

The Global Political Economy of Public Support for Private Regulation: The Impacts of International Eco-certification and Labeling on Canadian Fisheries Management

Paul Foley, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Political Science
York University
pfoley@yorku.ca

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Abstract

This paper examines why and how Canadian fisheries management is being reshaped through interaction with third-party environmental certification and labeling initiatives. The proliferation of certification schemes and similar forms of non-state regulatory authority has drawn attention from a growing number of political scientists over the last decade. However, political science and other academic literatures on new forms of authority such as certification standards lack detailed analyses on the impacts of more privatized regulatory tools on different domestic regulatory regimes. The nature and extent of different state responses to and involvement in these new regulatory arrangements in particular requires empirical and conceptual clarification. In response to these gaps, this paper combines document analysis and information from interviews to examine why and how Canadian federal agencies are interacting with new private environmental certification in fisheries, particularly the globally leading sustainable fisheries eco-certification and labeling program of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). Contrary to prominent approaches in the literature, this paper argues that conceptualizing certification dynamics as private, non-governmental and voluntary is somewhat misleading and that certification dynamics in Canadian seafood industries are being heavily shaped by existing globally-oriented economic 'competition' policies at federal government levels.

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