the initiatives to simply the state and/or its components (e.g. fishing industry, a fishery or bureaucratic functions of the state) or its territorial boundaries would overlook that they explicitly embrace the transnational opportunities and challenges associated with the global drive for "sustainable seafood". In abiding by international norms, and embedding them in territorial specificity, the initiatives enable industries to simultaneously assert territorial identity and comply with international market requirements. These features are consistent with emerging notions of territoriality as a set of mediated relationships rooted in ties to the material environment, other groups and mediated by techniques and representations. Our case not only shows how capital *retains* its links to particular states and that states support territorially embedded capital (Lacher, 2005), but illustrates active acts of *re-embedding* as a strategy that firms and states are deploying to contend with challenges and opportunities presented by the global. These findings reveal the persistence of the integrated nature of capitalist production, state forms, and world order (Cox, 1987) whereby producers and states draw upon international governance and market norms to institutionalize new forms of territoriality-as-spatial-strategy.

The emergence of territorial eco-certifications reveals the highly dynamic, fluid and increasingly politicized nature of sustainability governance in the global economy. As a result, the new initiatives are pragmatic and idealistic mechanisms for contending with and shaping the intersection between territorial production and transnational economic and environmental management. Like Bridge's (2008: 413) explanation of the territoriality of oil resources as "embedded in the proprietorial, institutional and cultural–political structures of the nation-state," the territorial eco-certification strategy carries nationalistic features that also engage transnational dynamics. Embedded in the regulatory structures of the state, the eco-certification initiatives function as a form of resistance against exclusively external, globally applicable, sustainability labels. They hinge on distinguishing a producer's territorial brand identity in the global marketplace. These kinds of territorial, often nationalist, sentiments around resources can create significant shifts in the distribution of power within and across an entire production network (Bridge, 2008; Perreault, 2006; Valdivia, 2007), not least because resources are closely bound to notions of territoriality and identity.

In this vein, the initiatives celebrate territorial specificity, promising an alternative to globally applicable sustainability governance initiatives that is nevertheless both legible in the global market and ostensibly more accessible for industry than competing global initiatives. Identifying this dynamism is not only an exercise in understanding and showcasing change in the global political economy of certification, it is consequential in that it continues to further complicate, if not obscure, what sustainability certifications signify in ecological terms or otherwise. By insisting there is no transnational monopoly on judgments over fishery sustainability and by defending the value of their state investments in regulation, these new institutions of territorial eco-certification demonstrate how scientific claims of sustainability are still subject to debate. They demonstrate, moreover, how territorially embedded actors can exert agency in the struggle over who can legitimately make sustainability claims transnationally.

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