TOWARDS PRODUCER-INCLUSIVE ECO-CERTIFICATION IN AQUACULTURE

A CASE STUDY OF THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN SHRIMP AQUACULTURE IMPROVEMENT PROTOCOL (SEASAIP) IN THAILAND

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Cover picture: An auditor and a shrimp producer on a shrimp farm in Chanthaburi, Thailand.
Photo taken by the author.

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A Case Study of the Southeast Asian Shrimp Aquaculture Improvement Protocol (SEASAIP) in Thailand

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Summary

Aquaculture is one of the fastest growing food sectors worldwide, providing an alternative to wild capture fisheries that deplete natural fish stocks, but at the same time resulting in numerous social and environmental problems such as mangrove destruction and water pollution. Eco-certification is a market-based and voluntary form of governance that aims to deal with these problems by stimulating sustainable production methods. However, the literature on eco-certification in aquaculture suggests that producers are often excluded from decision-making in eco-certification, resulting in standards that do not match the realities of producers. Moreover, the costs and benefits of eco-certification are unequally distributed.

The Southeast Asian Shrimp Aquaculture Improvement Protocol (SEASAIP) is currently being developed as an alternative, more inclusive form of eco-certification. The objective of this research is to evaluate the inclusiveness of SEASAIP with regard to producers in Thailand in order to enhance insights on the impediments to more producer-inclusive forms of eco-certification. Inclusiveness is defined as the possibility to participate as equals and consists of three domains: distribution, recognition and representation. Answering the question of the possibility of producer-inclusive eco-certification can also shed light on the debate between two opposing views in environmental sociology, namely ecological modernization theory and political ecology respectively. The case study of SEASAIP is carried out through a fieldwork in Thailand, involving the attendance of a SEASAIP Steering Committee meeting and interviews with various stakeholders and producers from SEASAIP pilot sites.

The research indicates that SEASAIP has been able to overcome some of the impediments to inclusiveness that are characteristic of other eco-certifications. For example, SEASAIP mainly consists of regional stakeholders among which producer representatives, ensuring that the standard is closer to regional production realities. Attention is paid to the costs of auditing and improvements in farm management. However, questions about the eventual costs and benefits of SEASAIP for producers remain because of its dependency on the willingness of buyers to contribute. Moreover, the format of the multi-stakeholder conference to create the standards is not conducive to the expression of producer interests. Finally, producers are only indirectly represented, making SEASAIP not a genuinely bottom-up initiative.

The case study reveals several mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in eco-certification, such as buyer dependency, the multi-stakeholder format and the form of representation. This shows that power does indeed play an important role in eco-certification, but this does not lead to the conclusion that inclusive eco-certification is impossible, as power can become the subject of discussion. Both ecological modernization theory and political ecology can be reconceptualized in the light of these findings.

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List of Acronyms

ASC	Aquaculture Stewardship Council
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASIC	Asian Seafood Improvement Collaborative
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GAA-BAP	Global Aquaculture Alliance Best Aquaculture Practices
GAP	Good Aquaculture Practice
GlobalG.A.P.	Global Good Agricultural Practice
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SEASAIP	Southeast Asian Shrimp Aquaculture Improvement Protocol
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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The poet Thomas Gray (1768) once wrote *"I shall be but a shrimp of an author"*. I do sincerely hope that this metaphor does not carry a prophetic message regarding this thesis about our crustacean friend.

All the members of human society stand in need of each other's assistance, and are likewise exposed to mutual injuries. Where the necessary assistance is reciprocally afforded from love, from gratitude, from friendship, and esteem, the society flourishes and is happy. [...] though among the different members of the society there should be not mutual love and affection, the society, though less happy and agreeable, will not necessarily be dissolved. Society may subsist among different men, as among different merchants, from a sense of its utility, without any mutual love or affection. [...] it [society] may still be upheld by a mercenary exchange of good offices according to an agreed valuation. Society, however, cannot subsist among those who are at all times ready to hurt and injure one another. [...] Justice, on the contrary, is the main pillar that upholds the whole edifice.

Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1853: 124-125), quoted in Sedlacek (2011)

I. Introduction

Erst kommt das Fressen, und dann kommt die Moral.[1]

Bertold Brecht in *Die Dreigroschenoper* (2009 [1928])

Eco-certification shows that morality and appetite can co-exist. But existing forms of eco-certification in aquaculture also show that issues of morality persist. Attaining just, inclusive and sustainable aquaculture through eco-certification requires paying more attention to producers and their realities. This thesis is about this pathway towards producer-inclusive eco-certification in aquaculture.

Aquaculture is one of the fastest growing food sectors worldwide. On the one hand, this provides an opportunity to maintain or even expand the consumption of aquatic animals in the context of depleting natural fish stocks, providing an important source of protein, economic development and employment. On the other hand, the growth of aquaculture has resulted in numerous social and environmental problems such as mangrove destruction and water pollution. Eco-certification is a market-based and voluntary form of governance that aims to deal with these problems by stimulating sustainable production methods. However, producers are often excluded from decision-making in eco-certification, resulting in standards that do not match the realities of producers. Especially small-sized producers in developing countries are excluded because of difficult technical requirements that are not tailored towards their realities and because of the high costs of auditing and certification. The Southeast Asian Shrimp Aquaculture Improvement Protocol (SEASAIP) is currently being developed as an alternative, more inclusive form of eco-certification. The goal of this research is to establish whether SEASAIP is successful in creating a producer-inclusive form of eco-certification. The study is limited to Thailand, the main producer of shrimp in Southeast Asia.

This chapter provides the background to this research, by answering questions such as: what are the developments in aquaculture and its governance through eco-certification?; why does this study focus on Thailand? and why is it important to consider producer-inclusiveness in eco-certification? At the end of the chapter the research objective and questions are presented.

1. AQUACULTURE: THE BLUE REVOLUTION

Aquaculture, or the production of farmed seafood, has become an increasingly important sector in global food provisioning during the last decades. This phenomenon has been labelled the Blue Revolution, referring to the similar rise in agricultural production induced by the Green Revolution. As of 2016, aquaculture is responsible for half of the fish consumed globally,

[1] This can roughly be translated as 'first food, then morals'.

compared to 13,4% in 1990 (FAO 2016; FAO 2014). Currently 17% of total animal-source protein is ensured by aquaculture production (FAO 2016). The sector has become an important source of income, producing US$160.2 billion worth of seafood and employing about 18 million people (FAO 2016). Farmed seafood production is often regarded as a viable and more sustainable alternative to capture fisheries, which is depleting the oceans and therefore overreaching its production capacity. The enormous growth in aquaculture production has been enabled by the expansion, intensification and industrialization of production. Intensive aquaculture involves selective fish breeding in hatcheries, high stocking densities, the use of processed feed, frequent flushing of water and mechanized farming (aerators, water pumps, lighting). As fish is the most-traded food product globally, farmed seafood products are often consumed at locations distant from where they are produced, rendering aquaculture subject to global value chain dynamics.

1.1 Aquaculture in Thailand

Thailand is one of the leading producers in aquaculture, producing about 934.8 thousand tons of aquatic animals in 2014, thereby occupying the tenth place in global rankings (FAO 2016). The vast majority of this consists of shrimp. Thailand is also an important player in the global market for aquaculture, being the largest exporter of shrimps worldwide, thereby contributing 18% of the world market for frozen shrimp. Most Thai shrimp is destined for the US market. Thailand's intensive shrimp farming industry took off in 1987 aided by its favourable geography (ca. 2600 kilometres of coastline) and climate as it took over the role of Taiwan as the main producer of shrimps after the latter's industry collapsed. Thai aquaculture depends heavily on global markets, which creates a large vulnerability to fluctuating market conditions. However, the opportunities for high and quick returns draw many people into the industry. Importantly, Thailand's aquaculture sector consists for the most part of small-sized, family-based enterprises, employing about 134,000 people (Nissapa et al. 2002).

1.2 Environmental and Social Problems

Like its green counterpart, the Blue Revolution and its associated expansion, intensification and industrialization of aquaculture have been heavily criticized because of various social and environmental problems. The creation of ponds in coastal regions has led to the destruction of mangrove forests, which protect coastlines and serve as nurseries for other fish species (Huitric et al. 2002). This has also evoked social conflicts over ownership and access rights, as previously commonly owned or open-access resources are privatized (Islam 2014; EJF 2003). Furthermore,

the use of chemicals to ensure hygiene and the use of antibiotics to prevent disease outbreaks[2] in ponds have led to concerns over food safety[3] and pollution of the pond water and bottom (Boyd and McNevin 2015). When the polluted pond water and pond bottom sludge is discharged, this causes salinization of soils and surface water and pollution through the spread of used chemicals and antibiotics (Boyd and McNevin 2015). Finally, some aquaculture species such as shrimp depend on fishmeal, which often consists of wild capture fish, thereby contributing to overfishing even more (Naylor et al. 2000). This phenomenon has become known under the label of the 'fish trap' (Boyd and McNevin 2015). Handing out fishmeal also leads to eutrophication of the surface water. The actual social and environmental impact of aquaculture varies per pond and depends on specific local characteristics such as the technology available, the capacities of the producers and the way the production process is organized (Oosterveer 2006).

2. ECO-CERTIFICATION

The environmental and social concerns related to aquaculture production have evoked responses from various social actors to attempt to govern the sustainability of the sector. The Thai government has developed extensive regulation, including 37 laws, but compliance is low because of low levels of monitoring and enforcement as the result of administrative fragmentation and lack of resources (Huitric et al. 2002; Oosterveer 2006). In response to the perceived failure of traditional government regulation, various alternative and often voluntary governance arrangements based on standards and certification have emerged (Bush et al. 2013a). These eco-certification schemes involve a more diverse array of social actors, including private businesses and non-governmental organizations (NGOs[4]). The three major schemes at the global level are GlobalG.A.P., the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) and the Global Aquaculture Alliance Best Aquaculture Practice standards (GAA-BAP). GlobalG.A.P. has as of yet no presence in Thailand and there is only one ASC-certified farm since October 2016 (GGN 2016; ASC 2016). There are 209 GAA-BAP-certified farms in Thailand, of which 198 shrimp farms (GAA-BAP 2016). Next to these global certification schemes, the Thai government has also

[2] The intensification of aquaculture has led to the prevalence of disease outbreaks in ponds by viruses, bacteria, fungi or other pathogens (Gräslund and Bengtsson 2001). Apart from using antibiotics, other strategies to deal with diseases are shifting pond locations and adopting closed management systems (Flaherty and Vandergeest 1998).

[3] For example, improved techniques to measure nitrofuran in imported shrimp in the EU led to the detection of nitrofuran in Thai shrimp, causing an enormous decline in demand for shrimp produced in that country (Bush and Oosterveer 2007).

[4] Although there is considerable debate over the exact meaning of the term 'non-governmental', NGOs are at least formally independent from governments and they do not seek to make profits, operating in the space of civil society.

developed Good Aquaculture Practice (GAP) guidelines as a national form of certification, the Thai GAP.

An important and often dominant aspect of these schemes are the technical and managerial standards that farmers have to comply with in order to receive certification (Bush et al. 2013a). Credibility of the standards is ensured through so called third-party certification, involving an independent auditing agency next to the industry and the standard-setting body, although this does not apply to Thai GAP. The various forms of eco-certification in aquaculture differ in their standard-setting process, most dominant actors, market strategies (labelling or business-to-business certification) and market orientation. GAA-BAP was one of the first forms of eco-certification in aquaculture, but as it was set up by the industry it was perceived to be mainly promoting industry interests and thereby excluding producers and local communities affected by aquaculture. This was one of the main reasons for the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to initiate the Aquaculture Dialogues that led to the establishment of ASC. Eco-certification is mostly targeted at the practices of producers at the farm site and it is often enforced through the value chain, as consumers, retailers and/or exporters demand certified products. This raises questions about the role of producers in eco-certification.

In the social sciences there are different views on the role of sustainability in markets, deriving from differing theoretical positions. The evaluation of eco-certification as a prime example of market-based ecological reform varies among these perspectives. On the one hand, ecological modernization theory regards eco-certification as the reflexive reordering of production and consumption practices. On the other hand, political ecology sees eco-certification as shaped by power relations, resulting in the exclusion of producers and thereby challenging its effectiveness. Because of the significance of these approaches for the evaluation of eco-certification, it is necessary to engage with the theoretical opposition between ecological modernization theory and political ecology. The theoretical framework in chapter 2 elaborates on this discussion. One of the central themes in the debate concerns the position of producers in eco-certification.

3. PRODUCERS

The truly globalized production and consumption of aquaculture products and its sustainability governance by an array of transnational social actors evokes questions about the position of producers in eco-certification. Is certification a choice that involves the active engagements of producers, or is it the result of pressures from markets, consumers in the global North and environmental NGOs, representing a new form of extraterritorial control (Vandergeest and Unno 2012)? What role do producers have in shaping these new governance arrangements? Various studies have shown that especially small-sized developing country producers are

underrepresented in the creation of global sustainability standards and eco-certification schemes (Vandergeest 2007; Bush et al. 2013a). The Aquaculture Dialogues initiated by WWF that eventually resulted in the establishment of ASC were meant to be more inclusive, actively involving producers in multi-stakeholder dialogues and providing the opportunity to respond to draft standards and documents through online consultation periods. Nonetheless, various studies show that the predominance of the technical and managerial knowledge of NGOs and industries over the socio-political concerns of farmers seriously hampered this effort towards inclusiveness (Belton et al. 2009; Anh et al. 2011). Others have pointed at a miss-match between global standards and local practices (Vellema and van Wijk 2015). Moreover, there are issues related to the costs and benefits of certification for producers. The effective exclusion of producers from standard-setting processes in eco-certification and the resulting mismatch between standards and the realities of producer on the ground, have made eco-certification less effective.

According to Bush et al. (2013b) there is a difficult relationship between improving access to certification for developing world producers on the one hand and promoting continuous improvement in environmental standards on the other hand, whilst both are necessary to maintain the credibility of labels. This conundrum of credibility, accessibility and continuous improvement can be understood as the 'devils triangle' of certification. Till now, it can be argued that accessibility has been the victim of this devils triangle.

3.1 The Southeast Asian Shrimp Aquaculture Improvement Protocol

In response to the frustrated efforts towards inclusiveness in the Aquaculture Dialogues, a new form of certification is being developed that explicitly aims to be inclusive through bottom-up participatory processes of standard development, under the name of the Asian Seafood Improvement Collaborative (ASIC). The aim of ASIC is to adapt sustainability programmes for the Asian seafood industry. Its main programme for aquaculture is the Southeast Asian Shrimp Aquaculture Improvement Protocol (SEASAIP), which aims for "better reconciliation between the desires of the marketplace and the realities facing producers on the ground" (ASIC 2016), operating under the assumption that SEASAIP is more accessible and therefore more inclusive in general. In addition, SEASAIP aims to address the excessive burden of certification costs on producers and processors. These costs and the lack of a significant increase in revenue for certified farms result in a lack of incentives for non-certified farms to become certified, according to SEASAIP.

The programme is established through a multi-stakeholder initiative. The Steering Committee involves producer representatives, NGOs, industry actors, an auditing agency, an intergovernmental organization and academia. SEASAIP has been funded by USAID and Seafood Watch. The latter's standards are used for benchmarking, thereby providing access to the US

market. SEASAIP provides an interesting case to research the position of producers in eco-certification. The question is whether SEASAIP can successfully overcome the impediments to producer inclusiveness in standard setting which hampered previous certification schemes.

3.2 Inclusiveness as Justice

In order to analyse issues of inclusiveness in eco-certification, this research adopts a justice framework based on the work of Nancy Fraser (2007). This framework will be further developed in the theoretical chapter. Justice as inclusiveness consists of three domains: distribution, recognition and representation. Distribution refers to the resources necessary to participate as equals in social life, pointing to the material and informational resources necessary to be involved in standard setting and to the costs and benefits of eco-certification. Recognition is concerned with institutionalized cultural hierarchies and as such the standing of actors as legitimate and equal participants in eco-certification. Finally, representation is related to issues of inclusion and exclusion from membership in the community entitled to making justice claims and the procedures that structure the politics of contestation.

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND QUESTIONS

This thesis analyses the politics of eco-certification in SEASAIP, looking at mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion of producers in terms of distribution, recognition and representation. Thus, the objective of this research is to evaluate the inclusiveness of eco-certification for aquaculture in Thailand in order to enhance insights on the impediments to producer-inclusive forms of eco-certification. To do so, the following question guides the research:

How inclusive is the SEASAIP aquaculture eco-certification scheme in terms of the incorporation of producers in Thailand?

In this question, 'inclusive' refers to the three domains of justice outlined above, i.e. distribution, recognition and representation. The main research question is divided into three sub-questions, organized according to the three domains of inclusiveness:

1. *How are the costs and benefits of eco-certification and the resources required to participate in standard setting distributed in SEASAIP particularly with regard to producers?*
2. *Are producers and their concerns recognized in SEASAIP?*
3. *How are producers and their concerns represented in SEASAIP?*

5. OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

The remainder of this thesis is organized as follows. In chapter 2 the theoretical discussion that has informed this research is explained. Furthermore, a framework for analysing inclusiveness is developed. The literature on producer-inclusiveness in eco-certification for aquaculture is reviewed in chapter 3. Chapter 4 deals with the methodology and methods of this research. The results of the empirical research are presented in chapter 5. Chapter 6 discusses these results reflecting on the theoretical framework. Finally, chapter 7 concludes.

II. Theoretical Framework

This research into the inclusiveness of eco-certification is for a large part informed by a theoretical discussion. This chapter shows how researching inclusiveness in eco-certification can shed light on a longstanding theoretical opposition in environmental sociology between ecological modernization theory and political ecology respectively. It is necessary to engage with this theoretical discussion because of its importance for the evaluation of eco-certification. Ecological modernization theory and political ecology seem to be mutually exclusive theories that lead to contradictory evaluations of the potential and success of eco-certification. Instead of simply adopting either one of these perspectives, this thesis reflects on the difference between the two, based on the assumption that both may contain useful concepts that need not be as mutually exclusive as they appear to be.

1. ECO-CERTIFICATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY

Eco-certification has gained a prominent status in various social theories about the environment, although in divergent and often opposing ways. The most exemplary and arguably most polarized discussion about eco-certification takes place between ecological modernization theory and political ecology respectively[5]. These approaches differ greatly in their analysis and evaluation of the possibility of market-driven environmental reform, the intentions of actors involved in eco-certification and the potential for change that eco-certification presents.

1.1 Ecological Modernization Theory

The notion of ecological modernization refers to the "environmental reform processes at multiple scales in the contemporary world", reflecting on "how various institutions and actors attempt to integrate environmental concerns into their everyday functioning, development and relationships with others, including their relation with the natural world" (Mol et al. 2009: 4). Ecological modernization theory argues that the process of modernization has an in-built corrective mechanism (Spaargaren and Mol 1992; Buttel 2000; Spaargaren et al. 2009). Drawing on Giddens' notion of reflexivity (cf. Giddens 1990), it attests that social practices are constantly restructured on the basis of newly incoming information about these practices. As the ecological risks of modernization become increasingly apparent, social practices are reflexively reordered to incorporate an ecological rationality as a "relatively independent epistemology", meaning independent of and in co-existence with economic and political rationalities (Mol et al. 2009: 7). Eco-certification is often regarded as the realization of this environmental rationality. In that

[5] Béné (2005) discusses the differences between political ecology and ecological modernization (which he labels 'best management practices') as they resonate in policy controversies in shrimp aquaculture from the viewpoint of discourse analysis. Here, I refer to both approaches as social theories and I am concerned with the actual institutionalization of reflexivity and power rather than the discourses that constitute these approaches.

sense, eco-certification reflexively reorders production and consumption practices, as it is regarded as part of "a set of normative and regulatory practices that use the [value] chain as a conduit for influencing the social and environmental conditions of production and consumption" (Bush et al. 2015: 13).

As ecological modernization is a theory of the 'modernization of modernization', it proposes a strategy of reform rather than a radical break with the core tenets of modernity. The relationship between economy and ecology is seen as unsettled and therefore open to reform, involving a decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation through technological innovation and new institutional arrangements (Spaargaren and Mol 1992). Economic development and technology are not regarded as threats to sustainability, but rather as opportunities for reform. Green growth can be realized through the development of eco-efficient and eco-consistent technologies (Huber 2009). In that sense, the market can serve as a vehicle for sustainability, as sustainable products and production methods become profitable.

Ecological modernization theory also argues in favour of a process of political modernization, meaning a more flexible, collaborative form of governance, which replaces top-down state-centred environmental politics with decentralized and preventive governance in networks with other social actors (Mol and Jänicke 2009). This is necessitated by the declining relevance of nation-states in an era of globalization. In that light, eco-certification is cherished as an appropriate and effective form of governance, being market-based and often participatory in nature.

1.2 Political Ecology

Political ecology is the study of "how power relations mediate human-environment relations" with a strong political economy component (Biersack 2006: 7). In that sense, it is a field of inquiry rather than a unified theoretical position. Nevertheless, there are some core elements uniting the field. As a merger of human ecology and political economy, political ecology has a strong history of applying neo-Marxist theories to the relationship between humans and their environment (Robbins 2004). The exploitation of nature is seen as a result of the inherent characteristics of capitalism, much like the exploitation of human labour (O'Connor 1996). The so-called 'treadmill of production' necessitates economic growth for the sake of growth because of the competition between capitalists, endlessly perpetuating exploitation of the natural environment (Schnaiberg et al. 2002).

Political ecology criticizes ecological modernization theory for neglecting the importance of power in assessing the possibility of environmental reform. In the case of eco-certification, this means that the power relations in global value chains play such a formative role that its effectiveness is challenged. Eco-certification is regarded as a new form of capitalist appropriation ('green grabbing') and a means for polluting industries to save face whilst

continuing production (Fairhead et al. 2012; Corson et al. 2013; Konefal 2013). The 'industry capture' of standard-setting processes ensures that the interests of big business are met, whilst environmental regulation is kept at a minimum level. Surplus value is created through higher prices for eco-certified products, but this premium does not end up at the lower end of the value chain. These arguments are derived from world system theory developed by Wallerstein (1974) According to world system theory, the dynamics of the capitalist world economy result in a global division of labour. High-end profitable production takes place in 'core' countries that can protect quasi-monopolies, exploiting the resources of 'peripheral' countries in which competitive bulk commodity production takes place (Wallerstein 2004). This spatial division of labour can also be seen from the viewpoint of value chains in which primary production of agricultural products and raw materials takes place in the global South, and retailing and marketing in the global North. Gereffi (1994, 1995) has further developed the notion of global value chains, focussing on the role of lead firms in the coordination and construction of globally organized production by distinguishing between producer-driven and buyer-driven chains. Concentration of capital and technological know-how ensure producer dominance, as is the case for example in the automobile industry. In buyer-driven chains retailers and distributors exert control over production chains because of the importance of branding and design. The latter is especially characteristic of commodity chains that integrate producers in the global South into global markets, which mostly consist of agricultural products (including aquaculture produce, see Ponte et al. 2014) and natural resources. Thus, the functions of the control and the execution of production have been separated in buyer-driven value chains.

Next to these economic or distributional aspects of power, political ecology approaches also consider the importance of culture, discourses and history in shaping human-environment relations (Biersack 2006). For example, the power of values ensures the prevalence of certain actors in setting standards for eco-certification. In sum, political ecology argues that inclusive eco-certification is impossible and, therefore, eco-certification is ineffective.

1.3 The Politics of Eco-Certification

The rather diverging evaluations of eco-certification by the two approaches discussed revolve around the key issue of the role of power in reflexivity – or in applied terms the politics of eco-certification. Whereas ecological modernization theory stresses the importance and success of ecological reflexivity, political ecology stresses the significance of power relations and the resulting reversed effects because of mechanisms of exclusion. In order to elucidate this theoretical controversy, it is thus necessary to further investigate the politics of eco-certification, thereby analysing the critiques of political ecology on ecological modernization theory. As the main claim of political ecology concerns the exclusionary effect of power relations in eco-certification with regard to producers, the question that needs to be answered to resolve the

theoretical dispute is: is producer-inclusive eco-certification possible? SEASAIP provides an interesting case to research the claims of ecological modernization theory about the possibility of ecological reform and those of political ecology about the exclusionary nature and therefore failure of these reforms, because it actively promotes inclusiveness, reflexively drawing on previous experiences which were allegedly exclusionary towards producers.

The politics of eco-certification and its accompanying mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion operate at three different 'sites' (Havice and Iles 2015). Firstly, certification schemes are positioned in relation to each other in a wider landscape. Secondly, the process of standard setting is itself a political exercise involving negotiations, often in so called multi-stakeholder dialogues. Thirdly, the 'touching down' (Vellema and van Wijk 2015) of certification through the implementation of standards in local practices and the auditing of these practices forms a third site of the politics of eco-certification. This thesis will mainly be concerned with an analysis of the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion at the second and the third site. But what is inclusiveness? The next section develops a conceptual framework to grasp this concept.

3. INCLUSIVENESS: A JUSTICE APPROACH

The concept of inclusiveness implies a certain form of equality. Something can be referred to as inclusive if all those concerned are taken into account. This means that there are no barriers to be part of it. In other words, inclusiveness implies the opportunity to participate as equals. Hence, a certain normativity is inherent to the concept of inclusiveness. Making this normativity explicit, this research uses a justice approach to inclusiveness, building on the work of the political philosopher Nancy Fraser (2007). As she defines justice as parity of participation or the opportunity to participate as equals in social life, her conceptualization of justice can just as well be regarded as a conceptualization of inclusiveness. The rationale for using a justice approach thus follows from the concept of inclusiveness itself. This approach is normative to the extent that it poses that more inclusiveness is more just, but it does not provide strict frameworks to determine the content of this. Rather, Fraser's work involves a conceptual framework that breaks down inclusiveness into three domains: distribution, recognition and representation. This conceptual breakdown aids in creating a more nuanced account of the complexities of inclusiveness. Moreover, the three domains of inclusiveness reflect various aspects of power that feature in political ecology research: power in the form of resources, power embedded in values, and power as claim-making procedures and rights.

3.1 The All-Affected Principle

Before explaining the three domains of inclusiveness, some further clarification is needed. To whom is this approach of inclusiveness applicable? In other words: whom to include in this conceptualization of inclusiveness? As a minimum, one could argue that at least all those

affected by a given social structure should be included in the definition of inclusiveness. For issues of sustainability, this implies that potentially everyone is involved, even future generations. In this thesis this principle is applied to all actors along the value chain, from producer to retailer. Following Nancy Fraser, I argue that all these actors together are responsible for the sustainability of aquaculture, based on the 'all-affected principle', which "holds that all those affected by a given social structure or institution have moral standing as subjects of justice in relation to it" (Fraser 2007: 25)[6]. This means that the negative environmental and social effects of aquaculture are not the sole responsibility of producers. Moreover, such an argument points towards the importance of inclusive governance arrangements in which parity of participation is ensured. In short, eco-certification is inclusive if it involves all actors along the value chain and ensures a shared responsibility for sustainability. This is only a partial application of the principle, though sufficient for the purposes of this thesis.

3.2 Domains of Inclusiveness

Justice as inclusiveness consists of three domains: distribution, recognition and representation. Distribution refers to the resources necessary to participate as equals in social life, pointing to the material and informational resources necessary to be involved in standard setting and to the costs and benefits of eco-certification. Following the 'all-affected principle', all actors along the value chain should share the costs and benefits of ensuring sustainability.

Recognition is concerned with institutionalized cultural hierarchies and as such the standing of actors as legitimate and equal participants in eco-certification. The work of Emmanuelle Cheyns shows that in multi-stakeholder standard setting a particular kind of participation characterised by a managerial orientation is expected from stakeholders, thereby excluding smallholders and affected communities (Cheyns 2011; Ponte and Cheyns 2013; Cheyns and Riisgaard 2014; Cheyns 2014). These norms and conventions create a gap between local practices, stories and attachments on the one hand and generalized, detached standard setting on the other hand. Inclusive eco-certification would not pose such barriers to equal participation.

Finally, representation is related to issues of inclusion and exclusion from membership in the community entitled to making justice claims and the procedures that structure the politics of contestation. This domain of justice is crucial, as it concerns the question who counts and who determines who counts. Thus, Fraser argues, there is "no redistribution or recognition without representation" (Fraser 2007: 23). Representation is not only about the procedures that

[6] Similar arguments for global justice are proposed by Phillipe Van Parijs (2007) and Thomas Pogge (2008).

structure the way in which justice claims can be made. On another level, it is also about who can make these claims, who counts as a subject of justice and who determines who counts.

4. CONCLUSION

For ecological modernization theory, eco-certification represent a reconfiguration of the value chain as a form of sustainability governance through the chain. For political ecology, power relations inhibit the adequate functioning of eco-certification, for example because of the dominance of lead firms in buyer-driven chains over producers. This can effectively be regarded as a hypothesis that poses that producer-inclusive eco-certification is impossible in this web of relations, which in the end leads to less sustainability. This hypothesis can be tested by studying an attempt towards inclusive certification. A conceptualization of inclusiveness as justice captures the various forms of power that influence eco-certification. The following chapters will apply this framework of inclusiveness to the literature on existing forms of eco-certification in aquaculture and the research on SEASAIP respectively. The discussion reflects on the results in the light of the debate between ecological modernization theory and political ecology.

IV. Producer Inclusiveness in Aquaculture Eco-Certification: A Review

This chapter provides an overview of the existing literature on producer inclusiveness in eco-certification for aquaculture. Most of this review concerns the Aquaculture Dialogues and the establishment of ASC, as this currently is the most elaborate attempt towards inclusive certification in aquaculture. The literature review is used to sensitize the research to the possible impediments to inclusiveness in eco-certification. Eco-certification differs from traditional nation-state governance in that it cannot base its legitimacy on the claim of representing a particular community and territory (Cashore 2000; Cheyns and Riisgaard 2014). Instead, as an alternative, transnational form of governance its legitimacy is based on the involvement of specialists and stakeholders representing various interests, expertise or morals. The involvement of stakeholders is organized in diverse ways, although multi-stakeholder initiatives have gained popularity over the last decades. This review first considers forms of eco-certification in aquaculture that do not actively pursue multi-stakeholder inclusiveness. Although there are numerous schemes, the two most important are selected based on their relevance in Thailand. These are GAA-BAP and the national GAP. The bulk of this chapter reviews ASC, as a 'best case' example of inclusiveness.

1. GAA-BAP AND THAI GAP

In aquaculture, one of the first forms of eco-certification was developed by an industry association, the Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA). The GAA was established in 1997 by processing companies, major buyers and corporate farmers. In 1999 it developed the Code of Practice for Responsible Shrimp Farming, which eventually became Best Aquaculture Practices or BAP. As the GAA was regarded as a closed organization, mostly promoting the interests of industry actors further down the value chain and ignoring wider ecosystem concerns and social aspects, its legitimacy was challenged (Havice and Iles 2015). The standard-setting process did not involve any public input and was mostly based on expert knowledge. There was only limited engagement with NGOs. Hence, there were various representational gaps in the process of developing BAP, especially with regard to small developing-world producers and NGOs. Moreover, producers have to pay for the auditing and the use of the label. As early as 1999 Vandergeest et al. warned for the limited prospects of industry self-regulation in the form of GAA-BAP because of the continued predominance of small-scale producers in Thailand (Vandergeest et al. 1999). Lebel et al. conclude that "there is little evidence that [GAA-BAP] or alternative certification schemes assist smaller farms" (2008: 217). The distribution of the value added in the shrimp value chain is very uneven, whilst the costs of auditing and certification are mostly carried by producers.

Similar problems of representation and credibility are confronting the legitimacy of the various national Good Aquaculture Practices (GAPs). Although these are based on conventional democratic legitimacy, this form of legitimacy is apparently not appreciated by the market. GAPs are mostly developed by government officials and do not go through a lengthy process of public consultation and stakeholder input. The process of creating the Thai GAP was "dominated by experts and representatives further down the supply chain" (Lebel et al. 2008: 216). Moreover, national GAPs face issues of credibility because they are forms of first-party certification: the government is both the standard owner and the standard reviewer. Coupled with a lack of enforcement and stringency (Oosterveer 2006), this results in a lack of recognition in the global market, in which apparently conventional nation-state legitimacy is valued less. Nevertheless, Thai GAP is more accessible to producers, because of less stringent criteria which are easier to understand for producers, and minimal documentation requirements (Vandergeest and Unno 2012). Moreover, it is completely free for producers to obtain Thai GAP.

In short, there are major gaps in producer-inclusiveness in these forms of eco-certification, beginning with a lack of producer involvement in standard setting. As Nancy Fraser points out, "no redistribution or recognition without representation" (2007: 23). In order to understand the more fine-grained impediments to producer-inclusive eco-certification, the rest of this review concerns ASC as a 'best case'.

2. ASC AND THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

The challenge to the legitimacy of GAA-BAP and national GAPs ultimately led to the establishment of the ASC by WWF, which is based on a multi-stakeholder initiative known as the Aquaculture Dialogues. Although supposedly all relevant actors are involved in multi-stakeholder initiatives, scholarship suggests that this is not always the case and, if so, it does not automatically lead to inclusive forms of certification. This section provides a literature review of the challenges to inclusiveness that multi-stakeholder initiatives for eco-certification face. Although the Aquaculture Dialogues are central to this review, scholarship based on other multi-stakeholder initiatives for eco-certification is also included.

2.1 The Aquaculture Dialogues

From 2004 onwards WWF has facilitated various multi-stakeholder roundtables on aquaculture with the goal to develop science-based, voluntary sustainability standards. This process referred to as the Aquaculture Dialogues eventually led to the establishment of the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) and its labelling standards. The dialogues were organized per species, of which in total twelve were identified based on environmental and social impact and the extent of international trade in the species. The goal of the dialogues was to involve a broad and diverse set of stakeholders which deliberate and debate through a transparent process,

making decisions based on science and consensus to establish measurable and performance-based criteria and standards (Anh et al. 2011). A 'process guidance document' provided the details of the dialogue process. The design of the dialogues was certified by the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards. Due to the open character of the process and the differences between species and the stakeholders involved, considerable differences emerged between the various dialogues. For example, For the Pangasius Aquaculture Dialogue reaching a consensus was less difficult than for the Shrimp Aquaculture Dialogue, since pangasius is mainly produced in one country, Vietnam, whereas shrimp is produced in over 35 countries, with differentiation in production systems and intensity (Anh et al. 2011).

A Global Steering Committee involving a range of stakeholders managed the Shrimp Aquaculture Dialogue. Next to that, three regional steering committees (Africa, Asia and the Americas) were established. The WWF managed the dialogues through the process facilitation group. Technical working groups involving various stakeholders draft issue-specific principles, criteria, indicators and standards. All standards have been adapted after being open for 60 days for public comments from all around the world. After the first round of adaptation, comments were answered by the Global Steering Committee and a new version drafted by the technical working groups was opened for a second round of public comments. The technical working group carried out the final revision of the standards, which were subsequently approved by all participants. Although the set-up of the dialogues differs per species, the pattern of drafting standards and public comment rounds is similar for all dialogues.

2.2 Distribution

Despite this seemingly open character of the dialogues, various mechanisms of exclusion can be discerned. First of all, only those able to participate in an international forum could influence the process. This creates a bias towards international NGOs and large corporations, excluding producers, especially small-sized enterprises (Anh et al. 2011). Being able to participate in an international forum requires not only substantial financial resources and a lot of time because of the lengthy process (Havice and Iles 2015), but also particular competencies and technical knowledge (Konefal and Hatanaka 2011). Since access to resources and knowledge is unequally distributed, the balance of power that follows is inevitably unequal, separating North and South, local and global, and industries and local NGOs (Cheyns 2011). Industry actors also used their production knowledge and data to counter NGO authority (Havice and Iles 2015). The length of the process also led to 'dialogue fatigue', resulting in an ever smaller club of regular participants (Havice and Iles 2015). In addition, whereas industry actors could devote all their attention to a specific dialogue, NGOs had to target multiple dialogues and strategically distribute their resources (Havice and Iles 2015). The importance of the unequal access to resources leads Vellema and Van Wijk to conclude that "private sustainability standards depend on unequal

power relations within the value chain" (2015: 106). The outcomes of eco-certification after implementation in terms of resource distribution are equally skewed. Lebel et al. (2008) show that the value added through certification schemes in aquaculture does mostly not end up with producers, especially smaller farmers. Moreover, producers often lack the resources to comply with the highly technical standards that do not match farm realities and they struggle to provide the required documentation for certification (Belton et al. 2009). In Indonesia for example, ASC is regarded as a European standard because it is too big a burden for local producers to comply with its demands (Vellema and Van Wijk 2015). The criticisms on the Aquaculture Dialogues in the literature in terms of distribution are summed up in Table 1.

Table 1 Criticisms on the distributional aspect of the Aquaculture Dialogues

Site	***Criticism***
Standard setting	1. Unequal distribution of material resources needed to participate in the dialogues
	2. Unequal distribution of competencies, knowledge and information needed to participate in the dialogues
	3. Excessive time investment needed to participate in the dialogues, leading to dialogue fatigue
Implementation	4. Lack of resources for (esp. smaller) producers to comply with the highly technical standards
	5. Unequal outcomes in terms of value distribution

2.3 Recognition

Various norms and values enter the negotiations in multi-stakeholder initiatives, rendering particular participants and their knowledge more accepted than others (Cheyns 2011; Cheyns 2014). Again, the literature points to a tendency to exclude producers. As Cheyns point out, multi-stakeholder initiatives require a certain kind of participant, namely the stakeholder who is supposed to represent a particular interest which (s)he pro-actively promotes with a particular kind of skill-set (Cheyns 2011). These stakeholders are expected to fulfil a specific pre-defined role, i.e. social NGOs represent the interests of producers and affected communities, whereas environmental NGOs solely represent environmental concerns. The kind of engagement that is expected is functional and strategic, rather than based on reference to the common good or familiarity (Cheyns 2011). Thus, what is required is not to be shy, not to make things too personal or political and not to be a victim. According to Cheyns, this is exactly the opposite of the kind of engagement that is common to producers (2011). Pragmatism is valued, whereas claims of justice and idealism are not. This results in a language based on technical rationality that values particular kinds of knowledge which are regarded as 'scientific' over others (Konefal and Hatanaka 2011). Although Cheyns does not base her work on the certification of aquaculture and the Aquaculture Dialogues in particular, there are various indications in the

literature that her work is equally applicable in that case. Moreover, Schouten et al. (2012: 49) conclude that the lack of inclusiveness because of the valuation of pragmatism is "not incidental, but [...] structural and even resulting from the Roundtable 'logic'". Vandergeest (2007: 1163) points out that shrimp aquaculture certification is created by an "environmental certification network" of "experts who frequently meet each other, and who work from the consensus that exists around the technical requirements for sustainable shrimp farming". During the Aquaculture Dialogues, Anh et al. have observed the tendency to call for 'further training' of farmers on technical aspects (2011). In the public comments document for the Pangasius Dialogue, the submissions of global NGOs and buyers that accounted for 36% of total comments, made up 73 of the 103 pages, with lengthy technical discussions which are not accessible for producers (Anh et al. 2011). These are all indications of the exclusion of a particular form of knowledge, defining sustainability as a biophysical problem with technical solutions (Béné 2005). Farming is represented as a value-neutral, apolitical activity, thereby ignoring the social dimension (Belton et al. 2009). The social dimension is only included as a "minor, nebulously defined component of 'responsible aquaculture'" (Belton et al. 2009: 842). Moreover, most stakeholders in the dialogues were not knowledgeable about the variety of non-industrial production practices that are common in Asia (Havice and Iles 2015). The result is that large transnational corporations and NGOs become standard setters, "while the primary producers act as standard takers whose contribution to addressing problems associated with the standards receives little attention" (Vellema and Van Wijk 2015: 106). The consequence is a mismatch between standards and the realities of especially smaller-sized, semi-intensive producers, as local norms and practices and the problem-solving strategies of these producers are not accommodated for (Belton et al. 2009; Vellema and Van Wijk 2015). This group of producers accounts for most of the aquaculture production in Thailand. Instead, more intensive forms of production are promoted, which are less sustainable, thus rendering ASC ineffective (Belton et al. 2010). The criticisms on the Aquaculture Dialogues in the literature in terms of recognition are summed up in Table 2.

Table 2 Criticisms on the recognition of producers in the Aquaculture Dialogues

Site	***Criticism***
Standard setting	1. Particular roles and capacities are expected from 'stakeholders', involving a particular kind of engagement that is foreign to producers
	2. Technical expert knowledge is valued over producer knowledge and sociopolitical issues
Implementation	3. There is a mismatch between standards and the realities of smaller-sized producers

2.4 Representation

The third domain of inclusiveness is that of representation. The (lack of) representation of producers in the Aquaculture Dialogues has been heavily criticized in the literature. For example, in the Pangasius Dialogues farmers made up the smallest group, comprising only 6% of the total attendees (Anh et al. 2011). Vandergeest (2007: 1152) concludes that "emerging environmental certification networks do not provide for community input into setting, monitoring, or enforcing technical standards". Although attempts were made to include producers in the Aquaculture Dialogues, there were great difficulties in recruiting and retaining a representative mix of participants (Havice and Iles 2015). In order to be represented it is required to belong to a particular interest group: individuals do not matter. For small-sized producers it is often difficult to form such an interest group which can represent them (Cheyns 2011). Moreover, by explicitly targeting the 20% best producers (in case of the Pangasius Dialogues; Anh et al. 2011) or intensive shrimp and tilapia farms (Vellema and Van Wijk 2015; Belton et al. 2009), the frame of the Aquaculture Dialogues was set in such way as to a priori exclude small, semi-intensive farms. As Belton et al. (2009) argue, semi-intensive tilapia production systems are generally more sustainable than intensive ones, but because of the lack of representation these systems cannot be certified as sustainable by the ASC. Havice and Iles (2015) similarly note the absence of producers from Asia and the underrepresentation of developing countries. Those who did attend were mostly natural scientists (biologists) whose main professional interest is to make sure how to grow fish (Belton et al. 2009). Ponte (2014) argues that although producers are sometimes included in multi-stakeholder initiatives because of pressures from NGOs, this is often rather late or even after standard-setting, thereby inhibiting real and deep processes of deliberation. Finally, at the site of implementation a translation step into the realities of auditing has to be made. This task was carried out by a separate body, the ASC, whose main interest is to create "economically efficient, profitable rules that can compete with existing certification bodies" (Havice and Iles 2015: 35). This translation step is not subject to a participatory process.

Table 3 Criticisms on the representation of producers in the Aquaculture Dialogues

Site	***Criticism***
Standard setting	1. Producers are mostly not present in the Aquaculture Dialogues
	2. A core group of natural scientists formed which excluded other participants
Implementation	3. The Aquaculture Dialogues explicitly target intensive production
	4. The translation towards the realities of auditing is not subject to a participatory process

3. CONCLUSION

GAA-BAP, Thai GAP and ASC are all to a certain extent excluding producers from the process of standard setting, resulting in forms of eco-certification that do not match the realities of especially small-sized producers. Apart from the criticism on the various specific systems, there is also a more general critique on eco-certification in aquaculture: the burden of change is put on the producer, as the 'farmer' is defined as the subject of certification and the 'farm' as the space of operation (Vandergeest et al. 2015). The regulation of these subjects and spaces is carried out by international technical experts, without much producer involvement. Even so, the costs of eco-certification are often carried by producers. Even multi-stakeholder formats do not guarantee adequate producer representation and recognition. Although Thai GAP is more accessible to producers and also regarded as more legitimate (Vandergeest and Unno 2012), the lack of market recognition and less stringent sustainability criteria impede its effectiveness and added value to producers.

III. Methodology and Methods

This chapter outlines the set-up of this research in the form of a case study design and the methods used for gathering and analysing data. In addition, research limitations are discussed.

1. METHODOLOGY

The research for this thesis is based on a qualitative case study design. Case studies involve studying the object of inquiry in its real-life context, thereby allowing for a contextualized and in-depth understanding (Yin 2003). The word 'case' originates from the Latin *casus*, an occurrence, which often has a negative connotation in the sense of an accident or a mistake. The case in the context of research can therefore be seen as "an unusual and specific challenge to established descriptions or reasoning" (Vennesson 2008: 226). Case studies can thus be used to provoke reflection on theoretical frameworks, which is exactly the purpose of this research. As Flyvbjerg (2006) notes, case studies are specifically useful for theory testing precisely because of their in-depth approach. The contingency and complexity of context-based knowledge often forces the revision of preconceived views and assumptions.

Besides, the meaning of case as an occurrence also indicates that cases can be related to other cases, depending on the type of case. The case of this research concerns SEASAIP as a form of eco-certification, which is approached from a producer's perspective. SEASAIP is a 'critical case' of producer-inclusive eco-certification because producer involvement is at the core of its existence. Critical cases such as SEASAIP, which is 'most likely' to be inclusive, are especially suited to test propositions (Flyvbjerg 2006: 230). SEASAIP can also be regarded as a 'deviant case' as it presents an unusual attempt towards inclusiveness. Flyvbjerg (2006: 229): "atypical [...] cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied". In other words, identifying the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in SEASAIP can shed light on inclusiveness in eco-certification in general. In addition, comparison between SEASAIP and other cases of eco-certification can be done on the basis of the literature review on existing eco-certification. Moreover, most of the respondents including the producers had experience with other forms of eco-certification. They were asked to compare SEASAIP to these other forms of eco-certification in order to provide meaningful context to the case.

According to Flyvbjerg (2006: 236), "the most advanced form of understanding is achieved when researchers place themselves within the context being studied". The real-life context of SEASAIP was studied at two 'sites': the standard-setting site and the implementation site. This means that both the SEASAIP Steering Committee members and their meetings as well as shrimp producers and auditors involved with SEASAIP were targeted. As the actual implementation of SEASAIP is still in a very early stage, an ex-ante evaluation was carried out

based on the current direction and plans of the protocol and producer concerns. Case validity was ensured by triangulating findings through multiple sources (see below). The use of theory aids both in interpreting the case as well as in abstracting the findings of the case study (Yin 2003). The main concept of 'inclusiveness' is defined and operationalized as distribution, recognition and representation. This means that specific attention was paid to the costs and benefits of (creating) eco-certification, cultural conventions and expectations involved in eco-certification, and the possibilities for farmers to voice their opinions.

2. METHODS

2.1 Data Collection

Data were gathered during a five week fieldwork in Thailand, carried out in February and March 2017. Additional interviews were held prior to and after this fieldwork. Finally, documents retrieved from the website of ASIC were used. These include SEASAIP meeting notes and draft versions of the standard. Most interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility whilst being targeted at specific knowledge (Bernard 2011), whereas some were informal (see Appendix). All semi-structured interviews with in total seventeen respondents were recorded and transcribed. Interviews were supplemented by observations at all times. The content of the semi-structured interviews was based on the conceptual framework elaborated above, covering distribution, recognition and representation.

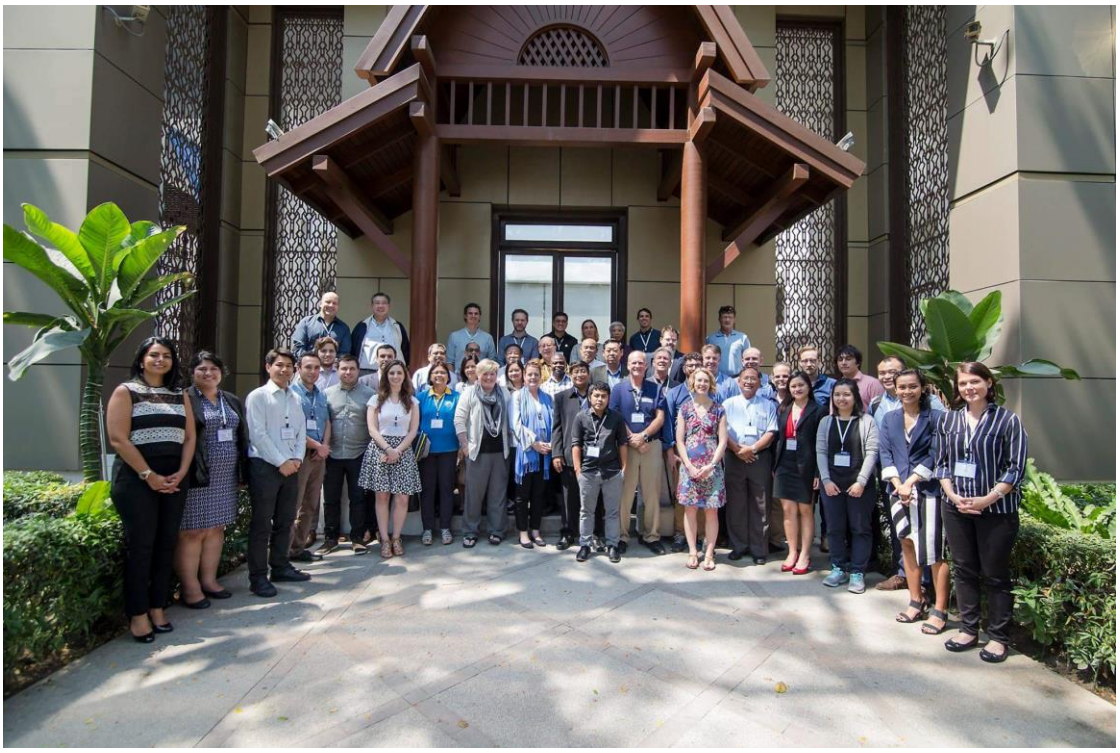

Figure 1 The 7th SEASAIP Steering Committee meeting on 14 and 15 February 2017 in Bangkok, Thailand. Photo from ASIC.

To study the site of standard setting, I attended a two-day conference of the SEASAIP Steering Committee in Bangkok on February 14 and 15, 2017 during which I observed the negotiations and carried out some informal interviews (Figure 1). Besides, I interviewed eight Steering Committee members and several other people that attended the conference. The selection of respondents was based on relevance and willingness to cooperate in the research. Thus, a strategy of purposive sampling was used (Bernard 2011). I interviewed a minimum of one representative per stakeholder group, i.e. NGOs, buyers, producers, processors, experts and auditors. Additionally, I interviewed the facilitator and initiator of SEASAIP.

To study the site of implementation, I interviewed a producer representative, a representative of a processor that has a SEASAIP farm under contract, two auditors and nine producers involved with SEASAIP, of which one producer who had obtained a SEASAIP certificate and eight producers that were still in the pre-assessment phase. Except for the producer under contract with the processor, this research covered all the producers in Thailand that were involved with SEASAIP at the time of the research. These were all small-scale producers that were part of a cooperative. I visited all of the farms. The certified farm was owned by the head of a cooperative in Sam Roi Yot, who had already obtained GAA-BAP and Thai GAP before. The other eight farms were part of a cooperative in Chanthaburi. I also joined an auditor during the SEASAIP pre-assessment of these farms (Figure 2).

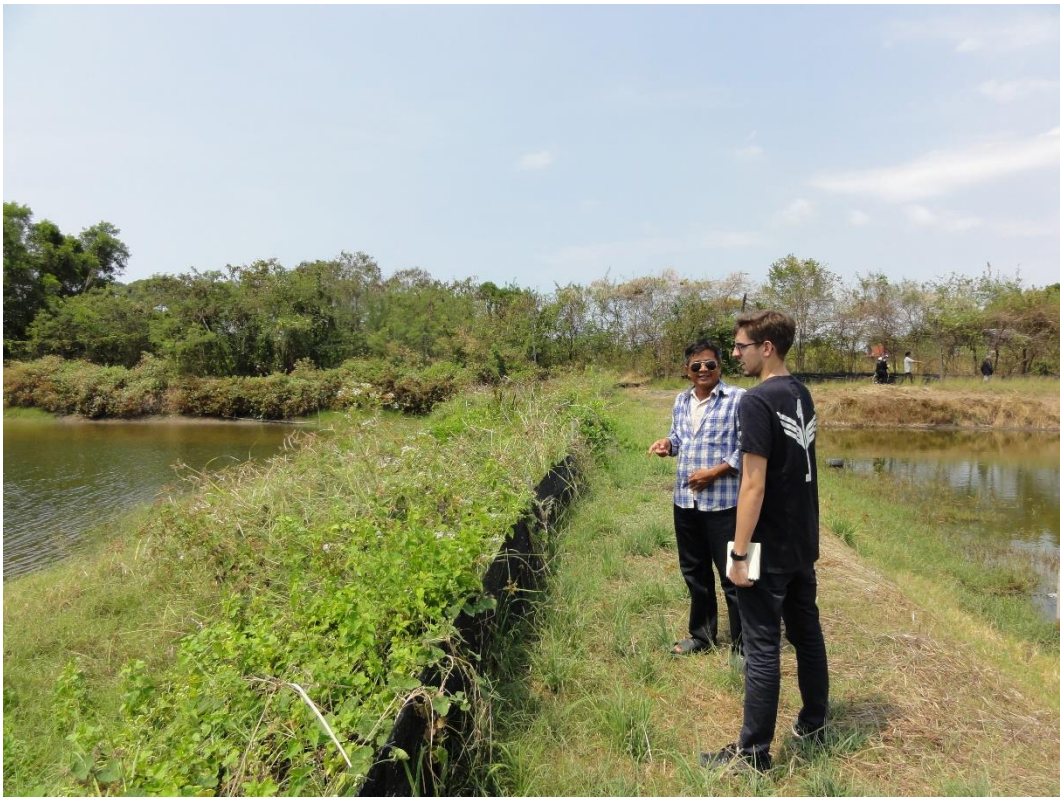

Figure 2 An auditor and a shrimp producer during a SEASAIP pre-assessment in Chanthaburi, Thailand. Photo taken by the author.

2.2 Data Analysis

Qualitative research cannot be analysed using rigorous mathematical and statistical models. Much of the analysis of the data requires clear thinking and hard work on the part of the data analyst. Interpretation of results already occurs during the fieldwork, so that data and interpretation are constantly in a dialogue. Nonetheless, an attempt was made at systematically organizing the data into a taxonomy based on the three domains of inclusiveness (distribution, recognition and representation) and the two sites of the politics of eco-certification (standard setting and implementation). This resulted in a matrix, on the basis of which the empirical chapter was organized. Further refinement of the data was carried out by grouping data in subcategories within this taxonomy, which formed the basis of the core arguments of the report.

3. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Case study designs involve setting boundaries around a theoretically defined object of inquiry. These limits are certainly not objective. In this research, this means that a particular conceptual understanding structures what belongs to (this particular case of) eco-certification and what falls outside of it. The same applies to the concept of inclusiveness. This conceptual definition of the case allows for generalization and hopefully provides insights in the ways in which shrimp producers and their interests can be meaningfully included in eco-certification.

Geographically, the study is limited to Thailand, meaning the SEASAIP pilot sites in that country. As the number of pilot sites is very small, there is an increased chance of data bias. As a case study of SEASAIP this provides no fundamental problem, but it might be that the selection of producers is not particularly representative for producers in general. Moreover, I have attended only one of the Steering Committee meetings, although this is partially made up for by the available notes on previous meetings. Finally, there are some limitations that stem from the role I play as a researcher from a particular geographical, ethnic, social, cultural, economic, academic and gender background (Figure 3). For example, during the research I have positioned myself as a social scientists, which might have influenced the perception respondents had of me, as they were mostly technical experts. My status as a *farang* (foreigner) in Thailand was especially noticeable when interviewing producers, who often referred to my length and who jokingly advised me to find a Thai girlfriend. Although this is not directly related to the content of the research, this classification of me as first and foremost a *farang* might mean that I have been associated with international certification, as these initiatives mostly bring foreigners to the farms. Language also played an important role during the interviews with producers. As translation was not always immediately possible, I was dependent on the list of questions I had provided to my Thai speaking colleague, allowing for less spontaneous interaction. My background also plays a role in the set-up of the research and the interpretation of the results.

On the one hand I was brought up with the importance of consuming certified products. On the other hand I have been instilled with a strong interest in justice, possibly resulting in a bias towards the excluded. Hopefully these two biases somehow serve to balance each other out in this research. As noted above, case studies often challenge preconceived views, as "The Field [...] is a powerful disciplinary force" (Geerts 1995, quoted in Flyvbjerg 2006: 235).

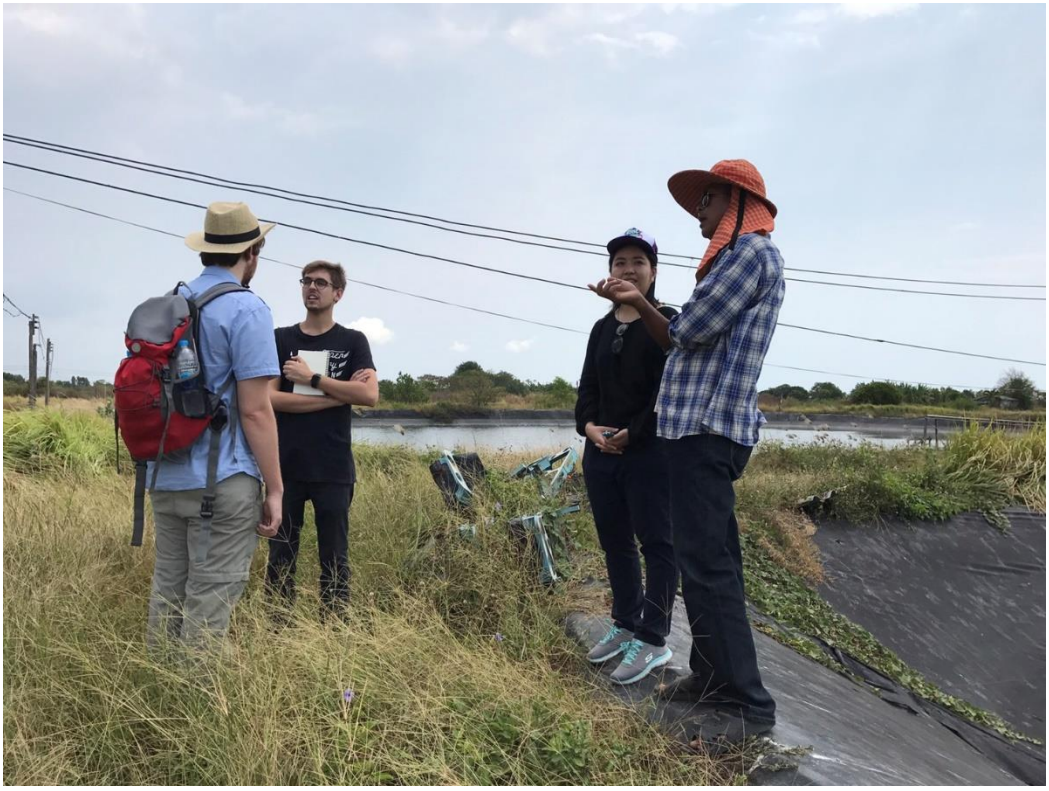

Figure 3 The author, a colleague researcher, an auditor and a shrimp producer during a SEASAIP pre-assessment in Chanthaburi, Thailand. Photo taken by a bystander on request of the author.

V. Results

This empirical chapter gives a detailed account of the research findings. Although the line between data and interpretation is blurry in social sciences, a separate chapter will analyse the findings and reflect on the debate between ecological modernization theory and political ecology. Here, the findings are presented using the conceptual framework of inclusiveness as justice. The chapter starts with an account of the background needed to understand SEASAIP. Why is it being developed? What choices have been made? How does it work? The following sections are divided according to the three domains of inclusiveness. As some of the aspects of producer-inclusiveness in SEASAIP fall under two or even three of these domains, choices had to be made about the representation of the findings. Some elements might come back several times, others have been categorized under the most important domain. Finally, this chapter gives an account of producer perspectives on SEASAIP and eco-certification in general.

1. BACKGROUND

Why do we need another shrimp aquaculture standard? In a sector that is known for its proliferation of standards, certifications and labels, establishing yet another standard might not seems to be the most productive endeavour. Nonetheless, this is what is currently happening in the form of the Southeast Asian Shrimp Aquaculture Improvement Protocol (SEASAIP).

1.1 History and Rationale

SEASAIP is the perhaps unintended outcome of a USAID[7] project that established a public-private partnership in the Southeast Asian fisheries and shrimp aquaculture sector at the ASEAN-level[8]. Only a very small proportion of shrimp production in Southeast Asia is currently certified and farming practices are not perceivably transforming towards enhanced sustainability, whilst demand for certified products is growing[9]. Thus, apparently there are some shortcomings of existing forms of certification. Based on this rationale SEASAIP was established in 2013 to create certification which is able to better "reflect production realities in the region" (USAID 2014). The perceived disconnect between the existing global forms of certification and the "realities facing producers on the ground" called for a new form of certification that actively involves regional stakeholders, including producers, through bottom-up participatory processes of standard development (ASIC 2016). In addition, the lack of improvement in production practices would be addressed by specifically designing SEASAIP as an improvement protocol. The improvement idea is embodied in the use of different levels within SEASAIP, which provide

[7] USAID is the United States Agency for International Development, a US government agency administrating foreign economic, development and humanitarian assistance.
[8] ASEAN is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, a regional intergovernmental organizations promoting cooperation and economic integration.
[9] Interview 2, 9 and 10

an incentive to improve farming practices also after achieving a certain standard level of sustainability. SEASAIP is thus a market-based voluntary governance arrangement that tries to enhance the participatory nature of such arrangements in order to increase the environmental impact of eco-certification.

Some of the people involved in SEASAIP – among which the facilitator and initiator of SEASAIP – also took part in the shrimp Aquaculture Dialogues that led to the establishment of ASC. These participants were all frustrated with the process of developing ASC, because the people involved were "almost all [from] Western NGOs" and "there was nobody who was a legitimate producer from anywhere in Asia"[10]. Another critique mentioned is that most of the meetings were not in Asia, and if they were they would be in five-star hotels in Bangkok, which did not attract "the right kind of conversation"[11]. Besides, ASC would be too expensive and only be suitable for large-scale intensive production, which would be less sustainable than small-scale and extensive production methods[12]. As a result only a very small proportion of shrimp production in Asia is certified, creating the need for a different approach in the form of SEASAIP[13]. Other than ASC, SEASAIP does not only target intensive production. The SEASAIP level 2 standard even distinguishes between both forms of production through distinct sets of criteria. Moreover, SEASAIP is working with small-sized producers to ensure that it is not only applicable to large scale systems.

1.2 Development

Mainly because of the personal ties of people involved in the USAID project, SEASAIP was able to link its system to the existing benchmarking system of Monterey Bay Seafood Watch, a US environmental NGO giving seafood recommendations to consumers and buyers. Seafood Watch develops country-level and species-specific recommendations based on a three-tier system consisting of 'red' or 'avoid', 'yellow' or 'good alternative', and 'green' or 'best choice'. This system was linked to SEASAIP[14] to allow for within-country differentiation and to engage supply chain actors in an 'improvement idea'[15]. For SEASAIP, this means recognition in the US market and access to the Seafood Watch buyer programme[16]. Moreover, Seafood Watch has ensured the viability of SEASAIP by providing funding after the USAID project ended.

The first SEASAIP draft standard was based on existing national standards such as Thai GAP (Good Aqauculture Practice) and VietGAP, combined with Seafood Watch criteria. These

[10] Interview 2
[11] Interview 2
[12] Interview 3 and 4
[13] Interview 9 and 10
[14] So that SEASAIP level 1 and level 2 can be sold with a Seafood Watch 'good alternative' and 'best choice' recommendation respectively.
[15] Interview 9 and 10
[16] Interview 2

national standards are not recognized by the market and perceived as still 'red' by Seafood Watch, hence the need to combine them with Seafood Watch criteria. These country-level GAPs and Seafood Watch criteria were combined with social criteria. A Steering Committee consisting mainly of regional stakeholders was established to revise the standards according to regional production realities. In addition, two rounds of public comments were held, as well as three public consultation meetings in the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia. This "multi-stakeholder, transparent and inclusive process" resulted in the establishment of SEASAIP level 1 (equivalent to Seafood Watch 'yellow' or 'good alternative') in 2016 (SEASAIP 2016). In 2017, the drafting of SEASAIP level 2 (equivalent to Seafood Watch 'green' or 'best choice') was initiated. The Steering Committee consists of representatives from NGOs (such as Seafood Watch), producer organizations, buyers, processors, university and research centres and an auditing organization. Voting rights are reserved for regional stakeholders, meaning that the representatives of Seafood Watch, a buyer, and the auditing organization are non-voting members of the Steering Committee.

1.3 Pilot Sites and Supply Chain Approach

There are currently three SEASAIP pilot sites in Thailand. The first and – at the time of the research – the only SEASAIP certified farm is located in Sam Roi Yot (Figure 4). A second farm involved with SEASAIP is under contract with Thai Union and is located in Chanthaburi. In that same province a cooperative of farmers is participating in SEASAIP, though they are still in the pre-assessment phase (Figure 5). In Table 4, a profile of the farms is given. The Thai Union farm is excluded as it was not part of the research because of reasons of access.

Table 4 Profile of SEASAIP pilot sites in Thailand, excluding the Thai Union farm.

	Pilot site 1	***Pilot site 2***
Location	Sam Roi Yot	Chanthaburi
Number of farmers	1	8
Farm type	Small to medium size, family business	Small size family businesses
Shrimp type	*Vanamei*	*Vanamei*
Production method	Intensive, biomimicry, closed system	Intensive, closed system, 7 farmers are not producing because of diseases
Farmer	Head of a cooperative	Members of cooperative
Other certifications obtained	Thai GAP and GAA-BAP	Thai GAP
SEASAIP status	Certified, but not selling yet	Pre-assessment phase
Remarks	Already obtained GAA-BAP before getting involved with SEASAIP	All suffered from disease among shrimp for several years; undergoing training at pilot site 1 for biomimicry + pre-assessment for SEASAIP to get loan from bank to start producing again

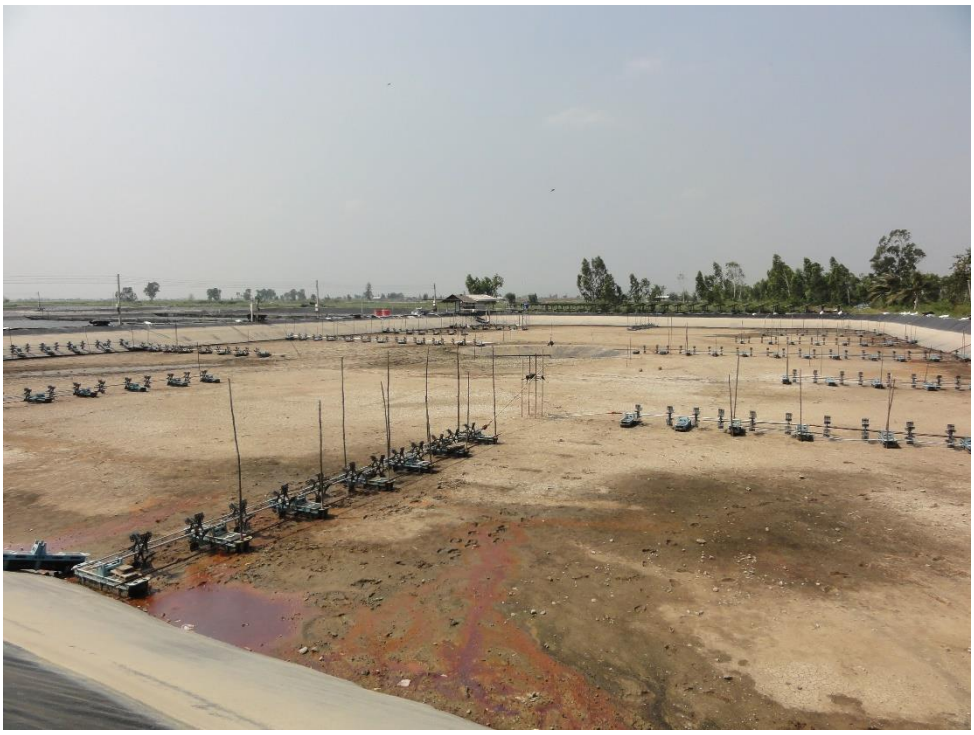

Figure 4 SEASAIP pilot site 1. Thanks to the use of biomimicry the drained pond is very clean. Sam Roi Yot, Thailand. Photo taken by the author.

SEASAIP does not only target the production site, as it includes requirements for sustainable inputs. This means that feed mills and hatcheries also have to be audited and certified. There are also plans to include processors, but this is not developed yet. The 'supply chain approach' of SEASAIP also means that buyers are more directly engaged with improvement in production practices, as connections are made and buyers are stimulated to contribute.

Figure 5 One of the farms belonging to SEASAIP pilot site 2. Because of a disease there has been no production in this pond for several years, resulting in the growth of algae. Chanthaburi, Thailand. Photo taken by the author.

In short, SEASAIP is built on the rationale of greater involvement of regional stakeholders and especially producers, so that the standard would better match the realities of these producers, thereby allowing for more widespread certification than possible under other currently existing schemes. Moreover, rather than certifying those producers that already meet basic sustainability criteria, SEASAIP aims to create a change in production methods by building incentives for improvement into the model of certification. Whether SEASAIP is successful in attaining these goals depends to a large extent on the degree of producer inclusiveness. Are producers adequately represented and recognized? How are the costs and benefits of SEASAIP distributed?

2. DISTRIBUTION: THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF SEASAIP

In this section the costs and benefits of participating in SEASAIP from the perspective of producers are discussed. To recall, distribution refers to the resources needed to participate as equals in social life. Resources are not only material, but also include access to information and knowledge. The distributional aspects of SEASAIP are discussed for two sites: the site of the standard-setting process and the site of implementation.

2.1 The Standard-Setting Process

Although one of the critiques voiced against the process of developing ASC concerned the expensive locations of these meetings[17], SEASAIP conferences are also generally held in five-star hotels in Bangkok. Nevertheless, all of the meetings are in the region, which distinguishes SEASAIP from ASC, thus requiring less investment in travel costs and time. Funding and lodging is available "for members that represent farmers or government or national associations in Laos and Cambodia" to cover their travel costs and stay in Bangkok (SEASAIP 2014). This means that SEASAIP meetings are generally quite accessible for regional stakeholders in terms of costs, also allowing producer organizations to take part in the standard-setting process. However, the process of developing the standard is already going on for over three years, and is far from being finished. This requires a lot of time investment from all the participants. The Steering Committee Terms of Reference provide an overview of the duties of Steering Committee members: they have to be present; participate in calls, e-mail, webinars, etc.; respond within 72 hours to all e-mail; be prepared and willing to make final decisions; raise awareness with constituents; host and support implementation of meetings in home country; and comment within one week on press releases. This means that only participants with sufficient resources can be part of the Steering Committee.

However, the standard-setting process does not only involve conferences of the Steering Committee. Various farms take part in the development of SEASAIP as pilot sites. These farms

[17] Interview 2

are reached through the stakeholders participating in SEASAIP. In the case of Thailand, this means that the National Farmer Council and Thai Union have selected farms that are participating in the development of SEASAIP from an early stage onward. The costs of implementing SEASAIP on these farms are discussed in the next section. Here, the distributional aspect of being part of the SEASAIP process is discussed. Thai Union and the National Farmer Council do not receive any compensation for the investment they need to make to communicate SEASAIP to the farmers, which often involves traveling costs, for example to attend pre-assessments and audits[18]. In addition, the farmers are not compensated for any time investment related to the development of SEASAIP, such as participating in demonstration activities[19]. However, it has to be noted that SEASAIP attempts to be very thoughtful in this regard: "we are trying to be careful with how much time we ask from the farmers"[20]. Moreover, SEASAIP has very limited resources at its disposal.

2.2 The Implementation

The costs and benefits of implementing certification can be divided into (1) the investment costs of upgrading the farm management in order to meet the standard, (2) the actual costs of auditing and certification, and (3) the price differential between uncertified and certified shrimp produce and the increase in productivity through improved production methods. One of the critiques on existing forms of certification has been the high costs of auditing and the low return in terms of price increase. Because SEASAIP is still in a rather early stage of its development, most of the issues related to costs and price have not been discussed yet[21]. The analysis will thus be based on the decisions that have been made for the pilot farms and the remarks of Steering Committee members regarding these issues.

The investment costs of upgrading the farm management have so far been on the producers themselves. However, the pilot sites that are currently under SEASAIP either did not have to make any changes (pilot site 1)[22] or are still in the process of finding funding to make the required changes (pilot site 2)[23], so no actual investment costs to obtain SEASAIP have occurred so far. SEASAIP is very much aware of the risks eco-certification poses to producers: "Because any improvements equates to changes on farming methods, there is a risk to farmers" (SEASAIP meeting notes). The initiator of SEASAIP hopes that there will be a fund available for farmers in the future[24] and the meeting notes show that there is agreement on this point. However, this will

[18] Interview 5
[19] Interview 5
[20] Interview 2
[21] Interview 4
[22] Interview 8
[23] Interview 6
[24] Interview 2

be totally dependent on the willingness of other actors in the value chain to contribute to such a fund. Even so, the experience of the cooperative in Chanthaburi (pilot site 2) shows that being in the process of obtaining certification can aid producers in obtaining financing from a bank. According to a Thai Union representative, implementing SEASAIP is also relatively easy compared to other forms of certification: "That's why I am interested"[25].

Auditing is another important cost in the implementation phase of certification. This cost does not add any value in the value chain and is therefore not perceived in such a good daylight , certainly by producers[26].

> *"The farmers are being protected by the organization of farmers. We refuse to pay. But those who are benefitting from our product, like processors, exporters, they have to pay."*
>
> (Producer representative, interview 5)

Under the current pilot version of SEASAIP the auditing costs are covered in the case of small producers. This means that the audit of the Thai Union farm has to be paid for by Thai Union, which is not a problem for them as it is only a very small amount compared to the total turn-over[27]. The funds to cover the auditing costs of the small producers consist of contributions from Seafood Watch and some of their buyers that are interested in SEASAIP. The willingness of buyers to cover the auditing costs is of great significance, as it results in a redistribution along the value chain compared to other forms of certification. For other certifications, it is either the producers themselves or the processing plants that pay for the audit. The producer of pilot site 1 had obtained GAA-BAP prior to SEASAIP because the processor required this. Therefore, the processor had also covered the costs of auditing. Whether the current system of funding for auditing stays in place remains to be seen. Seafood Watch is already retreating slowly from funding SEASAIP[28], so the success of the system will depend on the willingness of buyers and processors to contribute to the auditing fund. Even so, SEASAIP is dealing with the issue of high auditing costs in yet another way. By partnering with a relatively small auditing company based in Bangkok, the costs can be kept to a minimum[29]. This company is exploring innovative ways of using technology to decrease the costs of auditing even further. By triangulating data entered in a mobile application by farmers with other data sources such as satellite imagery, more constant monitoring from a distance becomes possible. This would mean that less on-site audits are needed, which significantly decreases the costs of auditing[30]. However, at the time of research

[25] Interview 11
[26] Interview 1, 2, 4, 5 and 8
[27] Interview 11
[28] Interview 9
[29] Interview 1
[30] Interview 1

this system was not yet in use by SEASAIP. Beyond the fixed cost of auditing, certification often involves a proportional fee, meaning that a certain percentage of the production income has to be paid to a certification body. Whether SEASAIP will introduce such a scheme is still unclear. Furthermore, it remains to be seen how the costs of the standard holder – which will be ASIC in the case of SEASAIP – will be covered.

The costs and benefits of auditing also relate to the capacities and time needed to prepare for audits, including the recording of the required data. Although record keeping and documentation are often seen as an important problem for producers in the literature and even though Seafood Watch thinks this is the biggest challenge in shrimp certification[31], the producers in the two SEASAIP pilot sites did not encounter or expect any major difficulties in record keeping[32]. Nevertheless, all producers and the producer representative acknowledge the importance of working in clusters or cooperatives to share knowledge about and capacities for certification[33]. Therefore, there is a call from producers to SEASAIP to design a system of group certification. However, SEASAIP could expect some serious set-back from processors against the improved position of producers that group certification would bring:

> *"All that favours the farmer. Because then the farmers get certified and they could sell to anybody. So if you do that the packers[34] don't really want to do it. [...] [The producers] are linked to processors, right. The processor has some sense of control over them."*
>
> (Thai Union representative, interview 11)

The final and perhaps most important distributional aspect of certification concerns the price of the certified product. Although it is often expected that certified products can be sold for a premium price, this is not necessarily always the case. All farmers in the SEASAIP pilot indicated that a higher price was the most important if not only incentive to participate in the project[35]. However, producers were also very much aware that certification does not necessarily lead to a higher price, which made them very hesitant to be involved in SEASAIP[36]. In the past, certification was sometimes necessary to be able to profit from the higher prices on the export market, but currently the domestic prices are sometimes even higher than the export prices[37]. Since the first SEASAIP-certified shrimp has yet to be sold and there have been no discussions of price during the Steering Committee meetings, it is still unclear whether producers will profit

[31] Interview 10
[32] Interview 6 and 8
[33] Interview 4, 5, 6 and 8
[34] 'Packers' also refers to processors in this case.
[35] Interview 5, 6 and 8
[36] Interview 5 and 6
[37] Interview 5 and 11

from a premium price. However, in various documents the price is mentioned as an important point of discussion. In the prelude to the level 1 standard, it is mentioned that:

> *"Farms that are certified using international standards have not received significant increases in revenue as a result of compliance with the standards and this lack of incentive along with technical gaps that can exist has discouraged other farmers from making improvements in their practices."*
>
> (SEASAIP 2016: 3)

The lack of a premium price for other forms of certification is thus used by SEASAIP as a rationale for its own development. In addition, the initiator of SEASAIP talks about redistributing value in the value chain[38]. However, another Steering Committee member has indicated that the price "should remain pure"[39]. Nevertheless, a higher price seems to be indispensable in the light of the current disappointment with existing certification schemes and the fact that producers are mainly interested in certification because of the promised premium price as a compensation for the required effort and investment. This then brings us to a seemingly inherent contradiction in the objectives of SEASAIP: on the one hand SEASAIP aims to certify as many producers as possible by making certification more accessible, but on the other hand it can only do so if it promises a premium price, which possibly means that SEASAIP products will become relatively expensive compared to shrimp produced under other certification schemes. Coupled to the plans of having buyers pay for the audit and the investments needed to upgrade the farms, this means that SEASAIP shrimp can only be sold as an exclusive and expensive premium product. As indicated by the initiator of SEASAIP: "We are not really that interested in Walmart or Costco because they are buyers that want cheap, cheap, cheap"[40]. Even so, asking a greater contribution from buyers to ensure the sustainability of shrimp aquaculture can be seen as an attempt to redefine global value chain relations. It is to be expected that this will prove to be difficult, but by delivering a higher price for farmers SEASAIP can initiate competition over producer access with GAA-BAP and ASC, potentially driving up prices. Another way in which producers could benefit is from increased productivity induced by the extensive reviewing of production methods that certification involves.

Finally, other forms of certification have been criticized because they are too demanding for producers to understand. In that sense, an unequal knowledge distribution has prevented the implementation of eco-certifications, making them less inclusive. The producer of pilot site 1 indicated that the requirements of Thai GAP are easier to understand than those of GAA-BAP and

[38] Interview 2
[39] Interview 11
[40] Interview 2

SEASAIP. However, as he is the only SEASAIP certified producer it is too early to draw conclusions.

2.3 Conclusion

The findings regarding the distributional aspects of producer-inclusiveness in SEASAIP are summed up in Table 5. Producers can more easily participate in standard setting (1), although some improvements can be made in terms of compensating for the efforts needed to participate in the process (3, 4). The implementation of SEASAIP could be more accessible for producers because of the possibility of an improvement fund (5a) and the coverage of auditing costs (5b). Designing a model for group certification would further enhance the accessibility of SEASAIP for producers (5c). Finally, a premium price would greatly enhance producer-inclusiveness, but this is still open for discussion and depending on buyer interests (6).

Table 5 Distributional aspects of producer-inclusiveness in SEASAIP compared to criticisms on other eco-certifications derived from the literature review (1 = ASC, 2 = GAA-BAP and 3 = Thai GAP, + = incl., - = excl.)

Site	***Other eco-certifications***	***SEASAIP***	
Standard setting	1. Unequal distribution of material resources needed to participate in standard setting[1]	1. Meetings in the region and compensation for certain participants	+
	2. Unequal distribution of competencies, knowledge and information needed to participate in standard setting[1]	2. -	
	3. Excessive time investment needed to participate in standard setting, leading to dialogue fatigue[1]	3. Participating in Steering Committee requires a lot of time, the process is lengthy	−
	4. -	4. No compensation for producers for being part of process of creating SEASAIP	−
Implementation	5. Lack of resources for (esp. smaller) producers to comply with highly technical standards[1,2]	5a. Plans to create fund for improvement for producers 5b. Auditing costs funded by buyers and processors kept at minimum 5c. No problems expected with documentation, but call for group certification	+ + +
	6. Unequal outcomes in terms of value distribution[1,2]	6. Premium for producers undecided, but value redistribution in the chain is attempted through 5a and 5b	±

3. RECOGNITION: VALUING PRODUCERS IN SEASAIP

The recognition of producers as legitimate and important actors in eco-certification seems to be constitutive of SEASAIP. This section analyses the extent of the valuation of producers as legitimate and equal participants in the standard-setting process and the (expected) implications this has for the actual implementation of SEASAIP.

3.1 The Standard-Setting Process

> *"The process of developing SEASAIP [...] I think it is very good. [...] The whole team has been patient. The public comment period is excellent and the sort of rules of how we talk to each other during the meetings, I think it's great. [...] Yes, it's a valid process."*
>
> (Thai Union representative, interview 11)

The process of setting a standard is governed by often subtle and unwritten rules and expectations about how to behave and speak properly. These rules can favour certain participants over others. In SEASAIP some of these rules are made explicit, as the facilitator starts the meeting with some 'ground rules' on how to behave: "be respectful of other views in the room", "observers are welcome to contribute but steering committee members have priority", "active listening and have a learning mindset", "build on each other's ideas and allow everyone to participate" and "challenge with respect". These rules are stimulating an inclusive conversation, but they are restrictive towards strong opposition and discontent. The following example helps to illustrate this: although the producer representative aired very strong opinions against eco-certification in general and did not seem to be particularly charmed by SEASAIP during an interview, he remained very polite and collaborative during the meeting. Another participant even commented: "I usually agree with him. He is quite intelligent and reasonably objective"[41].

As discussed above, the format of multi-stakeholder initiatives is not always conducive to the recognition of producers and their interests as it promotes a particular kind of engagement. In that regard, SEASAIP seems to be no different from other forms of multi-stakeholder initiatives. SEASAIP is developed through a series of Steering Committee meetings in which 'stakeholders' are expected to represent their interest in an atmosphere of collaboration. Pro-activeness and 'speaking out' are perhaps unintendedly valued in such a format. Although the facilitator of the meetings is very much aware of the difficulties of the

[41] Interview 11

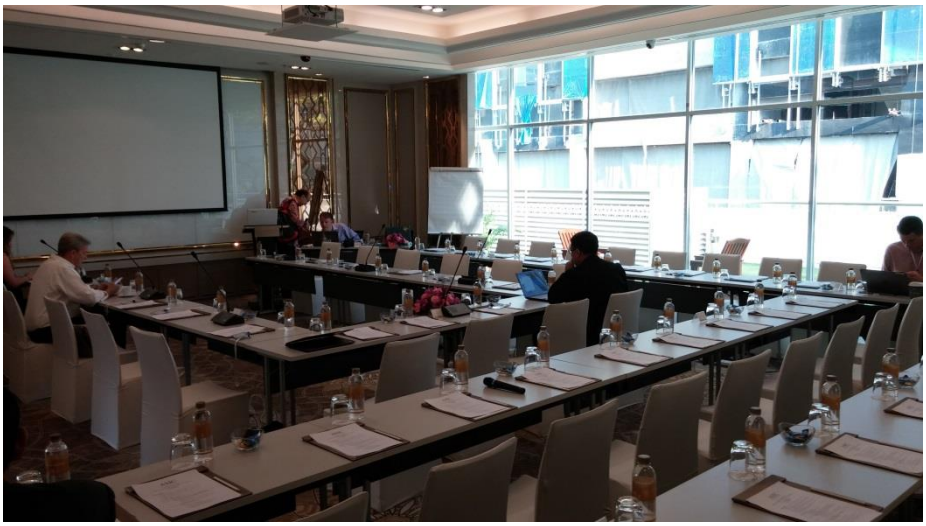

Figure 6 The setting of the 7th Steering Committee meeting in Bangkok, Thailand. The Steering Committee sits in the inner circle at the front. Picture taken by the author.

multi-stakeholder format[42], the result is that the conversation during the meeting tends to be dominated by non-regional stakeholders, despite the various precautions that have been made. These precautions include the rule that the Steering Committee always sits together at the front: "in order to foster that conversation between them, we need to keep anybody who is not a Steering Committee member in the back"[43] (Figure 6). In addition, Steering Committee members are given priority to make comments by the facilitator. Nonetheless, regional stakeholders – including producer representatives – seem to be less comfortable in speaking out during the meetings. Whenever an issue arises that needs further elaboration in a subcommittee, it is mostly non-regional stakeholders that are pro-actively indicating that they are willing to participate. The result is that regional stakeholders are less involved in the elaboration of SEASAIP plans. A factor that might contribute to the lack of engagement from regional stakeholders is possibly the fact that all meetings are conducted in English, making some people less comfortable in speaking out[44]. On various occasions during the meeting, the facilitator had to repeat and interpret the words of a participant to ensure clarity. The facilitator inevitably plays an important role during the meetings, deciding when to move on to a new topic, what deserves further attention in a subcommittee, and being the first and last to comment on any given issue. This is not necessarily problematic, but in combination with the lack of engagement of regional stakeholders it can steer the conversation into a particular direction. Nevertheless,

[42] Interview 2: "[If] Westerners start talking to each other the conversation isn't where it is supposed to be".
[43] Interview 2
[44] Interview 9 and 10

the facilitator is very much aware of the different visions and seems to be respected by the participants: "He is very inclusive. He listens well"[45].

The multi-stakeholder format and the use of English also seem to be a barrier for the direct involvement of producers in the meetings. Thai producers are represented by a producer organization that falls under the Ministry of Agriculture and by Thai Union. Producers from other countries are similarly represented by producer organizations or other industry actors. Direct involvement of producers is deemed too difficult precisely because of the type of engagement that is expected.

> *"[...] the thing is that most of the farmers, they cannot speak English. So you have a problem. You need to have a good translator and you need to encourage them to talk. We have experienced that before when you ask a farmer, when they are asked to talk they are very shy and they are very afraid. I don't know why, hahaha. [...] But it is good if we can involve farmers, if they are willing to, you know, to interact, to discuss important issues with experts, why not? It is really more productive if we can involve farmers."*
>
> (Expert, interview 3)

The Steering Committee meetings are, however, not the only moments of engagement with producers. The process of developing SEASAIP involves a constant back and forth from the shrimp farms to the meetings through pre-testing and pre-assessments[46]. As noted by a Seafood Watch representative, these field visits allow for a more intimate form of engagement that is often more comfortable for producers[47].

Recognition of regional stakeholders including producers is also apparent from the fact that all meetings are held in Southeast Asia. During the meeting, the facilitator mentions on several occasions that SEASAIP is meant to be a tool built by producers. There is a clear intention to really adapt SEASAIP to the realities and wishes of producers. There are extensive presentations and discussions about the producers and farms the stakeholders are working with. Examples of discussions about producer realities include the importance of the middle-man, which is often not considered in certification but is reflected in SEASAIP level 1, and the requirement that the 'main supplier' of inputs should be a SEASAIP certified feed mill and hatchery, which was unrealistic to some producers because they buy from several sources and switch constantly. Thus, producer knowledge is certainly valued and taken into account during the meetings, despite the barriers the set-up of the meetings poses to producers.

[45] Interview 11
[46] Interview 2 and 10
[47] Interview 10

However, the recognition of the importance of producer interests and knowledge does not automatically result in a standard that can be rightfully referred to as 'built by producers'. First of all, SEASAIP is not a producer initiative. Besides, the critique on the prevalence of experts from environmental NGOs in the development of ASC is, though arguably to a lesser degree, also applicable to SEASAIP. The following example serves to illustrate this point. During the discussion of the first round of public comments on the draft standard of SEASAIP level 2 for extensive shrimp production[48], a conflict of interest emerged over the discharge of water after a disease. According to the draft standard, this water would have to be treated before it can be released to the environment. The Thai producer representative remarked that this is an unrealistic requirement, as it is virtually impossible to treat all the water in an extensive production system, which usually involves very large ponds. In other words, the standard does not meet the everyday realities of producers. A Seafood Watch representative immediately defended the requirement by pointing out that the discharge of polluted water can never be certified as a sustainable practice. When talking to the producer representative even more than two weeks after this discussion, a strong sense of misrecognition could be observed:

> *"Actually I was there to protect the farmer interests. That is why I tried to point [out] that, when you are culturing extensive, why do you have to exchange water? That means that actually you know… I could have more experience than those who are going to decide the standard. [...] They got to listen because this is the truth!"*
>
> (Producer representative, interview 5)

The Seafood Watch representative had a similar strong remembrance of this discussion:

> *"And my response was: yes, I hear you, it's not easy, but would you consider a shrimp farm to be sustainable if they had a disease outbreak and immediately just discharged the water? We certainly at Seafood Watch don't think that that is representative of a sustainable shrimp farm. Is it going to be easy to figure out a way how to treat that water to be sure that when it is discharged it doesn't put active pathogens in the environment? Yes that is going to be difficult, but we need to figure it out, because we don't think it is sustainable."*
>
> (Seafood Watch representative, interview 10)

[48] SEASAIP level 2 differentiates between extensive and intensive production. This is an important difference from ASC, which is only applicable to intensive production systems.

The point is still up for discussion, but so far the requirement has been kept within the level 2 standard. Although Seafood Watch has granted permission to SEASAIP to use its rating system, it remains cautious of the credibility of its criteria:

> *"[...] our reputation is at stake as well, and the name of the companies we work with that always buy. So we are pretty cautious to make sure there is not a 'yellow' out there that we don't agree with."*
>
> *"Our primary goal [...] is to uphold those standards and it's never the idea for us to make those a little less stringent just to get some people in the system."*
>
> (Seafood Watch representative, interview 9)

This means that although Seafood Watch is a non-voting member of the Steering Committee, it wields considerable power over the content of the standard when it comes to environmental issues. This power is not formalized, but is subtly played out during the discussions. This is apparent from the fact that during the discussions about the public comments on SEASAIP level 2, the conversation was dominated by a Seafood Watch representative defending the standards. Although both arguments are very reasonable, the environmental expert claim is in this case prevalent over the practical claim of producers. This shows how the environmental rationality informing eco-certification becomes part of a play of power.

3.2 The Implementation

The degree of recognition of producers and their interests in the standard-setting process is also translated in the implementation of the standard. Taking the realities of producers seriously and thereby parting from the dominantly Western framework of reference, SEASAIP acknowledges that workers on shrimp farms are often compensated through a share of the production. In the standard for child labour an exception is made for family businesses as long as children do not engage in "hazardous work and work that jeopardizes schooling" (SEASAIP 2016: 19). Concerning the duration of labour for workers, the standard mentions "a lawful farm worker agreement (written or verbal [...]) specifying the duration of work" instead of requiring an eight-hour working day (SEASAIP 2016: 19). Eight-hour working days do not make sense in the case of shrimp farming, which usually requires only a few hours of work dispersed throughout the day[49]. In the words of an auditor, SEASAIP has developed "a set of indicators for social aspects which makes sense in the aquaculture and fisheries sector"[50]. Despite the disagreements such as the one discussed above about extensive farming, the environmental criteria of SEASAIP are also

[49] Interview 6
[50] Interview 1

much more tailored towards shrimp production in Southeast Asia than ASC or the original Seafood Watch criteria.

A further indication of the recognition of producer realities is that all SEASAIP documents will be translated in the local languages. According to an NGO representative working with shrimp producers in Bangladesh, this is quite different from ASC, which requires a good command of English "and an MBA at Harvard"[51]. Nevertheless, the discussion about extensive farming above indicates that producer knowledge is not always readily accepted, which could result in standards that are still distant from producer realities.

Another indication of the attempt to take producers seriously in SEASAIP can be found in the plans to have buyer assurance before getting farms SEASAIP certified. This still has to be developed and depends on the willingness of buyers to commit, although one buyer has already indicated to be willing to commit to buying before the shrimp has been produced. According to the Thai producer representative, this is one of the most important conditions for SEASAIP to be successful: "The standard will have to come with buyers"[52].

[51] Interview 3
[52] Interview 5

3.3 Conclusion

The findings regarding the aspects of producer-inclusiveness in SEASAIP relating to recognition are summed up in Table 6. The format of the multi-stakeholder initiative is not particularly conducive to the expression of producer interests, as it requires pro-activeness and a good command of and comfort in speaking English (1a, 1b). Nevertheless, different forms of engagement with producers are possible during field visits (1c). Producers are recognized in the sense that their realities are extensively discussed during the meetings (2a), although expert interests sometimes prevail (2b). This results in standards that match the realities of producers to a much larger degree than other forms of eco-certification (3). The plans to have buyer assurance for producers also indicate the recognition of producer interests.

Table 6 Recognition of producers in SEASAIP compared to criticisms on other eco-certifications derived from the literature review (1 = ASC, 2 = GAA-BAP and 3 = Thai GAP, + = incl., - = excl.)

Site	***Other eco-certifications***	***SEASAIP***	
Standard setting	1. Particular roles and capacities are expected from 'stakeholders', involving a particular kind of engagement that is foreign to producers$_{1}$	1a. Despite various precautions, the format of the meetings requires pro-activeness and a managerial orientation, excluding producers 1b. Meetings are in English, requiring a good command of and comfort in speaking that language 1c. Field visits and testing allow for different kinds of engagement with producers	− − +
	2. Technical expert knowledge is valued over producer knowledge and sociopolitical issues$_{1,2,3}$	2a. Producer realities are extensively discussed 2b. Expert interests sometimes prevail over producer interests	+ −
Implementation	3. Mismatch between standards and realities of smaller-sized producers$_{1,2,3}$	3. Standard clearly incorporates reality of producers, e.g. for social issues, and will be translated	+
	4. -	4. There are plans to have buyer assurance for producers if they get SEASAIP certified	+

4. REPRESENTATION: MEMBERSHIP AND PROCEDURES IN SEASAIP

How are producers represented in SEASAIP? Representation consists of the procedures that structure the way in which claims can be made and the criteria of membership to the 'SEASAIP community'. Who is involved? Who can be involved? How is the negotiation organized? What implications does this have for the implementation of SEASAIP?

4.1 The Standard-Setting Process

Other forms of certification have been heavily criticized for their representational gaps in standard setting. GAA-BAP and the national GAPs barely involve producers, and the lack of producer involvement in the Aquaculture Dialogues has been one of the main reasons to develop SEASAIP[53]. When asked about the difference between SEASAIP and other forms of certification, respondents often mention the presence of (regional) industry actors including producer representatives at the meetings.

At the time of this research, the Steering Committee consists of 14 members, among which 1 auditor (non-voting), 1 buyer (non-voting), 2 experts, 2 producer representatives, 2 processing company representatives, 3 NGO representatives (of which 1 non-voting) and 3 representatives of industry organizations with members along the value chain. Thus, only 2 of the 14 Steering Committee members are producer representatives. However, the industry organizations also represent producers, along with other actors along the value chain such as processors. The processing company that is represented is Thai Union and its US subsidiary Chicken of the Sea. Thai Union has many producers under contract and is therefore also said to represent producers[54]. Thus, the regional industry actors are certainly represented, certainly when taking into account the voting rights. However, the representation of producers is often combined with that of other actors in the value chain. Zooming in on the representation of Thai producers, there is one producer representative of the National Farmer Council and the two representatives of Thai Union. The National Farmer Council is a governmental organization under the ministry of agriculture. It has representatives at every level of Thai administration, ranging from the village level to the community (*tambon*), the district (*amphoe*) and the province (*changwat*). The National Farmer Council consists of selected representatives from the provinces[55]. The representative involved in SEASAIP does not represent a *changwat*, but is vice-secretary of the board, representing the aquaculture and fisheries sector. As an organization that closely cooperates with farmers and that explicitly promotes and protects their interests, the

[53] E.g. interview 3: "The problem of especially the ASEAN shrimp GAP is that it is the government officials formulating everything without consulting the farmers. [...] The same happened with ASC when they were formulating the guidelines and criteria they did not have the idea what is really happing at the grassroots level in the production centre of Asia-Pacific".
[54] E.g. interview 1, 2 and 3. This claim is questionable, see below.
[55] Interview 5

National Farmer Council can be regarded as a key participant in SEASAIP. The other Thai organization said to represent farmers is a processing company. Although working closely with producers, the interests of Thai Union are not necessarily the same as those of producers. For example, although the producers indicated that the most important reason to get involved in certification would be a premium price, a Thai Union representative argued that it would be better not to discuss the price in SEASAIP[56].

As discussed above, producers are not present at the SEASAIP meetings. They are involved through on-site visits, but do not directly participate in the standard-setting process. There are various reasons for the absence of producers at the meetings. First of all, there are cultural barriers related to the type of engagement expected during multi-stakeholder meetings (see the discussion of recognition above). Next to that, the distributional aspect of inclusiveness plays a role here as well: producers often lack the time and financial resources to participate in the meetings and to perform the various tasks that are required from Steering Committee members. Or as one auditor put it: "Most producers are too small to participate"[57]. In addition, there seems to be a lack of interest from the side of producers to get involved in the standard-setting process. When prompted about the possible involvement of producers in SEASAIP, the farmer representative answered that this would only serve one purpose: "Just to create the image"[58]. In other words, involving producers directly would benefit SEASAIP by fostering an image of inclusiveness, but it would not really change anything in the standard-setting process. Interestingly, one of the producers involved in the SEASAIP pilot has been involved in the standard-setting process of the new high-level Thai GAP. Although he did not provide an explanation for not coming to the SEASAIP meetings, one might speculate that language plays a role. The result is that producers are represented indirectly in the SEASAIP Steering Committee.

The negotiation process in SEASAIP is structured by particular formal procedures. The Steering Committee has the decision-making power. The Terms of Reference of SEASAIP state that it is possible to approve new Steering Committee members under certain conditions:

> *"To apply, interested members must submit a statement of interest that outlines why the candidate is interested, what sector they represent, and any other relevant information that needs to be considered. All proposed steering committee members must be approved by consensus."*
>
> (SEASAIP 2014: 2)

[56] Interview 5, 6, 8 and 11
[57] Personal communication
[58] Interview 5

The core group of the Steering Committee was involved in the USAID sponsored ASEAN-level taskforce that preceded SEASAIP. New members are reached through the networks of these members. Although officially membership is open to all, the lack of publicity on SEASAIP means that potential members might not be aware of the programme.

Steering Committee decisions are made on the basis of consensus, meaning that there is no "sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests" (ISO definition, quoted in SEASAIP 2014: 2). However, the discussion above about the treatment of water after a disease outbreak in extensive production systems indicates that consensus is not always possible.

In order to further enhance the representational validity of SEASAIP, various public comment periods are held in which anyone can comment on draft standards. In addition, three public consultation meetings were held. However, as the standards are only available in English and perhaps because of the channels through which awareness was raised about the possibility to voice opinions about SEASAIP, producers did not comment on the standards.

4.2 The Implementation

Although representation is mostly a procedural aspect of inclusiveness, some observations can be made about the representation of producers in the implementation of SEASAIP. One of the critiques on ASC is that the 'translation' of the standards for the purpose of auditing was not subject to a participatory process, leading to a non-participatory shift in the content of the standards. This is different in the case of SEASAIP. Auditing is intensively discussed during the meetings and the auditing checklist is also subject to a participatory process. An auditing subcommittee was created during the 7th meeting to deal with the various issues surrounding the implementation of SEASAIP through auditing. Besides the auditing, the 'field testing' of SEASAIP through various on-site visits and pilot projects ensures that producer interests are taken into account. The eligibility criteria for pilot farms are as follows: it can either be a farmer or a group of farmers, which need to be linked to a processor, demonstrating a need and desire for improvement and a need for access to better markets. In reality, the selection of pilot sites is mostly the consequence of the networks of Steering Committee members. Finally, other forms of eco-certification have been criticized for explicitly targeting intensive production or a particular segment of frontrunners, thereby a priori excluding small-sized and extensive production. SEASAIP is also applicable to extensive production and even distinguishes between intensive and extensive for its level 2 standards.

4.3 Conclusion

The findings regarding the representational aspects of producer-inclusiveness in SEASAIP are summed up in Table 7. Producers are represented in SEASAIP, though indirectly and sometimes in combination with the representation of other actors in the value chain (1a, 1b). The public consultations did not enhance producer representation (1c). Membership in SEASAIP is limited to the network of the current members, though there is no 'core group' representing a certain category of participants (2). Auditing is also subjective to a participatory process (3) and producer input is ensured through field-testing (4). No a priori exclusion of certain producers takes place because of a frame that in principle incorporates all producers (5).

Table 7 Representation of producers in SEASAIP compared to criticisms on other eco-certifications derived from the literature review (1 = ASC, 2 = GAA-BAP and 3 = Thai GAP, + = incl., - = excl.)

Site	***Other eco-certifications***	***SEASAIP***	
Standard setting	1. Producers are mostly not present or even represented in standard setting processes[1,2,3]	1a. There is producer representation, but partly combined with representation of other actors in the chain 1b. Producers are not present at meetings 1c. Producers did not comment in public consultations	± − −
	2. A core group of natural scientists formed which excluded other participants[1]	2. Officially membership is open, but lack of publicity means that potential members might not be aware of SEASAIP	±
Implementation	3. The translation towards the realities of auditing is not subject to a participatory process[1,2,3]	3. Auditing is intensively discussed during meetings and the auditing checklist is also subject to a participatory process	+
	4. -	4. Producer input is ensured through field-testing	+
	5. The standards explicitly target intensive production or frontrunners[1,2]	5. SEASAIP is also applicable to extensive production and even distinguishes between intensive and extensive for its level 2 standards	+

5. PRODUCER PERSPECTIVES ON SEASAIP

During the research, it became apparent that inclusiveness does not automatically imply that producers are interested in certification. Despite the various improvements SEASAIP has made compared to other eco-certification schemes in terms of distribution, recognition and representation, there seemed to be little interest from producers. The first and only SEASAIP-certified producer did not seem to be specifically interested in the programme, as he had already obtained GAA-BAP. Perhaps it would bring some market opportunities for his cooperative, but if not that would not really be a problem as he did not have to make any investments or efforts to obtain SEASAIP[59]. The eight producers of the second pilot site, in Chanthaburi, all indicated that they were only interested in SEASAIP if it was easy to obtain and would bring market opportunities[60]. However, their first concern was to receive a loan from the bank and being involved with SEASAIP would help to convince the bank. As long as they could start producing again after having suffered from a disease, they were content. The producers were planning to sell shrimp on the domestic market without any certification. One of the possible explanations for the lack of producer interest in SEASAIP is that certification has a bad reputation in general among producers. The differences between the various forms of eco-certification are not always clear to producers. Although SEASAIP might suit their interests better than ASC or GAA-BAP, it is still associated with the same problems the latter two face. For example, the producers were complaining about the social standards in eco-certification related to child labour and employment contracts[61], whereas SEASAIP has clearly adjusted these requirements based on feedback from producers. This general discontent with certification became especially clear during an interview with a producer representative:

> *"Please recognize that this kind of standard [...] is some kind of a roadblock. [...] When you start using this kind of standard to limit our capability, we have to look for another market."*[62]
>
> (Producer representative, interview 5)

When asked if SEASAIP was any better than other forms of certification because of more producer involvement, the answer was clear: "No! No! No! No!"[63]. According to him, the national standard would suffice so there would be no need for a market-based form of certification. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that the same producer representative is involved in the

[59] Interview 8
[60] Interview 6
[61] Interview 5 and 6
[62] The market for shrimp in China is growing, creating an alternative for export to the US and Europe.
[63] Interview 5

development of SEASAIP as a Steering Committee member. However, he views his involvement as an act of defence rather than a positive contribution towards more inclusive certification: "I was there to protect the farmer interests"[64]. For SEASAIP this means that clearly communicating the differences with other forms of eco-certification is essential.

An additional explanation for the lack of interest in eco-certification among producers apart from the possibility of a higher price, is that the ecological rationality that informs the development of eco-certifications such as SEASAIP is not universally shared, but limited to specific actors or specific locales. Private standards, in contrast to national standards, are initiated and developed mostly by Western NGOs and buyers that aim to incorporate environmental responsibility in their practices. As this environmental rationality is not shared by producers, eco-certification is regarded as something that is imposed, especially if it comes with burdens such as documentation, changes in farm management and auditing fees. Producers did not express much concern for the environment, except for issues related to the quantity of production and the survival rate of shrimp.

6. CONCLUSION

Various mechanisms of producer inclusion and exclusion operate in the standard setting and implementation of SEASAIP. SEASAIP is more inclusive than other forms of eco-certification for aquaculture in the following ways. First of all, producers are represented in the standard-setting process and their interests and realities are recognized, leading to standards that are closer to farm realities. Producer input is also ensured through field testing and even the auditing is subject to a participatory process. Meetings are held in Southeast Asia and certain participants receive compensation, making the standard-setting process more accessible to producers. The plans to set up an investment fund and to cover the auditing costs further reduce the burden of certification for producers. Incorporating buyer assurance for producers that successfully complete the SEASAIP certification process is another inclusive mechanism in SEASAIP. Producers not a priori excluded because of a particular frame that for example only considers intensive production, since SEASAIP is in principle applicable to all scales and forms of production.

Yet certain mechanisms in SEASAIP lead to the exclusion of producers. The format of the multi-stakeholder process of standard setting promotes a managerial orientation, in which pro-activeness and speaking out are valued. This form of engagement is not conducive to the expression of producer interests. Another barrier in this regard is created by the use of English as the language of the meetings. Producers are not present during the meetings, hence representation is indirect. As this representation is sometimes combined with that of other

[64] Interview 5

actors along the value chain, power relations in the value chain may prevent its adequacy. Expert interests do sometimes prevail over producer interests. Finally, it remains unclear whether it will be possible to ensure a premium price for SEASAIP-certified shrimp. A premium is essential to promote SEASAIP among producers, transforming producer's perspectives on eco-certification from barrier to opportunity. The lack of interest in SEASAIP among producers indicates that such a transformation of perspectives is necessary.

VI. Discussion

The mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion discussed in the previous chapter indicate the potential and challenges of producer-inclusive eco-certification. As SEASAIP is a deviant case of eco-certification, it activates more of these mechanisms than other cases (Flyvbjerg 2006), allowing for a better and deeper understanding of processes of inclusion and exclusion. The first part of this chapter deals with these mechanisms. The second part of this chapter evaluates the framework of inclusiveness as justice used to uncover these mechanisms.

As a critical case, SEASAIP is 'most likely' to be producer-inclusive, allowing us to test the hypothesis of the impossibility of inclusiveness posited by political ecology. The final part of this chapter reflects on this hypothesis and the way in which ecological modernization theory and political ecology can be reconceptualized on the basis of this research.

1. MECHANISMS OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION IN ECO-CERTIFICATION

As discussed in the theoretical framework, the three domains of inclusiveness can be considered as forms of power that operate in eco-certification. How do these forms of power play out in eco-certification with regard to the inclusion and exclusion of producers?

In the domain of distribution (the power of resources) one of the most formative mechanisms is the dependency of eco-certification on buyers. Taking into account the all-affected principle means that the costs of auditing and improvement in farm management should not be solely on producers. Buyers need to be willing to cover these costs. Thus, considering the often high costs involved in auditing, making eco-certification accessible for producers either results in a more expensive product that can only serve a niche market, or it requires a redistribution of value along the chain towards producers, although this varies depending on the complexity of the certification system. In other words, the costs could be put on either consumers or on buyers themselves. However, in order to turn eco-certification into an opportunity rather than a burden and to ensure producer interest in eco-certification, it is also necessary to consider premium prices for producers. This further serves to render eco-certified products into a niche market if the costs are to be carried by consumers. Therefore, a redistribution of value along the chain from buyers to producers is a requirement for successfully inclusive eco-certification. The power of buyers in buyer-driven chains means that such a redistribution is only possible if buyers are willing to commit to it. The process of standard setting also involves mechanisms of exclusion based on resources. However, these seem to be less problematic than the issue of costs. Although standard setting is often a lengthy process, adequate compensation mechanisms and meetings close to production locations can make such processes more accessible to producers. There are no strong barriers that prevent

this, but it requires sufficient consideration on the part of the organizers of the process. At the site of standard setting, issues of recognition and representation are of greater importance.

In the domain of recognition (the power of values) one particular issue stands out: the format of the multi-stakeholder meetings that is characteristic of many forms of eco-certification results in the subtle exclusion of producer voices. Speaking out, being pro-active and seeking solutions to manage the problem are attitudes that are valued in such a format. This ideal type of the 'stakeholder' is often unattainable for producers. It is also necessary to feel comfortable in speaking the language of the meetings, which is often English by default. In that way, standard setting becomes removed from producers. The rituals of interaction are foreign and serve to devalue producers and their interests. This indicates that processes that involve multiple stakeholders are not necessarily inclusive. It is important to consider the subtle rules and the setting of interaction. However, as noted by Cheyns (2014), producers or producer representatives can become trained in the format of the multi-stakeholder initiative. Moreover, engaging with producers through field testing of eco-certification also allows for the valuation of producer interests in standard setting. This means that recognition of producer interests is not necessarily impossible in multi-stakeholder formats, though it is not the ideal form of engagement promoting the expression of producer interests.

Finally, in terms of representation (the power of procedures and frames), both mechanisms of presence and absence as well as the particular form of representation play a role. Direct representation of producers appears to be difficult to achieve because of reasons of distribution and recognition. Both the costs and efforts needed to participate in standard setting as well as the expected form of engagement and issues of language serve to effectively exclude direct representation of producers. Indirect representation is not necessarily problematic, but it has to be carried out by those who can legitimately claim to represent producer interests. This means that all forms of combined representation such as industry associations are problematic, as different and sometimes conflicting interests are combined, thereby diminishing the message of the producers. Power relations in value chains are embodied in this kind of representation. In order to achieve inclusive representation, it is also important to consider who can and is effectively taking part in standard setting. Standard-setting processes tend to be populated by members of particular networks that got involved through these networks. Insufficient publicity and reaching out create relatively closed processes. Because producers and producer representatives are not necessarily part of these networks, this serves as a mechanism of producer exclusion. Finally, representation is also about frame setting, or determining who is by default in- and excluded from the frame of eco-certification. Targeting only specific forms of production such as intensive and large-scale agriculture or aquaculture sets a frame that a priori

excludes particular producers. Eco-certifications which are in principle and in practice applicable to all forms of production that can be considered sustainable are more inclusive.

2. EVALUATING INCLUSIVENESS AS JUSTICE

This section evaluates the framework of inclusiveness as justice that has guided this research conceptually. First of all, the framework allows for a more differentiated understanding of mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. The distinction between three domains of inclusiveness provides an analytical tool that points towards specific aspects of inclusion and organizes these aspects into comprehensive categories. The categories used cover (socio)economic, cultural and political aspects of justice and power. Categorization involves setting boundaries which do not always neatly correspond to the complexity and contingency of reality, but this allows for a conceptual differentiation that organizes this reality for the purpose of analysis.

'Inclusiveness as justice' is not a usual framework in the social sciences, as it originates from normative political philosophy. This thesis has effectively attempted to transform a normative philosophical theory into an analytical framework. The double nature of this approach as both analytical and normative makes it an appropriate tool for policy evaluations. It not only analyses reality as it is, but also what this reality should be like. As Karl Marx wrote: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it." (1969: 15). Thus, this approach is in line with the tenets of critical theory. However, the way in which the framework has been used in this research is analytical rather than normative. The normative character only surfaces in the use of the justice principle as a benchmark against which the case can be measured. Full inclusiveness is treated as an ideal situation, which makes mechanisms of exclusion especially apparent. Taking inclusiveness as an ideal situation does however not imply that inclusiveness is the only norm against which eco-certification can be measured. Rather, it serves to make explicit in which cases there is a trade-off between inclusiveness and other goals and norms. In other words, normativity is used as an analytical tool in this research.

However, there are also several limitations to the use of the justice framework. First of all, the categories of inclusiveness are limited because of their general and abstract nature. Asserting that 'distribution' is of importance for inclusiveness does not tell the researcher what to look for specifically. A further elaboration of the three domains of inclusiveness into subcategories would improve the analytical usefulness of the approach. Secondly, the relation between the three categories is not conceptualized. How do issues of distribution, recognition and representation interact either to reinforce or to weaken each other? Although the pre-eminence of representation is stressed, the conceptualization of these interrelations is still rather weak. Applying the framework to an empirical reality results in a list of mechanisms of

inclusion and exclusion, but it does not provide grips to formulate a general assessment of what all these mechanisms together lead up to.

Furthermore, in terms of the application of the framework, this study has only considered inclusiveness in as far as it concerns producers. Yet various studies show that communities affected by shrimp farming are also excluded from eco-certification (Vandergeest 2007). The framework of inclusiveness as justice could also be deployed in that context, broadening the scope of the concept.

Finally, the choice of this framework to reflect on the debate between ecological modernization theory and political ecology respectively has some shortcomings as well. Although it can serve to analyse the potential exclusionary nature of eco-certification and thereby either prove or reject one of the central theses of political ecology, it does not necessarily engage with concepts derived from ecological modernization theory. This is only done to the extent that these are of importance to dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. Further research on this theoretical debate could benefit from a more direct engagement with ecological modernization theory. One should bear this in mind when reading the next section that deals with this debate.

3. RECONCEPTUALIZING THEORIES IN ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY

Ecological modernization theory and political ecology appear to be mutually exclusive theories. Either market-based environmental reform is desirable as an expression of the reflexive emergence of an environmental rationality, or it is not because it reinforces power relations and results in the exclusion of producers. This hypothesis of the exclusionary effect of environmental rationality and the role of power in reflexivity has been tested for a particular case that explicitly aims to be inclusive. Therefore, it can evaluate the possibility of inclusiveness when particular agents explicitly strive for producer-inclusive eco-certification. Thus, what follows is an empirically informed reconceptualization of theories in environmental sociology. It is argued that both approaches need not be as mutually exclusive as they appear to be. However, it has to be noted that on the basis of this research the theoretical debate cannot be resolved because of the shortcomings of the justice framework, which are discussed above. The lack of the application of concepts from ecological modernization theory affects the conclusions that can be drawn on the basis of this research.

The existence of market-based governance arrangements that aim to be as participatory as possible is in line with the analysis of ecological modernization theory that a reflexive environmental awareness is restructuring production and consumption practices. Eco-certification is a collaborative form of governance that results from a developing environmental rationality. However, this environmental reflexivity becomes part of a context of power, in which

it develops as a force of its own. Moreover, ecological rationality is not universal, but tends to be concentrated among particular actors and in particular locales.

Ecological modernization theory in its crudest form has the tendency to underestimate the importance of power relations in environmental reflexivity. Global value chain relations and other forms of power such as values do play a role in the creation of eco-certification and therefore also in its effectiveness. In that sense, reflexivity should be seen as a deeply political process. Newly incoming information has the potential to reorganize practices of production and consumption, but this information is infused in and with relations of power. Reflexivity should not be regarded as a fully rational process: it is shaped by – yet also shapes –these relations of power. Ecological modernization theory cherishes market-based and voluntary governance arrangements as effective reforms in the current institutional context of global modernity, but it should consider what 'market-based' implies in terms of power relations. Various mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are constitutive of eco-certification and these co-determine the success of such governance arrangements.

Ecological rationality becomes a force of its own in processes of standard setting for eco-certification. As a 'relatively independent epistemology' it can come into conflict with other rationalities and interests and the outcome of this conflict is contingent. Sometimes ecological rationality prevails over pragmatic interests, sometimes it is subsumed under economic considerations. In this light it is also important to note that ecological rationality is distributed and tends to be concentrated among particular actors, i.e. Western NGOs and buyers. As such, it can become an externally imposed regime that seems more like a burden than an opportunity for producers in developing countries. In other words, ecological rationality can create conflict and inequalities. When ecological rationality and positions of power align, the independence of the former can be questioned. Nevertheless, this does not lead to the conclusion that ecological rationality has no transformative capacity. It surely results in new forms of governance with new roles and different actors.

Moreover, the importance of power in environmental reflexivity does not necessarily mean that inclusive environmental reform is impossible, as is argued in political ecology. Power structures are indeed drawn upon by agents in environmental reform processes, but these are appropriated and reconstituted in the process (cf. Giddens 1984). If agents explicitly strive for inclusive eco-certification, many of the barriers to inclusiveness can be overcome. It could be argued that genuine ecological rationality would steer environmental reform processes towards inclusiveness, because that eventually enhances sustainability. In other words, reflexivity is an ongoing process. Power itself can become the subject of this reflexivity. This means that the conceptualization of power in political ecology is too general and too static. Power does always play a role, so denying it as ecological modernization theory does is also not productive. Instead,

it is important to consider how power is produced in a specific context. Recognition of and reflection on power differences can be used to seek for more balanced power relations. Power itself can become part of the discussion.

In addition, multiple forms of power operate in environmental reform processes and they do not always necessarily align. There are multiple processes of inclusion as well, so the result is not always exclusion. This means that on overtly economic and structural conceptualization of power such as the 'world-system-theory' version of political ecology overlooks the complexity of power relations in environmental reform processes.

These arguments about environmental reflexivity and power lead to the conclusion that ecological modernization theory and political ecology need not be as mutually exclusive as they appear to be. The development of an ecological rationality that restructures production and consumption practices in the market co-evolves with mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. In other words, power relations both shape and are shaped by environmental reform processes. Both ecological modernization theory and political ecology contain important elements of understanding these relations and processes. In other words: *decision-making involves both reflexivity and rationality as well as considerations of power, resulting in contingent outcomes*. Are we then left to conclude that both theories highlight different aspects, but cannot explain everything?

> *"Stories are like searchlights and spotlights; they brighten up parts of the stage while leaving the rest in darkness. Were they to illuminate the whole of the stage evenly, they would not really be of use."*
>
> (Bauman 2004: 17)

Although such a metaphor is appealing, evaluations of environmental governance would certainly benefit from a more integrated and nuanced approach that considers these various aspects. Although the two theories might be difficult to integrate analytically, I argue that common ground can be found in terms of the evaluative and normative nature of the two approaches.

The contours of an alternative and integrative evaluation of environmental reform can be found in the conceptualization of inclusiveness as justice, defined as parity of participation. Following both from ecological modernization theory's assertion that top-down state-based governance should be replaced by more open and collaborative forms of governance, and political ecology's warning for processes of exclusion, is a call for what has been termed *ecological democratization* (Connely and Smith 2003). Such an approach is more sensitive to issues of justice than ecological modernization theory, but at the same time it embodies a pragmatic engagement with environmental problems rather than a pessimistic call for

localization or the acquiescence in the inevitability of power that is characteristic of political ecology. In such a conceptualization, participation in environmental governance is not understood as the representation of interests and expertise from the market, civil society and government, which has a tendency to promote the formation of elites. Rather, ecological democratization involves a form of participation based on citizenship in line with the all-affected principle. This entails a move away from interest-based representation towards deliberative environmental politics. Deliberative democracy is grounded on decision-making that incorporates the values and needs of all those affected by a particular governance arrangement as the basis of political deliberation. As Connelly and Smith (2003: 71) argue,

> *"contemporary institutions at all levels (global to local) lack legitimacy in that they are implicated in the growing disparity of wealth within and between societies, increased environmental degradation and the inability to act within the confines of the global capitalist system. Their practices and interpretations of sustainable development are seen to favour the interests of particular politically-influential groups within society and are relatively unconcerned with the experiences and needs of the disenfranchised".*

This leads them to conclude that "the crisis to which contemporary green politics must respond can best be understood as a crisis of representation" (Connely and Smith 2003: 71). In other words, ecological democratization is necessitated by the legitimacy crisis induced by the unequal outcome of environmental reform and the uneven distribution of ecological rationality that has resulted in perceptions of environmental reform as external imposition in the global South. Thus, what is needed to prevent political alienation is a restructuring of decision-making processes so that the voices of the underrepresented are heard. This entails forms of engagement which are outside of the sphere and logic of the market, but within a sphere of deliberation (Habermas 1984). As Barber and Bartlett (2005: 231-2) note, "the evidence suggests that decision making that is more inclusive and contemplative is more eco-friendly than conventional interest-group liberalism has been". In that sense, deliberative democracy is 'ecologically rational'. However, it is important to note that deliberation differs from rationality, as it is fundamentally democratic and cannot be appropriated by experts. As science and expertise always involve normative judgements when used to draft environmental policies, the Enlightenment dream of rationality becomes impossible. Instead, deliberation provides an alternative 'rationality'. Making power subject of the discussion might provide a pathway towards ecological democratization. A reflexive incorporation of considerations of power provides the potential to overcome the legitimacy crisis of contemporary environmental politics.

Ecological democratization is not an analytical tool that serves to understand environmental reform processes like ecological modernization theory and political ecology.

Rather, it should be regarded as a normative framework that can be used for the evaluation and steering of such processes. Even so, it builds on the integrated analysis of ecological modernization theory and political ecology respectively, seeking for the possibility of ecological rationality without exclusion. Perhaps it is a utopia, but this means that it can serve as a normative framework for evaluation and guidance. As Eduardo Galeano (1997) wrote:

> *"Utopia is on the horizon. I move two steps closer; it moves two steps further away. I walk another ten steps and the horizon runs ten steps further away. As much as I may walk, I'll never reach it. So what's the point of utopia? The point is this: to keep walking."*

4. CONCLUSION

Various mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in SEASAIP are characteristic of eco-certification in general, as they arise from the nature of this form of governance. The case study on SEASAIP has made these mechanisms explicit, as they are activated by a deviant case that explicitly aims to be inclusive. These mechanisms include buyer dependency, the format of the multi-stakeholder initiative, the form of representation and mechanisms of presence and absence. These mechanisms show that environmental governance is not simply the reflexive incarnation of an emerging ecological rationality. Rather, it is shaped by relations of power, showing that reflexivity should not be regarded as a fully rational process. Ecological rationality forms such a mechanisms of in- and exclusion itself, as it restructures governance relations. Moreover, because it is distributed unevenly, it is susceptible to be perceived as a form of external imposition. However, this does not mean that inclusive environmental reform is impossible, as is argued in political ecology. The agency of those involved in the reform, the ongoing process of reflexivity based on power considerations and the simultaneous operation of multiple processes of inclusion all indicate the possibility of inclusiveness. A common normative framework that integrates elements of ecological modernization theory and political ecology can be found in ecological democratization, i.e. the concept of a deliberative and democratic form of environmental governance that is able to overcome problems of exclusion whilst being ecologically rational.

VII. Conclusion

Aquaculture provides an enormous potential as an alternative to wild capture fisheries, yet its social and environmental problems need to be addressed in order to make this alternative viable and desirable. Eco-certification has the potential to reconfigure the production practices in aquaculture, though under the condition that it is accessible to small-scale producers which make up the bulk of production in Thailand. The potential of inclusive eco-certification is also at the core of the debate between ecological modernization theory and political ecology respectively. So far, the existing eco-certification schemes for aquaculture have been prone to various mechanisms of exclusion in terms of the distribution of costs and benefits of certification, the recognition of producers and their realities and the representation of producers in standard setting. The Southeast Asian Shrimp Aquaculture Improvement Protocol, or SEASAIP, explicitly aims to be a producer-inclusive form of eco-certification, making it an interesting case to study the possibility of inclusiveness in eco-certification. Using a framework of inclusiveness as justice, the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in SEASAIP have been analysed from the perspective of distribution, recognition and representation.

How are the costs and benefits of eco-certification and the resources required to participate in standard setting distributed in SEASAIP particularly with regard to producers?

With regard to the resources required to participate in standard setting, attention is paid to producers as there are forms of compensation, although the time and efforts needed to participate are not covered. The costs and benefits of SEASAIP are more equally distributed than in other forms of eco-certification, as auditing costs for small-sized farms are paid by buyers or processors and there are plans to create an improvement fund that is also paid by buyers. It is currently still unclear whether there will be a premium price, whereas this seems to be the key to producer interest in eco-certification, turning it into an opportunity rather than a burden. Again, this depends on the willingness of buyers to contribute. Thus, the buyer dependency of the value chain plays an important role in the creation and implementation of eco-certification. Although the costs of auditing, improvement and premium pricing can also be paid by consumers, this results in a niche market that can only cover a small amount of producers. Hence, genuinely inclusive eco-certification entails a redistribution in the value chain from buyers to producers.

Are producers and their concerns recognized in SEASAIP?

The format of the multi-stakeholder initiative in SEASAIP is not particularly conducive to the expression of producer interests. Speaking out, being pro-active and seeking solutions to manage the problem are attitudes that are valued in such a format. This ideal type of the

'stakeholder' is often unattainable for producers. Nevertheless, different forms of engagement with producers are possible during field visits. Producers are recognized in the sense that their realities are extensively discussed during the meetings, although expert interests and their ecological rationality sometimes prevail. This results in standards that match the realities of producers to a much larger degree than other forms of eco-certification.

How are producers and their concerns represented in SEASAIP?

Producers are represented in the process of creating SEASAIP. However, this representation is indirect, as direct representation is hindered by reasons of distribution and recognition, i.e. the costs and efforts needed to participate in standard setting as well as the expected form of engagement and issues of language. Indirect representation is not necessarily problematic, but it has to be carried out by those who can legitimately claim to represent producer interests. This means that all forms of combined representation such as industry associations are problematic, as different and sometimes conflicting interests are combined, thereby diminishing the message of the producers. Power relations in value chains are embodied in this kind of representation. Because SEASAIP is not widely advertised, membership is limited to the networks of the current members, making it a relatively closed process, although there is no 'core group' and membership is in theory open to anyone. Finally, representation is also about frame setting, or determining who is by default in- and excluded from the frame of eco-certification. Targeting only specific forms of production such as intensive and large-scale agriculture or aquaculture sets a frame that a priori excludes particular producers. SEASAIP is in principle and in practice applicable to all forms of production that can be considered sustainable and is therefore more inclusive.

So, how inclusive is the SEASAIP aquaculture eco-certification scheme in terms of the incorporation of producers in Thailand?

The picture that arises is mixed. Producers are represented and their realities are discussed and taken into account while drafting the standard. There are various plans to shift the burden of certification away from producers, so as to share responsibility in the value chain in line with the all-affected principle of Fraser (2007). However, several challenges to inclusiveness remain, such as buyer dependency, the format of the multi-stakeholder initiative and the form of representation. Compared to BAA-GAP, Thai GAP and ASC, SEASAIP clearly performs better in terms of inclusiveness. There is more input from producers and the standard is adapted to the interests of regional stakeholders, but at the same time there is (a potential for) market recognition because of a system of third-party certification and the use of credible standards endorsed by Seafood Watch. SEASAIP is posited between the international market-based forms

of eco-certification – ASC and BAA-GAP – and the national standard that is cheap and easy but does not encourage much improvement in terms of environmental and social performance, resulting in a lack of market acknowledgement. In other words, SEASAIP has the potential of becoming accessible and credible whilst fostering continued improvement, thereby overcoming the 'devils triangle' of eco-certification (cf. Bush et al. 2013b). Nevertheless, SEASAIP also suffers from a negative or at least indifferent perspective on eco-certification among producers. As long as eco-certification is seen as a barrier rather than an opportunity, it will be difficult for SEASAIP to reach producers. This might be explained by the distribution of ecological rationality mainly among buyers and Western NGOs, leading to perceptions of eco-certification as external imposition. In sum, SEASAIP is more inclusive than other forms of eco-certification for aquaculture, but several challenges remain. It is key to get buyers on board that are willing to redistribute value in the chain. Moreover, forms of engagement that are more conducive to the expression of producer interests have to be found. If SEASAIP wants to become an opportunity for Thai producers rather than a barrier, it has to overcome these challenges.

What does all this tell us about the debate between ecological modernization theory and political ecology respectively? First of all, it confirms that there are various mechanisms of exclusion. Power does play an important role in eco-certification and there are several mechanisms that lead to the exclusion of producers. Buyer dependency in value chains is a significant aspect of this. However, the research also shows that there are various mechanisms of inclusion and that the commitment of agents to create inclusive eco-certification can make a difference. Decision-making involves both reflexivity and rationality as well as considerations of power, resulting in contingent outcomes. Although integration of both theories on an analytical level remains difficult, common ground can be found in terms of the evaluative and normative nature of the two approaches. This common ground is an aspiration towards ecological democratization, a genuinely participatory and deliberative form of governance that incorporates the values and needs of all and is based on reasoned agreement.

For eco-certification, this entails a more direct involvement of producer and the use of deliberative methods of standard setting and deliberative forms of engagement. Making the problem of power inequalities the starting point of eco-certification and explicitly aiming for inclusiveness can make eco-certification more inclusive. For SEASAIP – which already goes a long way in this direction – this means that more direct engagement with producers in standard setting is recommended, for example by organising small-scale gatherings of producers on production sites to talk about eco-certification, without a pre-set agenda. This has the further potential of fostering a sense of local ownership over the standard, thereby ameliorating the rather negative reputation of eco-certification among producers. Perhaps such a context of

reasoned and reasonable deliberation can even create a space in which buyers and producers can agree on premium pricing and value redistribution. SEASAIP is already fostering a sense of mutual understanding between buyers and producers, but this could be taken to another level through such a deliberative process.

A principle is the expression of perfection, and as imperfect beings like us cannot practise perfection, we devise every moment limits of its compromise in practice.

Mahatma Gandhi in *Hindu Dharma* (1958: 172)

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Appendix

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Nr.	Role	Organization	Date	Medium	Type
1	Auditor, company director	Fairagora	17-1-‘17	Skype	Semi-structured
2	Facilitator and manager of SEASAIP	Postelsia	17-1-‘17	Skype	Semi-structured
3	Aquaculture specialist at Dutch social NGO	Solidaridad	14-2-‘17	In person	Informal
4	Aquaculture expert	NACA	17-2-‘17	In person	Semi-structured
5	Producer representative	National Farmer Council	24-2-‘17 3-3-‘17	In person	Semi-structured
6	8 farmers in cooperative in Chanthaburi	Chanthaburi Shrimp Farmers Cooperative	24-2-‘17	In person	Semi-structured and informal
7	Auditor	Fairagora	24-2-‘17	In person	Informal
8	Producer of SEASAIP certified farm, head of cooperative Sam Roi Yot	Sam Roi Yot Shrimp Farmers Cooperative	2-3-‘17	Phone call	Semi-structured
9	Science director of environmental NGO	Seafood Watch	2-3-‘17	Skype	Semi-structured
10	Senior aquaculture scientist at environmental NGO	Seafood Watch	2-3-‘17	Skype	Semi-structured
11	Operations manager of multinational processor and exporter	Thai Union / Chicken of the Sea	7-3-‘17	Skype	Semi-structured