Deindustrialization Along the Littoral: Shifting Capitalist, Social, and Environmental Relations in the American Fishing Industry, 1976-2007.

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A Thesis
in the Department of
History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts (History)

at
Concordia University
Montreal, Québec, Canada

May 2024

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

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Entitled: Deindustrialization Along the Littoral: Shifting Capitalist, Social and Environmental Relations in the American Fishing Industry, 1976-2007.

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (History)

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ABSTRACT

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At the margins of the industrial economy of the mid-twentieth century, economic change in the American commercial fishing industry challenged its very market, social, and environmental relations. The issue of overfishing became a national one in the 1960s and by 1976, the U.S. Congress passed the Magnuson-Stevens Act, nationalizing waters within 200 miles of its coast. And yet, it wasn't until the 1990s, with the collapse of fisheries across the Northwest Atlantic, that the notion of the unchangeable ocean would lose its hold over politics. This project considers the industrial decline in fisheries through the lens of neoliberalism and deindustrialization, an approach rarely used in fisheries history. Using the archive of the Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association (1947-1996), Rhode Island, USA, this thesis considers the history of industrial decline from the experiences of fishermen themselves. Instead of fishermen's jobs going overseas, Point Judith fishermen experienced consolidation and atomization, relying on the free market to access economic security while experiencing the squeeze of global free trade. Industrial decline in fisheries highlights the contradictions within late 20th century America, in which economic nationalism and neoliberalism went hand-in-hand. Not only did neoliberalism impact how the fishing industry was governed and financed, but it shaped how fishermen were treated as workers. This thesis strikes a path to excavate the history of fishermen's class consciousness at the nexus of ecological and economic pressures in an era of industrial decline.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My work has been made possible by the many people who shared their stories with me and without which I would never have begun this journey. I am deeply grateful for all the Point Judith fishermen who agreed to be interviewed. Thank you for welcoming me into your homes, taking the time to share some of your memories, and for entrusting them to me. Listening to you transformed how I think about our shared little region of the world and the big role it has played in this story. I only hope that I have done them enough justice so that others can be touched in similar ways. In particular, I am deeply indebted to Frederick Mattera for numerous calls and for introducing me to Christopher Brown. I am thankful for their stewardship of the Point Judith co-op meeting minutes for over the last thirty years and for temporarily lending them to me. These records were presented to me during a visit to the Commercial Fisheries Center of Rhode Island, located on the East Farm campus of the University of Rhode Island. I would also like to thank the South County Museum.

I am particularly thankful to my thesis supervisor, Steven High, for granting me the opportunity to come to Concordia University. Your willingness to let me explore and your clarity to reign me in are just some of the qualities that have made your mentorship so impactful. Additionally, it has been an honor to be a part of the nurturing community of students and scholars that you have cultivated on campus. Thank you for your generosity and for being such a positive role model for your students. Thank you to Bradley Craig and Yuan Yi for your thoughtful engagement. I would also like to welcome and thank Theresa Venture and Gavin Taylor for your time and thoughtful questions as my defense committee.

Thank you to all the fellow students in the history department who have made my years both enriching and enjoyable. I would particularly like to thank my cohort and Steven High's student group for promoting a collaborative learning environment that critically impacted my thinking. Among these many wonderful people include – Isadora Galwey, Karl Arieh Ponthieux, Camilla Casgrain-Rodriguez, Marie-Odile Samson, William Gillies, Kelann Currie-Williams, and Lauren Laframoise. I would also like to give a special thank you to Gabrielle McLaren for being so welcoming when I first arrived and for being a great DePOT associate director.

Thank you to fellow DePOT fisheries scholars Katherine Watson and Laurent Sauvage. Thank you to Matthew McKenzie and Kristen Ounanian for being generous with your time and knowledge. Thank you also to Lachlan MacKinnon for encouraging me to expand my horizons in thinking about the intersection of fisheries and indigenous histories. I would also like to thank my cohort of fellows at the Mystic Seaport Museum Summer Munson Institute and a special thank you to the director, Akeia de Barros Gomes. I hope this work contributes to 'Reimagining New England Histories.'

Thank you to all my Richter, Richardson and Davis families for always supporting me, no matter how far away I go, and for showing me that I will always have a place to go back to.

Most of all, a special thank you to my partner, Connor, for your endless encouragement, willingness to talk about fish at all hours, and grace as we navigated these two years of being long-distance together.

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INTRODUCTION

Littoral Thinking: Locating Fisheries in the Deindustrialization Literature

In 2021, I was first introduced to what would become a multi-year project, taking me from my home town in rural southern Rhode Island to Montreal, Quebec to do a masters at Concordia University. I had just gotten a grant-funded job at a local museum in Narragansett, Rhode Island, to manage a community oral history project. The goal was to collect the life histories of "old timer" Point Judith commercial fishermen. Point Judith is a port town in Rhode Island, nestled along a rocky coastline laced with kettle ponds and saltwater marshes. It is situated between the mouth of Long Island Sound and Cape Cod, giving fishermen access to both Mid-Atlantic and Northwest Atlantic fishing grounds as far south as the Chesapeake and as far north as Nova Scotia. The museum developed this project with the goal of creating an exhibit about the disappearing multigenerational fishing families and decline in the Rhode Island fishing industry. Importantly, it framed its focus on fishermen to the exclusion of shoreside workers as if the fishermen were somehow more authentic, more in need of preservation, more deserving of empathy. Whereas fish harvesters in Point Judith were supported by a web of families, shoreside workers were often temporary, new to the industry, or less embedded in these kinship networks. It was during the many conversations I had with these "old timers" that I began to learn about the history of the Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association and the New England fishing industry more generally.

Rhode Island has not found much of a place in fisheries history. Meanwhile, the ports of Gloucester and New Bedford to the north and Long Island and New York City to the south reverberate with symbolism about this iconic American industry. This is partly because Rhode Island did not have much of a commercial fishery until the mid-nineteenth century. By that point,

the economy of southern Rhode Island revolved around textiles and agriculture. During this period Rhode Island fishermen were organizing in "trap companies," and "fish gangs," and plied the coastal waters of Narragansett Bay in sail and row boats.[1] These people were primarily white multigenerational fishing-farming families. Point Judith fishermen remained inshore until the state encouraged the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to carry out harbor improvements in the 1890s-1930s so it could host steam-powered fishing vessels. Between 1935 and 1945, Point Judith fishermen's landings increased from 3,000 tons to 17,000 tons.[2]

In 1947, Point Judith fishermen organized a harvesters' cooperative. It would become an important catalyst for the port's fishing industry and by the 1970s was considered to be one of the most successful fishermen's co-ops in the country, lasting until 1995 when it went bankrupt and officially closing in 1996.[3] Until then, it worked closely with the University of Rhode Island, located in an adjoining town, to advance fisheries science, technology, and policy. Their partnership inspired numerous cooperative research initiatives between Point Judith fishermen and research institutions. These arrangements produced a wealth of records about co-op fishermen and their activities. Among such records included oral histories. And yet, I observed that no one had comprehensively studied these sources and so it felt important to analyze them on my own. Many of these interviews were conducted with the same fishermen over the years, often recycling the same questions. Without critical engagement with the pre-existing oral histories, further research-creation felt inattentive to the possible extractive dynamics that interviewing could create. In the end, I identified around 64 interviews related to Point Judith fishermen and through my work at the museum would conduct ten more.

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[1] John Poggie and Carl Gersuny, *Fishermen of Galilee: The Human Ecology of a New England Coastal Community*, *Marine Bulletin No. 17* (Kingston: Sea Grant University of Rhode Island, 1974): 31-32.
[2] Poggie and Gersuny, *Fishermen of Galilee,* 39.
[3] Poggie and Gersuny, *Fishermen of Galilee,* 41.

Throughout these interviews and my conversations with fishermen since 2021, I observed that the co-op's closure marked a shift in fishermen's perceptions about the industry. Whereas the 1970s and 1980s were "some of the best fishing," the co-op's closure coincided with the emergence of declension narratives about the industry. Recollections about the co-op indicated that it was an important unifying institution in a port that was otherwise extremely diverse in terms of fish caught, techniques used, and income. Once the co-op shut down, oral histories revealed the prevailing sense that the industry was "going down the drain." Fishermen who had grown up in multigenerational fishing families were confident that their own children would not follow in their footsteps. Industry decline was commensurate with the gentrification of southern Rhode Island as development strategies prioritized tourism and real estate in the 1990s. Whereas during the times marked by the co-op when "the fisherman lived in Galilee, since the rich people didn't want anything to do with it,"[4] today fishermen "don't live down by the water because you– you can't afford it anymore."[5] Fishing families feel this shift in terms of being no longer valued by a society that "just want the sports fishermen and the tourists down there,"[6] and is willing to "weed us out [... to] put up condominiums [...and] move us up to Quonset."[7] Decline, devaluation, and displacement are vivid in fishermen's narratives and their imaginations about the state of the industry. And yet, unlike the textile mills, the fishing industry has persisted in Point Judith. If fishermen's declension narratives are not the result of industrial closure, what caused them?

[4] Rodman Sykes, interviewed by Sophia Richter, June 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[5] Jon Dougherty, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[6] Ruth Reposa, interviewed by Jennifer Flesia, May 9, 2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[7] Niles Pearsall, interviewed by Azure Dee Cygler, November 15, 2011, transcript, Sector Management in New England Collection, NOAA Voices Oral History Archive.

In the Spring 2007 special issue of the *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine* on the "Politics and Memory of Deindustrialization in Canada," Steven High cites the Newfoundland-based Canadian historian, Rosemary Ommer, who considers the cod fishing moratorium in Atlantic Canada. In her 1993 lecture at the University of New Brunswick, Ommer called on scholars to "trace where [the crisis] came from" and to consider the "ideologies, beliefs and pressures that underlie" the historical process that led to closure. The 1992 Newfoundland cod fishery moratorium is an extreme example of industrial change in the fishing industry. When the cod fishery was shut down, it happened overnight, leaving over 30,000 people without work the next day.[8] As High alludes in his 2007 article, the political dynamics and social implications of the cod fishery moratorium can be studied in concert with other examples of closure and mass industrial job-loss. What happened off the coast of Newfoundland had a rippling effect all over the Northwest Atlantic, much like manufacturing decline has caused staggering unrest in North American and European working-class communities.

And yet, commercial fisheries, much like other resource extractive industries, has not found its place in the deindustrialization literature. High posits that economic change in these types of industries is usually explained by cyclical downturns,[9] as opposed to the conscious decisions that led to deindustrialized decline.[10] In the case of fisheries, these cyclical down-turns refer to the propensity for fishing grounds to be overexploited; for there to be variance in fish stocks from year to year; and for the overall industry to be sensitive to capitalization. When given the chance to join the transnational project *Deindustrialization and the Politics of Our Time,* I took up these questions

[8] Miriam Wright, *A Fishery for Modern Times: The State and the Industrialization of the Newfoundland Fishery, 1934-1968*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 1.
[9] Steven High,"'The Wounds of class': A Historiographical Reflection on the Study of Deindustrialization." *History Compass,* 11 no.11 (November 2013): 1002.
[10] Ibid. 997.

to understand how the history of the Point Judith fishing industry fit into the wider context of economic change. In the following section, I will draw together the literature on fisheries and deindustrialization to consider the boundaries that divide them and how they can be bridged.

Literature Review

The literature on fisheries history emerges from social history with the history of science, where place – marine places – are essential context for interpretation. The littoral is an ecological zone where land and sea meet; extending from the high-tide line to the outer edge of the continental shelf. Marine biologists point to the littoral as the most biodiverse region of aquatic ecosystems, a key site for fish' breeding and feeding grounds, and thus the location for fishing as well. While this speaks to the littoral as a discreet place, New England settlers have largely treated it as a border, a coast *line*. Chistopher Pastore, a historian of Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay, wrote that the littoral zone is a site of "political, legal, and cultural ambiguities…shaped by the tension between a desire to 'improve' the land and a belief that the ocean was eternal."[11] The littoral zone is constituted by its very permeability and nonlinearity, its resistance to rationalization and capitalization.[12] Coastal and Island studies, as well as Black and Indigenous thinkers, have used the littoral zone to articulate the discrete mode of being that exists at the margins of and in opposition to industrial America's settler colonial and racial capitalist society.[13] Commercial fishing on the other hand, both reinforces these structures and is complicated by their growth-oriented imperialist dimensions.

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[11] Christopher Pastore, *Between Land and Sea: The Atlantic Coast and the Transformation of New England* (Harvard University Press: 2014): 5-6.

[12] Michael Pearson, "Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems," *Journal of World History,* vol. 17, no. 4 (2006): 356-357.

[13] Ayasha Guerin, "Oysters and Black Marine Entanglements in New York's Zone-A." Shima Journal, 13, no. 2 (2019): 30-55; Ayasha Guerin, "Shared routes of mammalian kinship - Race and migration in Long Island whaling diasporas," *Island Studies Journal* 16, no. 1 (2021): 43-6.1

Fishermen exist at the periphery of the industrial twentieth-century political economy and at the center of, the often contradictory, economic and ecological pressures of the littoral. Meanwhile, histories of manufacturing and mining are often insulated from thinking about the politics of access and extraction of natural resources, even as their modes of production are dependent upon them. Tracing the relationship between deindustrialization and the fishing industry requires understanding the ways in which the field of deindustrialization has defined its boundaries and requires pushing through them to something beyond. 'Deindustrialization along the littoral' is both a reference to the place in which my thesis is grounded and an analytical framework for locating deindustrialization in the long durée of the history of capitalism.

The field of deindustrialization took off in the waning years of the twentieth-century in direct response to the widespread manufacturing closures in North America and Western Europe. Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison (1982) published their book *The Deindustrialization in America* to this effect. They focused on the politics of industrial decline and the "conscious decisions that have to be made…to move a factory from one location to another."[14] The second half of the twentieth century witnessed a structural disinvestment in the productive capacity of the United States economy and instead towards "unproductive speculation, mergers and acquisitions, and foreign investment."[15] Between 1979 and 1984, employment in the American steel industry dropped 40 percent and around the same time, 300,000 auto workers lost their jobs.[16] One of the prevailing politics that came out of this shift promoted the idea of a "post-industrial society" grounded in economic development theories about the natural progression from agrarian, to

[14] Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison. *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (New York : Basic Books, 1982): 15.
[15] Bluestone and Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America,* 6.
[16] Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969-1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003): 6.

industrial, to post-industrial economies. And yet, even scholars who argue that "deindustrialization has never really existed," pushed back against the assumed "naturalness" of post-industrial theory and its tendency to promote post-class thinking.[17] The field of deindustrialization exemplifies a "new materialist" orientation "towards structural transformations" by tracing the politics, process, and after-math of job-loss in order to reify the importance of class through which economic subjectivities and politics continue to be structured.[18]

And yet, aggregate data shows that manufacturing has only declined relative to total output; has been geographically uneven; and has been diversely experienced from one industry to the next.[19] This of course has spurred debate over the historical process and significance of deindustrialization that continues well into the present. One of the central tensions within the field is to define when it begins and when it ends; which processes are constitutive and which are adjacent. Does deindustrialization only refer to the period marked by Bluestone and Harrison, or can this process of industrial closure and the politics of economic change include a wide array of examples from economic history?[20] One dominant interpretation of this phenomenon is that deindustrialization and industrialization are "merely two ongoing aspects of the history of capitalism that describe continual and complicated patterns of investment and disinvestment."[21]

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[17] Cathay Stanton, "Keeping 'the Industrial': New Solidarities in Post-industrial Places," in *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Post-Industrial Places,* eds. Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, and Andrew Perchard (Vancouver: University British Columbia Press, 2017): 158.

[18] Marc Matera, et al., "Marking Race: Empire, Social Democracy, Deindustrialization," *Twentieth-Century British History,* vol. 34, no. 3 (2023): 567.

[19] Ibid., 8; Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott. *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003): 4-5; Jim Thomlinson, "De-industrialization: Strengths and Weaknesses as a Key Concept for Understanding Post-war British History." *Urban History* 47, no. 2 (2019): 199–219. 200.

[20] David Koistinen (2002) traces the decline of textile manufacturing in New England back to the 1890s. Meanwhile, Tim Strangleman (2017) brings the field of deindustrialization into dialogue with wider scholarship on the relationship between the withdrawal of state support and the collapse of industry that can be traced back to at least fifth century Rome. Similarly, H. Reuben Neptune (2019) has made the case that the Caribbean was a "precocious site of de-industrialization" as the British empire divested from the plantation slavery economy in the region.

[21] Cowie and Heathcott, *Beyond the Ruins,* 15.

A throughline in the literature is that the role of the state is critical to understanding economic change. Additionally, many historians structure their analysis of agency, subjectivity, and power within these historical moments of rupture. The underlying question remains whether deindustrialization can be usefully applied as a periodizing framework even as it has been understood as a process recurring throughout history.

In direct response to this question, others consider that industrialization and deindustrialization are two bookends to the industrial era, marking the shift away from stable, wage-labor – albeit largely reserved for white males – and from the image of industrial life as the basis for modernity.[22] Along those lines, Christine Walley argues that deindustrialization means "paying attention to the kinds of jobs that have been lost, not whether such jobs were located in factories, but whether they were stable, decent-paying jobs around which strong working families and communities could be built."[23] Tracing this shift, scholars in the field study the affective experience of plant closure and its aftermath for industrial workers and their families as they became dislocated from their former ways of life.[24] Their work builds on Bluestone and Harrison's 'capital versus community' framework for thinking about the power dynamics of these transformations, in which workers and their communities were harmed by those who made the decision to shut down their plant.[25] And yet, if we think about *de*industrialization as the "end" of

[22] Tim Strangleman, "Deindustrialisation and the Historical Sociological Imagination: Making Sense of Work and Industrial Change," (2017): 467.
[23] Walley, *Exit Zero,* 7.
[24] Katheryn Marie Dudley, *The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Steven High and David K. Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Christine Walley, *Exit Zero: Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, and Andrew Perchard, *The Deindustrialized World: Confronting Ruination in Postindustrial Places*. (Vancouver: University British Columbia Press, 2017); Sherry Lee Linkon, *The half-life of deindustrialization: Working-class writing about economic restructuring* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018).
[25] Dudley, *The End of the Line*, xix.

the industrial era, a discrete boundary that encloses the period of industrial modes of production and social relations, would it not have to include those that are beyond the manufacturing heartlands? The history of the fishing industry shows that there is at least one dimension of the industrial era that has not gone away with *plant closure*, that is, the industrial era's relationship with nature.

Political ecology frames this relationship not only in terms of extractive capitalism and intensive consumption, but also in terms of public health, environmental justice, and indigenous and decolonial politics.[26] If the industrial era brought about new ways of structuring people and power around natural resources and non-human life through enclosure, colonization, and plantation economies; then *de*industrialization would constitute deconstructing those relationships as well. In my thesis, I show that this is beginning to happen and is worth building into the deindustrialization field. If we continue our inquiry with the assumption that deindustrialization only applies to heavy manufacturing and the offshoring of these jobs, then histories that have experienced the eclipse of other aspects of industrial life will remain largely obscured from this timeline.

Even as scholars such as Sherry Linkon and Alice Mah have pointed to its various permeabilities,[27] the field of deindustrialization tends to reinforce its own boundaries. This is

[26] Aaron Foote and Cedric de Leon, "Origins of the Flint Water Crisis: Uneven Development, Urban Political Ecology, and Racial Capitalism," *City & Community* vol. 22, no. 4 (2023): 352-366; James McCarthy, "Authoritarianism, Populism, and the Environment: Comparative Experiences, Insights, and Perspectives," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* vol. 109, no. 2 (2019): 305; Erik Kojola, "Bringing Back the Mines and a Way of Life: Populism and the Politics of Extraction," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* vol. 109, no. 2 (2018): 373l Garrett Graddy-Lovelace, "The coloniality of US agricultural policy: articulating agrarian (in)justice," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* vol. 44, no. 1 (2017): 78-99; Geoff Mann, "Class Consciousness and Common Property: The International Fishermen and Allied Workers of America," *International Labor and Working-Class History* No. 61, Spring 2002, pp. 141–160.

[27] Alice Mah, *Industrial Ruination, Community, and Place: Landscapes and Legacies of Urban Decline* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Sherry Lee Linkon, *The Half-Life of Deindustrialization: Working-Class Writing about Economic Restructuring* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018).

done not only by a focus on histories of manufacturing decline that tend to privilege urban and industrial heartlands over their peripheries. Additionally, such focus in turn tends to make only white, male, wage labor and politics legible in this stage of the history of capitalism.[28] For example, examining decline in agricultural labor gives deindustrialization a different shape. Starting in the 1940s, instead of jobs being off-shored, they have shifted to being automated and consolidated.[29] Additionally, rural and agrarian contexts show that state withdrawal is not isolated to investment in manufacturing modes of production, but it also withdrew from shaping and managing public spaces more generally. It has been shown that this has led to economic and infrastructure decline in remote rural areas.[30] If not framed as the "politics of deindustrialization," such scholarship has focused on the rise of neoliberalism to understand these processes of "accumulation by dispossession."[31] As Stuart Hall, Doreen Massey, and Michael Rustin have defined it, neoliberalism is a process that revolves around "the supposed naturalness of 'the market', the primacy of the competitive individual, the superiority of the private over the public."[32] And yet, there is a tendency in the field of deindustrialization to separate deindustrialization from neoliberalization and globalization, within the wider history of the second half of the twentieth century, as if they are mutually exclusive dynamics.[33]

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[28] Gary Paul Green, "Deindustrialization of rural America: Economic restructuring and the rural ghetto," Local Development & Society vol. 1, no. 1 (2020):16; Steven High, 'A New Era in Deindustrialization Studies?' *Working Class Perspectives,* 30 September 2019, <https://workingclassstudies.wordpress.com/2019/09/30/a-new-era-in-deindustrialization-studies/>

[29] Green, "Deindustrialization of rural America," 17.

[30] Natalia Mamonova and Jaume Franquesa, "Populism, Neoliberalism and Agrarian Movements in Europe. Understanding Rural Support for Right-Wing Politics and Looking for Progressive Solutions," Sociologia Ruralis vol. 60, no. 6 (2020): 714-715.

[31] David Harvey, "The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession," *Socialist Register* (2004): 63-87; Mamonova and Franquesa, "Populism, Neoliberalism and Agrarian Movements in Europe," 714-715.

[32] Stuart Hall, Doreen Massey, and Michael Rustin, "After neoliberalism: analysing the present." *Soundings* 53, no. 53 (2013): 13.

[33] Jim Tomlinson, "Deindustrialization: Strengths and Weaknesses as a Key Concept for Understanding Post-War British History," (2020).

The relationship between deindustrialization and neoliberalism has tended towards viewing the former happening before the latter, to explain the creation of a neoliberal order.[34] And yet, histories of the fishing industry point out that the role of the nation-state in deregulating trade, upon which neoliberalism would emerge, was developing even before WWII. Beginning with the Trade Agreements Act of 1934, before which tariff protections were the most common form of government aid to industry, the Roosevelt and Truman administrations began easing trade restrictions.[35] The New England fishing industry, feeling pressure from foreign competition, began to press hard for a return of such tariffs as early as the 1940s. There were approximately annual mobilization efforts among New England fisheries stakeholders in which, as early as 1954, the Tariff Commission ruled that free trade was negatively impacting the fishing industry.[36] Instead of turning to protect the domestic fishing economy, the federal administration under President Eisenhower was already committed to policies of reducing trade barriers globally as an effort to counter communist power. This aligns with the U.S.-backed "Chicago boys" movement in the 1950s, who promoted Milton Friedman's neoliberal economic theory as a Cold War strategy to "counter left-wing tendencies in Latin America."[37]

In the wake of trade liberalism, foreign fishing fleets began to outcompete domestic ones in terms of modern technology and fishing capacity. While New England fishermen landed around 90 percent of the fish harvested from Georges Banks in 1960, by 1965, their catch

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[34] Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Andy Pike, "Coping With Deindustrialization in the Global North and South," *International International Journal of Urban Sciences* 26, no. 1 (2019): 1-22; Gabriel Winant, "'Hard Times Make for Hard Arteries and Hard Livers': Deindustrialization, Biopolitics, and the Making of a New Working Class," *Journal of Social History* 53, no. 1 (2019): 107–32; Tomlinson, "De-industrialization," 199–219; Steven High, *Deindustrializing Montreal: Entangled Histories of Race, Residence, and Class*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022).
[35] Dewar, *Industry in Trouble,* 46-47.
[36] Ibid., 47-48.
[37] David Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 8.

represented around 35 percent; and by 1972, this percentage would drop to around ten percent.[38] And yet, the federal government continued to dismiss fishermen's complaints until 1975 on the grounds that any protective measures would be counter to their trade liberalization goals.[39] While it wouldn't be until the 1970s that neoliberal economics would pervade social policy and the wider role of the state, this timeline shows that the challenges faced by the fishing industry were a precursor to what would happen for manufacturing sectors decades later. Thus, the boundaries between industrial decline and neoliberalization, even global integration, are more blurred than the process of manufacturing decline would suggest.

Since Rosemary Ommer's appeal in 1993, fisheries scholars have interrogated the historical process and impact of overfishing in the Northwest Atlantic fisheries, extending from the coast of Atlantic Canada to the Chesapeake in the United States. While this region of the world is not unique in its experience of overfishing, the Northwest Atlantic fishing grounds have experienced intensive fishing from fleets around the world for over four centuries.[40] Since the colonial period, fisheries in this region fueled colonization and empire and were important to the early American political economy.[41] By 1871, the U.S. Congress established a "Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries" for the purpose of assessing "whether and what diminution in the number of the food-fishes of the coasts and lakes of the United States has taken place."[42] The creation of the

[38] Margaret Dewar, *An Industry in Trouble,* 109.
[39] Ibid., 41-53.
[40] P. E. Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century,* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press Project: 2012): 80; Charles Travis et al., "Inventing the Grand Banks: A deep chart: Humanities GIS, Cartesian, and literary perceptions of the north-west Atlantic fishery ca 1500–1800." *Geo: Geography and Environment* 7, no 1 (2020): 4.
[41] Pope, *Fish into Wine.*
[42] George Brown Goode, *A Review of the Fishery Industries of the United States and the Work of the U.S. Fish Commission,* 1883: p. 54-55.

Fish Commission would orient the federal government's interest in fisheries around science and the impact of human pressures on these marine ecosystems.

The relationship between overfishing and industrial decline is an important window into the extractive dimensions of industrial capitalism. In an effort to understand overfishing, Canadian and American scholars have studied the relationship between economic development strategies, fisheries management, and fisheries policy decisions throughout the last century. These studies argue that state-backed modernization projects since the 1960s have led to overfishing and industry decline.[43] As fishing intensified throughout the Northwest Atlantic during the 1960s and 1970s, Newfoundland and Nova Scotian companies expanded their fishing capacity to overcome foreign competition with the aid of federal and provincial subsidies. These scholars show how this led to the eventual overcapacity and collapse of the industry. While Canadian scholars focused on the state's commitments to industrial capitalist hegemony, American scholarship has focused on the nation's trade liberalization agenda that put strain on the fishing industry and catalyzed fishermen to mobilize for collective change. While fisheries' closure marked industrial decline in Atlantic Canada, closure in the United States has played out differently and is less explanatory of wider political, social, and economic change.[44] Fisheries policy since the 1970s in the U.S. have given similar results to agricultural jobs, leading to consolidation, i.e. accumulation by dispossession.

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[43] Among Canadian scholars: Miriam Wright, *A Fishery for Modern Times;* Ian MacKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia,* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009): 35-41; Sean Cadigan, "The Moral Economy of Retrenchment and Regeneration in the History of Rural Newfoundland," in *Retrenchment and Regeneration in Rural Newfoundland*, ed. Reginald Byron (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003): 14-42; among American scholars: Margaret Dewar, *Industry in Trouble: The Federal Government and the New England Fisheries*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983): 185-188. Matthew McKenzie, "'The Widening Gyre': Rethinking the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Collapse, 1850-2000," in *A History of the North Atlantic Fisheries, Volume 2: From the 1850s to the Early Twenty-First Century*, eds. David J. Starkey and Ingo Heidbrink (Bremerhaven: Deutsches Schifffahrtsmuseum, 2011): 302-303.

[44] In *Industry in Trouble*, 169, Dewar explains that early management decisions after 1976 that led to closure were so controversial and unjustifiable that it was mandated that such management decisions avoid closing a fishery at all costs.

Therefore, in my analysis, I must go beyond sites of closure to understand the shifting market, environmental, and social relations under neoliberalization that have taken place in the fishing industry.

In one respect, the field of fisheries has already made the connection between political economy and social relations by showing how twentieth century fisheries politics was shaped by neoliberalism.[45] Some fisheries scholars have argued that during the 1970s and 1980s, fishermen resisted "the neoliberalization of their economy" by continuing to use a share system as opposed to paying crew through wages.[46] And yet, this line of inquiry has largely resisted moving beyond macro-level analysis in order to understand the lived experience of fisheries labor in the neoliberal era. In fact, the field of fisheries has been critiqued for "avoid[ing], if not outrightly obscur[ing], how capitalist relations and dynamics… shape fisheries systems."[47] Penny McCall Howard has explained that this is likely due to the neoliberal turn within fisheries itself that evades such class-based analysis. Additionally, analysis of the subjective lived experience of fishermen as workers is largely uncharted terrain. Sean Cadigan argued back in 1999 that until there are studies of fishers' own views about industrial change and about how fisheries should develop, we cannot discuss the emergence of hegemonic ideas about fisheries management and economic change.[48] Despite his call, there have been very few subsequent studies about fishermen themselves.

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[45] Evelyn Pinkerton and Reade Davis, "Neoliberalism and the politics of enclosure North America small-scale fisheries," *Marine Policy* vol. 61 (2015): 304-305; Campling, Liam, Elizabeth Havice, and Penny McCall Howard. "The Political Economy and Ecology of Capture Fisheries: Market Dynamics, Resource Access and Relations of Exploitation and Resistance," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 12, no. 2–3 (2012): 195; Becky Mansfield, "Neoliberalism in the Oceans," in *Neoliberal Environments: False Promises and Unnatural Consequences*, eds. Nik Heynen et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 2007): 65-66; Sean Cadigan, "Whose Fish? Science, Ecosystems and Ethics in Fisheries Management Literature Since 1992," *Acadiensis* 31, no. 1 (2001): 171; Donna Turgeon, "Fishery Regulation: Its use under the Magnuson Act and Reaganomics," *Marine Policy* 9, no. 2 (1984): 3-4.

[46] Kevin St Martin, "The Difference That Class Makes: Neoliberalization and Non-Capitalism in the Fishing Industry of New England," *Antipode* 39, no. 3 (2007): 527–49.

[47] Campling, et al., "The Political Economy and Ecology of Capture Fisheries," 178.

[48] Cadigan, "Whose Fish," 194.

There are some reasons that historians have avoided interrogating the social history of fishermen. As Matthew McKenzie explained, it is complicated to discuss New England fishermen as workers or even as part of a collective identity because the fishing industry is stratified along "multiple, shifting lines defined by gear, ethnicity, homeport, target species, and degree of capitalization."[49] Even those who do attempt to understand fishermen's social history, often create a false dichotomy between interpreting fishermen as conservationists or as capitalists.[50] Employing E.P. Thompson's moral economy thesis, a shared approach between deindustrialization and fisheries scholars, historians often misconstrue working people's relationship to nature with their overall relationship to the economy.[51] 'Rugged individualism' and 'independent mindedness' are personality tropes that leading fisheries anthropologists use to describe the ultimate struggle of fishermen to organize and to explain their tendency to overfish.[52] The metanarratives of this scholarship uphold and entrench the idea that fishermen are perfectly

[49] Matthew McKenzie, *Breaking the Banks: Representations and Realities in New England Fisheries, 1866-1966* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2018): 6.

[50] Brian Payne, "Local Economic Stewards: The Historiography of the Fishermen's Role in Resource Conservation," *Environmental History* 18, no. 1 (2013): 30-31.

[51] Daniel Vickers, "Those Dammed Shad: Would the River Fisheries of New England Have Survived in the Absence of Industrialization?" *The William and Mary Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (2004): 685-712 and Matthew McKenzie, *Clearing the Coastline: The Nineteenth-Century Ecological and Cultural Transformations of Cape Cod* (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 2010. focused on the reality that despite any moral economy or moral ecology that they might have embodied, fishermen were willing to integrate into capitalist markets when it was profitable. Brian Payne (2013) has focused on the sense that fishermen were preferencing localized modes of production over an intentional strategy for resource conservation has been alternatively described as a moral ecology, in which community well-being can be achieved through specific types of resource extraction

[52] Bonnie McCay, "Systems Ecology, People Ecology, and the Anthropology of Fishing Communities," *Human Ecology* vol. 6, no. 4 (1978): 397-422; Richard Pollnac, "Social and cultural characteristics of fishing peoples," *Marine Behavior and Physiology* vol 14, no. 1 (1988): 23-39; Richard Pollnac and John Poggie Jr., "The Structure of Job Satisfaction Among New England Fishermen and Its Application to Fisheries Management Policy," *American Anthropologist* vol. 90, no. 4 (1988): 888-901; Svein Jentoft and Anthony David, "Self and Sacrifice: An Investigation of Small Boat Fisher Individualism and Its Implication for Producer Cooperatives," *Human Organization* vol. 52, no. 4 (1993): 356-367; Svein Jentoft, Bonnie McCway, and Douglas Wilson, "Social Theory and fisheries co-management," *Marine Policy* vol. 22, no. 4-5 (1998): 423-436.

rational self-interested capitalists, thus obscuring their efforts to mobilize and their position within wider structures of inequality.[53] In reality, this is far from the truth.

Laws such as the Sherman Antitrust Act, the Taft-Hartley Act, and the Clayton Act all served to shape industrial "competition," as manufacturing sectors developed. And yet, these laws ironically were used against fish harvesting workers, whose designation as "employees" has always been vague under the law. Fishermen's unions, associations, and cooperatives developed as strategies for gaining access to otherwise exploitative markets and to control the flow of capital, labor, and fishing capacity for the benefit of the fishery.[54] The government regularly countered fishermen's identification as employees when they came together to collectively bargain. This reached its height in the 1980s when the IRS officially changed the tax code so that all fishermen would be designated as self-employed private contractors, effectively busting up most fishermen's unions, including the most militant ones in New Bedford and Alaska.[55] My own thesis will thus contribute to this debate by grounding my analysis in the primary sources of fishermen themselves in order to better understand their subjective economic experience of deindustrialization along the littoral.

On Sources and Methods

In this section, I enumerate my source base and the dimensions of critical analysis they demand. Primarily, this archive consists of the co-op's official records and oral histories interviews. I also used congressional hearings, technical reports, and newspapers as sites where

[53] Cadigan, "Whose Fish," 171.

[54] Mann, "Class Consciousness and Common Property,"142-149; Jonathan Adler, "Conservation through Collusion: Antitrust as an Obstacle to Marine Resource Conservation," Washington & Lee Law Review, volume 61, no. 1 (2004): 3-78.

[55] Daniel Georgianna and Debra Shrader, "Employment, Income and Working Conditions in New Bedford's Offshore Fisheries," Final Report for Contract No. NA03NMF4270265 Saltonstall-Kennedy Program, National Marine Fisheries Service (2005).

fishermen's voices, experiences, and wider industry trends are visible. Identifying additional co-op records was not self-evident. Most fishermen I spoke to had not played an administrative role in the co-op and they believed that nothing had been saved after its closure. After two years of inquiry, fisherman Fred Mattera introduced me to his colleague Chris Brown, the last Secretary-Treasurer of the co-op, who possessed its meeting minutes. Every meeting between 1947 and 1995 was recorded and cataloged chronologically in leather-bound books. All told, there were ten books and one thick binder. Chris had them nestled in Styrofoam, wrapped in plastic, and secured in a larger cardboard box. With only mild dust and mildew around some of the leather-bound creases of their covers, their quality was a testament to the care for which Chris extended to them. Resting on top was the first book of meeting minutes, slightly brighter in color and shining with the natural oils of being held often. This book has been a source of curiosity and comfort for Chris and possibly served a similar purpose for other co-op members over the decades.

There were two types of meetings, those attended by the democratically-elected Board, also fishermen, and those held for the entire membership. These meetings were attended by all accepted members and could last anywhere from an hour to eight hours. They usually recorded the date, location, leadership, number of attendees, and a bulleted list of topics discussed. It was here that such formal documents gave way to traces of the humans who created them. The tone, level of detail, and formatting depended on who the Secretary-Treasurer was at the time. Despite the general wealth and the temporal breadth of the meeting minutes as a source, they additionally do not convey what fishermen thought outside of the meetings nor recorded the experiences of fishermen who did not attend the meetings, of which this was the majority. Therefore, the co-op records came to life when read against the wealth of oral histories that have been collected with Point Judith fishermen over the years.

I did not limit my analysis to interviews with co-op fishermen but did limit it to Point Judith fishermen, notably not shoreside workers. The oldest oral history interviews are a collection of twelve held at the University of Rhode Island's Archives and Special Collections. These interviews were the result of a project carried out by students of a 'History Research Methods' class in the spring of 1979. They tended to ask the same questions and at times read like a survey. Despite this, the project interviewed prominent members of the Point Judith co-op as well as multigenerational fishing families, in particular women in these families.

The second collection of oral histories I used are held by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) 'Voices' archive which can be accessed online. These interviews were conducted over many decades as part of diverse projects. The interviews I drew from were created by the projects, "Sector Management in New England;" "Oral Histories from the New England Fisheries;" and "Women in the New England Fisheries." NOAA Voices has two purposes. The first is to collect social and economic data about the impact that regulations are having on fishing families. Secondly, it serves as a digital repository for a lot of community archival projects, some of which were done by high schools, at working waterfront festivals, or by historical societies. Thus, such oral history projects are diverse in how they were produced and why. Most of them were collected by people representing government interests and addressing concerns pertaining to fisheries management which play into the types of responses that fishermen gave.

The most extensive collection of oral histories with Point Judith fishermen are held by the South County Museum in Narragansett, Rhode Island. They include interviews conducted by school students from 2001-2002 as well as interviews by other community members, of which I was one of them in 2021. The 2001-2002 interviews were organized by teachers and often matched

students with a family member. They revolved around an assigned reading of *The Perfect Storm,* by Sebastian Junger which seemed to have been widely read by the interviewed fishermen as well. I also ended up conducting a few more interviews between the fall and spring of 2023 and 2024 that complied with Concordia's Research Ethics Review and that will be added to the South County Museum's collection.

In terms of congressional hearings, I was inspired by Matthew McKenzie (2018) who used them to examine the pervasive narratives and cultural assumptions that politicians promoted about fishermen. The hearing records contain a level of testimonial detail that provided insight into the stakeholders involved, the debates that contextualized them, and the abandoned alternatives along the path to creating policy. Fishermen and their families played a prominent role in these testimonies and thus the congressional hearings provided access to many of their voices. The purpose of the testimonies was not meant to provide nuance on an issue, but rather constructed to prove a specific point. I therefore found these records valuable because they conveyed the wider consensus among fishermen about their political position and how it differed from other industry stakeholders. I only went as far as to use the congressional hearings that were accessible digitally for the years 1975, 1980, 1986, and 1998. I came to analyze such records on the premise that fishermen found these debates and their subsequent policies important.

The technical reports that I used were all digitally accessible. There is a program called the National Sea Grant College Program out of NOAA which supports universities in their effort to promote research, community-university partnerships, and education in coastal, marine, and Great Lakes regions. The University of Rhode Island has long been one of the sites of the Sea Grant program, along with MIT. Many of the programs that the Point Judith co-op collaborated on were sponsored by the URI or the MIT Sea Grants and thus it was possible to trace the co-op's activities

in the technical reports. Other technical reports came from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (U.S. GAO) which provides investigations of the impacts of congressional decisions. I found it useful to pair congressional hearings with GAO reports in order to assess the impact that policy was having and how it shaped people's understanding of the fisheries economy. I usually came to these reports when they were referenced by Sea Grant or within congressional hearings.

Lastly, I used newspapers to understand how the Point Judith co-op fit into the wider ecosystem of the Point Judith and New England fishing industry. I only used newspapers that were accessible online but this proved to be a largely non-limiting factor because both *the Providence Journal* – the main news platform for Rhode Island – and a variety of local newspapers in southern Rhode Island are fully digitized and accessible online. Newspaper articles gave me the ability to access voices of fishermen in Point Judith who were either outside of the Point Judith co-op – such as fishermen who were not accepted or who did not want to join – as well as voices of fishermen whose presence were not explicitly evident in oral histories or meeting minutes. While such voices often enter newspaper articles because they are exceptional – either because they have achieved or experienced something unique or because they feel strongly about something that happened – they were valuable because they hinted to the dissidence and the dis-harmony that existed in the port despite the relative harmony that the meeting minutes suggested.

The methods that I used for analyzing my source-base have two main facets. First, I used oral history approaches to examine "secondary source" interviews. Secondly, I employed the qualitative analysis software NVivo to analyze oral histories and newspapers in aggregated and disaggregated ways. The debates about re-use and engaging with archived oral histories through secondary analysis point to a widespread "methodological skepticism" that favors the "single

interviewer- researcher" methods of interview creation.[56] While some voices in the debate argue that meaningful analysis cannot be achieved by returning to oral history interviews, others suggest that by addressing the methodological and ethical concerns, such sources can be analyzed by anyone. When I began my community interviewing project at the South County Museum in 2021, I had not heard either side of this debate and so my questions and approaches were not guided by their insights. By the time I did, I was already involved in a type of secondary analysis informed by tacit sensibilities about ethics, empathy, and critical thinking. Nonetheless, reviewing this debate has enabled me to recognize the methods I was already using; to better understand how they fit into the wider field of oral history; and to consider how these approaches could be improved for future researchers interested in the oral history databases I described above.[57]

The first consideration for engaging in secondary analysis that I found important was to understand the context by which these interviews were produced. In her reflection on using interviews from the Millenium Memory Bank, April Gallwey contends that one of the challenges was that the database lacked "supporting literature which would assist researchers" in better understanding the ethnographic dimensions of the interviews.[58] When it came to the NOAA Voices, the URI Archives, and the 2001-2002 interviews at the South County Museum, such contextual information varied widely. Importantly, none of these archives provided the consent forms automatically and so the questions about framing and ethical context were largely devalued by the databases. URI's archival cataloging technique provided the most detail in terms of the

[56] Steven High, "Going Beyond the 'Juicy Quotes' Syndrome": Living Archives and Reciprocal Research in Oral History," in *Going Public: The Art of Participatory Practice,* eds. Elizabeth Miller, Edward Little, and Steven High (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017): 118.

[57] I would like to thank Steven High's oral history reading group, and particularly Kelann Currie-Williams for enriching discussions about using oral histories as secondary sources and for drawing my attention to these debates.

[58] April Gallwey, "The rewards of using archived oral histories in research: the case of the Millennium Memory Bank," *Oral History* vol. 41, no. 1 (2013): 48.

context of the interviews' creation. As I mentioned about the NOAA Voices database, the context depended on the project for which they were created. The catalog also included information about interviewers and the locations of the interview. Lastly, the 2001-2002 interviews were the least contextualized. This is largely due to the bear-bones cataloging approaches of the community museum at which they are stored. While every interview contained the name and the date of interviewee, they did not always include the names of the interviewer.

In order to bolster the lack of contextual information at my disposal, I mapped out the extent to which Point Judith fishermen were reflected in the pre-existing interviews. I compiled a spreadsheet with all the names, dates, archival repositories, content summaries, and any ethnographic information I could glean from the interviews. I started doing this while at the South County Museum where I had the help of a few fishermen and fishermen's wives to review the list and provide their insights about whose voices were and were not represented. Sometimes I would receive unsolicited advice about who and who not to talk to. Such feedback added a layer of contextual information that I could not have gained on my own and underlined the immense power within community-driven oral history interviewing to elevate, as well as marginalize, heterogenous voices. Additionally, I used supplementary sources – newspapers, the co-op archives, word-of-mouth, and autobiographies written by fishermen in Point Judith to trace the kinship ties between the interviewees. Not only did this analysis show how embedded Point Judith fishermen were with kinship networks, it also gave me a sense of a prevailing challenge in "community" history. Participation and research design were likely mediated by sensibilities about whose voices were more "authentic." When considering the history of the Point Judith co-op, this was particularly relevant because there were pressures to homogenize and unify in order to promote loyalty and

camaraderie that likely influenced not only who participated in recording the history of the co-op but also how they framed their own narratives.

A second challenge was to determine how to incorporate the interviewer into my analysis. In his keynote address to the Digital Testimonies Conference at Erasmus University in June 2013 Steven High explains how interviews from his Montreal Life Stories project were used in secondary analysis by others. This was a project grounded in intentional community-University research collaborations which were often not taken into consideration by outside researchers. Not only did he critique such re-use as rendering the labor of these researchers – who were often members of the communities for which the life stories were intended to capture – invisible, but secondary analysis often recycled the interview questions as their own.[59] High's questions about appropriation and accountability are important to my own secondary analysis as well.

Largely, my experience conducting secondary analysis of these oral history collections put me in conflict with the interviewers. NOAA Voices contained the most extreme examples in which the interviewers – often trained anthropologists – treated the oral history interview like a survey. They were at times clinical and lacking reflexivity. In the worst of cases, there would be multiple interviewers in the room with the fisherman and would compete for attention or would disrupt the flow of conversation without pausing the interview. The impact of such behavior was salient in the transcripts. Fishermen might shut down or pivot in mid-sentence to a different topic. The 2001-2002 interviews tended to convey similar chaotic dynamics but instead of fishermen being interviewed by academics, they were being interviewed by high schoolers who were sometimes family members. This added its own layers of complexity. At times fishermen clearly self-censored or exaggerated their stories. Compared to the NOAA interviews, fishermen felt inspired to take up

[59] High, "Going Beyond the 'Juicy Quotes' Syndrome," 119.

space in the 2001-2002 interviews and to answer questions with a level of detail that the interviewees were often not prepared nor at times patient enough to receive. All the interviews additionally conveyed the interviewers' – even my – own biases and lack of knowledge about the fishing industry. The most common example is represented in questions about fishermen's superstitions or about any sayings they might have for predicting the weather. There was also a morbid fascination for fishermen's stories about being in "the perfect storm" or living through a serious accident. Just as Matthew McKenzie (2018) and Ian MacKay (2001) have shown, such appeals to the folk or normalization of the violence of their jobs must be treated critically.

Throughout my work, I found I could go beyond the constraints of the interview as it was constructed and connect more deeply with the narrators' stories. While some have raised questions about interpreting interviews beyond their intended purpose, I agree with April Gallwey's sensibility that all records enter an archive to be interpreted beyond the use of the people who produced them. It is the researcher's responsibility to do so critically, i.e. reading against the grain.[60] In fact, if I did not consider the biases, the motives, and the presence of the interviewers in these oral histories, I might have taken fishermen's answers too literally; perhaps overinterpreting their feelings of anger towards the government for being all-consuming. Joanna Bornat warns against analysis that tries to go beyond the unspoken or unexpressed to understand "subconscious motivations or ways of thinkings" because this can ultimately serve to alienate "the interviewee from their own words."[61] I found this to be a fine line that *had* to be walked in my secondary analysis. Every interviewer wanted to ask fishermen about their thoughts or experiences of fisheries regulations and the government but the framing of these questions often conveyed

[60] Gallwey, "The rewards of using archived oral histories in research," 39.

[61] Joanna Bornat, "Remembering and reworking emotions: the reanalysis of emotion in an interview," *Oral History*, vol 38, no. 1 (2010): 45.

wider biases, assumptions, and motivations among the interview*ers* that were anything but neutral. Rarely did they go beyond the fisherman's initial responses, nor did they seek to understand where fishermen were coming from. In my effort to understand fishermen's lived experiences, I had to wade through sound bytes, a range of class and gendered assumptions, and the automatic responses that fishermen had come prepared to share, in order to dig deeper where the initial interview did not.

This brings me to my second major methodological approach. In total, I ended up analyzing 88 interviews, ten of which I conducted in 2021 and four of which I conducted in the fall and spring of 2023-2024. Large-scale interview analysis has been similarly critiqued as secondary analysis and in my case I was dealing with both. I took initial inspiration from sociologist Gabor Sheiring (2020) who employed NVivo, a qualitative analysis software, to analyze his 80+ interviews.[62] Unlike his approach which was grounded in word frequency analysis, I used NVivo for its most basic capacity, coding. Not only did I upload transcripts of all 88 interviews but I also uploaded newspaper clippings to the platform. As I read, I began creating categories to which I "coded," or highlighted, information. My approach to close reading focused on a wide range of topics that enabled me to immerse myself more fully into the contents of the interviews.

Specifically, I used NVivo to better keep track of what these sources considered to be important. I didn't limit myself to only collecting information about a few topics that I thought would answer my questions. Above all, I paid attention to what fishermen thought was important and developed countless categories that were inspired by their perspectives. I had categories for types of regulations, government agencies, and other organizations to which fishermen referred. I had categories for demographics such as fishermen's positions on the vessels, any references to

[62] Gábor Scheiring, "Left Behind in the Hungarian Rustbelt: The Cultural Political Economy of Working-Class Neo-Nationalism," *Sociology* vol. 54, no. 6 (2020): 1159–77.

dates and names of people and places, and people's health issues, income, and other work experiences. I traced changes as they were expressed; changes in technology, in demographics, in development, in governance, in fish species caught, and in the types of fishing techniques used. In the end, patterns began to emerge.

The main benefit of using NVivo – aside from its ability to keep your notes organized and relatively consistent – was that it enabled me to zoom in and out fluidly between listening to interviews in the aggregate and focusing on them individually. This had its challenges. As fisherman Fred Mattera – a prominent community leader in the Point Judith fishing port – pointed out, "everybody has distorted concepts…if you had ten fishermen, you would get eight, at least, different opinions and seven of them would be clueless because they just hear the peripheral sound bites."[63] This may sound harsh, but not only was Mattera deeply embedded and committed to the fishing industry, he was also pointing to an important aspect of fishermen not having centralized knowledge dissemination. Instead of shying away from the work of recognizing the moments of convergence and shared experiences among this diverse group, I embraced the process of examining how collective narratives emerged from diverse experiences and where they gave way to incongruity, dissonance, and change.

In my thesis, I have tried to remain true to the moments when unity gave way to conflict. And yet, I was intentional about which types of unity and conflict to examine. There are some conflicts such as competition between fixed gear (such as lobster traps) and drifting gear (such as nets) or between inshore and offshore fishermen, or between one port and another, that are pervasive throughout the record. While these stratifications point to the diversity, competition, and tensions that shape fishermen's social, market, and political relations, they did not come up when

[63] Frederick Mattera, interviewed by Azure Cygler, November 8, 2011, transcript, Sector Management in New England Collection, NOAA Voices Oral History Archives.

they discussed wider ruptures in the fishing industry such as overfishing, global competition, and trade liberalization. Certainly fishermen have insights about which types of fishing are more intensive or destructive and about the fisheries that are struggling the most (i.e. groundfish), but this did not impact their wider imagination around fisheries labor and politics.

The merits of reusing the oral history collections that exist about Point Judith fishermen have been numerous. Most importantly, they captured examples of change as it was happening. As I mentioned earlier, many people were interviewed multiple times. Bob Smith, Rodman Sykes, Fred Mattera, Chris Brown, and members of the Dykstra, the Champlin, and the Westcott families are among the most commonly interviewed. While these interviews could be regarded as redundant, capturing the stories that these fishermen tended to repeat, they also marked the ways that these individuals changed over time. Some of these changes included going from expressing anti-government sentiments and exhibiting self-interested fishing behavior to becoming a leader who builds bridges between fishermen and fisheries management. Not only are fishermen diverse in their experiences, values, and beliefs at a given time but those facets of their lives are by no means static or exclusive. NVivo and secondary analysis allowed me to engage with these people as fluid beings, constantly in the process of becoming.

In the following two chapters, I examine what industrial change looked like for Point Judith fishermen, how they made sense of this process, and how it impacted their lives. In the first chapter, I orient the fishing industry around the deindustrialization framework and highlight the localized experience of globalization. Here, I show how the state, the market, and fishermen shifted their strategies of promoting the industry through state-backed development strategies and localized capital to increasing acceptance of foreign capital flows and private equity. I interrogate what fishermen's cooperatives meant to the industry and specifically what the Point Judith co-op meant

to its members and how it mediated their experience of and understanding of the changing economy. The co-op's closure not only marks the end of an age when fishermen's cooperatives were used as a federally promoted regional economic development strategy, but it also indicated that the changes taking place were hostile to the relatively localized capital that structured the co-op. Despite this, neither the fishermen nor the policy makers were aware of these trends or how to control them.

In the second chapter, I shift my analysis to the centralized fisheries management regime that emerged in 1976 and how it impacted these capitalist and social relations. I examine how Point Judith fishermen's structures of feeling were shaped by their unique position at the margins of the industrial mainstream. By tracing the role that Point Judith fishermen played and how they were impacted by fisheries politics, I denaturalize the process of neoliberalization in the industry. Instead of recognizing them as a labor force dependent on a range of economic and ecological pressures, fisheries management viewed fishermen as rational actors, individual industrial entrepreneurs, and at worst, stigmatized them for undermining the basic premises of fisheries management and conservation goals.

In my conclusion, I transition to the contemporary period and consider how my thesis helps to understand the rise of populism. I examine a case where Point Judith fishermen have pushed back against neoliberalism while realigning with conservative political agendas. I suggest the merits of littoral thinking around the rise of right-wing populism and the possible avenues that this will take in the future. Not only does further examination of industrial decline in fisheries point to a unique intervention into the field of deindustrialization, but this can be extended to how deindustrialization analyzes the rise of populist expression among communities left behind.

CHAPTER 1

From Fisheries Cooperatives to Consolidation: Experiences of Economic Restructuring

When the Point Judith co-op went bankrupt, a myriad of publications were disseminated to make sense of its closure. In 1995, a *Providence Journal* newspaper article explained that "changing market forces, dwindling fish stocks, government regulations...and some bad timing" forced the co-op into bankruptcy.[64] Soon after, in 1996, NOAA – the National Oceanographic and Atmosphere Administration – commissioned an "Appraisal of the Social and Cultural Aspects" of the dominant New England and Mid-Atlantic fishery industries. Its section on the fishing industry of Point Judith included a review of the closure of the co-op. It stated that after the moratorium on membership, which had been established in the late 1970s and was lifted in 1986-1987, other companies had moved into Galilee to fill "the niche created by the expanding industry", leading to fishermen no longer feeling incentivized to join the co-op. This lack of buy-in from membership, coupled with increased operating costs from their new processing facility and "pressures from local and external (main market) competitors" contributed "to its collapse."[65] In another report published through NOAA's MIT Sea Grant Program in 2001, anthropologist Madeleine Hall-Arber stated that it was "suggested that the co-op became over-extended…after constructing the new facilities" and that "its non-profit status caused the Directors to underestimate the funds needed for cash flow."[66] Not only do these descriptions shed light on how cause and effect were attributed, but they also indicate the prevailing understanding of the dynamics of the wider industry at the time.

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[64] Ron Cassinelli, "After nearly 50 years, Fisherman's Co-op dies," *Providence Journal,* July 19, 1995.

[65] Aguirre International, "An Appraisal of the Social and Cultural Aspects of the Multispecies Groundfish Fishery in New England and the Mid-Atlantic Regions," a report submitted to the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (1996): 202.

[66] Hall-Arber et al., "New England's Fishing Communities," 77.

Even though these accounts summarized the immediate reasons that the co-op shut down, there is more to be learned by interrogating the process of its closure. Importantly, returning to the story of the Point Judith co-op as a site of closure within the wider politics and lived experiences of deindustrialization can shed light on what it *meant.* As opposed to looking at the countless fish firms that went bankrupt over the last century, closure of the Point Judith co-op was significant for a number of reasons. First, the co-op was itself an expression of fishermen's needs, values, and visions for the industry. Therefore, the co-op's archive provides insight into how these fishermen behaved and changed over time. Secondly, the Point Judith co-op was a model for fisheries cooperatives around the country and was heavily supported by the industry, the state, and financial institutions. For it to go bankrupt marked a significant shift in these relationships and could shed light on wider trends within the politics of the fishing industry. Lastly, the Point Judith co-op ran from just after World War II until just before the turn of the century. For this reason, the co-op archives bore witness to a wide number of changes that took shape over the course of the twentieth-century worth reconsidering beyond the focus on this paper that allow me to locate the co-op's closure in the wider trend of industrial change.

I argue that among the changes that were taking hold in the commercial fishing industry, one of the important facets was that markets were increasingly becoming disembedded from the communities within which the ports existed and fishermen felt this alienation. This period was marked by growth in the industry that made "harvesting attractive to new forms of capital that [were] neither necessarily local nor family-based," thus incentivizing "accumulation harvesting and increased capital mobility."[67] This resonates with the work of deindustrialization scholars who

[67] Hall-Arber et al., "New England's Fishing Communities," 542.

trace capital mobility and capital flight in the process of deindustrialization.[68] In another instance, a study on fishing cooperatives in Yucatán, Mexico shows that the politics of neoliberalism created a difficult environment for cooperatives to provide their goods and services to their members as states shifted to the private sector to promote growth during the 1980s and 1990s.[69] Taking inspiration from deindustrialization scholarship that use E.P. Thompson's moral economy framework and Karl Polanyi's embeddedness thesis, my focus on the Point Juith co-op contributes to the small body of literature on how fishermen have experienced the emergence of a neoliberal regime.

This regime change restructured the way the fishing industry was financed, depending increasingly on private equity and foreign capital. While this period does not show the full extent to which foreign capital would disrupt the domestic fishing industry, it finds its origins here. While neither private equity nor foreign investment are inherently bad tools, their impact on an industry already sensitive to capitalization, and the lack of strong accountability measures, make this type of finance worth interrogating further. Importantly, such capital changed the organizational structure of the Point Judith fishing port, dislodging fishermen from the kinship-oriented labor culture in which they had previously been embedded. The shift in fishermen's sense of embeddedness can help historians better understand the constellation of values, changes, and tensions that characterized this period and to contextualize the tensions that persist today.

I will start by considering how the Point Judith fishermen's cooperative shaped fishermen's moral economy and the role that it played in the fishing industry. Secondly, I will examine fishermen's memories about why the co-op closed and how the politics and market changes of the

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[68] Jefferson and Heathcott, *Beyond the Ruins,* 4-5.

[69] Abigail Bennet, "The Influence of Neoliberalization on the Success and Failure of Fishing Cooperatives in Contemporary Small-scale Fishing Communities: A Case Study From Yucatán, Mexico," *Marine Policy* 80 (2017): 96–106.

1980s and 1990s informed their understanding of its closure. And lastly, I will point to the emerging facet of late twentieth-century political economy that, while largely invisible within both fishermen's accounts and the literature, played a significant role in these changes, that of private equity.

Moral Economy and Fisheries Co-ops as Regional Economic Development Strategies

Before the formation of a cooperative, Point Judith fishermen organized under the Southern New England Fishermen's Association out of Stonington, Connecticut, during the interwar period in an effort to push back against unfavorable market conditions. Fish buyers, explained Melville Strout, a life-long Point Judith trap fisherman, would "go to New York and [...] make deals with the [Point Judith] fishermen and the commissioned dealers."[70] Philadelphia and New York were the two main markets at which Southern New England fish were sold and Fulton Fish Market ran the fishing industry. By ship, then rail, then road, fishermen in Rhode Island had to find a way to get their fish to New York City if they wanted access to markets.[71] But that wasn't the only challenge at the time. Doris Champlin, wife of Point Judith co-op charter member Kenneth Champlin, recalled of the fishermen in Point Judith that "of course they didn't get paid till after the driver got back with the money" for the fish.[72] In 1931, a *Providence Journal* article announced that Rhode Island and Connecticut fishermen had formed the Southern New England Fishermen's Association in order to push back against transportation companies and fish dealers in New York who were purportedly behaving monopolistically against these fishermen.[73] During this inter-war period, the marketing network within the fishing industry was fractured along the supply chain and

[70] Melville Strout, interviewed by Karen McDougall, March 22, 1979, Galilee Fishermen Oral History, Mss. Gr. 37, University of Rhode Island, University Archives and Special Collections, Kingston, RI.
[71] "Fishermen Unite to Fight Racket," *Providence Journal,* November 28, 1931.
[72] Doris ("Mrs. Kenneth") Champlin, interviewed by Jennifer Saila, March 28, 1979, Galilee Fishermen Oral History, Mss. Gr. 37, University of Rhode Island, University Archives and Special Collections, Kingston, RI.
[73] "Fishermen Unite to Fight Racket," *Providence Journal,* November 28, 1931.

every link was in direct competition with the other, often with fishermen being the most precarious and at-risk of exploitation.

The widespread conflict between fishermen and dealers was the context for Congress passing, in 1934, the Fishery Collective Marketing Act (Public Law No. 464 - 73rd Congress).[74] This act was modeled after farmers' Capper–Volstead Act of 1922 that provided a provision for fishermen to organize to negotiate prices, behavior that had otherwise been considered monopolistic under antitrust laws and grounds for undermining their collective bargaining efforts.[75] As such, these cooperatives were designed to enable fishermen to exercise power within their political and economic contexts in an effort to evade exploitation. The Collective Marketing Act of 1934 not only enabled fishermen to legally collectively bargain, but it encouraged more cooperation between harvesters and dealers, making them more conducive to efficiency and development. Therefore, fishermen's cooperatives were both used as a labor organizing strategy and an economic development strategy.

Between 1946 and 1947, Point Judith fishermen came together to take advantage of the Collective Marketing Act. After a series of public meetings in 1947, the founding members pulled together:

> either fifty or thirty thousand dollars […] pledged by the fishermen and put into common stock shares […] then […] they went out to the townspeople and uh, allied interested businesses and so on, and asked them to match that, which they did. And then they went to the bank and asked the bank to match what they had raised, and uh, I think they started out with capital of somewhere around ninety thousand dollars.[76]

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[74] Fisherman's Collective Marketing Act of 1934, Pub.L.No. 48 Stat. 1213-1214 (June 25, 1934).
[75] M.R. Garstang, "Fisheries." *Antitrust Law Journal* 33 (1963): 14; Matthew. *Breaking the Banks,* 103-104.
[76] Jacob Dykstra, interviewed by Karen McDougall, March 29, 1979, Galilee Fishermen Oral History, Mss. Gr. 37, University of Rhode Island, University Archives and Special Collections, Kingston, RI.

According to the meeting minutes, the bank that first worked to finance the co-op was the Wakefield Trust Company.[77] While these accounts did not suggest any challenges in recruiting financial support from the surrounding business and administrative institutions in southern Rhode Island, the co-op relied on, and successfully received, this local stimulation of capital to get them going.

By the time the Point Judith co-op was established, this movement was fifteen years underway. In 1949, only a year after it began, the Point Judith co-op was among sixty-three documented fishermen's co-ops in the U.S., of which only the Point Judith co-op and one in Maine were listed for the entire Atlantic coast.[78] By 1960, the Department of the Interior identified fifteen cooperatives alone in New England.[79] In his report, Richard Khan enumerated the advantages of fishermen's cooperatives saying that they would bring "improvements concerning technological developments and sanitary conditions."[80] While Kahn recognizes the market efficiencies that came with cooperatives, he also recognized the "high educational effect" on their membership and that "working in a cooperative means sacrificing some points of our selfish interest."[81] Not only would the "cooperative movement [mean] progress of the fishery industries… [but it would] make its members better men."[82] This sensibility about the benefits of cooperatives for their workforce training initiatives resonated with Point Judith co-op fishermen.

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[77] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, April 15, 1948, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[78] Richard A. Kahn, "U.S. Fish and Wildlife on Cooperative Marketing," Conference Proceedings of the Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute*,* I, (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1949). 41.
[79] Leslie D. McMullin, "List of Fishery Cooperative in the United States, 1960-61," U.S. Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service, Fishery Leaflet 292, (Washington, D.C., August 1961). NOAA Fisheries Scientific Publications Office.
[80] Kahn, "U.S. Fish and Wildlife on Cooperative Marketing," 40.
[81] Ibid., 42.
[82] Ibid., 42.

The foundational years of the Point Judith co-op played an important role in shaping its members' sensibilities about the fishing industry through education, more transparent market access, and political mobilization. By the end of the first full year, the co-op's leadership presented its performance and the expectations for the future. During that first year, the co-op had been running at a loss. And yet, to contextualize this loss George Gross, the founding Treasury-Secretary, emphasized that "expecting top price for all species of fish in comparison to all other markets every day in the year is foolish" and that it would be additionally "foolhardy…to take the short-sighted viewpoint – thinking only of today's price with no other factors considered, and with no consideration of the future."[83] These early years would have been difficult for fishermen who founded the co-op. In addition to the capital they invested in the beginning, they were not only running at a loss, but they couldn't be confident that the co-op would ever succeed. And yet, when the leadership explained, on September 3, 1948, that the "working capital was inadequate…a number of the members present subscribed for more stock."[84] In other words, when faced with one of the first financial hurdles, fishermen chose to invest their individual capital further into the co-op project. The sacrifices that founding co-op fishermen were making to establish this organization were met with a level of commitment that is difficult to quantify.

As fisheries scholars have shown, fishermen's moral economy must be understood at the intersection of market and ecological pressures.[85] Fishermen at the Point Judith co-op experienced the market largely through fish prices. Prices were not only set by the co-op but were also impacted by wider industry and ecological dynamics. Importantly, fishermen used price as an indicator for

[83] Membership Meeting Minutes, February 11, 1949, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[84] Membership Meeting Minutes, September 3, 1948, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[85] Payne, "Local Economic Stewards," 29–43.

the species they should target. As the co-op manager of the 1970s, Leonard Stasikiewitz recalled, "if the price starts going down low, they will just draw back."[86] The co-op managers had a system of "grading" fish that were landed. In the plant, where fish would be unloaded, there was a "cull-board man" who sorted fish according to whatever agreed-upon metric of size per species. These grading categories would set the prices by which fishermen would be compensated for their catch. The meeting minutes evidence the negotiations between the fishermen and the salesmen to determine appropriate grading for each species over time.[87] While this was likely a contentious and imperfect process, the fact that the co-op enabled fishermen to influence prices, as opposed to being beholden to price-gouging behavior of private fish dealers, was important to understanding the significance of the co-op.

While Point Judith co-op fishermen made decisions based on price, their understanding of the relationship between ecology and economics were limited to the prevailing knowledge of their times. For example, after a fish dehydration plant was established in Point Judith, the co-op Board debated whether the plant incentivized over-fishing for immature fish. The consensus was that fishing for "trash fish" would not have a negative impact on other fish species or the ability of fish stocks to mature.[88] While there is a rich debate over fishermen's local ecological knowledge that enriches the field's understanding of their complex sensibility around the health of marine ecosystems,[89] it is also true that before data collection was improved, fishermen used

[86] Leonard Stasikiewitz, interviewed by R. Petrocelli, March 28, 1979, Galilee Fishermen Oral History, Mss. Gr. 37, University of Rhode Island, University Archives and Special Collections, Kingston, RI.
[87] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, February 10, 1953, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[88] Membership Meeting Minutes, October 7, 1949, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[89] McCay, "Systems Ecology, People Ecology," 398-399; David Feeny et al., "The Tragedy of the Commons: Twenty-Two Years Later," *Human Ecology* vol. 18, no. 1 (1990): 1-19; Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Elinor Ostrom, "Coping with Tragedies of the Commons," *Annual Review of Political Science* vol. 2 (1999): 493-535.

impressionistic techniques to measure the health of fish stocks, of which the accuracy is difficult to assess. Paul Champlin, Jr., recalled that "the only thing [he] could go by" to measure decline in fish stocks was his grandfather who,

> used to have cards, he used to tack them on the shed wall, when he was catching lobsters years ago [...] I mean he had all the tallies from his daily work every day [...with] the dates and the day you caught it and what year it was. So I mean, he was just telling what it was like, you know when he was around. You don't catch anything like you did, now.[90]

Point Judith co-op fishermen reflect the complexity of what Sean Cadigan (1999) and Brian Payne (2013) have argued about fishermen's moral economy or *moral ecology* being shaped by the intersection of market and ecological pressures.[91] Not only did price optimization shape their behavior but was constitutive of their local management strategy. By giving fishermen some control over the market, the co-op mediated their experience and understanding of the economy.

Lastly, within the first few years, the Point Judith co-op served to locate itself as a strong voice within the industry at the state and regional levels. Importantly, the actions of the co-op were determined by a direct vote of the membership and by democratically elected Board members. In addition, by 1950 there was also a legislative committee and a grievance committee to guide the co-op in its external and internal efforts to promote civic participation and accountability.[92] From

[90] Paul Champlin Jr., interviewed by Catherine Doran, March 28, 1979, Galilee Fishermen Oral History, Mss. Gr. 37, University of Rhode Island, University Archives and Special Collections, Kingston, RI.
[91] Sean Cadigan, "The Moral Economy of the Commons: Ecology and Equity in the Newfoundland Cod Fishery, 1815-1855," *Labour/ Le Travailleur,* 43 (1999): 9-42; Payne, "Local Economic Stewards," 29–43.
[92] Membership Meeting Minutes, March 4, 1949, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection; Membership Meeting Minutes, March 3, 1950, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.

as early as 1949, the co-op was informing its membership about important legislative hearings at the state level in order to mobilize fishermen.[93] By 1950, the Point Judith co-op was being solicited by the state of Rhode Island for recommendations for the "size of investment in the commercial fishing industry at Point Judith."[94]

The co-op meeting minutes and newspapers suggest that the Point Judith co-op worked closely with the state of Rhode Island to manage the regional development of the port. The land all along the waterfront of Point Judith has been owned by the state of Rhode Island since the 1950s. This means that it was up to the state – through the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RI DEM) – to accept and reject applications from potential businesses to lease land. As the director of the RI DEM, Edward Wood, explained, in 1979, Global Seafood, a fish processing firm, was selected among the applications because it "had the support of the co-op" which made it the most viable option.[95] Wood added that the DEM would not apologize "for working closely with the co-op because it had preserved Galilee's fishing industry through some tough times."[96] The co-op exercised such influence over the politics of port development that there was an appeal by emerging fish enterprises in Point Judith to investigate its potential monopoly on the fishing industry in the area.[97] Fishermen's sensibilities in Point Judith were informed by their considerable influence over the fish market and over local fisheries politics.

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[93] Membership Meeting Minutes, April 1, 1949, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[94] Membership Meeting Minutes, November, 3 1950, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[95] "Galilee" *Providence Journal.* December 30, 1979.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Dan Stets, "Fishermen charge co-op 'owns' port of Galilee," *Providence Journal,* December 30, 1979.

While early reports on the U.S. fisheries cooperative movement emphasized that progress attained through cooperatives was an indivisible aspect of the general progress that could be attained by the nation's diverse industries, later reports would increasingly treat fishery cooperatives as technical mechanisms that were in need of rationalization and discipline in order to receive government and financial support. In 1963, a circular was published on "Organizing and Operating Fishery Cooperatives in the United States," which emphasized that fishery cooperatives were being promoted through revolving loan programs through the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Commercial Fisheries and through the Small Business Administration (SBA). While the circular repeats the educational benefits of fishery cooperatives, it frames education as selling "the cooperative to its members at all times" and ensuring that members' expectations are reasonable.[98] Additionally, while it examines the diverse legal and economic structures under which cooperatives can develop, the circular does not once mention them devising welfare systems, even though this would be a prominent role of the Point Judith co-op. These later perspectives about the economics of fishermen's cooperatives show that perhaps the Point Judith co-op was not the example they were referring to and rather reflect wider trends in the U.S. fisheries cooperative movement.

A technical report published in 1974 through the Massachusetts Institute of Technology NOAA Sea Grant program titled "Using Co-operatives to Aid the New England Fishing Industry" indicated the financial difficulties that fisheries cooperatives seemed to have been facing. The report compared fisheries to agricultural cooperatives, with particular focus on how farmers handled the "revolving fund plans in a more efficient manner."[99] The authors of this report argue

[98] McMullin, "Organizing and Operating Fishery Cooperatives in the United States," 14.

[99] Henry S. Marcus et al., "Using Co-operatives to Aid the New England Fishing Industry," National Sea Grant Program, no. MITSG 75-7 (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1974): 8, NOAA Library Repository.

that there were three main reasons for these challenges. One was the increasing pressure on fish stocks and the foreign competition that were generally straining the domestic industry; the second reason was that the federal government was not promoting awareness about fishermen's cooperatives the way they were agricultural cooperatives; and the third reason was that fishermen's "staunch individualism" was keeping cooperatives from functioning as profit-making businesses.[100] The report was thus meant to educate fishermen about the dimensions of the fishing industry that were evolving and how they could maximize their comparative advantage. While the authors of this report envisioned that fishery cooperatives would continue to play an important role, they argued that co-ops needed to modernize along with the wider shifts that the mid-1970s would bring to the industry. Simply put, cooperatives needed to "strive to serve an economic need or discontinue [their] existence" altogether.[101] Gone was the romantic vision of cooperatives bettering the fishermen who composed their membership, never mind promoting a sensibility around the merit in sacrificing financial gain for other kinds of benefits.

Lastly, in 1988, the United States Department of Agriculture issued a report on fishermen's cooperatives. By this point, there were 102 fishery cooperatives, comprising 10,425 members.[102] The report calculated that this represented around 5.4 percent of all U.S. fishers. This compares to the roughly 10,000 members reported in 1969.[103] Even though this statistic gives reason to doubt whether the trends experienced by 5.4 percent of fishermen can be extrapolated to the rest of the

[100] Henry S. Marcus et al., "Using Co-operatives to Aid the New England Fishing Industry," National Sea Grant Program, no. MITSG 75-7 (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1974): 8, 357, NOAA Library Repository.
[101] Ibid., 4.
[102] William Garland and Phillip Brown, "Fishery Cooperatives," U.S. Department of Agriculture, ACS Research Report Number 44 (January 1988). NOAA Fisheries Scientific Publications Office.
[103] "List of Fishery Cooperatives in the United States, 1969-70," United States Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service, Fishery Leaflet 627 (Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, June 1970). NOAA Fisheries Scientific Publications Office.

industry, it is important to note that there was an expansion of the U.S. domestic fishing fleet between 1978 and 1984. This increased the number of New England fishing vessels alone from around 550 to nearly 1000.[104] Since the number of fishermen organized under cooperatives does not seem to have changed in these twenty years, it is therefore likely that the ratio of cooperative fishermen to independent fishermen between 1969 and 1988 decreased significantly before it arrived at 5.4 percent. Despite the existing record, a more thorough quantitative study would need to be done to assess exactly what this decline looked like.

As this section has shown, the fisheries cooperative movement in the U.S. worked as an economic development strategy within the fishing industry while also shaping Point Judith fishermen's moral economy about achieving some level of market control, political representation, and security. Even as the state may have started to have its reservations about the effectiveness of co-op's as a model, it was still important to fishermen. In particular, fishermen in Point Judith tended to agree that without the co-op, the port would never have developed into the commercial fishing hub that it is. "The co-op built most of the fishing people in Point Judith, helped them all out," reflected one fisherman who began fishing in 1955.[105] Another fisherman explained that the co-op was "90% of why Point Judith is the way it is today, is successful as a fishing port today."[106] Underpinning their feelings about the co-op is the agreement that it was essential for fishermen to be able to have control in the market, to be involved in marketing the fish they caught, and for there to be transparency in how fish were priced. Even as the federal government was warning fishermen's co-ops about making financially-sound decisions, fishermen in Point Judith were not

[104] Di Jin, et al., "Total Factor Productivity Change in the New England Groundfish Fishery, 1964-1993," *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management,* volume 44 (2002): 547.
[105] Robert Conley, interviewed by Anonymous, 2001-2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[106] Robert D. Smith, interviewed by Karen McDougal, March 19, 1979, Galilee Fishermen Oral History, Mss. Gr. 37, University of Rhode Island, University Archives and Special Collections, Kingston, RI.

oblivious to market logics and industrial culture. In fact, their economic and ecological sensibilities oriented them to being able to make effective marketing decisions and for the co-op to achieve a level of mastery in the fishing industry. This was a time when Point Judith fishermen were embedded in the political economy of the times.

Fishermen's Experience of Closure

By the mid-1970s, foreign competition was a salient problem for the fishing industry and would be the context for the shift in how the government viewed fishermen's cooperatives. When the Magnuson–Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (FCMA) was passed in 1976, U.S. jurisdiction expanded outward from 12 to 200 miles, meaning that domestic fishermen suddenly had exclusive claim over these fishing grounds. In an effort to capture this new surplus of fish, the federal government began to pump money into the fishing industry through vessel construction loans and other financial incentives. Among such interventions included the American Fisheries Promotion Act in 1980. The goal of the bill was to expand the domestic fishing industry through "comprehensive research and development regarding United States fisheries, [and] to expand the fishing vessel and processing capacity of the United States."[107]

An important feedback loop within government-supported expansion was that private capital also became willing to offer low-interest loans to fishermen. Even at the state level, the RI DEM shifted its development strategy to the private sector. A representative of the Rhode Island Department of Economic Development explained that ever since the 200-mile limit legislation was passed, the DEM was accepting applications for more fish firms because "the port is especially valuable now" and it was in the best interest of the state to maximize private sector development.[108]

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[107] American Fisheries Promotion Act of 1980, Hearing on H.R. 7039, Second Session, Before the Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation and the Environment of the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries House of Representatives, 96th Congress (May 1980), U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C..
[108] Mark Bomster, "Galilee Growth: State takes bigger role," *Narragansett Times,* January 4, 1979.

While the shift may not have been explicit, the state had transitioned its economic development strategy for fisheries from an emphasis on fishermen's cooperatives to an emphasis on industry-wide modernization projects. As historians have shown, the period between 1976 and 1996 marked a major transformation within the domestic fishing industry. Between 1980 and 1995, these federal programs and bank loans correlated with the highest rates of fishing intensity and seafood production in U.S. fisheries history.[109]

And yet, for Point Judith fishermen, these changes would be understood through the lens of the moral economy I outlined above. The record suggests that Point Judith fishermen did not see these modernization projects as a good thing. Instead, they saw them as a threat to their control over the market, as the very fabric of it began to shift beneath them. As it happens, the co-op was an important site where debates about modernization in fisheries took place and Point Judith fishermen used the co-op to explore strategies for adaptation as well as a platform to express their resistance to change.

In the following section, I trace the cause and effect that fishermen attributed to the closure of the co-op as a lens for understanding how they experienced and made sense of economic change. Importantly, I noticed that fishermen did not use language or frameworks for thinking about their circumstances within the emerging global system or about how their lives were being impacted by foreign competition. When asked about why the co-op closed and how closure impacted their lives, fishermen tend to focus on personal failures, personal loss, and interpersonal struggle.

While Point Judith co-op fishermen sometimes used to land their catch in other ports or with other small fish buyers, the co-op didn't consider this to be particularly concerning until 1980. In fact, when the Board brought up this observation to the membership, the consensus among them

[109] Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser. "Fish and Overfishing," Our World in Data, December 28, 2023. https://ourworldindata.org/fish-and-overfishing.

was that it wasn't a problem.[110] By 1985, discussion about members not unloading at the co-op and preferring to unload at private firms would be a common topic of conversation. From hardly mentioning it over the previous forty years, by 1985, 23% of the meetings discussed the issue of members unloading elsewhere; in 1986: 14%; in 1987: 7.6%; in 1988: 18%; in 1989: 7%; and in 1990 it was 30% of the meetings. In 1988, three fishermen came forward to explain why they had been unloading at other docks. Among the explanations that some smaller vessels were finding it easier to unload at small buyers where the wait wouldn't be as long, others explained that "co-op prices are somewhat lower" than what they were getting elsewhere.[111]

The reason for this shift must be understood in the context of the co-op's capital flows and how they were changing. During the Board meeting of September 19, 1984, the elected members created a list of companies with whom they had been selling fish who had not yet paid their bills. In numerous occasions the co-op manager reported that "no payment had been received for three weeks,"[112] or that more and more of their customers were falling into repayment categories of 15 to 20 days.[113] By 1993, only a year before the co-op would close its doors, this was still a problem.[114] Some members interpreted the co-op's difficulty with collecting its payments as the critical inflection point that led to bankruptcy. Fisherman Fred Mattera reflected on the co-op president's failure to attain these payments: "I love Jim McCauley, I loved him like a father. He was a mentor to me. He was a great president. But, he blew– he blew it. [...] He just, he wasn't

[110] Membership Meeting Minutes, May 15, 1980, book 7, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[111] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, July 28, 1988, book 9, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[112] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, May 31, 1984, book 8, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[113] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, May 19, 1988, book 9, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[114] Accounts Receivable Aging Report, March 9, 1993, book 11, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.

good at confrontations."[115] Fishermen such as Mattera would not have argued that one man's personal weakness could be to blame for everything that went wrong, but such failures resonated with them as significant nonetheless. Mattera explained that the issue of late payments extended the burden onto fishermen.

Along with the accounts receivable report, there was an aging settlements list by which the co-op would keep track of overdue payments to fishermen. Mattera explains,

> I can remember numerous times because I was just going, going, going, where they would call me and say 'jeez, you know, 'X's got a mortgage payment or got an insurance payment that's big. It's due, you know, next thursday, or whatever, next monday. Could she go ahead of you?' I'd say, 'well, you know, are your receivables there? Are people paying you? Are we keeping up? 'Yeah, yeah, yeah' [they'd reply]. So, I'd agree… I'd agree. Eventually, I got myself to where it was $78,000 that they owed me.[116]

By November 1994, the co-op was struggling to pay its vessels at all and owed $200,000 to fishermen.[117]

The settlement period during the 1980s and early 1990s would rest around two weeks, sometimes reducing to ten days, while at private firms, fishermen could walk off the dock with cash in their pocket right after every trip. As Mattera recalled,

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[115] Frederick Mattera, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[116] Frederick Mattera, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[117] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, November 11, 1994, book 11, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.

> at a co-op, we weren't there as a profitable company. We weren't there to make money. We were there to provide a service for its members as a mutual co-op. [...] It wasn't a business that could hold on [to inventory],[...] once we had X number of pounds, we had to move it out the door. So then they knew that, the people buying it, and so they under-bought, they lowballed the pricing, you know, so we didn't have that edge, that advantage.[118]

The oral histories reveal that co-op fishermen who stayed on with the co-op were proud of their loyalty but they also didn't blame their fellow members for shifting to private firms. As co-op members began to peel off, "our fishermen would say, 'I want to go for the best price.' And I certainly don't blame them."[119] When it was unclear whether people would be paid for their work, it was logical to seek alternatives. And yet, the moral economy of many fishermen kept them tied to the co-op, despite the risk of not being paid. Among them, fishermen expressed feeling "good about having never abandoned [their] post,"[120] and that they "were always loyal to the co-op [...] even though it might cost you something."[121] There was a waning, yet fervent, cooperative ethic among many of these fishermen. This stands in contrast to the processes around plant closures, decisions for which workers tend to have little control. Compared to the worker movements that resisted plant closure, co-op fishermen did not strive for similar mobilization strategies.

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[118] Frederick Mattera, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[119] Robert Smith, interviewed by Heather Pouliot Kisilywicz, June 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[120] Christopher Brown, interviewed by Sophia Richter, November 28, 2023.
[121] David Dykstra, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.

Not only were fishermen shifting to other firms but importantly, these firms were running as small scale vertically integrated companies. “These guys don't, you know, Town Dock bought seven boats. So they bought out guys, like, they didn't buy me out, but guys my age or a little younger, us gray beards, you know, that were ready to move on. And so they got young guys committed to them, and it's different,” explains Mattera.[122] Resonating with the change, Rodman Sykes, a fisherman who grew up alongside the co-op in a multigenerational fishing family of the area, recalled that in addition to Town Dock,

> I think, uh, Sea– Seafreeze has uh four or five, uh Sea Fresh owns three, uh KSJ or whatever that new one is, owns three. And then there’s Doyle's Fisheries has got two, McGlade Fisheries has two. Uh it’s not the individual boat owner. And those guys that own those boats don’t fish, the business guys. Of all those that I mentioned the owners of those boats, never even set foot on that boat dock [...] Hired captains and hired, you know, crew. [...] And– and you’ve got a lot of the boats were purchased by these corporations to supply their businesses.[123]

As fishermen increasingly shifted their landings to these other firms, the very fabric of social relations in Point Judith shifted with them. Sykes explains that “a lot of the guys now – and there’s nothing wrong with it but – they’re more businessmen than fishermen. They’re more into, what is it? You know, you put the fish on deck and they– they might see dollar signs instead of fish. [...]

[122] Frederick Mattera, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[123] Rodman Sykes, interviewed by Sophia Richter, June 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.

The– the other thing is that it's all, it's turning into more corporate business."[124] As fisherman's wife Maryellen recalled, "there were a lot of cowboys, if you will, out there. They really thought it was the last frontier and no one was going to tell them what to do and they would go out fishing and fish and fish."[125]

While these businesses didn't necessarily have higher overhead costs, they invested a lot of capital in vessels, processing facilities, and marketing strategies, and thus they needed "a lot of fish to keep [their] businesses going. If [they] deal with individual fishermen [they have] no guarantee [they're] going to get the fish. [...] And then they would control the price and the individual boat owner would have no– nowhere to go."[126] Supporting Sykes' memories, the co-op meeting minutes showed that by the end of the 1980s, the co-op was trying to negotiate prices with neighboring firms to try and level the playing field. In 1989, the co-op tried to negotiate with other local firms such as Fox Seafood and Great Circle to lower their ice fees.[127] In a subsequent meeting it was made clear that they did not win these negotiations and those private firms kept their ice fees high.[128] Something as seemingly benign as the price at which a company sold their ice actually marked a significant difference in how the co-op was able to run its operation compared to the new private firms.

This period represented a shifting moral economy of the fishermen at Point Judith. Importantly, fishermen who were embedded in the Point Judith co-op, who knew about why it had

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[124] Ibid.

[125] Maryellen Brown, *NOAA Voices: Women's Oral History Project,* interviewed by Azure Dee Westwood, December 15, 2008 [00:06:17 - 00:09:31]

[126] Rodman Sykes, interviewed by Sophia Richter, June 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.

[127] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, July 5, 1989, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.

[128] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, September 6, 1989, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.

started in the first place, were wary of the expanded capacity of private firms brought by modernization. Co-op fisherman Robert Smith explains that he was on the board of a local bank in the early 1980s and witnessed first-hand the impact that expansion could have on the fishing industry. He recalled that "in 1981 [...] the banks went from saying no money, to a check in my hand for $500,000. 'Go buy yourself a boat'[...] I had the education and I knew how to catch fish. [...] I sat on the board of directors and told them, 'Don't do it, it's the wrong thing to do [...] You're gonna kill us. We can do it on our own."[129] While some fishermen such as Smith understood this moment within a wider context, many fishermen experienced rapid capitalization of the fishery in material ways. Jon Dougherty remembers that,

> you know, …there was probably more wooden boats than steel boats where I was going down [to the Point] as a kid. And, we had all these bigger more powerful steel boats coming up from down south that people were buying and people were investing, and, and there was a rapid expansion of the fleet…And that's when my uncle, well, that's when my uncle bought the boat. He was part of that rapid expansion, I guess you could say. [But] when he was starting out, you know, he was borrowing from family and friends. Like, I used to hear stories like, when someone wanted a boat, the family would gather together, put their money, because the banks didn't really want to invest in the fishing industry. It wasn't… you know, you put money into a boat and then you're sending it out to sea, and you know, who knows if it's going to come back, you know.[130]

[129] Robert Smith, interviewed by Heather Pouliot Kisilywicz, June 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[130] Jon Dougherty, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.

Another fisherman recalled that "all these government guaranteed loans, all those doctors and lawyers, everybody else was buying boats because they could make money and couldn't lose it. Because, even if they defaulted, the government was going to pick them up."[131]

Beyond the individual scale, the co-op's archive suggests that, collectively, its fishermen resisted these changes. Around the same time as banks began giving out loans, the co-op was continuing to take development plans into their own hands. During a Board meeting, the "president discussed the possibility of forming a group of co-ops" throughout the southern New England region and included expanding "processing facilities" as an important strategy for maintaining market control.[132] In this meeting, the Board voiced their concern that "there [was] good probability that large companies would try to control boats in the future."[133] The foresight that fishermen at the Point Judith co-op had about the future of consolidation and loss of market-control speaks to the moral economy that fishermen felt was being eroded. Those co-op fishermen who stayed loyal found themselves in a relatively similar place as they had started so many years ago. Sykes considers the shore-side vessel-owner model bitterly, "it just seems like the guy who is the fish buyer is driving the Cadillac and I'm driving my beat up old truck."[134] To those fishermen who remained with the co-op, they felt as though something beyond financial gain had been lost to them. "And it wasn't because I grew up in the co-op," recalled one former co-op fishermen, "to be accepted into that, that camaraderie, that group, that worked so hard, was special."[135] It wasn't

[131] Daniel Smith, interviewed by Sophia Richter, Month day, 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[132] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, November 11, 1994, book 11, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Rodman Sykes, interviewed by Sophia Richter, June 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[135] Frederick Mattera, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.

just about being able to express some timeless sense of individualism that fishermen were averse to consolidation. They wanted dignity. They wanted work to be more than labor. They wanted it to remain within their control.

For many fishermen in Point Judith who had been fishing before the late 1980s, losing the co-op, political marginalization, and decline in the face of global integration went hand-in-hand. Bob Smith reflects on the industry after the co-op shut down,

> It's crazy. It's crazy. You can buy those fish from overseas cheaper than you can buy the American ones. And that– it– because they're going to a different market completely, somewhere else in the world, and getting more money for 'em, the American's can't…Because the dealer controls it. [...] If the co-op was here, that wouldn't happen. Would not happen. [There are a few other co-ops in the country] but not a lot. None– none like we had. We were the biggest in the country and we were there a long time.[136]

While the Point Judith co-op was by no means the biggest – there were West coast co-ops with three to ten times as many members – Smith's sensibility about the Point Judith co-op reflects its solidity in his imagination. It was secure and enriching for its members. Chris Brown's recollections of the dynamic between fishermen and dealers, once the co-op failed, were similar.

> You know, we think there is more collusion than ever. You know, [one fish house] who has a different kind of a processing plant for squid, has different overhead, has different scales, has different– every other thing in the world than Town Dock– They both get to the

[136] Robert Smith, interviewed by Heather Pouliot Kisilywicz, June 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.

> same conclusion on the same day that the price has to fall 10 cents 'or we're simply going to not make any money'. And it goes in lockstep. And I guess they get– [*heavy sigh*]... it's not legal, you know, the, the co-op, by virtue of that, had the right to collectively bargain. There's a, there was a huge difference…[...] At the same time that I bitch about it, you do want to have a fish house that is strong.[...] You know, you want that check to clear. And you want them to be making money too because if they're not making money, they're going to look at you as a proxy for a good business plan, you know, ripping you off.[137]

The memories of former co-op fishermen show that they primarily understood the co-op closure in very localized terms. Importantly, Point Judith fishermen's complaints about regulations did not factor into their understanding about the co-op's closure. This is likely for two reasons. Firstly, the co-op had a lot of influence over fisheries management during the 1980s. Only after the 1990s did Point Judith fishermen start to critique management decisions. Secondly, the regulatory pressures that they would end up discussing – such as sector management, limited entry, and quotas, were imposed well after the co-op shut down. While Point Judith co-op fishermen voiced understanding of the complex dynamics that were shifting around them, they internalized those changes through the moral economy they had developed before the FCMA was passed in 1976. And yet, there was a whole other dimension of the market and the politics that was emerging at that time.

The Global in the Local

After the FCMA was passed, foreign fleets were significantly reduced from local waters, but not entirely removed. In addition to quota allocations to foreign fleets, joint ventures and direct

[137] Christopher Brown, interviewed by Sophia Richter, November 28, 2023.

foreign ownership were two ways that foreign capital continued to participate in the New England fisheries. This was significant because the push to modernize domestic fleets not only made fisheries an attractive investment, but it also required private capital. While domestic fishermen and the regional councils pushed to incrementally abolish foreign fleets from within the U.S. EEZ, joint ventures had become increasingly viable means for domestic fleets and processors to ensure a reliable market and source of capital.[138] In a technical report published in 1980, NOAA articulated the state of joint ventures in fisheries around the world. The report defines joint ventures as associations "of two or more partners who share the risks and benefits of a commercial, or in some cases, non-profit [fishermen's cooperative, for example], venture."[139] These ventures could take two different forms. Contractual ventures were short-term arrangements meant to test the waters. The second type was called "equity arrangements" in which jointly owned companies are formed to conduct commercial activity. The report indicates that the reason the U.S. encouraged joint ventures was to expand extraction of "marine resources that are underutilized or not exploited at all" and for "local fishing industries [that] cannot competitively exploit" their abundant resources.[140]

As this report makes clear, joint ventures were a widely used model in the fishing industry around the world, from coastal nations in Africa to the northernmost regions of the Pacific Rim, and from highly industrialized nations like Canada and Australia to recently-independent states such as Bangladesh and Yemen. The most active states involved in joint ventures by 1980 were Japan and the Soviet Bloc. As the report contends, Japan "tended to concentrate its partnerships

[138] Vladimir Kaczynski, "Joint Ventures as an export market: U.S. groundfish," *Marine Policy,* January 1984: 17.
[139] Vladimir Kaczynski and Dominique LeVieil, "International Joint Ventures in World Fisheries: Their Distribution and Development," Washington Sea Grant Program and Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), no. WAS 80-2 (Seattle: University of Washington, August 1980). NOAA Library Repository, 2.
[140] Ibid., 12.

with the United States and Canadian fishing industries in land-based seafood processing companies" while the Soviet Union preferred "harvesting and processing-at-sea ventures."[141] By 1980, there were still restrictions in the U.S. and Canada that existed to keep these joint ventures short-term and there was "little or no direct capital investments."[142] The report concludes that it would be in the best interest of the United States to develop a more long-term vision for joint-ventures so that they could further develop.

Fishermen too, in New England, advocated for joint ventures. As early as 1981, the Point Judith co-op adopted the strategy of joint ventures with foreign firms. Among these efforts included contracting with "the Spaniards: in reference to joint ventures […in which] all fish would be processed in [the co-op's] plant and sent to Spain. Under their laws the fish would be considered as domestic and not imports, therefore would not be subject to restrictions."[143] Importantly, this was a model that co-op fishermen desired; they wanted to maintain control of fish processing in order to retain the value of processed fish. Individual members increasingly decided to enter into joint venture contracts with foreign firms to unload the fish onto those foreign vessels instead of at the co-op. In a co-op Board meeting in 1982, while other ports in New England were beginning to off-load their catch directly "on foreign vessels in joint ventures," it was voted that "there should be no off-loading of fish and to notify Lucy Sloan of NFF of this decision."[144] Lucy Sloan, director of the National Federation of Fishermen, was on the co-op's payroll as a lobbyist in D.C.. This became a significant talking point in the co-op meetings in 1983, in which the Board decided that

[141] Vladimir Kaczynski and Dominique LeVieil, "International Joint Ventures in World Fisheries: Their Distribution and Development," Washington Sea Grant Program and Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), no. WAS 80-2 (Seattle: University of Washington, August 1980). NOAA Library Repository, 17.
[142] Ibid., 17.
[143] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, February 19, 1981, book 7, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[144] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, July 21, 1982, book 8, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.

"any vessel participating in a joint venture, in order to remain in good standing, shall pay a fee to the co-op…[and that] all funds paid to the vessel by the Joint Venture must pass through the co-op."[145] While the co-op disliked the idea of individual vessels entering into joint ventures, they too were hopeful to enter into co-op-level contracts.[146]

There is some evidence of the extent to which New England fisheries were engaged in these contractual ventures. What remains unclear is the level of equity ventures that existed during the 1980s and 1990s. In order to gain an understanding of the role that foreign capital was beginning to play in the domestic fishing industry, I traced the debates that had begun soon after the FCMA was passed back to their sources. The first technical report on the topic was completed by the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) – now called the Government Accountability Office – in 1981. Not long after the FCMA was passed, Oregon Democratic Representative Walter Leslie AuCoin requested that the GAO investigate "foreign investment in the U.S. seafood processing industry."[147] As it happens, AuCoin and other northwest Pacific spokesmen would be at the center of criticism towards the trend of foreign investment in fisheries. Referenced in these debates was Jeremiah Sullivan's *Foreign Investment in the U.S. Fishing Industry*, published in 1979. He primarily focused on the Pacific fisheries, just as the GAO reports do. Within his analysis it is possible to trace some of the wider trends that were happening. Sullivan frames the FCMA in terms of foreign investment, such that foreign vessels who are pushed out of domestic fishing grounds would substitute for their own harvesting by importing fish caught by

[145] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, February 22, 1984, book 8, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[146] Membership Meeting Minutes, March 7, 1985, book 9, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[147] General Accounting Office Report to the Honorable Les AuCoin House of Representatives, Foreign Investment in U.S. Seafood Processing Industry Difficult to Assess. Community and Economic Development Division, CED-81-65 (March 20, 1981).

American fishermen and/or investing in American processing firms and fishing vessels.[148] He also predicted that in the event that American-owned firms could not accelerate their activities, "foreign investors could maintain an investment posture based on gradually building up their control of U.S. vessels and processors."[149] In this case, there was a risk that processing labor might be reduced "as fish are shipped to the foreign nation for final processing" as well as a risk that "small, wholly-owned U.S. firms" would be pushed out "by large integrated foreign firms."[150]

Sullivan argued that "such vast sums will be required" to modernize the American fleets "that foreign capital will be needed" and that the fish processing industry was most favorable to this type of foreign capital.[151] He warned against any efforts to discourage foreign investment and provided an example of an Oregon firm, Whitney-Fidalgo, which, upon legislative action due to it being subsumed under a Japanese company, had to seek government permission to fish as if it were a Japanese vessel.[152] It should be underlined that not only did Sullivan *not* problematize the long-term impact that foreign investment could have, he conformed to the mainstream assumption that "growth is the goal of everyone."[153] Additionally, he was a strong proponent of vessel construction subsidies and funds for developing U.S. floating processors, warning against the AuCoin Bill and other legislation that would limit foreign fleets' access to domestic fishing grounds.[154]

During a 1986 congressional hearing on trade negotiations between the United States and Canada, a debate over foreign investment and foreign ownership of domestic fishing firms came

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[148] Sullivan, Jeremiah J., and Per O. Heggelund, *Foreign Investment in the U.S. Fishing Industry* (Lexington Books, 1979): 2.
[149] Ibid., 2.
[150] Ibid., 8.
[151] Ibid., 166.
[152] Jeremiah and Heggelund, *Foreign Investment in the U.S. Fishing Industry*, 166.
[153] Ibid., 163.
[154] Jeremiah and Heggelund, *Foreign Investment in the U.S. Fishing Industry*, 169.

up. Testimonies indicated that "it's clear that significant foreign participation remained because our maritime and cabotage laws enable foreign firms to retain and even increase ownership shares in some segments of the U.S. fishing fleet. […] Our limited knowledge suggests that foreign investment differs markedly from region to region."[155] In an effort to ensure that only American vessels and American processing plants would attain rights to the U.S. EEZ, Congress passed the Commercial Fishing Industry Anti-Reflagging Act in 1988. It required that "only vessels which are owned by a majority of U.S. interests can be U.S. flagged and eligible to fish in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone. The law also required that fish processing vessels entering the U.S. fishery be U.S. built and that vessels rebuilt abroad be prohibited from participating in the U.S. fishing industry."[156]

In 1990, the GAO reported that the Coast Guard's interpretation of the 1988 Anti-Reflagging Act led to a greater awareness about the loopholes that foreign and local companies were finding in laws that had intended to "Americanize" the fishing industry.[157] The Coast Guard chose to interpret the law allowing for formerly U.S.-built vessels and plants to be grandfathered in even if they were later sold to a foreign-owned company. House Representative of Alaska, Ted Stevens conveyed that

> over 29,000 of the 33,000 US flag fishing vessels in existence are not subject to any controlling interest requirement. […] We also failed to stop the massive Norwegian ship-

[155] Negotiation of United States-Canada Free Trade Agreement, Hearing on the Negotiation of United States-Canada Free Trade Agreement, Second Session, Before the Committee on Finance, United States Senate, 99th Congress, (April 11, 1986) (Statement by David Evans, Deputy Directions of NMFS, Dept. of Commerce), U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

[156] Ibid., (Statement by Frank Palline, House Representative for New Jersey).

[157] General Accounting Office Report to the Honorable Bob Packwood, U.S. Senate, Coast Guard Anti-Reflagging Act has Mixed Impact on U.S. Fishing and Ship Rebuilding, Resource, Community, and Economic Development Division, RCED-91-127 (October 25, 1990)

> building program, which took place between 1987 and 1990, that allowed 20 of the world's largest fishing vessels ever built to come into our fisheries and fish in our exclusive zone as American ships. [...] Unlike the Jones Act, the system under our fisheries law is really a preference system for U.S. fishing industry interests, not an outright prohibition on foreign boats. The Magnuson Act allows for a path for foreign vessels to gain access to US fishing grounds.[158]

There was much debate over whether this was actually a problem. Don Young, House Representative of Alaska stated that "I have tried not to assess blame nor have I claimed that eliminating all factory trawlers is the solution to that problem. […] Are we worried about jobs, or are we worried about the species? Are we worried about jobs, or are we worried about the continued ability not only to harvest but to do it correctly?"[159] On the other hand, people such as House Representative of New Jersey, Frank Pallone, contended that "the American citizens, not foreign interests, should be the ones to catch fish in our waters. And we should ensure that our important fishery resources are adequately protected for the current and future generations."[160] A third voice in the debate spoke to the importance of joint ventures with foreign firms as a strategy for ensuring a viable future for the domestic fishing industry, arguing that:

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[158] Oversight Hearing on United States Ownership of Fishing Vessels, Oversight Hearing, Second Session, Before the Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife, and Oceans of the Committee on Resources, House of Representatives, 105th Congress (June 4, 1998) (Statement of Ted Stevens, House Representative for Alaska), U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

[159] Oversight Hearing on United States Ownership of Fishing Vessels (Statement of Don Young, House Representative for Alaska).

[160] Negotiation of United States-Canada Free Trade Agreement, (Statement by Frank Palline, House Representative for New Jersey).

> We permitted joint venture processing for Atlantic mackerel and herring […] Finally we've also issued transshipment permits under section 204(d) of the MSC to one vessel each from Cambodia, Russia, and Panama to receive and transport processed mackerel from those operations [...] Activities in the Northeast under these [joint venture] permits provide a small but important outlet for U.S. fishermen who are coping with our rebuilding programs for the groundfish stocks. They have enabled four U.S. vessels from the States of Massachusetts and New Jersey to harvest [...] mackerel and [...] herring.[161]

In 1991, a decade after the first report was conducted on the issue, the GAO published a report that focused on foreign ownership of facilities and vessels.[162] It prefaced the report by stating that while data had previously been lacking on the subject, it would improve in the future now that Congress had passed the Foreign Direct Investment and International Financial Data Improvements Act. While the report focused on the Pacific Northwest, the information is insightful because it gives shape to the wider pulse of change within globalizing financial markets. The GAO reported that in 1989, 37 percent of the Alaskan fish processing facilities had:

> some foreign ownership […] Japanese companies accounted for most foreign ownership, while Norwegian, Canadian, and English companies (in that order) accounted for additional ownership. In addition to ownership, we found examples of foreign involvement

[161] Negotiation of United States-Canada Free Trade Agreement, (Statement by Frank Palline, House Representative for New Jersey).
[162] General Accounting Office Report to the Honorable Frank H. Murkowski, U.S. Senate, Seafood Processing Foreign Ownership of Facilities in Alaska, Oregon, and Washington. Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division, RCED-91-127 (July 31, 1991).

through construction loans, sales agreements, or representatives in company management positions.[163]

The report used the Alaska pollock fishery as an example. With the help of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council in Alaska, data confirmed that an average of 70 percent of shoreside processing plants along the Bering Sea were owned by the Japanese.[164] Despite what this GAO report stated about improved data collection, in an "Oversight Hearing on United States Ownership of Fishing Vessels" in June of 1998, the extent of foreign ownership in the fishing industry was still being heavily debated. By this point, it was clear that the fishing industry was experiencing "an overcapitalization problem" and that foreign investment was enabling an ever-expanding capacity within fisheries that were crippling under the pressure.[165]

These transnational financial linkages were not only observable in aggregate, but they were also being experienced in Point Judith. By 2001, five years after the Point Judith co-op went into receivership, there were six processing plants in Galilee. Similar to other New England ports, these processing plants had "arrangements" with foreign corporations. For example, Sea Fresh Corporation worked with Mitsubishi Corporation which contracted with Taiwanese longliners to fish in Brazil and Trinidad, and shipping the fish from Trinindad to Miami and New York. While this global supply chain extended to distant waters, "all sales and business are conducted out of Narragansett."[166] As Madeleine Hall-Arber explained, "the involvement of foreign investors in

[163] General Accounting Office Report to the Honorable Frank H. Murkowski, U.S. Senate, Seafood Processing Foreign Ownership of Facilities in Alaska, Oregon, and Washington. Resources, Community, and Economic Development Division, RCED-91-127 (July 31, 1991), 2.
[164] Ibid., 13-14.
[165] Oversight Hearing on United States Ownership of Fishing Vessels (Statement of Don Young, House of Representative for Alaska).
[166] Hall-Arber et al., "New England's Fishing Communities," 79-80.

local seafood processing is a pattern that is being repeated in many ports" and processing foreign fish products is an important aspect of New England's processors.[167] For these market dynamics to be observable in 2001, it is not unreasonable that the co-op was experiencing them as well.

In fact, they were. The records of the Point Judith co-op indicate that it too was leaning towards foreign capital for support. In 1989, as the co-op tried to adapt to increased competition in the port, it began looking for firms with which to go into partnership or who could buy off their unused assets. The co-op tendered negotiations with foreign firms, namely from Japan, Australia, and Spain, "for use of part of our new facility and the purchase of co-op products."[168] Throughout the final years, co-op meeting minutes evidenced its efforts to attract foreign capital and would regularly seek additional investment partners such as "the proposed joint venture with Grippa," a Spanish firm, as well as the "Japanese company (Nokajema) has been contacted."[169] While I don't have the evidence, if the co-op was employing these strategies, it isn't unreasonable to imagine that other firms in the region were doing the same.

Another strategy for adaptation was to restructure the co-op internally. As early as 1985, the co-op was reorganizing its management structure, with the hiring of financial consultant Tim Eburne and comptroller Charles Kelly. During Eburne's tenure, the co-op's management was significantly expanded.[170] In 1989 Eburne was appointed the CEO of the co-op and decided that "the co-op henceforth would be operated as a for-profit corporation."[171] Eburne addressed the

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[167] Hall-Arber et al., "New England's Fishing Communities," 80.

[168] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, September 28, 1989, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.

[169] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, August 15, 1991, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.

[170] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, August 24, 1990, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.

[171] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, November 22, 1989, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection; Membership Meeting Minutes, March 1, 1990, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.

membership, stressing that if fishermen would not maintain their loyalties "the Board will have no choice other than to shut down the co-op […] including the resultant sale of the facility and other assets to a large corporation with the inevitable negative effect on the future of each member of the entire fishing community."[172] In addition to creating positions such as "VP of operations," by 1990 Eburne began arguing for the co-op to diversify their finances with equity investments.[173] Eburne proposed that the co-op supplement their Fleet National credit-line with an investment banking relationship with Fleet Associates.[174] This was unanimously voted on with approval. By the end of the 1980s, fishermen at the co-op were being marginalized within their own organization as new management strategies brokered relationships with private equit. In fact, new management during the early 1990s made it clear to the fishermen that they would no longer be playing as active a role in the co-op. As one administrator, Gary Schuler advised, the Board should avoid "certain kinds of relationships with management, especially when such relationships might cause confusion or interfere with time considerations amongst management."[175] Additionally, it was announced that even after Board members, along with Charles Kelly, had taken pay cuts to help reduce overhead costs, "Kelly's salary had been restored to its former level by Tim Eburne."[176]

Within a short span of time, both Charles Kelly and Tim Eburne were let go after it had come to the co-op president's attention that Eburne was "representing certain investors" who were

[172] Membership Meeting Minutes, March 1, 1990, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[173] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, April 26, 1990, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection
[174] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, September 20, 1990, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection; Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, February 23, 1991, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection
[175] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, March 15, 1991, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection
[176] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, April 10, 1991, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection

interested in the co-op.[177] It is hard to say whether Jim McCauley, the co-op president of the time, was averse to Eburne acting out of ulterior interests or if he was wary of equity investors. Regardless, the co-op's restructuring plan, as designed by Eburne, would end. The co-op returned to its non-profit status and the Board was reinstated to its previous leadership role. Only in its final days did the co-op attempt this type of restructuring again, seemingly as a last act of desperation. Jim McCauley brought in Donald Short to become CEO and to take over his presidential duties.[178] In November 1994, Donald Short proposed possible equity partnerships: Ocean Fresh Express, Tyson Seafood, Nicheri, and Unisea," only to face bankruptcy that same year.[179] No doubt, the leadership was forced into making very difficult decisions on a constantly moving target board. And yet, what is more important, the tools that the co-op was using to try to stay afloat provide insight into the emerging market dynamics; the extent to which their impact on overfishing has yet to be understood.

In this chapter, I have made the case for using fishermen's cooperatives as a unit of analysis for considering the shifting market and social relations in fisheries during the second half of the twentieth century. Focusing on the co-op archives, I have grounded analysis in fishermen's own perspectives about modernization and about their emerging understanding about how to adapt to global market integration. As I have shown, there was a shift from cooperatives being viewed as a cure-all for coastal fishing communities, to being regarded with skepticism. Despite this, a subset of fishermen continued to start them, join them, and remain loyal to them. This is particularly true

[177] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, February 16,1991, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection
[178] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, October 8, 1994, book 11, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection
[179] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, November 11, 1994, book 11, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection

for the state of Maine.[180] Rhode Island never reorganized under a cooperative structure. Even though this shows that a type of cooperative structure continues to be used in the fishing industry, I do not see this reality as a challenge to my initial thesis. For example, there is a correlation between foreign financed large-scale corporate fishing firms focusing mainly on the Pacific coast and its region's fishermen's cooperatives going into decline. Whereas Alaska, California, and Washington had the most fishermen cooperatives until the 1970s, those numbers would decline below those of New England by the 1980s.

While Point Judith experienced industrial decline through the emergence of foreign investment, this cannot be generalized to other countries. Secondary sources point to the reality that a nation's relationship to foreign capital and global competition is a vastly uneven experience and cannot be generalized to the American case nor exclusively to the process of deindustrialization. Whereas New England's industry was largely insulated from foreign capital in order to develop economically, Sean Cadigan shows that in the early twentieth century, Newfoundland adopted an economic development strategy of attracting foreign investment into their timber industry.[181] Thus, the reasons for which the U.S. domestic fishing industry experienced deindustrialization can be seen as strategies for *industrialization* in other regions of the world. This case further suggests that deindustrialization may be better understood as a process as opposed to periodizing framework.

Additionally in the 1980s, the U.S. was not only receiving similar foreign investment in their domestic fishing industry, but "U.S. fish processors [had] plants or subsidiaries in a large

[180] Sandra Dinsmore, "Something Work That Really Shouldn't: Fishermen's Co-ops from New Hampshire to New Jersey," *Fishermen's Voice,* Vol. 16, no. 12 (2011). https://www.fishermensvoice.com/archives/122011MakingSomethingWorkThatReallyShouldntFishermensCoopsFromNewHampshireToNewJersey.html

[181] Cadigan, "The Moral Economy of Retrenchment and Regeneration," 29.

number of foreign countries, such as Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Japan, and the Philippines."[182] As the sources reveal, American policy makers didn't have a firm grasp on the extent to which foreign investment had established itself in domestic fisheries before the 1990s, even as it was a strategy among U.S firms to do so abroad. This suggests that in regions such as the U.S. fisheries which largely benefited from steady development, foreign investment was not an intended national strategy but rather a more recent outgrowth of global market integration.

A valuable study would take up the question about these U.S. fish processors and subsidiaries abroad to understand the relationship they had to both the host nation and the U.S. domestic fisheries. This would likely reveal the fault lines of empire that underpin industrial history and along which the fall-out of economic rupture impacts regions and demographics unevenly. Deindustrialization in America, as Steven High (2003) has shown, resulted in widespread plant-closure across Canada due to the extent to which the Canadian economy was entangled in U.S. capital. Because of Canadian "dependency on the U.S.," deindustrialization struck a nationalist chord as Canadians saw "vital economic decisions being made outside the country."[183] Even as American offshore firms may have benefited from American imperialism, its domestic fisheries were its collateral. Within just a few decades, American fishermen experienced the benefits and dangers of economic nationalism as modernization in the 1980s led to widespread over-capitalization and fishery collapse in the 1990s and early 2000s.

[182] American Fisheries Promotion Act of 1980, (Statement byAlan Macnow, consultant to the Japan Fisheries Association and registered as such with the Justice Department).
[183] High, *Industrial Sunset,* 7.

CHAPTER 2

Invisibility and Legibility: Emergent Fishermen's Political Ecology under Industrial Extractivism

Histories of the rise of the conservation movement show that there have been widespread tensions between class-specific visions of political economy and the environment.[184] Just as Christine Walley described the class-struggle in environmental justice issues in Chicago, fishermen have been sidelined by middle-class sensibilities about what climate justice should look like.[185] The 1990s witnessed a shift in industrial narratives in which commercial fishermen's labor became increasingly associated with "the stigma of economic, social, and environmental failure."[186] Even though extending U.S. jurisdiction to 200-miles would give a sense of security to the fishing industry as a whole, Point Judith fishermen largely experienced this regime-change as fragmentation and marginalization. Fishermen were being asked to let their individual economic interests be subsumed under wider conservation priorities even as their work-life devolved into increasing economic precarity. Instead of fisheries management tackling the structural entanglements between economic and ecological pressures under industrial capitalism, fishermen experienced what Steven High and Jackie Clarke have regarded as, the "pervasive de-recognition of class-based violence" and "new forms of working-class *in*visibility."[187]

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[184] Consider Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind,* (1967) which examines how notions about wilderness, environmental policy, and conservation have stratified along class lines, marginalizing subsistence workers.

[185] Walley, *Exit Zero,* 138.

[186] Marion Fontaine, "From Myth to Stigma? The Political Uses of Mining Identity in the North of France." *Labor (Durham, N.C.)/Labor* 16, no. 1 (2019): 65–80.

[187] High, *Deindustrializing Montreal,* 21; Jackie Clarke, "Closing Moulinex: Thoughts on the Visibility and Invisibility of Industrial Labour in Contemporary France," *Modern & Contemporary France,* vol. 19 (2011): 448-449.

Other fisheries scholars have hinted at this trend as well. As early as the 1980s, Bonnie McCay pointed to the "invisibility of labor issues" in the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council process since the establishment of limited-entry policies.[188] McCay compares this trend to Canadian, Norwegian, and Icelandic fisheries to show that it has been largely an American phenomenon. Among the reasons for this was the dramatic decline in fisheries unions, trade associations, and the reality that the FCMA both promoted consolidation and did not encourage data collection on labor.[189] Meanwhile, the U.S. Census and Department of Labor aggregates fisheries employment statistics within a wide variety of agricultural and non-agricultural harvesting sectors. By the early 2000s, the approaches used by the "rationalist system of scientific fisheries management" were still being critiqued for obscuring "community ties in New England fisheries."[190] Regulation of fishing activities were "reduced to discussions of technical issues" as opposed to addressing the "management problems identified by fishers themselves" such as pollution, environmental degradation, and world-wide overfishing.[191] The health of fisheries are measured in abstract terms such as "optimum yield," that actually serve to justify maximizing extraction, as opposed to devising more holistic approaches to measuring their wellbeing. St. Martin alludes that this period can be understood as the neoliberalization of fisheries policy. In fact, Sean Cadigan has broadly categorized fisheries management literature as either grounded in neoclassical economics or in industrial extractivist commitments.[192]

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[188] Bonnie McCay, "Labor and the Labor Process in a Limited Entry Fishery," *Marine Resource Economics* vol. 6 (1989): 327.
[189] Ibid., 327.
[190] Richard A. Schroeder, Kevin St. Martin, Katherine E. Albert, "Political ecology in North America: Discovering the Third World within?" *Geoforum,* vol. 37 (2006): 164-165.
[191] Schroeder, et al., "Political ecology in North America," 164-165.
[192] Cadigan, "Whose Fish," 171.

Even as neoliberal fisheries policy since the 1980s obscures fishermen-as-workers, it has not challenged masculine, white, or nationalist articulations of access and extraction of natural resources. This posed an important barrier to liberatory politics in which many workers' sense of belonging and material well-being were dependent on these power dynamics. As political ecologists argue, natural resources are deeply connected to nationalist imaginaries and are important to state-making projects that shape how notions of citizenship and belonging are articulated.[193] Commercial fishing has long been legitimized as both a reasonable use of fisheries resources, and even an essential service to the nation.[194] This doesn't mean that fishermen are resistant towards environmental stewardship nor apathetic about alternatives to industrial extractivism.

In order to understand this moment in the context of deindustrialization, I ground my analysis in how Point Judith fishermen came to understand the limits of industrial capitalist formation. Ultimately, I suggest that the period between the 1970s and the early 2000s marks an important shift in, what may be understood as, the industrial era. Here I explore the possibility of deindustrialization as a periodizing framework to think about the rupture of the industrial paradigm. These fault lines developed under the failure of neoliberal approaches to natural resource management. This dynamic, I argue, aligns with Nancy Fraser who calls the politics since the 1990s "progressive neoliberalism," an alliance between leftist social movements and entrepreneurs and the urban middle class.[195] Deindustrialization along the littoral both challenged and entrenched fishermen's industrial modes of living, situating them at the nexus of invisibility

[193] Kojola, "Bringing Back the Mines and a Way of Life," 373-374.
[194] Margaret Dewar points out that congressional debates leading up to the Magnuson-Stevens Act mobilized the historical role that fisheries have played in the "national interest," and that "food sovereignty" was essential to "national security" both during WWII and in the context of the Cold War in *Industry in Trouble,* 76-86.
[195] Nancy Fraser, "The End of Progressive Neoliberalism," *Dissent* January 2, 2017.

and legibility. As the contemporary period sits at the precipice of the "Blue Economy" and its projects to industrialize the oceans, fishermen's experience of deindustrialization, of the breakdown of confidence in the industrial political economy, is a prescient perspective.

Fishermen's Structure of Feeling in the Industrial Era

"Structures of feeling," as conceived by cultural theorist Raymond Williams, refers to the "particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which give the sense of a generation or of a period."[196] Labor and deindustrialization scholars have used William's framework for tracing the subjective lived experience of people under political and economic change.[197] In this section, I trace Point Judith co-op fishermen's structure of feeling that pervaded the record leading up to the FCMA. This structure of feeling was shaped by fishermen's unique position as workers and seafood harvesters, but it was also reflective of wider trends in industrial working-class white communities. Alice Kessler-Harris has argued that the emergence of a welfare state in early twentieth-century America solidified a gendered and racial consensus about fairness and about the state that enforced and legitimated a social order around the male "breadwinner."[198] The benefits granted to male wage-labor gave definition to what would become a new type of economic citizenship. Fisheries labor during the twentieth century was stratified along shifting lines of wage and share systems, unionized and independent labor, and thus varying degrees of access to this economic citizenship. And yet, I suggest that Point Judith fishermen's structure of feeling was still shaped around an economic citizenship industrial workers experienced.

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[196] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 1977): 131.

[197] Chiara Bonfiglioli, "Post-socialist deindustrialisation and its gendered structure of feeling: the devaluation of women's work in the Croatian garment industry," *Labor History* vol. 61, no. 1 (2020): 37; Strangleman, "Deindustrialisation and the Historical Sociological Imagination," 468-471.

[198] Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity*, 16.

The level of economic security that would develop out of the co-op gave an industrial form to Point Judith fishermen's lives. Jacob Dykstra recalled that,

> When the co-op was established, the fishermen, uh, were either uh, very poor or some of those that were more prosperous, had larger vessels, were unloading in other ports, and uh, even some of the best of them were engaging in, uh, questionable activities, uh, when away from home.[…] In my day, most of the kinds of people who were fishermen tried to hide it and didn't feel very good about it.[35]

But the co-op would change that. Dykstra explained that the co-op's economic success changed perception of the fishing industry and its workers. "I think most significantly, most of their children are very proud to be the children of fishermen."[36] Economic and community well-being in the memories of these co-op fishermen were co-dependent. Economic citizenship was shaped by a sense of pride in being able to contribute something meaningful that otherwise would not have been. As Rodman Sykes enumerates, in the 1950's, the co-op paid its fishermen in two-dollar bills as an experiment to show the community the impact of the fishing industry on the surrounding towns:

> And all of a sudden these two dollar bills will be showing up at the grocery store, the hardware store [...] Well this is– this is what the fishing community does with- with this town. [...] But yeah we've done a lot of this, uh, community work. We have a scholarship fund, we give away– we gave away 30, $1,000 scholarships this year and I've been on that

committee for 35 years. [...] We also raised money to– to maintain the monument and insurance and stuff. But also to have money on hand if something happens.[199]

Fishermen who witnessed the impact that the co-op had on Point Judith families focus on the relative economic security to which it enabled them to access. Melville Strout, who worked during the 1940s and knew the industry in Point Judith before the co-op was established, reflected in 1979 that back in the day he "could never visualize, there was no social security for us," whereas "fellows now they got, they got some prospects."[200] Melville Strout went on to refer to health insurance and vessel insurance, a safety net, as markers of these prospects. Access to affordable health and vessel insurance were central indicators among New England fishermen about their wellbeing.[201] Among such examples is the pride with which fishermen recalled the welfare fund and the health insurance to which the co-op gave them access. Importantly, such forms of welfare were viewed as an indicator of the success of their economic strategies.

The Point Judith co-op worked to provide a welfare system that wove together structural mechanisms and social networks between members. It wouldn't be until late 1951 that the membership formally developed a welfare fund. Up until then members might remove one of their preferred stock to help them cover "personal financial difficulties" or the co-op would "start a collection" for a member who was "injured."[202] Soon after, when the welfare fund was instituted, "if he's a member, he [could] be off a boat for six weeks and still collect if he is sick or something,

[199] Rodman Sykes, interviewed by Sophia Richter, June 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[200] Melville Strout, interviewed by Karen McDougall, March 22, 1979, Galilee Fishermen Oral History, Mss. Gr. 37, University of Rhode Island, University Archives and Special Collections, Kingston, RI.
[201] Hall-Arber et al., "New England's Fishing Communities."
[202] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, November 26, 1948, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection; Membership Meeting Minutes, March 4, 1949, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.

where[as] a non-member, the day he steps off… is it," recalled Bob Smith who joined the co-op in 1960.[203] On another occasion, the co-op membership voted that, while they weren't legally obliged, it was their "moral responsibility to…bear one-half the cost of repairs" to the boat of a member that had been damaged when a piece of the co-op's roof flew off in a storm.[204] Rodman Sykes recalled "there used to be a club of [fishermen's] wives that used to get together when their husbands would roll out and kind of support each other and watch each other's kids and things like that."[205]

In addition, the co-op facilitated more formal welfare structures. They ensured that "injured crew members who [were] treated in the local hospital" received federal aid,[206] and they "approved a plan for Physicians' services for employees."[207] Fishermen were considered, under the merchant marine provision, eligible for care by the US Public Health Service (USPHS).[208] Meanwhile, the Point Judith co-op had been contracting with the Blue Cross Health insurance provider since 1948 to cover co-op employees.[209] By 1990, the Point Judith co-op was working with Blue Cross Health to also provide a group health insurance plan for fishermen.[210] This was likely in response to

[203] Robert D. Smith, interviewed by Karen McDougal, March 19, 1979, Galilee Fishermen Oral History, Mss. Gr. 37, University of Rhode Island, University Archives and Special Collections, Kingston, RI.
[204] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, December 11, 1950, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[205] Rodman Sykes, interviewed by Sophia Richter, June 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[206] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, February 10, 1953, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[207] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, March 28, 1951, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[208] Membership Meeting Minutes, February 18, 1981, book 7, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection; Here, I have to thank the collective memory of the members of the "Fishermen of Galilee" Facebook page who have helped me identify the role of the USPHS. In many fishermen's memories, this institution was not very salient and was only referred to in vague terms such as "being on state" or "being wards of the state."
[209] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, October 23, 1948, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[210] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, May 17, 1990, book 10, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.

Reagan's role-back of eligibility criteria for social services. Despite this, the co-op maintained a relative safety net for its fishermen and employees until its closure. While there are very few traces of the USPHS servicing fishermen and the material benefits they may or may not have gained, it is certain that Point Judith fishermen's welfare was a largely socialized experience that was provided by the state, the co-op, and by community networks.

Despite this institutional bridge to economic citizenship, Point Judith fishermen's experience of the economy depended largely on what Christine Walley described as the "ideals of meritocracy" in which individuals consider that their "ability to transform himself or herself ultimately lies within."[211] While they do not call it that, their understanding about the exchange value of their labor for money taught them that hard work would result in more purchasing *power.* When asked how he learned about managing money and how to think about running his business, Tom Westcott recalled that "you learn by experience."[212] He continued on to explain how his father would pay him and his cousins to paint his boat. He had stories about scraping starfish off the docks and selling them for a nickel or catching dogfish and selling them to schools' dissection classes for a dime. Robert Smith reflects that, in the 1950s, he was "only fifteen years old, sixteen years old… I got oysters in the pond, I brought them home and opened them and sold them by the pint for 75 cents a pint and $1.50 a quart and delivered them to each household."[213] Growing up, as younger generations learned how to follow the rules of the market, they were able to access a type of economic citizenship that tended to be reserved for wage labor.

For many of them, family played an important role in reinforcing the link between hard work, economic citizenship, and morality. As Jon Dougherty reflects, "I was the oldest one and

[211] Walley, *Exit Zero*, 7
[212] Tom Westcott, interviewed by Sophia Richter, February 25, 2024.
[213] Robert Smith, interviewed by Heather Pouliot Kisilywicz, June 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.

my parents were divorced and I don't think anybody, you know they didn't worry about me because I always had money in my pocket, I was always doing the right thing."[214] As Walter Davis frames it, work was not just a means of gaining independence, it was also a means of alleviating burden and learning important lessons. "I think my mom never said 'go to work'. I just knew what she had. She had nothing. So what I could do is help her out with the money. And I didn't do that until I got fishing of course because I didn't make enough money to give her any. But I was working, so. But that's, that's how you learn work ethics."[215] Learning to make money and to wield it were lessons that emerged out of family, and was often synonymous with lessons about morality.

Learning to participate in the market was mediated by sensibilities around fairness, humility, and respect. This was not only the case because of the kinship networks within Point Judith but it was also an economic strategy for promoting transparency, trust, and cooperation within a market that had thus far been exploitative and monopolistic to their detriment. For example, the share system, equivalent to a wage but functions as a percentage of total income landed by a vessel, was determined by the captain's sense of fairness. More often than not crew shares would be dependent on their performance. Fisherman Jon Dougherty recalled that his "uncle wanted [him] to know how to mend twine, know how to splice wires, know how to navigate, you know, [...] before [he] got a full share. And if [he] screwed up, like [he] showed up late one time, [he] went from a full share back to a half share and [he'd] still have to work [his] way back up again."[216] Fair distribution of the share was not always defined in these terms. Tom Wescott recalled that his father, Jack, "would never pay [inexperienced workers…] half shares [just]

[214] Jon Dougherty, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[215] Walter Davis, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[216] Jon Dougherty, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.

because they didn't know anything and he always said, 'no, he says, 'you're full share and if you can't do the work, then you're not gonna be on the boat. He was always fair about that."[217] The co-op raised a generation of men who could expect pay to be commensurate with their labor output. This meant that growing up under capitalism, these men experienced its mechanisms through frameworks of morality that modulated how and why they accumulated capital.

Getting work in the Point Judith fishing industry depended on who you knew. While fishermen did not say this explicitly, it was one of the dimensions of tacit knowledge that determined who was allowed to work in the industry. Many fishermen explain that they got into the industry because "it was just something [you] were raised into."[218] Rodman Sykes reflects on his childhood during which he would "hang around the docks and just, when those guys were working on things on the boats [...] they would be willing to, you know, to teach you what, to show you what they were doing and why they were doing it."[219] For those who were starting out as deckhands who may not have had a family member on a boat, "it was difficult to get on good boats,"[220] "if you didn't have a permanent site then, yea, you would do what they called transit work and we would just, whoever needed somebody at the time he would jump on."[221] There were no contracts between vessels and crew to ensure that, after a trip, fishermen would have work to return to. Thus, gaining a long-term position depended on a crewman's relationship to the captain.

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[217] Tom Westcott, interviewed by Sophia Richter, February 25, 2024.
[218] Paul Champlin Jr., interviewed by Catherine Doran, March 28, 1979, Galilee Fishermen Oral History, Mss. Gr. 37, University of Rhode Island, University Archives and Special Collections, Kingston, RI.
[219] Rodman Sykes, interviewed by Sophia Richter, June 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[220] Frederick Mattera, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[221] Daniel Smith, interviewed by Sophia Richter, Month day, 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.

As Jon Dougherty explained, after going out on a vessel for a day, "the guy said, 'oh, you should come fishing with us, you're a good worker."[222]

As I showed in the previous chapter, the Point Judith co-op played an important role in developing the port. It was also a significant site of early fisheries management policy. For Point Judith fishermen, fisheries policy at the state-level was more important during the first half of the 20th century than offshore, federal and international, fishing policy, and often their focus was on limiting fishing activity in Rhode Island's state waters. To this end, the Point Judith co-op advocated for introducing state fishing licenses for boats that fished in state waters.[223] They also pushed hard against commercial interests in other states who wanted to weaken Rhode Island's protective fishing legislation that privileged local fishermen's access to poggies, also known as menhaden.[224] There is much evidence in the meeting minutes that suggest that during the first half of the 20th Century, the Point Judith co-op was acting on a sense of moral ecology that was wary of pressures that could lead to overfishing. A menhaden bill introduced to the State of Rhode Island was influenced by the co-op in their "effort to keep Narragansett Bay from being overfished for menhaden.[225] Additionally, the co-op opposed legislation that would have promoted power dredging for quahogs.[226] While commercial fishermen in Rhode Island were interested in promoting a bill that would enable otter trawling, a more fishing intensive technique, in Narragansett Bay, the Point Judith co-op actually advocated against the bill in response to Newport

[222] Jon Dougherty, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[223] Membership Meeting Minutes, March 3, 1950, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[224] Membership Meeting Minutes, October 5, 1951, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[225] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, April 14, 1952, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[226] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, March 28, 1951, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.

fishing interests who included a provision that would have opened up previously protected spawning grounds to dragging.[227] In these cases, the state's authority over coastal fisheries management had to be corralled by the fishermen who used the co-op to mobilize collective action to influence the state's decisions.

Fishermen's expectations about fisheries management and the role of the state were not only shaped by the contexts of the co-op or Rhode Island. Importantly, a multilateral treaty provision existed in the background. The International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (ICNAF) was a multilateral approach to regulating the member nations who fished off the Atlantic Canadian and New England coasts. As early as 1953, regulations were being passed on the types of gear that fishermen could use to catch certain species. As Dewar explains, fishermen largely accepted this model and the decisions made by the ICNAF were not perceived as controversial.[228] The impact of the ICNAF evidenced that New England fishermen were not unfamiliar with fisheries management provisions. Having to throw fish overboard to stay under catch limits; conforming to fish quotas that favored the large-scale distant water vessels; and respecting enforcement measures that individual countries were unevenly practicing all constituted some of the ICNAF's management practices that Point Judith fishermen would have been fluent in.[229]

Despite these diverse avenues of enforcement, by the 1960s it was becoming apparent that overfishing was a systemic problem that required structural change. Point Judith fishermen began to advocate for the 200-mile limit. In 1971, the New England Fisheries Steering Committee was

[227] Membership Meeting Minutes, September 2, 1948, book 1, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association Records, Personal Collection.
[228] Dewar, *An Industry in Trouble,* 119-120.
[229] Ibid., 125-126.

organized, including members from "every major port and every type of fishing,"[230] and in 1973 the National Federation of Fishermen (NFF), which represented around 8000 fishermen nation-wide to promote government action on foreign fishing activities. These fishermen's grievances were bound up in their structure of feeling and their relative lack of control to personally improve their situation without better jurisdiction and enforcement measures.

Newspaper articles starting around 1972 report of foreign trawlers harassing local fishermen and sabotaging their fishing gear while also intensively fishing waters 24/7.[231] As an expression of their level of frustration at the lack of effective management enforcement measures there is evidence that fishermen were taking things into their own hands. By 1975, it was clear that tensions between domestic and foreign fleets were high. As one article noted, fishermen "routinely carr[ied] high-powered rifles in their boats."[232] It would be in this context, and as a result of fishermen's collective action, that the 200-mile limit would be passed in the United States. This law gave immediate authority to the National Marine Fisheries Service, under the Department of Commerce, to exclusively manage marine fisheries up to 200-miles from U.S. shores. It also marked a significant step in centralizing the U.S. fishing industry and nationalizing the oceans of the EEZ.[233] When the fishermen's collective action resulted in the FCMA, it was deemed a mark of their success, the dawn of a new great era for the fishing industry.

While the FCMA was meant to curtail overfishing and stabilize the industry, it would do the exact opposite. Despite the seemingly contradictory nature of an increase in federal regulations for fisheries during a climate of anti-regulation, this is a false tension.[234] Even though

[230] Dewar, *An Industry in Trouble*, 116-117.
[231] "R.I. Lobstermen Accuse Russians," *Providence Journal,* February 01, 1972.
[232] "Fishermen ask protection from foreign fleets," *Providence Journal,* March 13, 1975.
[233] St. Martin, "The Difference That Class Makes," 529.
[234] Turgeon, "Fishery Regulation," 126.

neoliberalism is largely characterized by the withdrawal of the state, the FCMA would prolong the state's control of its newly nationalized fisheries resources. In fact, for the first decade, the state's commitment to industrial extractivism, read capital accumulation, undermined the authority of fisheries management. Simultaneously, the liberal state's austerity agenda put fishermen between a rock and a hard place, losing economic stability and welfare provisions at the same time that unsustainable fishing activity was being pushed to an all-time high.

Nationalism and modernization were co-constitutive of fisheries politics after the FCMA. Just after signing the Act into law, President Jimmy Carter expressed that his administration was still "strongly committed to reducing barriers to international trade."[235] In compliance with this platform, the Department of Commerce and the Department of State often rejected fisheries management regulatory suggestions that would have maintained lower levels of fishing; instead granting foreign fleets access to the surplus. While fishermen were not anti-capitalist in their desire to conserve surplus fish populations, they recognized that it would incentivize more intensive fishing, the very problem they sought to avoid by advocating for the FCMA in the first place. In a Congressional Hearing, Lucy Sloan, director of the NFF, gives voice to these concerns by urging for the regional fisheries management "Council's authority to be respected in situations where the Council and the Secretary disagree..." on how much fish should be reallocated to foreign fleets.[236] U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War contextualized fishermen's experience of early federal fisheries management. Point Judith co-op manager Leonard Stasikiewicz explained that during the

[235] Jimmy Carter, Fishery Conservation and Management Bill Statement on Signing H.R. 10732 Into Law. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/248835

[236] Lucy Sloan, "Foreign Quotas May Hamstring Butterfish Sale," 5/6/1980 American Fisheries Promotion Hearings before the Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation and the Environment of the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries House of Representatives 96th Congress, 2nd session on H.R. 7039 U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 358-372.

end of the 1970s, the federal government would say "'well, you're not utilizing it, let's give [the fish] to the Russians'. [...] As far as the federal government is concerned, [...] they got this little bargaining power."[237] All the fish that wasn't being caught domestically was being traded away, instead of conserved. Thus, federal fisheries management goals were being undermined by the state's commitment to trade liberalization and by American geopolitics.

And yet, it is also true that nationalizing the fishing grounds and state-backed modernization reinforced the economic citizenship benefits, both political authority and market mastery, with which Point Judith commercial fishermen had become familiar. One of the pillars of the FCMA dictated that fisheries be managed under regional councils whose membership would include industry stakeholders. In 1977, New England's provisional regional Council membership was replaced by eleven voting members who were appointed by the Secretary of Commerce. Of those eleven, seven of them depended on the fisheries for their work, including "the head of the Rhode Island fishermen's cooperative," presumably Jacob Dykstra of the Point Judith co-op.[238] Prominently, the Point Judith co-op consistently represented fishermen's economic needs on the council during these years. The co-op manager Leonard Staskiewicz described in 1979 that:

> we do try to cover, like I tell you, with as many people as we can muster, you know, with Jake, myself, Bob Smith, Jack, Charlie Follett. And we try to attend all meetings [...] look, there are going to be some management plans. [...] We also know that if you partake, if you only stick to fishing, [and abstain from the council process], that somebody sitting on a committee will put a broad pencil and say there's no fishing on these fish. [...] We will fight

[237] Leonard Stasikiewicz, *URI Archives and Special Collections,* 1979 [02:05:56 - 02:13:55]
[238] Margaret Dewar, *Industry in Trouble,* 157.

> anything that we don't want,[...] Simply, because they'll look, they'll think twice before they come up with another one like that. So we are, we are very, probably more active than most other places."[239]

They often mobilized the co-op membership as well. David Dykstra recalled, "we [the co-op fishermen] used to be very active. We used to go to a lot of the fisheries meetings, the council meetings. Jake went but we all went just because we could see and we, [*laughs*] basically we went because they were going to let us be heard."[240] As I will show, this political authority would be eroded in subsequent years.

In addition, the FCMA provided fishermen a political platform, state-backed modernization gave fishermen access to new technology, increasing labor, and ever expanding markets. In this way, commercial fishermen continued to be able to exercise their mastery over the industry. Fishermen in Point Judith will say that 1976-1989 were the best years to be in the fishing industry. Even though many of the co-op leadership critiqued modernization projects, fishermen didn't tend to internalize the shifting power dynamics that this would cause. Instead, they persisted in exercising their economic behavior as before. As one Point Judith fisherman, Jon Dougherty, described "some people say, like, you know, 'I can't keep up with you, you just, you'll just grind and grind and grind and grind'. Like when fishing's good I'll just go, go, go, go."[241] Dougherty's memory during this time is marked by pride in his work ethic. "You harvest [the fish] when it gets plentiful or when it's ripe and ready. And then you're– you're destined for the– the free market

[239] Leonard Stasikiewitz, interviewed by R. Petrocelli, March 28, 1979, Galilee Fishermen Oral History, Mss. Gr. 37, University of Rhode Island, University Archives and Special Collections, Kingston, RI.
[240] David Dykstra, interviewed by Sophia Richter, September 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[241] Jon Dougherty, interviewed by Sophia Richter, 2021, *South County Museum.*

society and whether you know there's a lot of stuff out there or a little bit of supply and demand."[242] Despite the political atmosphere of change, fishermen still had a lot of autonomy and the laws of supply and demand worked in their favor. Another fisherman explains that the reason he went into fishing in the 1980s was because "the harder you work, the more money you make– in general."[243]

Even as demographics began to shift in the Point Judith fishing industry, the co-op was a site where these economic sensibilities were salient and were being reproduced. Chris recalled the experience of joining the co-op board's apprenticeship position in the 1980s:

> They [the co-op leadership] brought, they brought a knowledge of having nothing to the table. And if there was ever a guiding principle that you should listen to is how to emerge out of nothing to something. Simply participating in something that's already set up and going along doesn't, doesn't get you a lot. But when, to listen to Jack Westcott or Chet Westcott or Charlie Follett go on a tirade about a few dollars, one way or the other, and for them to get religion and go back to the day, it was like, 'Oh my god. So this is how you get from there to here, you worry about pennies'. And you worry about principles, and you worry about support and membership and loyalty.[244]

In his memory, it is clear that the economic strategies of the older generations still held meaning to the next generation of Point Judith co-op fishermen. This contributed to framing their expectations that the rules of free trade still worked in their favor.

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[242] Jon Dougherty, interviewed by Sophia Richter, 2021, *South County Museum.*
[243] "Fishermen now need better equipment," *Providence Sunday Journal,* October 21, 1979, C-12.
[244] Chris Brown, interviewed by Sophia Richter, November 28, 2023.

An Era of Austerity: Economic Precarity, Political Marginalization, and Health Crisis

By the early 1990s, economic precarity and the risk of fisheries collapse both felt tangible. In a newspaper article, it was reported that "a record number of foreclosures on boat mortgages were logged, as owners failed to make their monthly payments. At least eight Rhode Island-related boats were seized."[245] Christopher Benson recalled, "when stocks started to diminish precipitously um, a lot of those who owned fishing vessels decided it was more profitable to leave them in the ocean than it was to bring them home…[and] boats weren't properly maintained."[246] Dewar has shown that the cost of insurance was crippling. Once it became clear that many fishermen would not be able to afford their mortgages, "several of the insurance companies, large insurance companies abandoned the fishing industry entirely."[247] For many, competition and an overexpanded industry pressured a lot of fishermen into desperation by "forcing people to go out in weather they're not supposed to be going out in, money is tight and the boats aren't being kept up as well as they should be."[248] This wasn't just risky behavior but at times led to accident and death.[249]

Immediately after the closure of the co-op in 1996, all fishermen had to transfer to private dealers, just as it had been before 1947. Chris Brown explains that the fish houses in Point Judith where they moved to "were fair enough. But there was no camaraderie. There was something really lacking. There was no sense that there was an institution that had your back. You know, that, that

[245] Colleen Fitzpatrick, "Outlook on the '90s Commercial fishing founders Depleted stocks, spiraling insurance plague industry; but there is a ray of hope," *Providence Journal,* January 28, 1990.
[246] Christopher Benson, interviewed by Chris, 2001-2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Mitch Chagnon, interviewed by Nicholas Gorham, 2001-2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[249] Niles Pearsall, interviewed by Azure Dee Cygler, November 15, 2011, transcript, Sector Management in New England Collection, NOAA Voices Oral History Archive.

is missing to this day."[250] Without the co-op, fishermen returned to being beholden to private interests setting the prices and having to front the costs of health insurance, retirement, and other welfare needs on their own. Norma Conley recalled her husband's experience of this time,

> For one thing, you're self-employed. So, you have to do your own taxes, and nothing is coming out of your check when you get a check. It's the whole thing. […] They don't do unemployment or temporary disability, or Blue Cross, not any of that. You have to take care of it yourself. On all the boats my husband has been on. [...] Even though you don't own the boat, all are self-employed fishing on the boat. [...] I would say it would be nice if you had a retirement at the end of your lifetime, you have social security but that's all. I mean, you don't have those big-time retirements like if you worked for the State or a big company that put these retirements away for you.[251]

In addition to becoming taxed like business owners, fishermen had to worry about health insurance, especially after they were dropped from the USPHS in the 1980s. Many fishermen have stories about the dangers of the industry. Working with heavy machinery, miles from shore, in small crews, accidents and death were always a possibility. As studies on labor accidents and fatalities have shown, workers in the fishing industry are nearly 30 times more likely to face fatal accidents than the national average.[252] This takes on a layer gravity with the reality that the impact

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[250] Christopher Brown, interviewed by Sophia Richter, November 28, 2023.

[251] Norma Conley, interviewed by Ariane Buffum, 2001-2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.

[252] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention NIfOSaH. Commercial Fishing Safety - NIOSH Workplace Safety and Health Topic. 2019. Accessed January 15, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/fishing/default.html>; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics LFS, 2018. Annual Averages, Household Data, Tables from Employment and Earnings. 2018

of U.S. economic deregulation and trade liberalization policies gave way to "increased waterfront development, offshore oil drilling, higher fuel prices, and [fish] imports" and also impacted the health and welfare of commercial fishermen.[253] As Madeleine Hall-Arber explained in her assessment of New England fishing communities in 2001, the combination of increasing healthcare costs, the shifting criteria of eligibility, and declining incomes left a lot of fishing families without access to healthcare. By 1996, the uninsured rate for fishermen was around 52 percent, while the national average for 1989 was only 20 percent.[254]

As Ryan Moran, who grew up in a fishing family and began fishing full-time during COVID recalled, "I kind of realized it's a very painful job. It's just like, you're free, but at what cost to your body. You know, at the end of the day, you're trading freedom for your body's, like, use."[255] While accidents and safety issues on vessels were being addressed from many angles, including federal legislation about vessel insurance and safety training by 2007, individual health plans were still very expensive and vessels often didn't have paid leave, thus disincentivizing people from seeking care.[256] Moran emphasizes the decision matrix of fishermen and recalled that he has seen " the guys down there [in Point Judith] that are lifelong fishermen and just, they're broken. Like, it's insane. The pain they go through to– like Jimmy worked for about a month with a broken foot until his, [..] it got so swollen, and he had to cut his boot off of his leg because he couldn't get his boot off [...] and went to the hospital.[257]

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[253] Shannon Guillot-Wright, Ellie Cherryhomes, and Lacy Davis, "The impact of economic deregulation for health disparities among Gulf of Mexico commercial fishermen," *Marine Policy* 141 (2022): 1-6.
[254] Hall-Arber, et al., "New England's Fishing Communities," 17.
[255] Ryan Moran, interviewed by Sophia Richter, August 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[256] Hall-Arber, et al., "New England's Fishing Communities," 17-18.
[257] Ryan Moran, interviewed by Sophia Richter, August 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.

In alignment with what Bonnie McCay wrote in the 1980s and Kevin St. Martin wrote in the early 2000s about the federal fisheries management regime, this section has shown that Point Judith fishermen came to feel the squeeze of neoliberalization in the fishing industry by the 1990s. Despite the seeming power that the 200-mile limit and seats at the regional management councils seemed to offer, Point Judith fishermen remember this time through the lens of marginalization and increased economic precarity. Considering this paradox, scholarship has pointed out that "[o]ver the course of its development, much of fisheries management science, both in theory and in practice, has had a misplaced emphasis. Whereas its first concerns should have been the human beings who utilize fisheries resources, its cornerstones were instead … the conservation of important marine-biological species … [and] allocating fisheries resources and maximizing the economic benefits from them."[258] Co-op fishermen too saw this tension. As former Point Judith co-op manager Leonard Stasikiewicz expressed back in 1979, the Council was supposed to:

> Take on the economical problems, sociological problems, and say, this is what I think the fisherman should get [...] 'I also got to take care of that factor that if I push these guys too much, and they got a mortgage to pay for and their option is they either lie and cheat and keep their vessel or they become the most honest men in the world, and actually go into bankruptcy'… Knowing human nature, what is the guy going to do? In most cases, the guy is going to lie and cheat.[259]

[258] James McGoodwin, *Understanding the cultures of fishing communities: A key to fisheries management and food security.* No. 401. (Food & Agriculture Organization, 2001): 1.
[259] Leonard Stasikiewitz, interviewed by R. Petrocelli, March 28, 1979, Galilee Fishermen Oral History, Mss. Gr. 37, University of Rhode Island, University Archives and Special Collections, Kingston, RI.

Fishermen and their families regarded the disconnect between the fisheries management council process and fishermen's lived experiences and needs. As one fisherman's wife expressed in an interview with NOAA,

> Well, I think if the regulatory bodies or the State, the Feds – I don't know who I would address – but they do need to embrace the individuals in the industry to make changes. [...] If they could somehow support them for their efforts [...] provide health care, or provide some sort of compensation [...] I think if they could just support those individuals or the community a little more, that would be a win-win.[260]

Her grievance resonated with fishermen who had to participate in the council process after the co-op shut down. Whereas before, fishermen like Jacob Dykstra, Robert Smith, and Jim McCauley devoted their years as co-op representatives to gaining proficiency in political participation, once the co-op closed, individual fishermen had to speak up in order to have a voice. Bill Dykstra considers these changes,

> We're frustrated, as a group we're discouraged and [...] when we go into a political arena we feel like we get eaten alive and it's not our, it's not where we're at home. None of us are trained to do it um, we live a totally different life. You go into a [Council] meeting, we don't sit still all day and listen to people talk, that, that's not my idea of a blast you know, so, but we have to and then you might speak for like five minutes and that's it, that's your whole day's effort [...] so we don't like it so we, you know, but it's necessary and somebody

[260] Maryellen Brown, interviewed by Azure Dee Westwood, December 15, 2008, transcript, Oral Histories from the New England Fisheries Collection, NOAA Voices Oral History Archives.

> has to do it but you hope it would be somebody else. [...] The other thing about the regulatory process is everybody that's involved on the government level gets paid to go to the meeting. The fisherman ties his great big boat up and sends his crew home and goes to the meeting and loses money big time going to the meeting [...] we don't make the kinda money you need to hire people to represent you. It's a dilemma….[261]

Without examination of the regional council records, it is impossible to know how much clarity the co-op even gave fishermen while it existed. Regardless, when it was running, it was led by fishermen who devoted their entire careers to gaining mastery of the politics, putting their fishing aside, and served as a unifying voice.

During these years the council often made choices that they hoped would minimize the economic impact to fishermen, vessel owners, and fish dealers.[262] But the council was not actually equipped to consider such social and economic factors.[263] In an important step in this direction, the Sustainable Fisheries Act was passed in 1996 which listed an eighth National Standard by which fisheries policy must conform. National Standard 8 calls on fisheries policy to mitigate socio-economic impact on "fishing communities."[264] And yet, it has been argued that National Standard 8 has not been adequately conceptualized and that it is subsumed by the higher priority of mitigating overfishing and maximizing the resource. Ultimately, despite these amendments, a

[261] Bill Dykstra, interviewed by Rachel Dulude, 2001-2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[262] Dewar, *Industry in Trouble,* 152-156.
[263] Patricia Clay and Julia Olson, "Defining 'Fishing Communities': Vulnerability and the Magnuson-Stevens FisheryConservation and Management Act," *Human Ecology Review* vol. 15, no. 2 (2008): 152.
[264] Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, Pub.L.No. 94-265, 90 Stat. 331 (1976)

more holistic view of fishermen as workers is considered to be outside of the jurisdiction of the regional councils.[265]

Progressive Neoliberalism: The Conservation versus Jobs Dilemma

Not only was the federal fisheries management regime forged under neoliberal politics, but it evolved during the late 1990s to resemble what Nancy Fraser has called "progressive neoliberalism" as conservation priorities began to render fishermen-as-workers increasingly invisible. This shift would take place between 1996 and 2007. In the face of dangerously low fish stocks in the 1990s, the National Marine Fisheries Service was sued by the Conservation Law Foundation for failing to promote sustainable fishing.[266] In response, the Sustainable Fisheries Act was passed in 1996. This would mark a shift towards prioritizing conservation above all else. By 2007 and the passage of the MSA Reauthorization Act, increasingly tight regulations were being felt by Point Judith fishermen. Building on the previous section in which fishermen experienced increased economic precarity, I will show how conceptions of conservation that devalued fisheries labor and their grievances marked a shift in alignments between Leftist environmental advocacy and anti-labor politics.

As early as the passage of the FCMA in 1976, the burden of conservation was put on commercial fishermen. In a news article published just after the FCMA was passed, Jacob Dykstra warned that "the network of new regulations are not only difficult to understand, but may oppose the economic interests of the fishermen…The small port fishermen feel they're not being represented by the NEFMC [the New England regional council]…If you impose 25 new

[265] Jaime Speed Rossiter, Giorgio Hadi Curti, Christopher M. Moreno, and David López-Carr. "Marine-space Assemblages: Towards a Different Praxis of Fisheries Policy and Management," *Applied Geography* 59 (2015): 143.
[266] Jon Brodziak, Michele L. Traver, and Laurel A. Col, "The nascent recovery of the Georges Bank haddock stock," *Fisheries Research* vol. 94, no. 2 (November 2008): 123-132.

regulations on fishermen all at once it might result in confusion and uncooperation."[267] In response, government agencies turned on local fishermen. The Coast Guard, responsible for enforcing the fisheries management provisions, argued that domestic fishermen are "responsible for conservation" and a representative from the National Marine Fisheries Service emphasized that "whether or not the law works is up to the fishermen themselves."[268] This mindset of putting the responsibility of conservation and cooperation on fishermen set the tone for what fisheries management would look.

On the one hand, there is evidence of fishermen taking this role seriously. On the other hand, there were far too many pressures incentivizing overfishing for the individual stewardship acts to have an effect. The effectiveness of conservation was understood in terms of regulatory compliance. So long as fishermen didn't break any rules, fisheries would automatically evade overfishing. And yet, fishermen were wary that compliance might result in job-loss since management provisions and prevailing notions of conservation did not seriously grapple with the dual economic and ecological pressures of industrial extractivism. From protesting the unfairness of "limited entry" policies in the 1980s to expressing frustration with policies that incentivized by-catch in the 1990s, fishermen equated these measures with job-loss rather than conservation. As one fisherman lamented,

> I agree with the regulations to a certain point that it was necessary for the stocks to come back but they have, they are coming back and I don't know if there is a political motivation for the restrictions or what it is but [...] I agree with a certain point, agree to maybe maintain

[267] Dwight Darling, "Cooperation Seen Key to the 200-mile limit," *Narragansett Times,* March 10, 1977.
[268] Ibid.

the stock, but not to the point where it puts people out of business. And that's what it's done.[269]

In 1992, by-catch, the fish species incidentally caught while targeting other species, had become a prominent topic of conversation at the Point Judith co-op. One fisherman, Bob Smith, reported that the regulations used by other regional councils dictated that if the allowable amount of by-catch is surpassed, the council will close the fishery.[270] The co-op sensed that by-catch was an issue that fisheries managers and environmentalists were considering more closely and that such a thing could pose "a very large potential for economic injury to industry harvesters."[271] Jake Dykstra was mentioned in the minutes for discussing the strategy of fisheries managers to use "bycatch considerations…to substantiate further their proposal for a consolidation, i.e. reduction of the fishing fleet to several large vessels."[272] Resistance to consolidation was not just a fear of losing control of one's business, but more importantly it was experienced as class marginalization. By-catch was caught up in the complicated disputes between fishermen and scientists about how many fish were in the water. Ultimately, scientists were allocating quota conservatively while fishermen were catching more fish than they were legally allowed to land. But this issue was not experienced solely in terms of business lost.

Fisherman Christopher Benson explains, "we find ourselves in the position of having to discard sometimes significant quantities of perfectly good fish and because they, most of them die

[269] Mrs. Tarasevich, interviewed by Amber Newbauer, 2001-2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[270] Board of Directors Meeting Minutes, February 5, 1992, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association, Book 10, Personal Collection.
[271] Membership Meeting Minutes, March 5, 1992, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association, Book 10, Personal Collection.
[272] Membership Meeting Minutes, March 5, 1992, Point Judith Fishermen's Cooperative Association, Book 10, Personal Collection.

once they are brought on deck of the fishing vessel, you're killing them for nothing and that is… that is literally sickening for most fishermen."[273] Sometimes, nets full of "by-catch" would have to be tossed overboard, dead fish swirling back into the waters of depleted fishing grounds. David Dykstra remembers, "my father loved scup and, and all of a sudden we couldn't save any scup. We had one tow right out here and we had 20,000 pounds of scup that big, and we had to run them all back, all of them. And he was just, you know, he was beside himself."[274] For many fishermen, discarding by-catch was not just viewed as a loss of income, but it fueled a sense of despair and futility towards the effectiveness of conservation-oriented management plans. Many fishermen in their interviews expressed frustration towards the narrow definition of conservation. As one member of a fishing family reflected "we always used to joke about the tree-huggers and the conservation and all this; it seemed so out of the realm for us, but he's actually very much from that wavelength. He says 'why destroy the fisheries if this is how we're going to make our money'."[275] Others described themselves in other terms: being "pro-ecology,"[276] and "an environmentalist."[277]

And yet, such values could not be exercised without sacrifices. Niles Pearsall voiced a common experience that fishermen had in Point Judith who tried to accommodate for overfishing in the late 1990s by substituting away from those fishing grounds. When the Council and NMFS developed a policy in 2006 based on fishing history, "I got kind of screwed on my quota. I got like

[273] Christopher Benson, interviewed by Chris, 2001-2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[274] David Dykstra, interviewed by Sophia Richter, September 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[275] Maryellen Brown, interviewed by Azure Dee Westwood, December 15, 2008, transcript, Oral Histories from the New England Fisheries Collection, NOAA Voices Oral History Archives.
[276] Parker Sorlien, interviewed by Alison Marshall, 2001-2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett,RI.
[277] Robert Smith, interviewed by Gianna Gray, 2001-2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.

25,000 pounds of groundfish total quota, compared to some of my friends who have hundreds of thousands of pounds and, you know, it's because my boat fished South of New England. I tried to do what the government said and then we ended up getting screwed for it in the long run anyway."[278] Former co-op fisherman Rodman Sykes, who was among such fishermen to diversify their landings during the late 1990s to reduce the stress on overfished populations, remembered that

> When they divided the fish up, they also divided up the days of sea up. We had 88 days of sea at that time. [...] I ended up with I think 42 days instead I had, which was hard to manage. Because the years they used was '96 to 2005. And I did a lot of Tuna fishing and a lot of sword fishing and a lot of cable patrol in those years. And it affected my whole career. We all– we all felt they sho– they could have divided it up better.[279]

Without further investigation of the regional council during this time, it is difficult to say how such decisions were made. And yet, the record suggests that the regional council favored consolidation. One Point Judith fisherman asserted in 2001 that "if someone has a conservation attitude or a sport fishing attitude and uh have been nominated for, uh, a council position, it's been fought tooth and nail" by Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts "and um the governor of the state of Rhode Island."[280] While there is a mandate to balance commercial and recreational fishing interests among the voting members of the council, there isn't an equivalent for extraction versus

[278] Niles Pearsall, interviewed by Azure Dee Cygler, November 15, 2011, transcript, Sector Management in New England Collection, NOAA Voices Oral History Archive.
[279] Rodman Sykes, interviewed by Sophia Richter, June 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[280] Al Anderson, interviewed by Luke, 2001-2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.

conservation interests.[281] Additionally, scholarship on stakeholder participation in natural resource management has tended to be "selected on an ad hoc basis,"[282] and will always prove marginalizing to some extent, reproducing "preexisting power imbalances and geometries of privilege."[283] Ultimately, these fishermen who favored conservation-oriented fishing practices were essentially punished with harsher limitations on their work due to these geometries of power constituted by the regional council process.

In addition to conservation-oriented fishermen and small-boat fishermen feeling increasingly marginalized in the fisheries management process, between 1996 and the MSA Reauthorization Act of 2007, job-loss was experienced as a type of dispossession. Displacement is an important grievance among fishermen and their families who thought that they would never have to worry about not having access to fishing grounds when they wanted them. One fisherman's wife recalled,

> [W]hen I see what happened to our income last year I think holy smokes, you know, if they turned around and did this to any other group in society, they'd be…and twenty years of a history of an income, then all of a sudden, it's like, oh, I mean, my husbands going– 'what do I have to do, go get a job at home depot to be able to keep being a lobsterman?' Do I have to go and get a second job?...he, forty-eight, he shouldn't have to think about that at this point. He's put a lot of good years in…."[284]

[281] Erin Ryan, "Fisheries without Courts: How Fishery Management Reveals Our Dynamic Separation of Powers," Journal of Land Use & Environmental Law vol. 32, no. 2 (2017): 447-448.
[282] M.S. Reed. et al., "Who's in and why? A typology of stakeholder analysis methods for natural resource management," *Journal of Environmental Management* 90 no. 5 (2009): 1933-1934.
[283] Rossiter et al., "Marine-space Assemblages," 144.
[284] Karen Swaboda, *South County Museum NHS Oral Histories,* 2001-2002, transcript, p. 11.

A mother in a fishing family reflects with worry, "if those things [fishing] aren't here for him, I just don't know where he would go. There is just too much history in fishing."[285] As fishing families face displacement, it resonates with their structure of feeling about fairness in which work is a right that should be protected.

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, a progressive neoliberalism began to emerge that pitted free enterprise against the state in a battle between capital and conservation, in which partisan fault lines were drawn and fishermen had to pick a side. Anthony Lewis, a career legal journalist for the *New York Times* published a piece in 1995 that marked an increased politicization of these debates. Lewis had a definitive Democratic readership and, as his alma mater proclaimed, "at a liberal moment in American history, he was one of the defining liberal voices."[286] In essence, Lewis contended that the root of the issue of overfishing was "the conflict between public and private interests" and expressed "misgivings about the Republican Contract with America."[287] Lewis called fishermen "self-destructive" and caught in a "catch-22" in which "as individuals, even those who would benefit from conservation of resources are often unable or unwilling to act."[288] This article inspired a flurry of opinion pieces in the *Providence Journal* among fishermen and civilians. On one side of the aisle, local Rhode Island liberal voices joined in to criticize the role of the Point Judith co-op in resisting regulations "to protect the interests of Point Judith fishermen" and in "violating tax laws" by "spending their money lobbying Congress and making deals with the Internal Revenue Service to keep from losing their boats."[289] The author used these examples to

[285] Zela Westcott, *South County Museum, NHS Oral Histories,* 2001-2002, transcript, p. 6.
[286] Nicholas P. Fandos, "Anthony Lewis '48, Pulitzer Winner and Crimson Mentor, Dies at 85," *The Harvard Crimson,* March 26, 2013, https://thecrimson.com/article/2013/3/26/Lewis-Reporter-Dies-Journalist/
[287] Cheryl Latos, "Fishing crisis 'solutions' aren't easy," *Providence Journal,* February 10, 1995.
[288] Richard Allen, "The environment is safer in the hands of the private sector," *Providence Journal,* January 18, 1995.
[289] Ibid.

argue that it was unfair for the government to buy back fishing vessels and that the government should just seize them instead.

In so many ways, this rhetoric reflected the widespread demonization of fisheries labor and the shift among Democrats to the right. One fisherman lamented in 2001 that young people "are being told that we are killers, and what we do is kill, and the stock is in bad shape because of us. And we need to do something about it, there needs to be lessons."[290] He agrees that overfishing is bad, "but to portray us as, as rapists and pillagers of the sea is the wrong thing to do. Cause we're not! We're doing it for a living."[291] And yet, the wider consensus among fishermen accepted the public versus private dichotomy that pitted labor versus conservation. On the one hand, fishermen believed that it was their own fault that "commercial fishermen and the national fishery service have put themselves outta business [...] – the fishery council – have failed to do their job [*chuckles*] and the reason they have failed to do their job is because they composed primarily of commercial fishermen umm… the henhouse is being guarded by the foxes."[292] And on the other, some fishermen believed that to be a conservationist had become a left-wing talking point condemned by neoliberal *conservatives*. Such fishermen claimed that managing the fishing industry through private property regimes would be the answer to the industry's problems. As fisherman David Dowell argued, "the 'Contract with America' seeks only to bring common sense into the equation of environmental regulation: just compensation for those who have had property devalued or taken, and the reiteration of rights afforded the American people by the Constitution."[293] Another fisherman, Richard Allen, condemned the Lewis article as the rhetoric of "left-wing ideologues"

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[290] Richard Allen, "The environment is safer in the hands of the private sector," *Providence Journal,* January 18, 1995.
[291] Ibid.
[292] Al Anderson, interviewed by Luke, 2001-2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[293] David Dowell, "Refraining from regulatory overkill," *Providence Journal,* February 17, 1995.

and justified fishermen's resistance to regulations as rational when the fisheries "were open to anyone who could buy a boat and catch fish."[294] In a sense, both the left and the right were subsumed by neoliberalism's power to erase the historical process by which these debates developed.

Since, fishermen's sensibilities about conservation priorities have taken a decidedly anti-government tone. One Point Judith fisherman mused,

> If I was king…I'd get rid of the environmentalists that are making our job tougher by suing the National Fishery Service and we all get down to doing our jobs and realizing what's rebounding and paying attention to that and letting us fish our rebounding stock and…start paying more attention to how things really are and working within that world, the real world as opposed to the world that seems to come out of fluorescent lights and cubicles up in Gloucester.[295]

While litigation by conservationists increased after the enactment of the 1996 Sustainable Fisheries Act, the National Marine Fisheries Service has been sued more often by commercial fishermen.[296] Despite this, the common sentiment is that conservation interests have won out at the expense of fishermen's jobs. Another fisherman explained,

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[294] Richard Allen, "The environment is safer in the hands of the private sector," *Providence Journal,* January 18, 1995.
[295] Mike Marchetti, interviewed by James Joseph, May 18, 2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[296] Ryan, "Fisheries without Courts," 450.

> there are groups of people that don't agree with the fact that there's commercial fishing in the United States and those groups want to see us eliminated. [...] They care, they say they care about uh, the fish. So, environmentalists would be in that group, uh sports fishermen, they are numerous. There are a lot of those people and they have a good deal of money behind them.[297]

These fishermen were referring to a subset of environmental advocacy groups such as Greenpeace. They refer to them as "environmental terrorists" and as virtual economic parasites who "should all get a job,"[298] instead of making money off of "flipper syndrome."[299]

At this point, progressive and conservative neoliberalism had gained political and cultural consensus, naturalizing the assumed incommensurabilities between conservation and jobs, between the state and the market. And yet, examining the historical process by which this dichotomy emerged shows that many truths were obscured by its politics, namely that both sides agreed that industrial extractivism was no longer an unproblematic model. Deindustrialization along the littoral has proven to be a protracted process by which the very industrial dimensions of fishing have been contested, turned over, and even denied. And yet, they cannot be understood without a deep engagement with the evolving neoliberal political economy that was developing alongside the fishing industry. While deindustrialization in both fisheries and manufacturing were shaped by and entrenched anti-labor politics, decline in the fishing industry directly catalyzed

[297] Bill Dykstra, interviewed by Rachel Dulude, 2001-2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[298] Parker Sorlien, interviewed by Caitlin, 2001-2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[299] Robert Smith, interviewed by Gianna Gray, 2001-2002, transcript, Narragansett High School Oral History Interview Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.

scientific, legal, and labor debates in the public sphere about the end of the industrial era's hegemonic relationship to nature in ways that manufacturing decline has not.

By focusing on the memories, collective action, and grievances of fishermen during this time, I sought to balance my analysis of the wider structural changes with people's own understanding of them. The closure of the co-op proved to be an important window into the process of global financialization and the withdrawal of the state from regional economic development projects. I have aimed to show how this translated into a particular class struggle for fishermen that doesn't often get explored in labor history. Tracing the shifting capitalist and social relations between the 1970s and early 2000s contributes to denaturalizing the neoliberalization of the industry and foregrounds the feedback loops between industrial decline, class dislocation, and the neoliberalization of the American political economy. I make the case for viewing deindustrialization as a process of eroding the industrial norm of resource extractivism that pervades the industrial era. Perhaps like noxious employment deindustrialization,[300] this history exemplifies 'deindustrializing extractivism', a paradigm shift from how the industrial era related to natural resources. Thinking along the littoral, the fishing industry challenges some of the prevailing ideas about deindustrialization as a periodizing framework.

[300] Feltrin, Mah, and Brown, "Noxious deindustrialization," 950-969.

CONCLUSION

Deindustrialization, Empire, and Populist Politics: Lessons from the Littoral

While I have endeavored to put the fishing industry in conversation with heavy industry, unlike manufacturing and mining sectors, the welfare state did not fully encapsulate the fisheries. The history of the withdrawal of welfare, and thus the erosion of industrial wage-earning family structures, does not capture the causes and impacts of industrial decline in fisheries. Instead, I have had to look in diverse places to reconstruct the type of "industrial era" that constituted fishing families' lives and fisheries political economy. Between the 1880s and 1960s, U.S. fisheries were characterized by a mix of domestic finance capital and local capital that largely enabled industrial-scale fishermen to access and control market supply chains, regional development, and fisheries management. Welfare was primarily provided by fishermen's unions and cooperatives; and local schools and universities partnered with the industry to educate the next generation of skilled laborers. To commercial fishermen, the "welfare state" was adjacent; excluding them from its direct benefits. Taking this as a whole, deindustrialization in the United States, as Bluestone and Harrison described it, is linked to a history in which the welfare state was only a blip in the history of political economic ideas and economic life. One of the questions is whether this perspective, and thus the history of industry decline in fisheries, actually adds anything to the understanding of deindustrialization.

I have argued that the history of decline in the fishing industry dramatically shifted the consensus around the viability of industrial extractivism. This differs from what deindustrialization of manufacturing allows us to see about this process. Capital flight does not directly challenge the viability of growth economics. The industries themselves, even after they have offshored, remain complicit with extractivist commitments and the attending imperial dimensions that come with

growth economics. Instead, offshoring only points to the localized crises of capitalism and the deferred crises of unfettered consumption. Industrial decline in fisheries, on the other hand, suggests that deindustrialization has political-ecological dimensions. Deindustrialization scholars have already begun examining the health and environmental dimensions of manufacturing and its decline. Arthur McIvor, Robert Storey, and Alice Mah have studied the site of manufacturing from the vantage point of its harm to workers' health and to the environment, but their work does not go so far as to challenge the growth paradigm of capitalism.[301] Research at the intersection of deindustrialization and settler colonialism have considered some of the fundamental tensions between manufacturing's economic and ecological impacts. Joseph Whitson looks at the environmental injustices of unequal distribution of economic benefits and environmental impacts of mining the Iron Range. Whitson brings together historian Traci Voyles "wastelanding" critique of extractive industries to point out the violence of settler colonial usage of indigenous lands.[302] Steven High examines the settler colonial politics of exclusion in which rural industries in Canada did not benefit First Nations.[303] Gabriel Winant, too, gives voice to the reality that the benefits of industrial labor of the twentieth century, upon which modernity seemed to rest, was unevenly distributed.[304] More histories of the diversity of industrial life, particularly for those who did not benefit from it, are essential to complicating the history of economic life.

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[301] Arthur McIvor, "Deindustrialization Embodied: work, health and disability in the United Kingdom since the mid-twentieth century," in *The Deindustrialized World,* 25-45; Robert Storey, "Beyond the Body Count? Injured Workers in the Aftermath of Deindustrialization," in *The Deindustrialized World,* 46-67; Lorenzo Feltrin, Alice Mah, and David Brown. "Noxious deindustrialization: Experiences of precarity and pollution in Scotland's petrochemical capital." Environment and planning C: Politics and space 40, no. 4 (2022): 950-969.

[302] Joseph Whitson, "Mine Tourism, Settler Colonialism, and the Creation of an Extractive Landscape on Minnesota's Iron Range," *The Public Historian* vol. 41, no. 3 (2019): 49-53.

[303] Steven High, "Deindustrialization on the Industrial Frontier: The Rise and Fall of Mill Colonialism in Northern Ontario," in *The Deindustrialized World,* 257-283.

[304] Winant, ""Hard Times Make for Hard Arteries and Hard Livers," 109.

In the context of recent scholarship that has sought to understand the link between populism and working-class communities "left behind" by the neoliberal age, these perspectives are even more urgent. Deindustrialization scholars have begun to examine the relationship between the rise of right-wing populism, widespread decline in reliable working-class jobs and the decline of working-class politics.[305] In mainstream debates, ring-wing populism is portrayed as a result of the economic or cultural crises that have hit deindustrializing regions, mobilizing people's feeling of being left behind. In the context of rural and agrarian communities, this is certainly observable. The French far-right presidential campaign of Marine Le Pen gained the support of many farmers with her "buy French act,"[306] and Trump's "Make America Great" campaign mobilized rural communities with the prospect of bringing mining back,[307] are just two examples. Commercial fishermen's alignments with conservative politics resonate with wider trends of agrarian and rural communities shifting to the right.

In 2016, the first offshore wind project in the U.S. came onto the grid off the coast of Block Island, Rhode Island.[308] As members of the Fishermen's Advisory Board of the Rhode Island Coastal Resource Management Council (RI CRMC), fishermen used their platform to participate in shaping the development of offshore wind. They collaborated with fisheries scientists and management to express their reservations about the review and permitting process. Not only is there concern that the construction projects, the turbines themselves, and the cables connecting the turbines to the grid disrupt habitat and compete for ocean space with fishing grounds, but they are also wary of the long-term impacts of development on coastal communities and working

[305] Steven High, "Deindustrialization and its consequences," in *Routledge International Handbook of Working-Class Studies,* eds. Michele Fazio, Christie Launius, and Tim Strangleman (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020): 169-179.
[306] Mamonova and Franquesa, "Populism, Neoliberalism and Agrarian Movements in Europe," 711.
[307] Kojola, "Bringing Back the Mines and a Way of Life," 372.
[308] Aaron Orlowski, "Offshore wind projects worry Northeast fishermen," *SeafoodSource,* June 21, 2018.

waterfronts.[309] And yet, in September of 2023, all nine of these members resigned due to feeling that the RI CRMC were "so committed to developing offshore wind power that it has rejected the board's concerns about fishery and environmental impact."[310] Their resignation was made in protest against the decision to approve a new 84-turbine project, which falls under President Biden's executive order for the Interior Department to double U.S. offshore wind capacity by 2030.[311] Rhode Island fishermen viewed the state's commitment to offshore wind as putting Point Judith at risk of becoming "a ghost town."[312] The fear of deindustrialization in the fishing industry is present in conversations about advancing renewable energy that are *industrializing* the oceans.

These debates have further divided fishermen and conservationists on the question of ocean stewardship, as offshore wind gets politicized as a pivotal step in transitioning away from fossil fuels. Lacking a strong voice to represent their needs, fishermen from New Jersey to Maine have found unlikely allies. Fossil fuel interest groups and climate denial think tanks, prominent among them, the Charles Koch Institute's DonorsTrust, and the Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF), have adopted fishermen's concerns as a strategy to push their own agenda of dismantling federal regulation.[313] A report published by Brown University's Climate Development Lab, pointed to this ultra-conservative coalition's strategy of organizing a campaign to cause "subversion in the

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[309] Will Sennott and Anastasia Lennon, "Blown Away: Fishermen Endangered by Offshore Wind's Political Power," *ProPublica,* April 18, 2023.
[310] "Rhode Island Fishermen's Advisory Board resigns en masse in protest of offshore wind development process," *SeafoodSource,* September 5, 2023.
[311] Josh Christenson, "RI fishermen's board resigns en masse over Biden admin-backed offshore wind farm: 'Wholesale ocean destruction'," *New York Post,* September 5, 2023.
[312] Mary Lhowe, "Fishermen See Offshore Wind Coming and Buckle Down to Plan for Shared Future," *ecoRI,* November 9, 2023.
[313] Hiroko Tabuchi, "A Potentially Huge Supreme Court Case Has a Hidden Conservative Backer," *The New York Times,* January 16, 2024; Isaac Slevin, William Kattrup, and Timmons Roberts, "Against the Wind: A Map of the Anti-Offshore Wind Network in the Eastern United States." *The Climate and Development Lab*, December, 2023; David Gelles, "The Texas Group Waging a National Crusade Against Climate Action," *The New York Times,* June 20, 2023.

message of [wind] industry" that appears "as a groundswell among grass roots."[314] New England fishermen have become the source of that groundswell. Free of charge, the TPPF brought forward a lawsuit against the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), a federal agency established during the Obama administration, on behalf of six New England fishing companies in 2021. In testimony by a Rhode Island fisherman, it was made clear that these fish harvesters are willing to look past TPPF's climate change denial in order to get some kind of representation.[315] Additionally, since January 2024, Rhode Island and New Jersey fishermen are being represented in the U.S. Supreme Court case against NMFS by the conservative legal foundations the New Civil Liberties Alliance and the Cause of Action Institute.[316] These conservative interests are pushing for a conservative-dominated Supreme Court to revisit the Chevron doctrine, a 1984 decision that could be used to roll back the authority of federal agencies to regulate everything from energy, to health, worker protections, and environmental standards.

Once again, I consider a littoral approach to thinking about these relationships. Instead of applying a linear method that traces the loss of jobs or the rise of multiculturalism and the surge of some kind of "white rage,"[317] a littoral approach would examine the significance of populism as a movement to separate from the mainstream. Instead of asking whether race or class can explain the rise of Trump, or whether white working-class people can be blamed for his election, I would suggest questioning where populist resonances came from in the first place. Deindustrialization

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[314] Stephen Lacey, "Anti-wind activists want to create fake grassroots campaign against industry," *Grist.* May 9, 2012.

[315] Isaac Slevin, William Kattrup, and Timmons Roberts, "Against the Wind: A Map of the Anti-Offshore Wind Network in the Eastern United States." *The Climate and Development Lab*, December, 2023

[316] Kirk Moore, "Supreme Court hears fishermen's challenge that could upend agency powers," *National Fisherman,* January 17, 2024.

[317] Arlie Russell Hochschild's *Strangers in Their Own Land* (2016), J.D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (2016), and the recent, *White Rural Rage: The Threat to American Democracy,* (2024) by Tom Schaller and Paul Waldman, all point to the "back stories" that explain white working-class feelings of "being left behind" and why Trump's appeal to white nationalism garnered their votes.

does not seem to explain that on its own. Instead, deeper analysis requires contextualizing it within the wider politics of globalized neoliberal capitalism. Whereas some argue that the core politics of populism are too close to fascism for there to be any version that is progressive, there is a rich literature that emphasizes the power of populist politics in building diverse coalitions towards counter-hegemonic struggle.[318]

In what way are commercial fishermen critiquing the current political economic system in their resistance to offshore wind? Fred Mattera, one of the only fishermen I ended up speaking to about this issue, recalled an encounter during a public hearing in which progressive neoliberalism was mobilized against him. He explained that "four or five women" got up and challenged him for not addressing "renewable energy [...] and reduc[ing] the carbon footprint" of the fishing industry.[319] At that moment he realized that "that's what makes [offshore wind] difficult to fight, progressives aren't "hearing what I'm saying."[320] While he doesn't say it directly, Mattera alludes to the weakness of Leftist politics that demonize fisheries for not reducing their own carbon footprint, as if this were the crucial pressure point to ending the climate crisis. Instead, many fishermen, as Mattera explained, are experiencing the rise in renewable energy as a continuation of the state's commitment to industrial extractivism. Chris Brown laments, "with wind farms [offshore wind], when we use politics as a proxy for science, the end is near, capitalization– over capitalization translates readily to environmental degradation."[321] Creating jobs and profits seem to be guiding industrial policy, but "where's the state coming up with a proper plan to say, here's

[318] James McCarthy, "Authoritarianism, Populism, and the Environment: Comparative Experiences, Insights, and Perspectives," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers,* vol. 109, no. 2 (2019): 305.
[319] Frederick Mattera, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[320] Ibid.
[321] Christopher Brown, interviewed by Sophia Richter, November 28, 2023.

where the ideal places are" for renewable energy?[322] All of this is symptomatic of the kind of neoliberal political economy that I described in my thesis, in which the private is viewed as superior to the public. And yet, Point Judith fishermen are pushing for alternatives. Mattera describes the "learning circles, we want to educate the public and we want to educate the industry [...] and say, look, there are alternatives."[323] Of course, one of these alternatives has been to allow alt-right, climate change deniers to gut what remaining regulatory system exists. I do not argue that everything that fishermen do, or that populist politics express, are the right path. But to reduce this movement to being anti-democratic or a cultural backlash would obscure the generative perspectives that emerged in opposition to hegemony.

The coordinates for such possibilities have additionally been sketched by thinkers such as Doreen Massey who called on us all to consider, in the light of globalization, a more global sense of place and the "politics of mobility and access" that "both reflects and reinforces power" conferred to those who control their mobility and have more access.[324] Not only does Massey bring attention to the ways that capital mobility in an increasingly globally integrated society is experienced locally, but she draws a class line between those who have positions of control in this world and those who do not. This raises important analytical questions about how to interpret working people's resonance with politicians' populist appeals. In doing so, Massey warns, there is the risk of seeking out the "real meanings of places" by telling stories about heritage and 'community' histories that serve to reinforce a rootedness that romanticizes and essentializes our sense of place.[325] This promotes an "inward looking" or even a "reactionary" sense of belonging.

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[322] Frederick Mattera, interviewed by Sophia Richter, July 2021, digitized audio file, Voices of the Ocean Oral History Project, South County Museum, Narragansett, RI.
[323] Ibid.
[324] Doreen Massey, "A Global Sense of Place," Marxism Today, (June 1991): 26
[325] Ibid.

Histories that trace evolving social relations under neoliberalism can help people reorient themselves around the new power dynamics that structure their lives and perhaps empower them with alternatives to fear. It is my hope that in the process of researching my own community in Rhode Island that I have revealed avenues for reorienting towards these more generative notions of place. Taking this work further, I would recommend examining the experience of First Nations' fisheries during the same period to examine how these wide political economic trends were experienced in the context of Indigenous politics. There is additional value in examining the archives of the regional fisheries councils to locate fishermen's and conservationist voices within the industry. In combination with histories that have attended to the racial and settler dimensions of fisheries history, more generative understanding can develop around the process of deindustrializing extractivism.

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