

Building capacity, overlooking context: examining the effects of European fisheries management development programmes on socio-environmental justice for artisanal fishers in West Africa.

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Abstract

The period between 2017 and 2023 saw important involvement of the European Union in the fisheries policy domain of ECOWAS and its member countries in West Africa under the 'Improved Regional Fisheries Governance in West Africa Programme', or PESCAO, for short. Fisheries governance in this region is often characterised as weak, facing a number of challenges such as illegal fishing, overfishing and concerns around food security. Artisanal fisheries form the backbone of the local sector, with profound links to coastal communities and an often-undervalued importance to the regional economy, but it faces competition from largely foreign-owned export-oriented industrial sector. Despite its importance, the former is often marginalised in policy-making. This thesis sought to examine whether PESCAO repeated this marginalisation trend, with specific regards to the impact of its interventions in terms of socio-environmental justice for artisanal fishers, combining Fraserian justice as redistribution, recognition and representation with Schlosbergian capabilities justice, supplemented by a historical-materialist approach to power relations. It used historical-materialist policy analysis to structure the examination of documents and interviews with relevant actors. Finally, it sought to examine the follow-up programme West Africa Sustainable Ocean Programme (WASOP)'s likely further marginalisation of artisanal fisher communities through its reification of the 'Blue Economy' before meaningful advances in fisheries governance have been made. It concludes that European Union fisheries management development programmes, though often positive for the capacity of states to regulate their waters, tend to further an industrial-focused conception of fisheries management not necessarily suited to the artisanal West African context, with little implicit or explicit regard for socio-environmental justice for the human and the more-than-human.

Keywords

West Africa; fisheries; capacity-building; Blue Economy; artisanal fishers; environmental justice; historical materialism.

Abbreviations

AIS	Automatic Identification System
BBNJ	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdictions
CAOPA	Confédération Africaine des Organisations de Pêche Artisanale
CECAF	Fisheries Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic
CFFA	Coalition for Fair Fisheries Agreements
CFP	Common Fisheries Policy
CSF-SFAD	Comprehensive Strategic Framework for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Development
DEMERSTEM	Demersal Ecosystems
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EFCA	European Fisheries Control Agency
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FCWC	Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea
FiTI	Fisheries Transparency Initiative
FPAOI	Federation of Artisanal Fishers of the Indian Ocean
GOPA	GOPA Worldwide Consultants
GREPPAO	Gestion et Résilience des Pêcheries de Petits Pélagiques en Afrique de l'Ouest
HMPA	Historical Materialist Policy Analysis
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IUU	Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported
LDAC	Long Distance Advisory Committee
LIFE	Low Impact Fishers of Europe
MCS	Monitoring, Control and Surveillance

MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Aid
P-ARM	Poseidon Aquatic Resource Management
PESCAO	Improved Regional Fisheries Governance in West Africa
PSMA	Port State Measures Agreement
RAMPAO	Réseau régional des Aires Maritimes Protégées en Afrique de l'Ouest
RFB	Regional Fisheries Body
RFMO	Regional Fisheries Management Organisation
SFPA	Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement
SRFC	Subregional Fisheries Committee
SSF	Small-Scale Fisheries
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
VGSSF	Voluntary Guidelines
VMS	Vessel Monitoring Systems
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WANSFA	West African Non-State Actor regional platform for Fisheries and Aquaculture
WASOP	West Africa Sustainable Ocean Programme

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1. *Introduction*

Thanks to its oceanic currents, the coast of West Africa is a region with a lot of maritime biodiversity, an economic and nutritional boon on which many livelihoods depend. Yet the fisheries policy domain of its coastal states, such as Mauritania and Senegal, Gambia, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, faces a number of challenges. These include Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, causing a loss of revenue within states' waters because of what essentially amounts to theft, illegal labour practices on industrial vessels, unfair competition between foreign industrial long-distance fleets and artisanal fishers, environmental degradation and a gradual displacement of migratory fish populations northwards due to climate change. Most importantly, some fish populations, such as round sardinella, are at risk of collapse due to overexploitation for local consumption and, crucially, an explosive increase in export-induced fishmeal and fish oil production, with potentially catastrophic consequences for food security in the region (Standing, 2019; Corten, 2020; Dème et al., 2023). These problems are compounded by a pervasive lack of both capacity and internal political interest to address these challenges in the fisheries policy domain (European Commission, 2017a).

West Africa is not unique in this regard, as developing small islands and coastal states around the world face similar challenges in fisheries and ocean governance. The European Union deems itself an authority in ocean governance, and has, as such, committed more than EUR 450 million in official development aid (ODA) to improving ocean governance through various capacity-building programmes globally as of 2021, with an intensification of its efforts since 2016 (European Commission, 2022). This has manifested itself in West Africa through the five-year Improved Regional Fisheries Governance in Western Africa programme, or PESCAO, for short, which came to a close in late 2023 (European Fisheries Control Agency [EFCA], 2023a). The goal of this programme was to “[...] enhance the contribution of fisheries resources to sustainable development, food security and poverty alleviation in West Africa. The specific objective is to

improve regional fisheries governance in the region through better coordination of national fisheries policies” (European Commission, 2017a; EFCA, 2023a). In order to achieve this, the programme ran from 2018 until 2023 with a total budget of ~€17.000.000, used for enhancement proposals of national maritime laws, joint control missions, training and seminars with EFCA and their West African counterparts, setting up regional Monitoring and Control System (MCS) centres, and funding research by FAO-CECAF and others (Caillart et al., 2022; European Commission, 2022).

The West African fisheries policy context is set to implement a follow-up capacity-building programme to PESCAO, the West African Sustainable Ocean Programme, or WASOP, for short. This programme, though taking place in the same historical, socio-political and geographic context, broadens the scope of the programme from fisheries to a wider focus on the Blue Economy—a contentious vision of the ocean as a largely untapped economic resource that could, in the eyes of governments and investors, provide significantly more economic value if managed and protected more thoroughly and scientifically (European Commission, n.d.; 2023). While it currently remains unclear whether and to what degree the PESCAO programme has achieved its goals of strengthened fisheries governance in the region and applied the lessons from the mid-term evaluation, and to what extent artisanal fishers will be involved in the formulation, implementation and governance of WASOP, the future programme seeks to support the formulation of policies for the entire Blue Economy in the region. With a larger budget and a larger focus, and while the region still hasn't fully resolved its issues in fisheries governance, it is therefore important to provide critical perspectives on the lessons learnt under PESCAO, in order to avoid watering down the importance of inclusive fisheries governance in the region by subsuming it in a broad economic project.

The West African fisheries economy can largely be subdivided into two categories; the first group is industrial fisheries, which are oftentimes owned by foreign interests, gain access to West African waters through private agreements between the fishing business and the state granting

access, European Union access agreements (SFPAs) or similar non-EU bilateral agreements, reflagging practices (nominally fishing as a 'Senegalese' vessel, even when the vessel is owned by a foreign company, and fishing solely for exports), or illegally. Industrial catches are often meant for foreign European and Asian markets, and have little value-added to the local economy, society and regional food security. The second one, crucially, is the local artisanal sector, which forms the backbone of fisheries meant for local consumption. Artisanal fishing offers employment to entire communities, going out to sea on pirogues and other relatively small vessels, transforming the fish locally, and being responsible for the food security and livelihood of an estimated 6.7 million people in West Africa (Belhabib et al., 2015; Food and Agriculture Organisation [FAO], 2015). These communities, however, often remain an afterthought for policymakers when it comes to fisheries policy, as their economic and societal value is hard to quantify, and thereby often underestimated (Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS], 2020a). Therefore, it is important to assess whether these development programmes take the concerns of local artisanal fishers, who form the core of the local fisheries industry, on board, or if they risk entrenching fisheries management practices that are ultimately of little benefit to those communities, the health of the local maritime environment and the food security it provides.

Note that the issues being raised do not uniquely relate to the question of distributive justice, of who gets what, but extend beyond this restrictive and, in fact, anthropocentric perception of justice to questions of recognition and representation, as well as capabilities. Socio-environmental justice is then a conception of justice that allows for a more holistic view of the programme's effects on justice for local communities and the environment than what is often deemed 'classical' justice. This thesis therefore employs socio-environmental justice as its main lens through which the situation is assessed. This is combined with a focus on the underlying historical and socio-economic structures in the local fisheries policy domain that led to the present situation and power dynamics. Given their importance to local livelihoods and regional food

security, and despite their currently marginal position in fisheries governance, artisanal fisher communities should be taken into account as important partners in the effort to address the challenges facing the West African fisheries policy sector in the European Union-funded capacity-building programmes. This thesis therefore specifically seeks to investigate how their role has evolved in recent times, and is likely to further evolve in the near future, in light of the recent fisheries governance development programmes. For this purpose, the capacity-building programmes PESCAO and its follow-up, the West African Sustainable Ocean Programme (WASOP, for short) are selected as case studies. This thesis therefore asks: to what extent do European Union-funded fisheries governance development programs (such as PESCAO and WASOP) in West Africa incorporate the concerns of artisanal fishers, as seen from the perspective of socio-environmental justice?

Subquestions:

1. To what extent are the interests of artisanal fishers in terms of socio-environmental justice taken on board in the elaboration of the programmes, in comparison to those of states and/or industrial fishers?
2. To what extent are the interests of artisanal fishers in terms of socio-environmental justice taken on board in the execution of the programmes, in comparison to those of states and/or industrial fishers?
3. To what extent do fisheries governance development programs in West Africa reproduce relations of aid dependency to the European Union?
4. How could the future programme WASOP incorporate lessons from PESCAO in order to develop a more socio-environmentally just fisheries policy?

Assessing these questions with regards to the entire West African region risks being beyond the scope of this thesis. As such, it focuses its assessment on the effects of the programmes on

the maritime policy spheres and artisanal fisheries of Senegal and Mauritania when observing specific interventions by the programmes on a national and subnational scale in order to provide more detail to said interventions, which are often discussed based on their less specific overall regional impact in many assessment documents. Interventions exceeding this scale, such as those concerning ECOWAS or the (sub)regional fisheries organisations, will be explicitly assessed as such. The PESCAO programme has made strides in the inclusion of artisanal fisher community voices in both its governance and the West African fisheries policy sphere at large, WASOP could benefit greatly from including them further still—yet it seems to be moving in the opposite direction.

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 explores the scientific and societal relevance of exploring the fisheries development programmes through an environmental justice lens, after which chapter 3 explores the limited literature on European Union official development aid programmes in fisheries in West Africa. Chapter 4 discusses the various theories of environmental justice, aid dependency and historical-materialist power structures, their synthesis and how they relate to the thesis. Subsequently, chapter 5 explains the thesis' data gathering, analysis, research philosophy and strategy, followed by the analysis in chapter 6. The analysis follows the historical-materialist policy analysis structure in that it is subdivided in three parts, dealing first with the historical and social-material *context* of the policy "conflict", then the *actors* that participated, followed by a careful examination of the *process* of the policy—in this case, the PESCAO programme. Chapter 6 also advances beyond the PESCAO programme to both the successor WASOP programme and the period in between, for both long-term and future perspectives of the West African fisheries policy sphere. The thesis ends on a discussion of its limitations in chapter 7, followed by a summary of the findings and concluding remarks in chapter 8.

2. *Scientific and societal relevance*

2.1. *Societal relevance*

As will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on the West African context in the analysis section of the thesis, artisanal fisher communities form the backbone of the fisheries industry in West Africa, offering both an important source of employment and essential value for the food security of millions throughout the region. For example, Belhabib et al. (2015) estimate the number of people employed in small-scale fisheries to be nearly 1.7 million throughout West Africa, of which nearly 1 million are employed by the artisanal sector. It generates an estimated 3.6bn US\$ in returns annually, which, in contrast to the returns generated by the industrial sector which is often destined for export, is directly injected into the West African coastal economy (Belhabib et al., 2015). Aside from being a labour-intensive sector providing employment for both men, but in particular women, and contributing an estimated 1.8% of the gross domestic product in the case of Senegal, and between 4 and 10% in the case of Mauritania, artisanal fishing is above all a lifestyle on which many coastal communities depend (FAO, 2025a; 2025b).

Their continued existence is not without its challenges. Artisanal fishing communities around the world have been calling for more protection, representation and recognition for some time, including in West Africa, given the issues of industrial overexploitation facing the fisheries resource and the threats to their way of life posed by competing maritime sectors. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations (2015) '[Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication](#)' (VGSSF, for short), it is noted that artisanal fisher communities remain largely marginalised, and that they could contribute significantly more to food security, sustainable resource use, development and poverty alleviation if granted more protection, recognition and representation. Furthermore, artisanal fisher organisations from around the globe, such as the African

Confederation of Artisanal Fisher Organisations (CAOPA), the Federation of Artisanal Fishers of the Indian Ocean (FPAOI), Low Impact Fishers of Europe (LIFE) and many others have launched the [‘Call to Action from small-scale fishers’](#) (Coalition for Fair Fisheries Agreements [CFFA], 2022), identifying five areas of action for governments to aid artisanal fisher communities in preserving their livelihoods.

Beside calls for recognition and representation from artisanal fishers, the European Union’s efforts for development of fisheries and aquaculture governance around the globe have seen intensification since 2016 (European Commission, 2022). Their impact could be long-lasting in both the positive and negative sense depending on how they make various fisheries policy domains evolve. It is therefore important to assess whether the programmes take these concerns of artisanal fishers into consideration, or whether their focus lies elsewhere, thereby potentially reifying fisheries management structures to the potential detriment of those very communities that are essential for regional food security.

At the time of writing this thesis, the West African fisheries policy domain is in between programmes. PESCAO having ended in early 2023, and WASOP being due to start in late 2024 means policymakers in Abuja and Brussels are actively shaping the follow-up programme according to their ambitious visions for regional Blue Economy strategies, and meeting the target of having 30% of land designated as protected areas by 2030 (known by the catchy name of ‘30x30’)—thereby expanding beyond merely addressing challenges in fisheries governance (European Commission, 2023). Yet with many of the challenges within the fisheries domain being unresolved, small pelagic fish populations remaining overexploited and observable backsliding in the fight against Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported fisheries in, for instance, Senegal, the question remains of whether these ambitions would divert the attention of policymakers away from addressing the pressing problems in fisheries management (Okafor-Yarwood et al., 2020; Caillart et al., 2022; Gorez, 2024a). This research therefore aims to provide an outside perspective

on the importance of and potential improvements to these programmes, in light of the importance of artisanal fishers to the local context and its numerous enduring challenges.

2.2. *Scientific relevance*

The fisheries policy domain in West Africa, like elsewhere in the world, is both complex and continuously subject to change, involving a plethora of actors on different levels, and bringing together a vast number of varied challenges, making it an immensely interesting arena of ideas and power dynamics. Within literature on marine policy and fisheries governance, though there has been a relatively steady growth of academic interest in artisanal fisheries and their economic and societal value in recent decades, artisanal fisheries are often overlooked. In literature discussing programmes of official development aid in fisheries policy, specifically, almost no mention is made of this group, their interests, their involvement and their potential impact for good. This gap in the literature on fisheries governance development programmes is one that this thesis seeks to fill. In order to achieve this, this thesis takes the European Union-funded fisheries governance programmes of PESCAO and WASOP, recent and future respectively, as case studies for the way the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States includes or has included artisanal fisher concerns in the development and management of both programmes, and analyses their merit and potential improvements for both. Due to the short timespan between these programmes and the writing of this thesis, academic literature specifically concerning these programmes, at present, is nonexistent.

What remains underassessed, concretely, is the interaction between artisanal fishers, fisheries governance development programmes, and the policy sphere at large. In practice, there are a number of artisanal fisher organisations that interact with policymakers across various levels of government, as their calls to action demonstrate. Yet as the focus in research often remains on the social and ecological challenges artisanal fishers face, their marginalisation, unfair competition

with industrial vessels, and fish population depletion, it tends to ignore the efforts made to resolve these challenges in the fisheries management domain—such as the fisheries development programmes assessed in this thesis. Resolving this gap in the literature could hopefully encourage more academic forays into the topic of justice for and inclusion of artisanal fishers essential to the food security and livelihoods of so many people in capacity-building fisheries governance programmes beyond grey literature from (inter)governmental and nongovernmental institutions.

3. *Prior literature on European Union development aid in the fight against IUU fishing*

With regards to fisheries governance and the European Union, there is a relatively large body of literature to be found. The overall view in the literature on its fisheries management methods in Europe and abroad among those is generally positive. The European Union sees itself as a global leader when it comes to maritime security (Bueger & Edmunds, 2023), particularly with respect to the fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, where it is often presented as an authority on the forefront of the fight (Aldereguía Prado, 2020; Cabral, 2021). Still some authors, such as Okafor-Yarwood & Belhabib (2020), dispute the European Union's positioning as a role model on combating IUU fishing, mainly due to the selective application of its regulations on distant water fleets.

Looking at West Africa, the maritime security challenges faced by coastal states, such as biodiversity loss and IUU fishing, are well-documented in academic literature. Alexandre (2023) writes, for instance, that more than nearly 39% of *recorded* cases of IUU fishing across the globe were in the Gulf of Guinea, and that it poses a serious threat to the region's coastal communities as well as its biodiversity. In line with this, Okafor-Yarwood (2019) observes that the unabated IUU fishing in the region is due, in large part, to the limited financial and human capacity provided by,

as well as the lack of awareness, interest and cooperation among states in the region. More critical of the European Union's activities, Bourmaud (2021) explicitly links the presence of the European Union distant water fleets, as well as those from China and Russia, to concerns about overfishing in the Gulf of Guinea.

Despite the more than EUR 450 million committed to development and capacity-building in fisheries and aquaculture alone in 2021 (European Commission, 2022; Gorez, 2023a), research on capacity-building fisheries development aid seems limited to a relatively small academic bubble. Blasiak & Wabnitz (2018; 2019) track an unexpected drop of official development aid (ODA) in fisheries of more than 30% between 2010 and 2015 across the globe, despite increasing awareness of the risks facing the marine sector. They also point out that to truly align these types of development grants with international commitments to enhanced policy, they need to be targeted and context-dependent, with the aim of increasing equity, access, sustainability, monitoring and evaluation as well as good governance mechanisms. Looser grants, they found, run the risk of incurring diminishing returns past a certain threshold (Blasiak & Wabnitz, 2018). The value of focused and context-specific programmes and investments seems to be a shared view among academics, as Macfadyen et al. (2019), commenting on the need for robust assessments of previous capacity-building programmes, point out that it would be a mistake to seek a one-size-fits-all approach to fisheries capacity-building development programmes. Commenting on the disconnectedness between regional priorities for good ocean management, and the ODA investments made into the South Pacific, Hills et al. (2019) also vouch for targeted, efficient and coherent investments.

These articles largely treat the broader perspective, however. PESCAO, specifically, aside from occasionally having been name-dropped in academic works as a maritime security programme of the European Union, does not seem to have been the subject of analysis yet outside of a mid-term evaluation report—co-authored, interestingly, by Macfadyen—and a letter from CFFA and CAOPA

to the European Commission (Caillart et al., 2022; Gueye & Gorez, 2022; SRFC, 2023). This broad perspective, focusing on between-case studies instead of within-case ones, is where this thesis believes a gap in the literature to exist. Contrary to reports produced by non-governmental organisations such as CFFA, and bureaucratic grey literature, much of the *academic* literature focuses too much on the flow of ODA funds in fisheries governance, and too little on the practical changes they produce in certain policy contexts and the implications of the programmes for the people they affect.

4. Socio-environmental justice and material structure: theoretical approaches

Three theoretical conceptions form the red through-line of this thesis. These are radical environmental justice, in the tradition of Fraser and Schlosberg, to shine a light on potential injustices and advances of artisanal fisher communities as a consequence of the development programmes of the European Union,, aid dependency as defined by Lensink and White, which allows for an analysis of the evolutions in maritime between the end of PESCAO and the start of WASOP, and historical-materialism, which serves to highlight imbalances and power dynamics within the material structure of the programme that root themselves in the historical marginalisation of artisanal fishers. The following chapter will explore each in more detail, synthesising their various strengths and weaknesses with each other to structure the analysis.

4.1. Environmental Justice: various conceptions and the “radical” tradition

Environmental justice is a conception of justice that developed in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s from local struggles against hazardous pollution by heavy industries (Svarstad & Benjaminsen, 2020). Since then, it has rapidly developed into a thematically heterogeneous academic field with bearings on all levels of society, from global to local, that seeks to address the

multiple and pluriform questions of (in)justice arising from environmental concerns, in terms of distribution of the negative effects, but also in terms of inclusivity, democracy, indigenous rights and recognition (Schlosberg, 2004; Gupta et al., 2023). Over the years, environmental justice has become a rich field of study with numerous conceptions used to understand justice in an era of fundamental changes to our planetary systems and wide-ranging global and local injustices (Gupta et al., 2023; Schlosberg et al., 2024). Gupta et al. (2023), for instance, define earth system justice as a broad conception seeking to fuse a host of conceptions of justice in one conceptual framework that encompasses both the human and the more-than-human, and is limited by planetary boundaries. Specifically, they define it as the aim to achieve equity in access to the benefits, risks and responsibilities of nature to provide for universal life support within the boundaries of the Earth, with special attention to justice between species, beyond anthropocentric approaches, justice between generations present and future, and justice in the present between countries, communities and individuals. Planetary justice is another such conception with a more express focus on the global repercussions of local socio-environmental distribution conflicts, with researchers aiming to expand its epistemic notion of justice beyond Western conceptions to include different ways of knowing (Aoki Inoue et al., 2024).

While interesting as different lenses through which to potentially assess the fisheries development programmes and the involvement (or lack thereof) of artisanal fishers in the West African fisheries policy domain, this thesis makes the choice to focus on the so-called “radical” environmental justice tradition as a red throughline. More specifically, the conceptions of Nancy Fraser and David Schlosberg, who both, much in line with the other conceptions within environmental justice, expand the conception of justice from traditional Rawlsian or Marxist conceptions of justice, which focus on the “who gets/owns what” question—on redistributive justice. The conception employed in this thesis focuses on the three conceptions of justice by Nancy Fraser—distributive, procedural and recognition—with the addition of the fourth,

overarching dimension of capabilities by David Schlosberg, as it provides for clear and concise assessment criteria for the programme's interventions and effects on artisanal fishers. These criteria are discussed below, along with the radical environmental justice tradition and the respective dimensions of justice that constitute it.

4.1.1. *Nancy Fraser's tripartite theory of social justice*

Much in line with Young's argument that justice was too often reduced to distribution, Fraser's tripartite conception of justice is one that breaks from traditional Marxist or Rawlsian conceptions that base themselves solely on the principle of redistributive justice - to put it simply, who gets what, when, where and why (Vincent, 2020). It does so by extending the concept of justice to not only include *redistribution*, but also *recognition* and *representation* (Knijn et al., 2020). After all, according to Fraser, (in)justice does not only reside in the distribution of economic goods or access rights, but in parity of participation based on equal moral worth, the possibility for every person to participate as co-equals in social life (Fraser, 2007). Her three dimensions then base themselves on the potential obstacles people can face when seeking to attain parity of participation. Maldistribution is the impediment to parity in participation that can arise from economic structures that hamper access to the necessary resources; misrecognition is the impediment that arises from 'institutionalised hierarchies of cultural value'; finally, misrepresentation was added later as the political leg of the theory, as misrepresentation is the impediment that arises from exclusion of certain individuals or groups that are entitled to a seat at the decision making table (Fraser, 2007; 2008). Fraser distinguishes herself from other theorists of social justice that recognise both recognition and redistribution justice, such as her colleague Iris Marion Young, by focusing more explicitly on the political economy as the basis for hierarchical connections between actors and the separation and tension between various forms of justice (Vincent, 2020).

These three dimensions deserve more careful observation and description. According to Knijn et al. (2020), for instance, there is no set definition for each of these dimensions across all

scientific disciplines. This is most noticeable in redistributive justice, as 'ideal redistribution' has been the subject of debate among economists, political philosophers, legal experts and social scientists since time immemorial. According to Fraser, then, redistributive injustice is the distribution or denial of the resources to certain people according to their needs, preset by the economic class structure of society, which allows or hampers them from participating in society as peers. This class structure is in turn subject to struggle and interpretation, to what she calls 'needs-talk', through which certain groups with more material and discursive means can impose their unequal narratives as hegemonic, and thus legitimate (Fraser, 2008; Knijn et al., 2020). The conception of redistributive justice as not purely material is useful to this thesis, as a broad interpretation of means can come to include immaterial products, such as local knowledge, experience or mandates to act, and their shifting 'ownership' based on discourses can also be turned to positives under the right conditions, by incorporating morality, care and interdependence between various actors in the policy domain (Knijn et al., 2020).

Recognition justice concerns the appreciation of a person or group's value within social life, their recognition as peers instead of maligning, treating as lesser or outright ignoring them, wilfully or otherwise (Knijn et al., 2020). Misrecognition arises from 'institutionalised hierarchies of cultural value', through which their denial of equal standing is enforced and reinforced (Fraser, 2008). Think, for instance, of women, who suffer the consequences of culturally ingrained paternalistic norms of motherhood before work, or minorities being routinely discriminated against based on skin tone or religion. As Fraser observes that class structures do not match the cultural status of misrecognised groups one-to-one, recognition and redistribution cannot be seen as fully separate - their inherent tensions reinforce each other dialectically. As an example of this, Vincent (2020) illustrates that the recognition justice through the affirmation of cultural differences would remedy culturally-rooted oppression, but would undermine the struggle against economically-rooted oppression of, say, class, by fragmenting this group further.

The third dimension, representation, also dubbed procedural justice, forms the political aspect of justice, and concerns, as stated above, the seat at the table. Though deeply connected to both recognition and redistribution, and both are inherently political due to their contestatory nature, Fraser felt the need to differentiate with the more specific, *structuring* political (Fraser, 2008). In this sense, representation justice focuses on the rules and jurisdictions through which contestation is structured, through which certain voices obtain a say in the matter while others remain excluded, the stage through which certain voices can play determining roles while others remain in the dressing room. Fraser distinguishes between ordinary-political *misrepresentation* and *misframing*, the former of which is largely exclusion based in procedures, while the latter consists of wholesale exclusion of certain groups from the political community (Fraser, 2008).

4.1.2. *David Schlosberg's capabilities approach: a fourth overarching dimension*

Building on Young and Fraser before him, as well as the works of Sen and Nussbaum, Schlosberg further developed the radical tradition of environmental justice by including the dimension of capabilities (Schlosberg & Carruthers, 2010; Svarstad & Benjaminsen, 2020). This new dimension serves the dual purpose of being both a separate element and a framework through which to understand the mediation of the other dimensions on the transformation of primary goods into 'fully-functioning lives' (Schlosberg, 2007). Capabilities are defined as 'the opportunities to do and to be what they choose in the context of a given society' (Schlosberg, 2007). Consequently, capabilities structure what is possible for individuals and groups to choose or perform. In so doing, Nussbaum identifies a number of base justice-related considerations for capabilities that according to her ought to be constitutionally enshrined so as to provide protection to minority individuals from oppressive factors that might hamper these fully-functioning lives (Schlosberg & Carruthers, 2010). This thesis agrees rather more with Schlosberg, Carruthers and Sen's assertion that these key capabilities ought to arise rather from the concerned communities themselves, be they indigenous peoples or artisanal fishers. Societies are inherently embedded in the natural

environment, and economic activity both affects and is affected by the environment. Changes to the natural environment, to the conditions in which living beings evolve, reverberate across all levels of society. Those *communities* often understand best what is necessary for them to resolve the injustice they face in order to live their fully-functioning lives within their environment, opening the discussion to indigenous ways of knowing about their surroundings as well as highlighting the importance of protecting said environment (Schlosberg & Carruthers, 2010; Schlosberg, 2012).

Schlosberg and Carruthers (2010) argue that the capabilities approach can serve to fully bridge the three dimensions of Fraser in addressing ‘inequality, cultural disrespect, and participatory and democratic rights.’ Employing the capabilities approach as a fourth dimension also helps to bridge the gap between theory and the practical demands of artisanal fishers as a community in Senegal and Mauritania, with regards to conservation measures and fisheries governance. The quadripartite conception of social justice employed in this thesis is thus a conception that distinguishes between economic, cultural, political and capabilities dimensions of justice, while also interweaving them, as they all affect each other (Fraser, 2007; 2008; 2010; Jackson & Barber, 2013).

Given these clear distinctions, these conceptions of justice lend themselves particularly well to the analysis of (in)justice in the context of the PESCAO and WASOP programmes. Given this thesis’ focus on the inclusion of artisanal fishers in a policy domain where they are often considered an afterthought, the application of these conceptions of justice to the programme’s formulation and implementation can yield salient results with regards to potential just developments and unjust backslides. This thesis augments the conceptions of environmental justice by making explicit what largely tends to remain implicit through the use of Gramscian concepts that will be discussed later in the exploration of historical materialism—such as the subaltern nature of the ‘claimants’, of the communities seeking key capabilities, those who find themselves in the situation of misrecognition and misrepresentation, the hegemonic nature of

those who can provide them with justice, and the cultural battle waged to attain said justice—though, as will appear later in this thesis, this cultural battle is largely civil, institutional and bureaucratic in nature, which might appear counterintuitive at first.

4.2. *Aid dependence—why ODA might be necessary but not sufficient*

Adding to the quadripartite conception of radical environmental justice employed in this thesis, and in order to provide structural answers to recent observations regarding state (in)actions following the PESCAO programme, this thesis borrows the theoretical concept of aid dependency from economics. This concept serves to illustrate why certain elements of the programme do not result in long-term advancements in the region, and why the inclusion of artisanal fishers might serve to at least address this. Within political science, many definitions of the concept of aid dependence exist. All have their respective advantages and drawbacks, yet none are as all-encompassing as Lensink and White's. Lensink and White (1999) define aid dependency as the situation in which a state cannot achieve a certain objective in the foreseeable future without aid. This definition does not cast judgement on whether this is a good or a bad situation, nor does it specify aid to be purely material--it can be other than a lump sum of money. It also provides a directionality to aid, a certain goal to be achieved. As such, it finds a natural application to European Union-funded programmes in the West African fisheries policy sphere through both its broad interpretation of aid and its directionality. Lensink & White (1999) also emphasise that, though aid might be a necessary condition for a certain state to achieve a certain objective, it should not be considered a sufficient condition. Aid alone will never be a silver bullet. Domestic capacity and interest, for instance, are also essential in the attainment of a goal.

The main interesting conceptual point Lensink & White (1999) make is the idea of an aid Laffer curve, demonstrating the diminishing and eventually potentially negative returns to aid. Citing a number of colleagues' case studies in developing countries in the previous century, they

posit that an overreliance on aid can cause an economy, or a sector, to move to an even less sustainable, though 'sticky', policy path in the short run, that cannot easily be adapted once aid diminishes. The case of Guinea-Bissau as analysed by Alvesson et al. (1994), for instance, found that aid caused an increase in investment so large that the country's management capabilities were overrun—it could adapt to increased investment thanks to foreign aid in the short run, but once aid diminished, the country found itself swamped. This disincentive to construct institutional capacity over the long-term is supported by the wider literature on the subject of aid dependence, and has been observed widely as a potential pitfall of foreign aid (Bräutigam, 2000; Moss et al., 2005).

4.3. Historical materialism and the lopsided capitalist 'state' structure

In line with the Historical-materialist Policy Analysis method that will be discussed later, this thesis will seek to implement the concept of a hegemonic project as defined by Jessop (1983). Building on Gramsci's conception of the term - not as the domination of one group over the other, but the dominant values and ideas pervasive in society that then guide policy and economics - Jessop argues that hegemony is not easily reducible to a mere 'consensus' or accepted policy paradigm, but rather what he calls the 'unstable equilibrium of compromise' maintained by the unequal institutional access structures of the state. The hegemony then brings together and organises multiple 'class-relevant' forces under the moral, political and intellectual leadership of (the spokespeople of) one group. The development of a hegemonic project then takes place within this structure, as a way of resolving the conflict between the plethora of particular interests and what is presented as the interest of all. This mobilisation behind a general interest then involves real-world policies that advance the interests of the hegemonic group and their close allies, while mobilising many—though not necessarily all—other groups around its common-sense narrative (Jessop, 1983). This does not imply that the hegemonic project simply imposes laws that only further the interests of the hegemonic group—instead, it is in constant flux, with periods of relative

weakness and relative strength, being able to give leeway to the largely subordinate 'class-relevant' groups—the counter-hegemonic, *subaltern* group—if need be in the short run, but with a long-term red throughline to the benefit of the hegemonic group it tends to return to (Jessop, 1983).

This continuous renegotiation of the hegemonic project happens within a certain framework, with institutional rules, methods, time and space - what Jessop calls 'the state'. In Jessop's conception, the state is an arena for competing ideas about policy, and thereby, in practice, largely neutral and independent from the 'capitalist class'. However, it is also not a fully neutral arena, as the state is also a condensation of a relationship of forces, among classes and class factions. This condensation of forces is then historically inscribed in the institutional buildup of the state; it is the role of the state to ensure the continuity of the capitalist system, or to maintain the status quo as much as possible. The involvement of certain political actors is facilitated, while others are rendered more difficult; the state then functions as an asymmetric filter for ideas and discourses, policies and policy goals, with a natural penchant towards the hegemonic discourse—thus, the state retains what is called 'strategic selectivity' in the orientation of policy (Jessop, 1983; Brand et al., 2022). Potential *counter*-hegemonic discourse that could arise from the non-hegemonic, subaltern groups, such as calls for socio-environmental justice from communities marginalised in the political discourse, the subaltern 'claimants', would therefore have a harder time to make their mark within the capitalist state structure due to its strategic selectivity.

Given the plethora of actors involved in the PESCAO and WASOP programmes on various subnational, national, subregional and supranational levels, and thus the number of different jurisdictions involved, defining 'the state' then becomes difficult. This research therefore seeks to explore a different avenue, by observing the programmes themselves, and their internal organisational structures, as state structures in and of themselves. After all, in terms of being a policy arena, as historical-materialist social thought presupposes, the PESCAO and WASOP programmes are not dissimilar from state structures, with states, international organisations,

academic research groups and artisanal fisher advocacy groups as the actors that evolve within them. It then allows the research to explore the barycentre of hegemonic thought within the programmes—on what type of fisheries and markets does the focus of the programme lie? What does that say about the ambitions of states in the region for their fisheries institutions, and who, if anyone, will be left behind?

4.4. *An interface between socio-environmental justice and material structure*

It should be clear, at this point, that this thesis sits within the realm of critical theory, that seeks not to simply explain the world as it is, as positivist research would, but aims to uncover the underlying historical and socio-economic dynamics of the fisheries governance development programmes for a potentially emancipatory result (Ryan, 2018). The broad nature of European Union-funded fisheries governance development programmes and their interaction with artisanal fisheries in the region means that, on their own, these theories can only serve to answer part of the research questions. Taken together, however, they can illuminate various aspects of the programmes in a way that provides a deeper insight into the various and multiple aspects of these capacity-building programmes' interaction with the policy domain and artisanal fishers. Their shared origins in emancipatory critical theory helps to bind their individual findings together in a narratively coherent conclusion at the end of this thesis.

The structure of this thesis will thus present a historical retread of the two programmes and the period in between, employing the theories above as ways of explaining advancements, setbacks and regressions in terms of fisheries policy in the region, paying special attention to the interaction between the programmes and artisanal fisher communities. The historical-materialist concept of hegemony will be employed to uncover the pervasive logic of the interventions by the programmes, and their support from the various actors involved. The concept of aid dependency will mainly come to the fore in the period in between programmes to underline the events during

that period. However, the main focus of the analysis will rest on socio-environmental justice, to make visible the impact and potential non-impact of interventions by the programmes on the crucial domain of artisanal fisheries.

5. *Methods*

5.1. *Data collection*

At the time of writing this thesis, neither of the programmes subject to the case study are seeing implementation. The research period for this thesis spanned from January until December 2024. At present, the WASOP programme is hiring experts and seeking and evaluating proposals from potential implementing partners for its various goals, with the aim of starting the programme proper in early 2025—though this does not appear to be the case yet as of the end of March 2025. Its predecessor, PESCAO, concluded in late 2023 with a series of meetings between implementing partners of all three components of the programme. Thus, in what is essentially downtime, this thesis cannot gather data directly as the programmes are being implemented, and has to rely either on careful analysis of previously existing and publicly-available documentation online, or on semi-structured interviews with actors involved in the elaboration, governance and implementation of both programmes that are willing to give some of their time to address the author. This mixed-method approach allows for the triangulation of data from the documents analysed with the lived experiences of both the author and the actors involved in PESCAO.

Starting off with document analysis as the first qualitative data collection method. Morgan (2022) defines this method as the systematic analysis of any textual document - books, institutional reports, newspaper articles etcetera - as a potential source for data. Documents produced around the programmes are an important source of data for gaining understanding of the context (Bowen,

2009). An important weakness of document analysis is the potential limitations and selection bias that might arise from the opacity of the fisheries sector (Bowen, 2009; Morgan, 2022). Despite the limited number of publicly-available documents, this research applies careful document analysis on documents from a wide range of state and non-state stakeholders in the PESCAO programme, including the European Commission, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission, EFCA and non-governmental organisations, as well as the national governments of Senegal and Mauritania. This wide array of stakeholders is necessary, as contrary to similar capacity-building programmes elsewhere, such as ECOFISH in East Africa, documentation on the subject of PESCAO is scarce and decentralised, being scattered across websites and organisation databases. By its nature as a programme in its preparation phase, documentation on WASOP is even harder to find. Thus, the sampling philosophy for this research spans most of the documentation that was publicly available online at the time of writing. Specifically, much of the analysis is based on documents assessing the results and achievements of the PESCAO programme, such as the 'Rapport Narratif Final du Programme PESCAO' assessing the achievements under component 2 in the region covered by the Subregional Fisheries Committee (SRFC), stretching from the coast of Mauritania (not a member, but affiliated within the context of PESCAO) to that of Sierra Leone. Another important document is the 'PESCAO Mid-term evaluation' conducted by Caillart et al. (2022) for Poseidon Aquatic Resource Management, the European Commission and the ECOWAS Commission, covering all three components but focusing on the technical and managerial aspects of the programme over the human and more-than-human. Other documents consulted include the mission documents, publicly available presentation slides and meeting minutes.

The second method, semi-structured interviews, entails conversational interviews using both closed, but mainly open-ended questions (Adams, 2015). These conversations often entail following up generally directed questions with why or how questions, and are particularly well-

suited for uncovering context and meanings that may remain obscure in written data (Adams, 2015). Though the ambition was to include more of them, this thesis numbers four of these semi-structured interviews, each with actors directly involved in either the governance of PESCAO (Gueye), the implementation of one of the components of PESCAO (Panossian, Guitton & Quemper), or its mid-term assessment (Caillart). Thus, in terms of interviews, *n actors involved in PESCAO* = 4. Overall, with the exception of “component 2” of the PESCAO programme, the interviewees were each involved either directly with a component of the programme, or with its general assessment, and despite the limited number of interviews this thesis was able to conduct, their interviews convey valuable information concerning its management and results, throughout and beyond its implementation in the region—their value lies in the context in which they were involved in PESCAO (Tracy, 2019). All interviews were conducted in French, as that was the common language shared between the author and all actors involved.

Fig. 1: Interview Respondents & Involvement in PESCAO

<i>Date</i>	<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Involvement</i>
11 April 2024	Mr. G. Gueye	CAOPA; WANSFAFA	Steering Committee
7 May 2024	Mrs. A. Panossian	Advisor to EFCA	Component 1
7 May 2024	Mr. B. Caillart	Consultant P-ARM	Mid-term Evaluation
15 May 2024	Mr. J. Guitton & Mr. F. Quemper	DemerstEm Project	Component 3

(Source: Author)

Finally, this thesis implements elements from participant observation to provide notes on the discussions and discourse between stakeholders from both the European distant water fishing fleets and stakeholders, such as various organisations representing the artisanal sector

in the West African fisheries policy domain, as well as some hallway conversations. *Elements* is key, in this case, as limitations in physical distance to and between stakeholders in the programmes, the limited means available to the author, the broad timescale on which fisheries policy meetings take place and the fact that neither programme is currently running means the author was only able to involve himself in a handful of meetings of the Long-Distance Advisory committee. This is a market and civil society advisory body to the European Commission that pertains to the activities of its long-distance fishing fleets, including in West Africa. Most interesting for this thesis is, then, the meeting attended on the 23rd of May 2024, in Berlin, the 'LDAC-CFFA Seminar on the Role of Fishing Companies with Investments and Operations in Third Non-EU Countries: Africa case studies', as it welcomed civil society actors from West Africa to discuss with European Union representatives, market and civil society actors from Europe.

Naturally, this limited involvement in the policy domain entails a break with one of the core tenets of the methodology for the sake of feasibility, namely, the idea of *prolonged engagement* (Kawulich, 2005). Prolonged engagement with the culture of the community being observed is crucial, according to Kawulich (2005), to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, as spending only a short time might imply wrongful conclusions being made. However, this lack of prolonged engagement should not, in this case, necessarily be considered a drawback. The position of the author as a peripheral member, somewhere between a *complete observer* in the shadows and an *observer as participant*, as an occasional interlocutor, opens the door to observations and conversations with actors who might not divulge as much to other insiders, generating a more complete understanding of the situation (Kawulich, 2005). Ethics naturally come into play, and the author made sure to divulge the subject of the thesis when gathering data at the seminar.

5.2. *Data analysis*

Data analysis was carried out along the theoretically-informed historical-materialist policy analysis (HMPA) framework proposed by Brand et al. (2022). Methodologically, HMPA structures the analysis in a three-step process. This three-step process within HMPA is generally built around analysis of *context*, *actors and networks*, and *process*. Though Brand et al. (2022) point out that HMPA is cyclical and iterative in nature, and could start at any of these steps, it generally starts with the analysis of the context in which the policy takes place, in order to explain the historical and material structures that informed the policy. Following this, the actor analysis identifies, groups and interlinks the actors involved into constellations, based on common ground or competing interests. Lastly, process analysis is generally operationalised as the reconstruction of the dynamic process of the 'conflict' under investigation, its various phases, important decisions and moments, with special attention to the broader context analysed prior to this (Brand et al. 2022). This method of policy analysis is particularly useful for this research, as it offers a neat structure for an in-depth investigation into the wider context in which PESCAO was introduced, the actor constellations involved, their varying interests in the programme, and the effects the programme has had over time on different actors and actor networks - whether they have been included, weakened, strengthened or left out. It provides an orderly method of analysing whose interests have been served, and why. Furthermore, according to Brand et al. (2022), the data collection methods previously discussed fit neatly within HMPA, and this analytical methodology then serves to shine a light on the competing ideas and interests that have co-constructed the capacity-building programmes PESCAO and WASOP.

HMPA is cyclical, iterative and retroductive in nature. This means that the research is divided in an inductive moment and a deductive moment, through which the researcher cycles time and again. The inductive moment consists of data gathering through immersion in the topic and deskwork. 'Immersion' will take place through participant observation and expert interviews,

while deskwork implies document analysis. The deductive moment sees the application of existing theories on the collected data to see if they fit (Brand et al., 2022).

As a method for analysis, HMPA follows the historical-materialist vision of the state and hegemony as discussed in the theory as core assumptions. This means that the state—in the case of this thesis, the governing institutions of the temporary PESCAO and WASOP programmes—is viewed as the skewed arena for competing ideas in the formulation of policy. It is skewed because, though it makes space for social compromise and is largely independent from the hegemonic group, its institutional rules largely favour the hegemonic project, the consensus (Brand et al., 2022). Lastly, due to HMPA's tendency for overwhelming comprehensiveness, its originators recommend focusing on one of the three steps in HMPA. This thesis will thus focus on both the context and the process, limiting the latter to largely a play-by-play of the implications of the PESCAO programme's components for artisanal fishers.

5.3. *Research philosophy*

Concerning the nature of the human world and the debate over whether reality is singular or plural and dependent on mental constructs, this research leans towards a historical realist ontology, taking the stance that reality is context-dependent and informed by historical processes. Historical realism is an ontology that assumes reality to have been plastic in the past, or at least sticky and context-dependent. Over time, social understanding of said reality has been moulded by socioeconomic, sociopolitical and identity-related factors (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). When using historical materialism, this ontology offers up the understanding that what might seem like objective reality at first is oftentimes a reified version of institutionalised and crystallised power dynamics - a system that is not impervious, but reticent to change. Epistemologically, this research positions itself as constructionist. Constructionism assumes that the "truth" and meanings science ascribes to observations arise from human interaction with the realities of the world (Moon &

Blackman, 2014). Knowledge, in this sense, is an active and personal object that can change over time. Knowledge is therefore also context-dependent, informed by factors such as the level of access the researcher has, the time invested, and other factors (Moon & Blackman, 2014).

Given these philosophical points, declaring the orientation of the researcher that motivates the writing of this thesis is essential. As such, this research will be dedicated to emancipatory critical theory. The modern world is informed by historically embedded power relations that rarely provide us with an ideal societal outcome. This is exemplified in the idea that, instead of the Great Acceleration, we can better describe the current era of technological progress and environmental and social regress as the *Great Inequality* or the *Great Divergence* (Parthasarathi & Pomeranz, 2019; Rammelt et al., 2023). The modern world is rife with inequality, skewed opportunities, unbalanced access levels and underprivileged loci. It is within this context that this research believes knowledge to be indispensable to bring about positive change, and that it is the responsibility of the academic world to create the necessary conditions to make the world a slightly better place (Moon & Blackman, 2014).

5.4. *Research strategy*

The nature of the subject as a temporary, localised programme undertaken by the European Union and its partners in fisheries management in the region means this thesis will have to rely on qualitative methods. Due to the transience of the programme, this research will therefore be a case study that will not seek to discover some universally-applicable conclusion or truth, but to gain insights applicable to the follow-up programme. By definition, case studies analyse a single unit—in this thesis, the PESCAO programme—in order to shed light on other potentially similar units—such as WASOP (Gerrig, 2004; 2017). As such, it will attempt to gain in-depth insight into PESCAO and its impact, so that this hindsight can be applied to trace the path taken under WASOP in terms of its interaction with artisanal fishers back to potential prior origins under PESCAO.

5.5. *Validity and reliability*

Because of its nature as a case study of two temporally-bound and context-dependent fisheries governance development programmes, the results of this thesis are not deemed to be generalisable to every other fisheries governance development programme (Leung, 2015). Nor would that be productive, as the academic consensus fundamentally disagrees with a one-size-fits-all approach to development aid. It can, however, provide useful insights into improvements that could be made to programmes in regions where artisanal fisheries still play a large part in the livelihoods and food security of the local population.

Given the iterative and circular research process of HMPA, with the research process examining and reexamining the data many times to arrive at a more refined conclusion, aiding the reliability of the research - whereby the theories used are assessed and reassessed on their merits for explaining the data. If the same cases are to be used, this thesis believes the conclusions to be understandable and reproducible for this reason (Noble & Smith, 2015).

In terms of validity, this thesis has had to rely almost solely on documents produced by people involved in the programme, and interviews with people involved in the programme, yet has sought to offer as broad a base of data as possible, with neat and meticulous records of each. Furthermore, as to improve the validity of the data, this thesis has relied on advice from experts within the policy field as to avoid any misrepresentations of the programmes and artisanal fishers. It is not the goal of this thesis to speak for artisanal fishers - these groups can and wish to do that themselves - rather to synthesise their concerns with the evidence in the field of these programmes. As such, being able to rely on the expertise of experts involved in the long term ensured the validity of the data (Leung, 2015; Noble & Smith, 2015).

6. *Analysis*

6.1. *The PESCAO programme*

As discussed, the analysis will be structured in three main parts. Part I, 'Context', concerns itself with setting the scene for the region and the important role that artisanal fishers play in more detail than expressed in the introduction, in order to give credence to the argument that inclusion and participation of this group is essential for the formulation of maritime and fisheries policy in the region. Part II, 'Actors', remains brief, and introduces a number of key actors, and how they are implicated with the fisheries management development programmes of the European Union in the region, clustering them in various 'projects' with shared goals and aspirations. Part III then zooms in on the various interventions under each of the three components throughout the programme's implementation and their effects in terms of socio-environmental justice, after which the analysis examines the governance backsliding in between PESCAO and WASOP, and looks ahead to the transformations in the near future announced in the WASOP mission document. In all, as the programme has a broadly regional focus, and the documentation on the programme's interventions and achievements shares this regional focus with the programme, the analysis will observe the broad strokes of the programme's various components and their effects on the artisanal fishers of West Africa in a general sense. As discussed, specific examples of these effects will focus on the cases of Senegal and Mauritania, as those fisheries governance contexts are well-documented relative to the wider region, and provide a relatively representative sample of the repercussions for the often-transboundary artisanal fisher sector.

6.1.1. Part I: Context

6.1.1.1. *The vitally important nature of artisanal fisheries to the region*

Artisanal fisheries form the backbone of the fisheries industry in Senegal and Mauritania. Even more so, their importance reaches far beyond the seas and shores of the region to millions of people. According to Belhabib et al. (2015), as many as 6.7 million people across West Africa depend either directly or indirectly on the artisanal fisheries sector for their livelihood, with this number only increasing in the future. Though these figures are not necessarily impressive when compared to the overall population of West Africa, with nearly 400 million inhabitants within the ECOWAS community alone, their impact on food security is far greater still, as they are crucial to the protein intake of 200 million of them (Macedo et al., 2025). The FAO estimates the number of fishers in Mauritania to be about 180.400, mainly in the artisanal fisheries sector (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations [FAO], 2025a). In Senegal, the number of direct jobs, again mainly in the artisanal sector, are north of 86.000, with the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) putting this number as high as 169.000, employing around 3,2% of the overall Senegalese workforce (EJF, 2023; FAO, 2025b). These numbers are more than likely a low estimate, as it is important to remember that the Senegalese or Mauritanian artisanal fisher is rarely where this employment chain ends. According to the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (VGSSF, for short), as well as UN Special Rapporteur Michael Fakhri, artisanal fishers tend to be deeply anchored in local communities. The entire process from the act of fishing to the moment it can be consumed is, then, a communal effort (FAO, 2015; United Nations Human Rights Council [UNHRC], 2024). Examples of these communities are the Wolofs of Guet-Ndar, the Lebu of Cap-Vert or the Nyominka of the Saloum River Delta (FAO, 2024b). The transformation of fish in the artisanal sector is an activity largely dominated by women (FAO, 2024b).

Having been at the heart of coastal communities in the region for centuries, if not millennia, the artisanal fisher trade has fostered local knowledge of the sea and the coastal environment over generations. This indigenous knowledge, as Obiero et al. (2023) note, integrates the spiritual, environmental, technological, social, economic and political dimensions of society, forming what amounts to citizen science with a deep reverence for the ocean that was historically often dismissed by colonial powers (Akyeampong, 2007; Nnaemeka, 2024). Far from being careless custodians, the fisher communities of Senegal and Ghana, for instance, set up closed seasons and even restrictions on the use of certain types of gear based on community observations and indigenous knowledge that certain species were decreasing in numbers—without clear statistical data on the ecological status of the fish (Akyeampong, 2007; Obiero et al., 2023). Mbaye et al. (2021) note that older, more experienced Senegalese artisanal fishers can deduce anything from weather patterns to sea bottoms and high sea navigation based on local environmental knowledge accrued over the years. These forms of knowledge of their own environment, transmitted from generation to generation, shows a deep connection with and reverence of nature and the coastal seas in which these communities fish.

Various figures on the market share of artisanal fisheries in the region exist, but a study commissioned by ECOWAS (2020a) claims that artisanal marine and inland artisanal fishing accounts for more than 70% of fish production in West Africa, almost all of which is dedicated for local human consumption—in stark contrast with the 10% of industrial catches. 90% of industrial catch is destined for export, mainly to China and the European Union. While various figures on human consumption exist, research into the topic tends to suffer from lack of data, and though there may be stark variations between countries in the region, experts generally agree that artisanal fisheries remain crucial in the diet of millions across the region (Belhabib et al., 2015).

6.1.1.2. *Challenges facing artisanal fisheries in Senegal and Mauritania*

Aside from their crucial importance for the food security of the region, this study also highlights their marginal position in decision making processes, underreported value to national economies and societies, as well as limited benefits from national policies (ECOWAS, 2020a). Competition with industrial vessels in these waters can be fierce. On the 10th of May 2024, in line with efforts to implement Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI, 2017) transparency standards in their EEZ, the Senegalese Ministry of Fisheries, Maritime Infrastructure and Ports published the list of industrial vessels authorised to fish in Senegalese waters - the fleet flying the Senegalese flag numbering 132, with seventeen additional *declared* foreign vessels fishing under the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement with the European Union (République du Sénégal, 2024). Even then, many vessels flagged as Senegalese fish under joint ventures that, in practice, often serve foreign companies with little regard for national laws or total allowable catches. This allows them to theoretically circumvent article 62.3 of UNCLOS, stating that access to the fisheries resource can only be allocated to other states insofar as the coastal state retains a surplus of fish it cannot extract on its own—a surplus to be determined by the Senegalese authorities. Senegalese law requires joint ventures to be in local hands to the tune of at least 51% of its capital—though this condition seemingly isn't always met (Sarpong, 2023). Many Senegalese-flagged vessels with authorisations are thus listed to Chinese, Korean or European-owned joint ventures—some, like SOPERKA or CAPSEN, with a mixed record of adhering to local law and fishing quotas (Gorez, 2022b; 2024a; 2024b).

A second major challenge facing artisanal fishers is that of Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing. This catch-all category thus contains all fishing activity that either takes place in contravention to the laws and boundaries set by the coastal state (illegal), or takes place by vessels flagged to a state not party to any arrangements with the coastal state, or flying no flag at all (unregulated), or (potentially knowingly) does not report or misreports its activities and catches

(unreported). Simply put, under maritime law, this amounts to theft, and is considered as a major cause for overfishing (Song et al., 2019). Many estimates of the economic damage exist, but due to its illegal nature, knowing the full extent of IUU operations is nearly impossible, estimates from a policy brief for the AU Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources place the estimated share of IUU activity taking place in West Africa at 57% of the total activity across the continent, and at 52.6% of total landings (AU-IBAR, 2016). Again, however, the methodology behind these numbers appears unclear from the policy brief. This study is therefore more than likely the one referenced by Standing (2016) as lacking in data due to using a basic multiple-choice questionnaire propagated among African fisheries professionals as a data gathering tool. Doumbouya et al. (2017) estimated the loss of revenue for countries of the Subregional Fisheries Committee (SRFC), the Regional Fisheries Body of the western West African coast, at USD 2.3 billion a year between 2010 and 2016, but again, these figures are based on assumptions made on the basis of recorded cases. Research into IUU fishing is thus notoriously hard, misconceptions abound, and no one source of information is likely to provide a full picture - nevertheless, despite issues with the concept and the available data, IUU fishing should be addressed in a balanced and evidence-based way (Standing, 2016; Doumbouya et al., 2017). The impact of IUU fishing on artisanal fishers seems therefore twofold. On the one hand, IUU activities carried out by distant water fishing fleets lead in a direct sense to lost economic value in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the state it takes place in, and by extension for local and artisanal fishers. Doumbouya et al. (2017) find that the most common infraction between 2010 and 2016 has been incursions into zones reserved for artisanal fishing, oftentimes at night, risking collisions and loss of life. On the other hand, the over-securitisation of the ocean space, and the tightening of laws and sanctions on the basis of a potentially too universal concept without regard for diversity of culture and governance systems could lead to the criminalisation of certain forms of artisanal fishing (Standing, 2016; Song et al., 2019).

Another notable challenge faced by the artisanal fisher community in Senegal and Mauritania, is the expansion of the fishmeal industry to the detriment of the local populations. These industries target largely the same pelagic fish species, such as sardinella, as the artisanal fishers, for transformation of the fish into meal and oil destined for export as animal feed for, amongst other things, aquaculture in countries such as Norway, Turkey and China. There used to be only one factory for the processing and transformation of fish into fishmeal in Mauritania prior to 2010. Nowadays this number sits at around 24 to 33 operational factories (Standing, 2019; Corten, 2020). Though not comparable to the levels seen in Mauritania, the Senegalese Ministry of Fisheries and the Maritime Economy reported sharp increases in exports of small pelagic products, citing an increase of 86% in fishmeal, and 129% in fish oil between 2021 and 2022 (Seye et al., 2024; Philippe, 2024). The intensification of this industry in the past decade risks depleting the small pelagics essential to the food security of those reliant on the artisanal fisheries sector. In the short run, these fishmeal factories can provide a more remunerative source of income for migrant artisanal fishers less bound to their communities (Dème et al., 2023). Their long-term impact on the resource is more significant, however, as the industry has a natural inclination to increase production further to the detriment of small pelagic populations, leading to criticism for its contribution to the rarefaction of sardinella and other small pelagics, and the deteriorating food security of Senegal, Mauritania and the wider region (Standing, 2019; Corten, 2020; Dème et al., 2023)

Given the migratory nature of many fish populations, the problems faced by artisanal fishers are often transboundary in nature. After all, fish do not obey national borders or EEZs - nor do some industrial and artisanal fleets, for that matter. Overexploitation of certain fish populations, such as sardinella, coupled with the impacts of climate change warming the ocean and leading to a northward shift of fish populations also leads to diminishing catches by pirogues in near-shore fishing grounds, leading artisanal fishers to operate ever further from the shore (Beye Traoré,

2021; Philippe, 2023). This structural overfishing due to the multiple factors mentioned above renders the improvement of fisheries management in the region ever more urgent. According to the scientific subcommittee of the FAO Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic, a Regional Fisheries Body (RFB) providing scientific advice on the status of fish populations in West Africa, six of the seven *assessed* small pelagic resources should be considered either fully or overexploited. Only the population of sardines was deemed to be 'not fully exploited', whereas the populations of bonga in Mauritania, Senegal and the Gambia, and those of sardinella across the whole subregion, were deemed to be overexploited (FAO, 2023). More recently, a paper co-authored by scientists from the Mauritanian Institute for Oceanography and Fisheries (IMROP), the Moroccan National Institute of Fisheries Research (INRH) and the Senegalese Oceanographic Research Centre of Dakar-Thiaroye (CRODT) alerts for the overexploitation of the migratory flat sardinella populations, and the potential total collapse of round sardinella - two species whose exploitation rates have increased rapidly due to strong local demand as well as the emergence of fishmeal factories (Braham et al., 2024). The collapse of small pelagic fish populations in a region where those fish account for 30-40% of the protein intake could have dramatic consequences on the food security in the region (ECOWAS, 2019; 2020; FAO, 2024a; 2024b).

Efforts are being made to ensure the food security of artisanal fishers. An example of this is the singular position of the Imraguen in Mauritania. This group lives within the boundaries of the Parc National du Banc d'Arguin, a Marine Protected Area in the north of the country, where they are, other than sports fishers and tourists, the only fishers authorised to fish (Loi relative au Parc National du Banc d'Arguin, 2000; Décret portant application de la loi no. 2000/24 du 19 janvier 2000 relative au Parc National du Banc d'Arguin, 2006; Belhabib et al., 2019a; Trégarot et al., 2020). Other examples include the implementation of coastal zones up to 6 nautical miles from the coast for exclusive use of licensed artisanal fishing communities in Mauritania since 2015, with the authorisation to go as far as 9 nautical miles. The new Senegalese government has also committed

itself to a similar reserved zone up to 12 nautical miles. Even if such a distance will likely only benefit the artisanal fisheries of Senegal with larger pirogues fishing for commercial goals, which fall in a grey area between industry and artisanship according to some, this can help keep foreign industrial fleets at bay and retain the fisheries resource for truly national fleets (Philippe, 2023; 2024b, Beye Traoré, personal communication, 23 May 2024). Still, these *de facto* artisanal fishing zones are subject to illegal incursions of industrial fishing fleets (Belhabib et al., 2019b; ECOWAS, 2020a). AIS data from between 2012 and 2016 analysed by Belhabib et al. (2019b) revealed that between 3%-6% of the time spent fishing by industrial fleets in the region took place illegally within artisanal fishing zones. These illegal incursions can lead to disastrous consequences ranging from competition for fish populations and overfishing to collisions and loss of life (Belhabib et al., 2019b).

6.1.1.3. *Valuing and respecting artisanal fisher communities*

These challenges are intrinsically linked, and changes to the conditions of one tend to reverberate across the others, as well as across national borders and ecosystems. As such, a holistic and regional approach to the alleviation of these problems is necessary for it to have a lasting impact. The Small Scale Fishers [SSF] Call to Action co-signed by small-scale and artisanal fisher organisations across the globe and supported by 28 NGOs, sets out five priorities for action by governments to ensure the continued existence of artisanal fishing communities around the world. These are 1) the preferential access to and co-management of coastal areas through, for example, participative surveillance, 2) the protection and empowerment of women, who are essential for artisanal fisheries communities in, for instance, processing of fish, 3) the protection of small-scale fisheries from competition of other sectors of the Blue Economy through enhanced consultation and participation in decision making, 4) transparency and accountability by, at minimum, adhering to the FiTI standards (FiTI, 2017), and 5) the development of resilience to climate change together with local communities. The document calls on governments to develop

action plans informed by the FAO VGSSF by 2030 to achieve these goals (FAO, 2015; Small Scale Fishers [SSF] Call to Action, 2022a).

At present, the capture fisheries with direct consequences for regional food security and poverty alleviation in West Africa remain the artisanal fisheries—not the industrial fleets fishing under national flags, foreign licences or reflagging practices. Artisanal fisheries still account for the overwhelming majority of economic value and fish protein for human consumption directly injected in the region, and as such have an outsized, though often underassessed and undervalued importance to the regional economy. It is within this context that taking into account their knowledge, fishing practices, beliefs and values is essential in crafting new policies in light of the changing economic and environmental circumstances. Climate change is accentuating the growing scarcity of fish populations in the region due to warming ocean temperatures chasing populations northward, leading to fishers exploring increasingly remote—and thereby, increasingly risky—fishing grounds (Mbaye et al., 2021). Though they might at times ascribe different meanings to these changes, viewing them through a more social-theological lens at times, artisanal fishers are acutely aware of their environment and the changes that occur to it, such as warmer waters, reduced rainfall, and declining fish populations, ultimately impacting the entire community employment chain (Environmental Justice Foundation, 2023; Mbaye et al., 2021; 2023; Macedo et al., 2025).

It is therefore crucial to take artisanal fishing and their representatives into account when formulating policy that addresses the biodiversity, efficiency, management and policing challenges faced by the coastal states. Given this importance the inclusion of artisanal fisher voices will form a notable throughline in the assessment of the programmes' formulation, runtime and results in the case of PESCAO, and the formulation of WASOP as its successor.

6.1.1.4. *PESCAO, its legal-institutional context and the challenges it problematises*

Like most coastal states around the world, the maritime space of West African coastal states, in some cases collectively through ECOWAS, is bound by various multilateral agreements that they are party to, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), or the International Labour Organisation Work in Fishing Convention, colloquially known as C188. This section will provide an overview of the relevant bilateral and multilateral agreements and conventions to the coastal member states of ECOWAS that may have led to, or otherwise influenced, the interventions of the PESCAO programme through the request from the ECOWAS Commission to the European Commission. Though coastal states of ECOWAS may not all be party to these agreements, they may still feel the necessity of a regional implementation, as many of these agreements include either clauses of non-discrimination or a global scope. These agreements, together with the challenges faced by fisheries in the region discussed prior, have in large part informed the actions of the programme, and provide a legal basis for the external action of the European Union as a 'developed nation' at the request of ECOWAS.

The International Labour Organisation Work in Fishing Convention of 2007, known as ILO C188, is a multilateral convention that regulates work conditions on board of fishing vessels inside the jurisdictions of its signatories. Relative to PESCAO, mainly the articles under Part VII. ("Compliance and Enforcement") find their application. These refer to the responsibilities of Members (those who have ratified the agreement, i.e. many EU Member States and Senegal) to set up the necessary infrastructure for fisheries control pertaining to labour conditions, for example by appointing a sufficient number of inspectors under Article 42 to bring this about. Article 42 paragraph 2 states that Members can also approach external organisations in order to fulfil this mission. Article 44 is one of those 'articles of non-discrimination' discussed prior to vessels flying the flag of a country not party to ILO C188. In short, this means that under a situation

where the relevant authorities have sufficient capacity to do so, Chinese vessels (among others) can be held accountable for their actions in Senegalese waters despite the People's Republic of China not having ratified the agreement.

PSMA, the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, is perhaps the most definitive document with regards to the intervention logic of PESCAO, deserving of an explicit mention in the Action Document (European Commission, 2017a). In line with its name, it proposes baseline measures, such as inspections, to be taken by the port state, the state where any ship, flying its flag or another, goes to port. Both Senegal and Mauritania, as well as the European Union and its Member States are signatories of the agreement, which contains a number of crucial articles for PESCAO, such as Article 6, which invites its signatories to cooperate towards the full implementation of these measures from the subregional to the global level. Part 6 of the agreement further specifies this by explicitly asking signatories to support developing states in order to “enhance their ability to develop a legal basis and capacity for the implementation of effective port state measures; facilitate their participation in any international organisation that promote the effective development and implementation of port state measures; and facilitate technical assistance to strengthen the development and implementation of port state measures by them, in coordination with relevant mechanisms.” Article 21 delves into how these capacity-building programmes should function and what their finance systems should accomplish. In annex B, it specifically mentions Vessel Monitoring Systems, or VMS, as a technology that should become widespread under PSMA for enhanced MCS. Again, PSMA is global in scope, and under Article 3 paragraph 5, its signatories are encouraged to motivate non-signatories to apply similar, if not the same measures consistent with PSMA.

In conclusion, the intervention logic of the programme largely follows commitments made by both the European Union, the states of ECOWAS and Mauritania under international law, thereby clarifying the aims of the programme. After all, these agreements provide a baseline for

ocean governance that Mauritania, Senegal and other ECOWAS countries might not be able to fulfil in light of their current capacities. In very real terms, the implementation of PSMA and ILO C188 requires investments in the training of capable maritime controllers, as well as the implementation of modern monitoring, surveillance and control technologies such as Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) and Automated Identification Systems (AIS) on any industrial vessels fishing in their waters.

A brief summary of the mission document for the "improved regional fisheries governance in Western Africa" programme, or PESCAO, for short, is then in order. At its core, it is a programme negotiated between the European Commission and ECOWAS, negotiated following a request submitted by the ECOWAS Commission in August 2015, to address the sub-optimal management of fisheries, and consequently its sub-optimal contribution to food security and economic development in the coastal states of ECOWAS and Mauritania (Sub-Regional Fisheries Committee [SRFC], 2019). Essentially, the PESCAO programme defined the underlying causes of the challenges facing West Africa as a lack of financial, logistical, legal and political will and capacity in governance, a lack of scientific information and common channels through which to share this information for on-the-ground application (Caillart et al., 2022).

Countries along the Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem face a number of challenges at sea. These include unfair competition between foreign industrial long-distance fleets and local artisanal fishers, illegal fishing and labour practices, all compounded by a lack of monitoring, control and security capacities and apparent lack of political interest in the ocean space. At its inception, the PESCAO programme problematised these points as main challenges that it sought to address. In line with the challenges in fisheries in both Senegal and Mauritania mentioned prior, it problematised these cross-cutting issues, along with the relatively weak position of fisheries in the national policy contexts and the absence of management plans for fish populations. It also problematised the spatial displacement of fish due to climate change, labour conditions on board of industrial fishing vessels, the marginalisation of youth and women in decision-making and

increased pressure on artisanal fishing communities due to competition with tourism, overfishing and IUU fishing (European Commission, 2017a). Furthermore, the action document observed the lack of political motivation for maritime policy-making in the member states of ECOWAS and the low expertise, financial and administrative capacities and resources of RFBs and ECOWAS member states as problems to be addressed, as well as a lack of coherence and coordination between actors. Motivation for reform is mostly external, and came from the ECOWAS Commission aiming to modernise its fisheries policy domain according to modern standards. The programme inscribes itself according to its mission document into a gradual supranational evolution towards integrated fisheries policy across Africa, from advisory committees at the African Union, the West African Economic and Monetary Union and ECOWAS, as well as the focus on “sustainable exploitation, management and conservation” of fish in the external dimension of the CFP. The European Union is also keen on exporting its ‘regional’ approach to fisheries management. As such, PESCAO is one of several programmes the European Commission has undertaken across the globe in the period of 2014-2024. In its State of Play of Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture EU-funded projects, the European Commission (2022) provided an overview of the EUR 450 million of development funding it had spent on forty programmes, categorising them as either regional, continental and cross-continental or bilateral. The regional category, to which PESCAO belongs, along with similar programmes such as ECOFISH in the Indian Ocean, and PEUMP in the Pacific, seeks to bring about or improve regional fisheries management by supporting the implementation of evidence-based management of fish populations, the development of regional management plans and joint MCS operations (European Commission, 2022).

In order to achieve its goals, the programme was split into three components, each seeking to achieve a specific result according to the underlying causes it problematised, and implemented by a different set of actors. Each will be discussed more in depth further along in this analysis. Nevertheless, a short overview of the components and their implementing entities is in order.

Component 1 sought to develop a regional fisheries and aquaculture policy and improve coordination between regional stakeholders. This component was to be implemented by the ECOWAS community through indirect management, and received upward of EUR 2.17 million for indirect management with ECOWAS and GOPA. Component 2, the strengthening of the regional response to and prevention of IUU fishing through enhanced MCS was to be implemented by the RFBs with ECOWAS member states (the Sub-Regional Fisheries Committee (SRFC) and the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC)), as well as by EFCA. All these implementing partners received grants of EUR 3.63 million, 1.65 million, and 3.81 million respectively, to be used for the reinforcement of and training in monitoring, control and surveillance at sea by these institutions (European Commission, 2017a; 2017b; Caillart et al., 2022). The third and final component, the improvement of the regional management of shared fish populations, was to be implemented by FAO-CECAF, the DEMERSTEM project from Agrocampus France, and the GREPPAO project from the University of Portsmouth, receiving EUR 1.35 million, 1.5 million and 1.5 million in grants respectively (European Commission, 2017a; 2017b; Caillart et al., 2022). Each project operated mostly independently and with different scientific aims. For example, GREPPAO sought to scientifically examine migratory small pelagic fisheries communities in the region, and DEMERSTEM aimed at better scientific assessment of fish populations in the region through the creation and dissemination of expertise and improved statistical and stock assessment models, among other things.

Fig. 2: Overview of the three programme components of PESCAO

<i>Component</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Implementing Partners</i>	<i>Grant</i>
Component 1	"A Western African fisheries and aquaculture policy is developed and coordination of regional stakeholders is improved"	ECOWAS Commission; GOPA; WANSAFA	EUR 2.17M
		SRFC;	EUR 3.63M
Component 2	"Prevention of and responses to IUU fishing are strengthened through improved Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) at national and regional levels"	FCWC;	EUR 1.65M
		EFCA;	EUR 3.81M
Component 3	"Marine resources management at the regional level is improved, building resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems to perturbations"	FAO-CECAF; GREPPAO (University of Portsmouth);	EUR 1.35M EUR 1.50M
		DEMERSTEM (Agrocampus Rennes)	EUR 1.50M

(Source: European Commission, 2017a; Caillart et al., 2022)

On this basis, it can be noted that the PESCAO programme action document developed by the European Commission only partially addressed the concerns of artisanal fishers. It flirted with

the inclusion ('representation' and 'full association') of stakeholders including small-scale/artisanal fishers, but fell short of explaining how. Based on the action document alone, it sought to address concerns from ECOWAS and its Member States, not those of artisanal fishers. Although it might appear like this thesis is therefore comparing apples and oranges, artisanal fisheries still form the backbone of fisheries in many coastal states in the region, and provide jobs to hundreds of thousands and food security to millions more. Ignoring these artisanal fisheries communities in the conception and implementation of such a programme would therefore amount to ignoring a not insignificant part of the industry, and ultimately the development goals of these coastal countries, rather focusing on industrial fleets with largely foreign origins and ownerships. Whether this industrial tunnel-vision held up in practice will be explored in the following two parts, where first the actors and their respective ideological groupings are discussed, followed by a play-by-play exploration of the practical results of the PESCAO programme based on socio-environmental justice.

6.1.2. Part II: Actors

Development programmes like PESCAO necessarily involve, even in limited fashion, a plethora of actors, organisations, states and individuals that would dramatically extend the scope of this thesis if they were all to be analysed and positioned. Therefore, this thesis limits the actors in this analysis to those directly involved with the steering committee of the programme, as well as implementing partners that were invited to its meetings and directly managed (part of) the implementation of a programme component. This limits the number of actors to be grouped to thirteen (inter-)governmental and nongovernmental organisations, two academic projects and one private consultancy bureau, either involved in steering the programme or in implementing one of its components—thereby ultimately having an influence on the programme's outcomes in terms of socio-environmental justice for artisanal fishers. This thesis identifies two main associations of actors involved in shaping the fisheries governance development programmes, labelling them as

either 'institutional idealists', aiming for European-style upgrades to the regional fisheries management infrastructure, and 'pragmatists', who take into consideration the importance of, for instance, artisanal fisheries, and recognise that all systems might not be adapted to the local context. These groups should not be considered formal associations of actors with a common goal in steering the PESCAO programme in one pathway or the other—as far as this thesis is aware, there has been no wilful association between any of the actors to do so—rather as groups with a shared ideational vision of what fisheries management in West Africa ought to look like. Both these groups ultimately share the same goals of addressing the challenges extant in fisheries in the region, but differ in where they see the barycentre of the problems, and the methods necessary to address them. Note that this is not a conflictual relation, but rather a battle of ideas and interests within the imbalanced 'state framework' of the PESCAO programme, where both groups can overlap in terms of ideas, attempt to convince one another, influence each other, and advance their interests in the policies and interventions PESCAO produces. In the following figure, the various organisations are identified based on their involvement within the fisheries management development programme (as either on the steering committee (SC), an implementing partner (IP), or both) and their loose ideological grouping.

Fig. 3: Actors and Ideological Groupings

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Involvement</i>	<i>Ideological Grouping</i>
ECOWAS Commission	SC; IP Component 1	Institutional idealists; pragmatist-leaning
WAEMU Commission	SC	Institutional idealists
European Commission	SC	Institutional idealists
SRFC	SC; IP Component 2	Institutional idealist- leaning
FCWC	SC; IP Component 2	Institutional idealist- leaning
EFCA	SC; IP Component 2	Institutional idealist- leaning
Rotating SRFC Member State	SC; Gov.	Institutional idealists
Rotating FCWC Member State	SC; Gov.	Institutional idealists
WANSFA	SC [only after formalisation]	Pragmatists
GOPA	IP Component 1	Institutional idealists
GREPPAO Project	IP Component 3	Unbound; Pragmatist- leaning
DemerstEm Project	IP Component 3	Unbound; Pragmatist- leaning
FAO-CECAF	IP Component 3	Unbound

(Source: Caillart et al., 2022; Author)

Starting off with the group that appears hegemonic based on both the action document and their prevalence among the core actors identified above, the one dubbed 'institutional idealists', this group is defined as a relatively ideologically homogeneous group that, though having

no formal organisation or coordination among one another, share a similar vision of the future of fisheries in the West African region that is much in line with the Action Document of PESCAO. The intervention logic of the PESCAO programme is largely influenced by this vision, encompassing modern systems of fish population management, proactive fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance mechanisms and patrols, as well as updates to fisheries policy to modern, industrial and multilateral standards. In short, this group, largely consisting of states and state-like structures, shares a hegemonic, largely modernist view of the future of fisheries in West Africa that might ignore the current reality of the prevalence, and centrality, of artisanal fisheries.

This brings us to the second group, dubbed 'pragmatists'. This counter-hegemonic group is noticeably smaller in terms of representation at the heart of the programme, but does present a relatively different narrative. The concerns about overfishing, IUU fishing, climate change and food security are largely shared with the hegemonic group, but the emphasis on policy and interventions is different. The pragmatist group, for instance, tends to recognise the importance of artisanal fishers to food security in the region *more* than growth-minded institutional idealists, and promotes complementary monitoring, control and surveillance methods to the modern technological solutions of VMS and AIS, such as participatory surveillance by artisanal fishers. Ultimately, this counter-hegemonic group has seen advances of its narrative during the runtime of the PESCAO programme within the hegemonic sphere. As shown in figure 3, after its formalisation thanks, in part, to PESCAO, a representative from the West African Non-State Actor regional platform for Fisheries and Aquaculture (WANSFAFA), was included in the steering committee long-term, to represent, among others, the artisanal fishing sector.

It is worth pointing out, however, that neither group can be considered a homogenous bloc, as various actors within these blocs may have goals that largely align within the context of PESCAO, but divergent ones outside of its framework. Diving deeper into abstraction, within these actors themselves, now defined as participating states, international organisations, university

research groups, government agencies and artisanal interest groups, are individuals with their own goals and aspirations—convictions that might differ from the organisation they are part of.

Ultimately, judging from the actors involved in the steering committee, two conclusions can be made. On the one hand, based on the institutions involved in the committee, the focus of the programme was likely to remain on the hegemonic project creating and/or strengthening a regional institutional framework tailored to a setting oriented towards flashy, modern industrial fishing practices—one that is not bound by the artisanal realities of the region. This is due to the preponderance of institutional idealist-leaning state and intergovernmental actors leading the charge to modernise the policy domain along the European example of an integrated regional approach, with both funding and expert help from the European Commission and the European Fisheries Control Agency. The “state structure” of the programme’s governance, then, carries strategic selectivity in how the programme is steered, with only few potentially dissenting voices from civil society within the steering committee, which, as will become apparent later, only effectively joined the steering committee through WANSAFA some years after the start of the programme, and were not involved in its formulation phase of the action document (G. Gueye, personal communication, 11 April 2024). The following section will explore the practical results of the PESCAO programme in further detail, providing a play-by-play analysis of the various outcomes of each component of the programme, its effects in terms of socio-environmental justice for artisanal fishers and whether it ultimately showed advances for the counter-hegemonic group, or if it constituted a flawed ‘class compromise’.

6.1.3. *Part III: Process*

In this part, the thesis will examine the results of the PESCAO programme based on the interests of artisanal fishers, as defined in the SSF Call to Action. Specifically, it will examine the results in terms of Frasier's tripartite social justice, and whether the results affect them either positively or negatively. Though the development programme may not have explicitly sought to transform the fisheries policy sphere to the benefit of either industrial or artisanal fishers, its interventions might have had reverberations across economic and societal sectors that might not be straightforward at first, while others directly affect artisanal fishers, as will be discussed later.

6.1.3.1. *Component 1, enhanced policy and regional coordination.*

The first goal of this component was to develop a better understanding of fisheries policy at the ECOWAS-level, as fisheries policy largely fell under the purview of ECOWAS agricultural policy prior to the PESCAO programme, thereby largely ignoring the specificities of fisheries and aquaculture. In short, this was done through the development of policy briefs on various regional issues and statistical factsheets on fisheries in its member countries (ECOWAS Commission, 2020). The second goal of this component was the creation of the Comprehensive Strategic Framework for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Development in West Africa (CSF-SFAD) at the ECOWAS-level (ECOWAS, 2019; 2021). This document serves as a pathway for regional alignment of fisheries policy along a number of shared concerns, and it has been approved by the council of ministers and heads of state of ECOWAS, yet remains a set of non-binding guidelines. Aside from the creation of the CSF-SFAD, putting to words the commitment of ECOWAS to the regional harmonisation of fisheries and aquaculture policy, Component 1 also led to the signing of two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) between ECOWAS and the SRFC and FCWC RFBs. This entails that the anchorage of these institutions in the fisheries policy landscape under the ECOWAS commission has now been put to words instead of relying on customary law.

Overall, this component has been met with some criticism due to the lack of clear results. Despite the reported changes, improvements and harmonisations of fisheries and aquaculture policies, and the setting up of national action plans for the fight against IUU fishing, it remains to be seen if the implementation of said policy reforms will hold up in the long run. With specific regards to artisanal fisheries, however, there seems to have been some careful consideration of the importance of the sector. The CSF-SFAD, for instance, dedicates its entire first Strategic Priority Policy Area (PA1) to the enhancement of the governance of fisheries and prioritised development of small-scale (artisanal) fisheries, through recognition and increased integration of the local communities in decision-making across the ECOWAS region (ECOWAS, 2019; 2021). The explicit inclusion of artisanal fisheries in the CSF-SFAD is a significant step forward in the recognition of the value of artisanal fisheries to the region at the governmental and supranational level., though it remains to be seen if the written acknowledgement of their importance will lead to meaningful change or improvements in the valuation of their trade on the markets and in political society in comparison to the oft-favoured industrial sector (ECOWAS & FAO, 2020).

In terms of representational justice, this component has also had a significant contribution to the inclusion of artisanal fishers in decision-making in the ECOWAS region by helping to formalise the West Africa Non-State Actors in Fisheries and Aquaculture (WANSAFa) platform as the sole interlocutor for the ECOWAS Commission with non-state actors on fisheries and aquaculture. Prior to the PESCAO programme, non-state actors, among which artisanal fisher organisations, lacked clear institutional pathways to speak with national or regional institutions, and it was often the agricultural sector that spoke for fisheries. WANSAFa existed as a loose network of nongovernmental organisations and artisanal fisher syndicates. Now, the regional WANSAFa platform is a legitimate formal organisation that aims to group most, if not all actors in the artisanal fishing sector, is structurally consulted by the ECOWAS commission with regards to regional fisheries policy formulation, as well as by FAO-CECAF for working groups related to

artisanal fishing (Fisheries Committee of the West-Central Gulf of Guinea [FCWC], 2020; FAO, 2020; G. Gueye, personal communication, 11 April 2024). The regional WANSafa platform also became the ninth member of the PESCAO programme steering committee, which, though being severely outvoted as a member of the counterhegemonic project in a structure that favoured the hegemonic one, at least gave a platform to potentially dissenting voices from artisanal civil society organisations on the steering committee. Nevertheless, given their importance to the regional fishing sector, this significant imbalance within the steering committee should still be deemed insufficient in nature (G. Gueye, personal communication, 11 April 2024; A. Panossian, personal communication, 7 May 2024). Ultimately, the steps taken under component 1 have the added benefit of providing an institutional framework where artisanal fishers can raise their concerns, through the creation of conditions for a regional approach to fisheries policy and stronger institutional capacities, as well as more communication with non-state stakeholders among whom artisanal fishers can ultimately lead to better policy for solving transboundary problems. The period following the programme's conclusion, however, seems to have weakened the institutional interest of the ECOWAS Commission, which still subsumes fisheries under the same directorate as that of agriculture, and lacks its own commissioner on fisheries (G. Gueye, personal communication, 11 April 2024).

Socio-environmental justice in terms of capabilities for artisanal communities did not advance under this component, nor did the component mean much for environmental protection or marine life in the short run—it led to adaptations to the institutional landscape in which fisheries policy is made in West Africa, and increased ECOWAS' connection and institutional knowledge base on fisheries policy through a number of briefs, statistical assessments, policy documents and memorandums of understanding with RFBs (Tall, 2022). The gradual creation and centralisation of fisheries policy to the regional level under ECOWAS, with the involvement of organisations representing artisanal fishers in decision-making processes is then but a step towards a future

where catch numbers could one day become mandatory limits set by a central authority for the purported benefit of maintaining healthy fish populations. This is not necessarily a positive advancement, as the 'Diagnostic on the effectiveness of national fishery and aquaculture policies and strategies for food and nutrition security in West Africa' by ECOWAS (2020) argued that the public accessibility of fish as a resource for artisanal fishers hampers its sustainable development and effective management—arguing for what is essentially enclosure of fish populations through universally enforced catch quotas, potentially impacting the capabilities of artisanal fisher communities to live a fulfilling life in the future.

6.1.3.2. Component 2, improved monitoring, control and surveillance at the national and regional level in the fight against IUU fishing.

The second component of the programme was the reinforcement of Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) at the national and regional levels for the prevention of and response to IUU fishing. The implementation of this was done through direct grants to the SRFC and FCWC, as well as through indirect management and technical support by EFCA (European Commission, 2017a; 2017b). The role of EFCA herein was to study the options for updates and harmonisation in the maritime legal frameworks of ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania, as well as support the adoption of national action plans against IUU fishing, support the implementation of a hypothetical coordination of MCS convention, provide operational support by providing training for controllers and helping set up or improve MCS centres (Kempff et al., 2021; European Commission, 2022).

One notable feature of the implementation of Component 2 was its demand-driven and operational-oriented approach (European Commission, 2017a; 2017b). This meant that while the analysis of how the legal frameworks of states could be improved to meet international standards was conducted by EFCA between 2018 and 2019, to be updated each year based on legal developments, the provision of advice on improvement of said legal frameworks only took place

at the request of the state (European Fisheries Control Agency [EFCA], 2018; 2019; 2020; 2021; Kempff et al., 2021; Caillart et al., 2022). In total, six countries have made use of advice from EFCA for the drafting of legal texts and national plans of action against IUU fishing, these being Togo, Cape Verde, Benin, Nigeria, The Gambia and Mauritania (EFCA, 2023a). Joint patrol missions were also demand-driven. This approach ensured that the implementing organisations did not overstep their responsibilities in the region and focused their actions on constructive and consensual capacity building. In terms of redistributive justice, this component showed that though the European Union provided funding and expertise to regional policy-makers, its position as chief distributor of the means was not used to impose, but rather to *propose* solutions to be accepted, amended or rejected wholesale by West African states and intergovernmental institutions (Fraser, 2008; Knijn et al., 2020). These tailored proposals were made by European experts associated with EFCA. All in all, Component 2 is the one with the most positive responses, as it led to tangible results on the ground, for states, national and regional MCS organisations and fishers themselves. In the SRFC Member States, this component also translated into very tangible investments into the MCS infrastructure, such as video communication systems, scooters, electrical generators, phones and uniforms (Sub-Regional Fisheries Committee [SRFC], 2023). The RFB grants could thus be used by the RFBs themselves to enhance their capacity where they thought it to be most necessary.

In practice, this component also led to a number of joint patrols between patrol vessels of SRFC member states and with support from EFCA, coordinating inspections on a regional level, and with increased use of VMS/AIS data triangulation. This led to more targeted patrols due to the risk assessment on IUU fishing done prior to the joint patrols. However, due to their reliance on VMS/AIS data, which largely target industrial fleets (pirogues are not often outfitted with AIS systems), these patrols likely overlooked potential IUU fishing in the coastal zones. Large patrol missions can serve a practical purpose of hitting hard where it hurts on industrial fleets, but they form momentary bursts of surveillance as deterrents (James et al., 2019). A potential method

proposed by the artisanal fisher organisations of WANSABA to space out the monitoring, control and surveillance at sea is to make it participatory, by outfitting artisanal fishers with cameras and GPS beacons, so that they can help with the documentation of potential infractions. Including artisanal fishers in the efforts to, for instance, monitor incursions into near-shore waters means having many more eyes at sea at certain moments, and is a lot less costly in the short run than implementing VMS/AIS on every single industrial vessel.

With regards to the overall budget of PESCAO, nearly 60 percent (north of EUR 9.090.000) was allocated to Component 2, indicating the centrality of tangible investments and training missions within the programme (Caillart et al., 2022). This important component has therefore also led to not insignificant upgrading of the local monitoring, control and surveillance infrastructure along modern, industrial-fisheries focused lines, with the goal of implementing a European-style regional approach to law enforcement in fisheries. This mainly took the form of increased monitoring, control and surveillance capacity and materiel for the various law enforcement organisations in the SRFC region. For instance, it provided funding for the acquisition of eight expensive satellite phones, seven antennas, and eight “robust smartphones” that were distributed by the SRFC among its member states’ MCS organisations, as well as 108 sets of uniforms and MCS equipments to be used by inspectors throughout the region (SRFC, 2023). Trainings for those inspectors, as well as technical advice and assistance during transboundary patrol missions, was provided by EFCA based on their experience in the (overwhelmingly industrial) European Union context, as repeatedly mentioned in EFCA’s “year in review” documents (EFCA, 2018; 2019; 2020; 2021). This then follows the approach of the hegemonic group, the institutional idealists, in furthering an industrial-focused infrastructure in West Africa, as it largely ignored the proposals from artisanal fisher organisations for participatory monitoring, control and surveillance. More pressingly, the narrative report of the SRFC concerning their implementation of Component 2 with the help of EFCA specifically mentions the necessity of extending the action

domain to include artisanal fisheries, meaning the artisanal sector was largely ignored when it came to the fight against IUU fishing. Component 2 seeks to establish and strengthen infrastructure that is sometimes not there yet, but does not always opt for pragmatic solutions based on the available human and structural resources—such as local environmental knowledge and the aforementioned participatory surveillance proposed by artisanal fisher organisations. Justice-wise, it could be argued that improved monitoring, control and surveillance capacities would enhance redistribution justice through the more stringent enforcement of boundaries for industrial fleets, as well as in terms of capabilities, as the fight against IUU fishing practices ultimately reduces the likelihood of overfishing, providing some much-needed respite for some species of fish. If lasting improvements were made under the programme, countries like Senegal and Mauritania would be able to render the artisanal fisher zones of 6-9 nautical miles off the coast more resilient to illegal industrial incursions, as well as be able to enforce biodiversity protection measures such as closed fishing seasons in the future. This improved resilience of the near-shore zone then improves ecological health of Senegalese and Mauritanian seas, as well as the distribution of fish for artisanal fishers, limiting unfair competition from industrial vessels.

In sum, the second component of PESCAO sought to set up, strengthen and enhance the current monitoring, control and surveillance infrastructure in West Africa by hiring and educating professional controllers, funding the purchase of the materials necessary for independent control missions, launching joint regional surveillance missions with EFCA and local partners, and updating the legal frameworks of willing countries to modern-industrial-standards. As a consequence of this, the infrastructure was adapted to target industrial vessels specifically, thereby limiting the scope of monitoring, control and surveillance in the region to vessels capable of housing VMS/AIS systems and hauling large amounts of fish. The interventions under Component 2, while meant to address IUU fishing in its totality, sought to create or reinforce a modern, industrial fisheries-centric approach to monitoring, control and surveillance largely based on the European

experience of EFCA and implementation of expensive technologies such as VMS and AIS, as well as their necessary control rooms (EFCA, 2018; 2019; 2020; 2021). While it is true that the bulk of the problem with illegal fisheries lies with this group of largely foreign industrial vessels, artisanal fishers are not exempt from responsibility either, and do, on occasion, practice illegal fishing or overfishing due to better gear (B. Caillart, personal communication, 7 May 2024). The monitoring, control and surveillance infrastructure set up under Component 2 could contain significant regulatory blind spots, all the while also furthering the narrative that modern industrial fleets are the future of West African fisheries. In its narrative report on the actions taken within the frame of Component 2, the SRFC explicitly (though offhandedly) mentions that the action ought to be expanded to include artisanal fisheries (SRFC, 2023). When the infrastructure is set up in favour of the regulation of one specific practice of fishing, this risks delegitimizing the forms of fisheries not encapsulated by that regulatory framework.

6.1.3.3. Component 3, improved scientific evidence-based regional fish stock management.

Under component 3, the programme focused on improving the management of shared fish populations through the financing of FAO-CECAF for enhanced knowledge and advice-sharing across the region, as well as through the financing of the DEMERSTEM project by Agrocampus France for scientific and ecosystemic advice on shared demersal fish populations in support of FAO-CECAF, and the GREPPAO project by the University of Portsmouth (Caillart et al., 2022). The ultimate goal of this third component was to facilitate evidence-based regional fish population management, yet as Caillart et al. (2022) pointed out, the short time span of the PESCAO programme has hampered the full implementation of such an approach at the state level. In all, this component did little that directly affected the health of the ecosystems and the health of fish populations. Besides, it being based on scientific evidence-finding about the health of fish

populations, with the goal of offering better advice regarding the quantity of fish to be extracted sustainably carries within it an implicit view of nature as a resource over as a value in and of itself. Nevertheless, given the fact that such knowledge on the health of fish populations is lacking, and that PESCAO sought to resolve this, at least in part, through Component 2 means the programme did seek to resolve the problem of overfishing and the reduction of fish populations in the long run.

With regards to scientific advice on the management of fish populations in the region, as an RFB, FAO-CECAF is the seminal institutional provider of scientific advice (Caillart et al., 2022). As such, it became a partner for the PESCAO programme in the enhancement of its impact in the region, with the programme seeking to gather knowledge about the integration of its scientific advice in management policies, extending its toolbox of assessment methods and rendering its data sharing and research methodologies more efficient. FAO-CECAF makes no mention of integrating local environmental knowledge in its project inception workshop report, but does highlight the importance of gathering knowledge on artisanal fisheries, which remains lacking (FAO-CECAF, 2019). Scientific knowledge in FAO-CECAF has seen improvement, and the methodological options for the organisation have been extended, though not yet fully implemented, thanks in part to DEMERSTEM. One point raised by Guitton and Quemper during the interview is that CECAF, much like the SRFC and FCWC, remains a strictly advisory scientific body, with no mandate to enforce any conservation targets. The stock assessments they publish have little value if they remain sidelined in the decision-making processes of its member states.

The GREPPAO project has been criticised for the apparent lack of added value to the wider programme, having produced limited amounts of specific research on migratory small pelagic fisheries. Though it would theoretically feed into the goals of FAO-CECAF, which sought an increased understanding of the value chain of small-scale fisheries, Gueye & Gorez (2022) point out that the research has not been linked to the real need for scientific advice on the management

of small pelagic fish populations. In total, GREPPAO produced 28 published scientific articles on sedentary and migrant artisanal small pelagic fisheries with perspectives from the social sciences that did not amount to much useful information for FAO-CECAF or member states in the assessment or management of fish populations. It did, however, explicitly interview artisanal fishers in its data gathering, and increase the academic output on the interaction between national policies and artisanal fisher communities, thereby increasing their visibility for science-based policy formation, suggesting a somewhat positive, though implicit, advancement in recognition justice for artisanal fisher communities, despite it having little effect on policy (Dème, 2022). An example of this is the article by Dème & Failler (2022) on the inconsistencies in Senegalese public policies in support of artisanal fishers.

DEMERSTEM, on the other hand, seemed to have more tangible goals and results of creating tools and know-how for ecosystemic approaches to fisheries management, and enhanced methods of evaluation of fish populations in West Africa through the involvement of many scientists from various research institutes across West Africa and in Europe. In comparison to GREPPAO, the results from this research and formation programme appear far more useful for the regional approach, as they sought to provide FAO-CECAF with the necessary alternative and complementary methods and information for better stock evaluation. In short, the subject matter of the project was, realistically, of more use for the overall goal of PESCAO of enhancing the contribution of fisheries to the food security in the region, as it actively sought to lighten the workload of FAO-CECAF (Jérôme Guitton & Florian Quemper, personal communication, 15 May 2024). It also sought to spatialise the fishing efforts of pirogues, which, as discussed prior, still largely fall outside of data collection methods.

These new stock evaluation models from DEMERSTEM were, at the time of the interview, so-called “candidate models”, and were being evaluated by FAO-CECAF regarding their usefulness. Whereas a number of countries have already adopted the models in practice, the scientists from

DEMERSTEM still push for their application at the regional level through FAO-CECAF. These statistical models are a lot more complex than what is applied by CECAF at present. According to Mr. Guitton, this means that CECAF is reticent to apply their new models out of fear that they might not have the capacity to apply them well, whereas he argues that there are plenty of scientists, such as those who participated in DEMERSTEM, who are very well capable of fulfilling that role (J. Guitton & F. Quemper, personal communication, 15 May 2024). Observing the impact of Component 3's modernisation and enhancement of CECAF, it being able to better assess the health of fish populations in the region, to provide more sound scientific advice on the maximum sustainable yield of certain species, this could theoretically lead to better policies from the states who *do* have the power to mandate certain catch amounts downstream—thereby improving redistribution justice *somewhat*. This thesis believes this result to be mixed, at best, since improvements have been made to the CECAF framework, but the tangible effects of these improvements further down the information chain among states, and artisanal fishers, are unclear. The main adaptations of its framework relate to improvements in knowledge of the challenges of integrating CECAF scientific advice into national management processes through various country-focused reports, improved collaboration in data and information sharing between CECAF and its member states through standardised fisheries data reporting tools, and the prospect of improvement in the RFB's fish population assessment models (FAO-CECAF, 2022)

Component 3 also received criticism for its insularity and lack of real coordination (B. Caillart, personal communication, 7 May 2024). Despite meetings at the beginning and near the end to discuss the results of the three scientific projects, they could have benefitted from more extensive collaboration during the runtime of the programme, as well as simplifying their results for a wider audience. This thesis finds the research and development projects under Component 3 to be the most amenable to pragmatist interests. Though not explicitly furthering the interests of the counterhegemonic group, it does not seek to encourage fishing practices in line with the

hegemonic group's industrial focus either. No scientific programme or fish population assessment research has explicitly included local knowledge on the environment, other than gathering data on catch and migration through interviews in the case of GREPPAO, or beacons on pirogues in the case of DEMERSTEM (A. Panossian, personal communication, 7 May 2024; J. Guitton & F. Quemper, personal communication, 15 May 2024). Explicitly including local environmental knowledge could have been beneficial for, or even crucial to, for example, historical reconstructions of fish landings in order to complement stock assessment data from FAO-CECAF (Macedo et al., 2025). Conversely, their inclusion could also open the door to what Macedo et al. (2025) call shifting baseline syndrome, whereby different generations associate different meanings to their experienced realities—younger generations might not perceive the drop in fish populations as dramatically as older ones. Ultimately, the necessity to better emphasise local knowledge and decentralised capacities over a centralised top-down approach came up as one of three areas of strategic improvement for West African fisheries management at a roundtable discussion on the results of component 3 in Abuja, Nigeria (FAO, 2025c).

Fisheries management should be, at its core, evidence-based, and if there are significant gaps in data on the status of migratory fish populations in the region, this could lead to bad policy making and ultimately overfishing. If the region is to enhance its food security and policy making with regards to its fisheries, be that industrial or artisanal, it is essential to have strong assessment mechanisms in place for evidence-based fisheries management. Within that context, it appears that the grants under component 3 to FAO-CECAF and DEMERSTEM were the ones with useful, if somewhat unfulfilled in the case of the latter, results for the region. Naturally, DEMERSTEM were not the final decision-makers, but the propagation of their stock assessment methods could have benefitted from a longer presence in the region through the PESCAO programme. The enhancement of stock assessment mechanisms in the region is thus not over, as many fish populations remain underassessed or fully unassessed. Furthermore, as long as FAO-CECAF

remains unable to mandate conservation criteria on its member states, it can produce all the scientific advice that it wants, that advice might not be implemented.

6.1.3.4. *Overall observations—implicit justice, explicit modernisation*

Ultimately, this thesis identifies a number of advancements in each of the components for socio-environmental justice of artisanal fisheries and for the marine ecosystem that surrounds them. Though marginal, and despite not forming the core goal of the programme, it is worth noting them given the enduring importance of artisanal fisher communities in the region. Observing these advancements, and noting their value, can serve to guide future interventions to perhaps make more informed choices with regards to artisanal fishers. This being said, note that the programme did little to reinforce the capabilities of artisanal fishers to live fulfilling lives in the short run—as long as their fishing grounds are not sufficiently protected from incursions, or the fish populations they rely on are not sufficiently protected from industrial overfishing. Rather, it focused on enhancing (inter)national capacity in monitoring, control and surveillance for an industrial-style fisheries sector, which might have impact in the long run, and fell short of reinforcing the RFBs to the point that they could mandate the tonnage of fish industrial vessels are allowed to extract. Theoretically, some interventions also increased institutional knowledge at the state, ECOWAS, and CECAF level on the value of artisanal fishing communities, but so far, this has not yet been translated into meaningful and targeted policy along the lines of the VGSSF or the SSF Call to Action to support them in their struggles against unfair industrial competition and the consequences of climate change (FAO, 2015; SSF Call to Action, 2022a). As of 2025, it appears too early to tell whether the PESCAO programme will meaningfully impact the capabilities of coastal artisanal fishing communities.

Fig. 4: Interventions and resulting changes in terms of socio-environmental justice

<i>N</i>	<i>Intervention</i>	<i>Component</i>	<i>Justice type</i>	<i>Result</i>
1	Recognition of importance in the CSF-SFAD	1	Recognition justice	Mixed
2	Formalisation of WANSAFA regional	1	Representation justice; capabilities justice	Positive
3	Formalisation of WANSAFA national	1	Representation justice; capabilities justice	Largely positive, incomplete
4	Enhanced monitoring, control and surveillance on industrial vessels	2	Redistribution justice	Mixed
5	Increased attention for artisanal fishers in scientific research through GREPPAO	3	Recognition justice	Largely negative
6	Enhanced knowledge on health of fish populations through statistical measures in CECAF	3	Redistribution justice	Mixed
7	Increased attention for artisanal fishers in scientific research through DemerstEm	3	Recognition justice	Neutral

(Source: Author; Caillart et al., 2022; Gueye & Gorez, 2022)

These implicit advancements in terms of justice through the interventions above remain marginal compared to the larger changes the PESCAO programme produced in legislation, monitoring, control and surveillance, and organisational set-up of FAO-CECAF and the relationship between ECOWAS and the Regional Fisheries Bodies SRFC and FCWC. Those interventions remain

hegemonic and idealistic to their core, meaning the group of institutional idealists retained the upper hand in terms of influence on the programme and (inter-)governmental bodies remained the ultimate beneficiaries of the programme, receiving the bulk of funding, material and immaterial aid and increasing their control over fisheries in the region. What becomes clear, then, is that the focus of the programme was mostly on the enhancement of the capacity of institutional actors in West Africa based on experience of integrated fisheries management in the European Union and expensive obligations under the multilateral agreements such as the PSMA. In line with the wider trend in African fisheries governance, the governance, monitoring, control and surveillance infrastructure set up largely focuses on and prioritises the industrial fleets over the artisanal ones (Okafor-Yarwood et al., 2022). While each states' context has certainly been assessed in the crafting of interventions by the programme, as pointed out in the discussion of Component 2, the fight against illegal fishing, cheaper complementary alternatives such as participatory surveillance exist. Though this means that the infrastructure in the region for the combat against IUU fishing had been improved in the short-run, however, this is not necessarily the case for the long-run, as ambitious changes then need to prove their sustainability for states in the absence of funding from the 11th European Development Regional Fund.

6.2. In between programmes: backsliding and aid dependency.

A notable recent observation with is that the programme's actions under component 2 might not have led to perduring change or long-term strengthening of fisheries governance in all countries. This is most visible in the case of Senegal, whose government was issued a 'yellow card' by the European Commission on the 27th of May 2024 for non-compliance in the fight against IUU fishing. The evaluation of the EU-Senegal SFPA for tuna and hake it accompanied made specific mention of the legal and material support Senegal had received under the PESCAO programme with respect to the fight against IUU fishing (Gorez, 2024b). There are, however, positive signals, as EFCA

points out that the analysis of and risk-assessment with VMS/AIS data prior to the organisation of MCS patrols has been taken on as standard practice by countries such as Cabo Verde, but the *acquis* of component 2 do not seem set in stone in all states according to the European Commission - a prolongation of training and joint patrols could thus be useful (Caillart et al., 2022). Adding to the case of apparent Senegalese backsliding, the implementation of and transposition of the National Action Plan in the fight against IUU fishing in Mauritania seems, at this stage, to be up in the air (A. Panossian, personal communication, 7 May 2024). The narrative report of the SRFC references that it has not yet been transposed into law or put into effect, with little expectation that this will happen in the future, despite their commitment to do so. The implementation of this National Action Plan is voluntary in nature, but its lack of implementation does suggest a slowdown in monitoring, control and surveillance policy implementation in Mauritania, as well, that could theoretically speed up again under the future programme (A. Panossian, personal communication, 7 May 2024).

Development programmes such as PESCAO should not be expected to be a “silver bullet” that instantly, and sustainably, improves the situation. Monitoring, control and surveillance at sea, and particularly in fisheries, is both costly and resource-intensive, and not all countries should be expected to suddenly adhere to the most modern, most stringent standards. What this slowdown and potential backsliding in the eyes of the European Commission does show, however, is the tendency of West African governments to lose the level of interest they had in maritime governance during the programme runtime. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to make claims about why this might be, but based on Lensink & White’s (1999) work on aid dependency, the infrastructure set up during the programmes might either be too costly for coastal states to maintain on their own, or the political class might simply lose interest when having to fund the interventions with national means. Supporting documentation of Senegal’s *yellow carding* by the European Commission seems to suggest the latter option, yet it raises questions on the value of

the development aid in the first place when it does not produce the conditions for its continuation independently from the development programme.

The SRFC (2023) Narrative Report on Component 2 does reference “sustainability strategies”, in the sense that the knowledge gained among trained fisheries inspectors is not lost, but in practice, this amounts to handing out manuals to fisheries inspectors. Much like CECAF, the SRFC is little more than a Regional Fisheries Body with little to no power to mandate certain behaviours from its member states. They explicitly mention that “the maintenance and management of the system are the responsibility of the [Member States]” (SRFC, 2023). If certain states can only be expected to act in the presence of a foreign development aid programme, either because prior interventions proved too idealistic, costly and unsustainable in the short run, or because policymakers simply lose interest when not explicitly pointed at the somewhat obscure issues in fisheries, this indicates a new form of dependency on aid that does little to combat the structural problems in fisheries in the long run. Programmes like PESCAO need to be careful when crafting context-based interventions to ensure their long-term sustainability for participating states and fishing communities, instead of relying on the assumption that states will carry on what from their perspective might amount to costly and superfluous monitoring, control and surveillance, such as with the transboundary control missions even when the European Union does not cofinance them (B. Caillart, personal communication 7 May 2024). More importantly, the interventions under PESCAO could have positive long-term implications for artisanal fishers if, for instance, laws and catch quotas become noticeably better enforced at port and at sea, and industrial vessels are compelled to comply with the Port State Measures Agreement, this could lead to more implicit protection for artisanal fishers through, for instance, truly exclusionary exclusive coastal fishing zones. If states are already backsliding, reducing their commitments to monitoring their coastal zones, and leaving free rein to potentially exploitative and extractive industrial and distant water fishing fleets, the limited gains in terms of redistribution,

representation, recognition and capabilities justice that artisanal fishers might have seen are likely to remain unstable at best.

6.3. *Looking ahead: WASOP and the expansion towards a 'Blue Economy'.*

In the coming years, PESCAO will be followed up by the West Africa Sustainable Oceans Programme, or WASOP, for short. With a budget four times that of PESCAO, and an official timespan of just two years, this programme relegates the improvement of MCS capacities in fisheries to just the first of three programmatic elements, as the core of PESCAO is maintained in objective 1 of WASOP ("Strengthen West African ocean governance"). Before delving deeper into the second and third objectives of the programme, it is important to note that objective 1 retains a lot of what made PESCAO work well - the fight against IUU fishing is maintained through the participation of EFCA in policy enhancement and capacity-building, both materially as well as operationally, and joint patrol missions are maintained. The aforementioned criticism of unnecessary, if not wasteful, investment into research that is of no real consequence to the regional approach in fisheries management is addressed by streamlining the research component to only include scientific advice by an FAO-CECAF taskforce in collaboration with relevant regional universities and research centres for enhanced management of shared small pelagics (European Commission, 2023b). This, therefore, drops the investments into both the GREPPAO and DEMERSTEM projects, even if the research from DEMERSTEM could be taken on board given its valuable contributions to the knowledge on demersal fish populations and better statistical stock assessment mechanisms that could benefit FAO-CECAF greatly in their endeavours. This final point is notable, as DEMERSTEM was still in the process of reifying their statistical models in the wider West African practice. Without support from the European Union, the Agrocampus Rennes has no possibility of being active on the ground, rendering the propagation of those complementary stock

assessment models, despite their potential benefit for the enhanced management of fisheries in the region, ever more difficult (Jérôme Guitton & Florian Quemper, personal communication, 15 May 2024).

Nevertheless, objective 1 of enhancing fisheries management does not seem to be the main focus of the programme anymore, as the Blue Economy takes centre stage in the action document (European Commission, 2023b). The wider goal of the programme is for the European Union to support policy-making for the “Blue Economy” in the West African region, in line with the European *Global Gateway* infrastructure projects (European Commission, 2023a; 2023b; Expertise France, 2024). Central to the idea of the Blue Economy is the idea that, based on the premise that the supposedly boundless economic resources of the world’s oceans are essentially underutilised, economic growth, improvement in livelihoods and social conditions, and protection of the environment can be reconciled in a triple-win scenario. According to the UN Special Rapporteur Michael Fakhri (2023), this frame is based on a fundamentally flawed understanding that the world’s oceans, while facing an unprecedented environmental crisis, still offer an untapped and often-overlooked economic frontier, and that the triple-win scenario can be achieved by treating the oceans as private property instead of a public good (UNHRC, 2024). At present, the governance context in West Africa might have been improved, but the cases of Senegal and Mauritania show that this has not solved overfishing or the practice of IUU fishing for the long term. Aside from the northward migration of fish population due to ever-warmer waters, some fish populations remain at risk of collapse even following the PESCAO programme’s conclusion. Within that context, increasing the economic value of the ocean through increased extraction of fish seems counterproductive in achieving the triple-win scenario of the Blue Economy.

Regardless, the programme seeks to enhance the sustainable and integrated use of ocean resources in West Africa on the basis of the Blue Economy in order to boost inclusive economic growth, by supporting innovative and sustainable Blue Economy by financialising the ocean

(objective 2), and enhancing marine and coastal resilience by extending marine protected areas (objective 3) (European Commission, 2023b). It opens up the involvement of the European Commission's directorate general for international partnerships (DG INTPA) to a significantly wider range of economic activities, and invites the renegotiation of the use of ocean space in the region. After all, in the wider Blue Economy, fisheries are but one potential use of ocean space among petrochemical and mineral extraction, tourism, aquaculture and many others. In its action document, WASOP therefore bases itself on the High Seas Treaty, otherwise known as the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement (2023), and commitments made by the European Commission at a number of conferences such as the One Ocean Summit 2022 in Brest and the Our Ocean Conference of 2023 in Panama. These initiatives have been criticised as ushering in a new round of oceanic enclosure under the guise of both exploitation and conservation; hence the necessity of guard rails for the programme (Campbell et al., 2022; Cavallo et al., 2023).

The inherent fuzziness of the concept of the Blue Economy, and its focus on a triple-win scenario combining environmental, social and economic concerns leaves the formulation of policy open to interpretation. As such, the definition of the Blue Economy employed by the African Union differs from the one employed by the European Union in its emphasis on the social aspect of the Blue Economy, which should serve to enhance the transformation and growth of the African continent and its inclusivity of communities that are less well off (AU-IBAR, 2019; European Commission, 2019). The European Union definition noticeably places a heavier emphasis on the economic aspect of the Blue Economy. Conceptually, the Blue Economy remains flexible in order to suit the needs of the actors employing the concept, thereby gaining the capacity to assert itself as policy through a gradual hegemonisation of its common-sense narrative - that we should use the ocean *better* to reap more rewards from it (Schutter et al., 2021). This essentially amounts to unquestioning orientation towards economic growth, but leaves room for manoeuvre as to how

to achieve this goal, with often significant differences between the theory and its application in practice (Ayilu et al., 2022). The Blue Economy's understanding of the ocean's potential is based on the goods and services that could arise from a broad array of industries, such as maritime transport, petrochemical extraction, mining, tourism, aquaculture, conservation economics and fisheries - some of which are more capital-efficient than others (Cohen et al., 2019). According to Cohen et al. (2019), on the current trajectory of the Blue Economy narrative, the reallocation of ocean space is often based on top-down privatisation of the commons driven by short-term economic interests— "ocean grabbing"—thereby squeezing out the social interests of artisanal fisher communities with relatively smaller economic heft.

The aim of this thesis, however, is not to criticise the concept of the Blue Economy itself, but its application within WASOP, and its potential consequences in relation to distributional, procedural, recognition and capabilities justice for artisanal fishers. In the mission document, the European Union employs its own working definition, which is not a bad one, by any stretch, but leaves little room for a context-specific definition for, say, Senegal and Mauritania, or the wider West African region, with input from artisanal fishers, given the unique and specific challenges facing the region explored earlier in this thesis. Aiding in the development of a Blue Economy strategy at the ECOWAS-level is not a bad thing. The increased regional interest in the ocean's potential is a relatively new phenomenon that further developed during the PESCAO programme through the formulation of the CSF-SFAD and the MoUs with the SRFC and FCWC, and as such, like many organisations on the African continent, the Community still lacks the institutional knowledge and technological capacity to do so fully by itself (Okafor-Yarwood et al., 2020; Caillart et al., 2022). Therefore, offering assistance for this development to be successful is essentially logical from the perspective of the European Union, but the working definition employed in the mission document, let alone the employment of the Blue Economy concept in and of itself, already creates strategic selectivity towards a new hegemonic discourse within the future WASOP programme.

As such, the definition employed in the WASOP action document, and its accompanying proposed interventions, such as the financialisation of the ocean, are a modern evolution of the Blue Economy concept that has developed to serve the ambitions of powerful economic interests, of *sustained* growth under the guise of *sustainable* growth (Louey, 2022). The widening in scope to the entire Blue Economy, largely based on the Blue Economy strategy of the African Union, which acknowledges the relatively low economic heft of fisheries in comparison to offshore minerals, oil and gas, and coastal tourism encroaching on traditional beaches, landing grounds and communities by building beachside resorts instead, runs the risk of reducing the voice and economic importance of artisanal fishers in the formulation and supposed improvement of Blue Economy policy (AU-IBAR, 2019). Previous research also points out that the prevalence of loans over cash grants as financial instruments in the Blue Economy indicates a preference for sectors with higher returns on investment, as well as a notable lack of scrutiny and transparency in said investments from the private sector (Schutter et al., 2024). The action document of WASOP also does not make any mention of potentially conflicting uses of ocean space for the Blue Economy, and the supplanting of vital activities with lesser economic value by more value-intensive industries. Simply put, a beach might create more value when privatised for hotels and resorts, but would deprive artisanal fishers from their usual landing spot. In a letter to DG INTPA, CFFA and CAOPA already raised this risk of future industries replacing vital current ones as a concern (Gorez, 2022a; Gueye & Gorez, 2022).

Contrary to, for example, the operationalisation of the Blue Economy in the CSF-SFAD, as formulated by ECOWAS under the PESCAO programme, yet in line with its predecessor's mission statement, the WASOP action document makes no reference to the FAO VGSSF (ECOWAS, 2019; European Commission, 2023b). While both documents present economic growth as the foremost reason to lay the groundwork for a regional approach to the Blue Economy, the CSF-SFAD differentiates itself by focusing less on finance, and more on fisheries and maintaining and

enhancing the position of small-scale fishers in the wider economic landscape (ECOWAS, 2019; European Commission, 2023b). Based on the importance accorded to output 2.2 ('access to Blue Economy instruments and blue finance facilitated'), it remains to be seen if the results of the programme can be safeguarded against important financial interests from the private sector (European Commission, 2023b).

A more tangible, direct consequence that the implementation of the new programme is likely to have, is the reinforcement of capacity of regional and local organisations such as the *Réseau régional des Aires Maritimes Protégées en Afrique de l'Ouest* (RAMPAO) for the management of West African MPAs and, more crucially, the proposal for the creation of a marine protected area in the high seas, i.e., beyond national jurisdiction of the West African coastal states, as has been made possible under the High Seas Treaty (BBNJ, 2023; European Commission, 2023b). The capacity-building for these management organisations is both positive and necessary, but the exploration of the creation of such an MPA beyond national jurisdiction carries, the way this research sees it, three distinct risks that need careful evaluation prior to its implementation. Firstly, the future programme needs to carefully evaluate the MCS capacities of the states and RFBs in the region for the management and protection of said MPA to be effective. Increasingly, evidence shows that for MPAs to provide more ecological benefits, they need to be either strongly or fully protected (Giakoumi et al., 2018; Pendleton et al., 2018). Yet the RFBs' and states' MCS capacities have only recently, and only partially, been strengthened with the help of EFCA under PESCAO with a focus on asserting control on their EEZs. The creation of an MPA on the high seas should therefore avoid overextending the MCS framework currently in place as best it can. Secondly, as Leurs et al. (2021) point out, evidence from the Parc National du Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania and the Bijagós Biosphere Reserve in Guinea-Bissau shows that, though industrial fleets, most notably trawlers, move their fishing activities outside of these MPAs, they do concentrate their efforts around their borders. This is a trend that can be observed around MPAs more generally, as their status as

nursing grounds for fish populations attracts industrial fleets targeting the ‘spillover’ fisheries resources (Di Lorenzo et al., 2016; Cohen et al., 2021). Lastly, by limiting access to fishing grounds in the high seas, it risks driving the industrial fleets currently operating there into the EEZs of West African states, where they would compete with artisanal fishers for the pelagic resource, endangering the food security of the local communities - a concern raised by CFFA in the past (Philippe, 2023).

In line with the SSF Call to Action, the new programme should commit itself to avoiding risking what could essentially amount to dispossession of the fishing grounds of artisanal fishers through more competitive accumulation regimes such as conservation finance or tourism (Doerr, 2016; SSF Call to Action, 2022a). The implied reallocation of ocean space under the future Blue Economy of West Africa should not come at the expense of the marine biodiversity of the historically flourishing ecosystem, the food security of its citizens or the hard-fought *acquis* of its artisanal fishing communities—it should not come with negative consequences for the capabilities of the regional populations and ecosystems to pursue fulfilling lives.

Where PESCAO focused on the ‘infrastructure’ of the marine policy domain, WASOP, then, seems more ideological. The focus of the action document on the Blue Economy points to an aim to change the ‘superstructure’, the politico-cultural definition of the ocean in the West African region. Outside of the Blue Economy having been made a priority by the African Union (African Union Interafrican Bureau of Animal Resources [AU-IBAR], 2019), WASOP lacks the clarity of purpose that made PESCAO a focused and ultimately successful programme. Outside of BBNJ, to which not all ECOWAS+ states are parties, the new programme is not as deeply connected to international law when it comes to its second and third objectives as its predecessor. The reification of the Blue Economy as a new superstructure to reevaluate and reallocate West African ocean space risks basing said reallocation on what sector provides the most economic growth short-term. The triple-win logic of the Blue Economy, decoupling economic growth from

environmental damages and social backsliding is a dangerous fiction when conferences on the Blue Economy are visited almost exclusively by financiers, and the concerns of artisanal fishers are often underrepresented, if not totally absent (Cohen et al., 2019; Philippe, 2024a).

Finally, with a particular eye for the recent communication of the European Commission with regards to Senegalese 'backsliding' in the fight against IUU fishing, it might be more valuable to prolong and intensify the fisheries and aquaculture component of WASOP instead of diverting the attention from the institutions involved to the development of the West African Blue Economy (Gorez, 2024b). In light of the tense situation many local demersal and pelagic fish populations find themselves in, and the catastrophic consequences a collapse in fish populations could have on the food security in the region, there is more urgency in resolving the maritime governance problems of the present than in developing the maritime industries of the future.

7. *Discussion*

This thesis is naturally far from perfect. A major challenge facing the analysis of these fisheries management development programmes in West Africa was the limited availability of public data. In all appearances, this lack does not stem from any secrecy on the part of the implementing parties of the programme, rather from an apparent lack of coordination, potentially due to the Covid pandemic slowing the pace of communication between the implementing parties. Some documents refer to a website (<https://www.pescao.org/>), yet the website seemingly no longer exists, removing a potential central gathering space for documentation on the programme similar to that of ECOFISH, another fisheries management development programme in Eastern Africa. The dispersed nature of the documentation on PESCAO online, as well as its limited publication and apparent removal of several documents, means the analysis had to be based in part on secondary sources—for instance, the mid-term evaluation that had access to more documents, such as

meeting minutes of the steering committee and programme newsletters. This issue was shared with and commented on by other researchers who wrote about the programme (A. Panossian, personal communication, 7 May 2024; B. Caillart, personal communication, 7 May 2024).

The distance of this thesis to the subject of analysis—that being the effects in terms of social justice for West African artisanal fisher communities of the PESCAO programme—can also be considered a limiting factor. Interviews had to be conducted online with individuals linked to the programme ranging from Brittany, France, to Senegal and Cambodia, in order to gain primary sources, but the author was limited in the means to gain anecdotal information firsthand.

Importantly, this thesis has sought to avoid the pitfall of speaking for the artisanal fisher communities in their stead, by basing the analysis of advancements in socio-environmental justice terms on demands formulated and documents produced by artisanal fisher communities themselves—notably the SSF Call to Action—or co-produced with them—such as the FAO VGSSF (FAO, 2015). It has sought to abide by the [Rules of Conduct](#) established by global artisanal fisher organisations with the support of CFFA during the 2022 International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture to the best of its ability (SSF Call to Action, 2022b). While it is true that the critical approach of the thesis ultimately seeks to be emancipatory in nature, the goal is not to formulate a conclusion that speaks for artisanal fishing communities in their stead, rather to offer an informed perspective on the evolutions in social justice that occurred under PESCAO and raise awareness without limiting their voices.

Ultimately, the case study presented in this thesis is not generalisable to wider cases of development aid in fisheries management, nor does it claim to be. It does offer interesting insights into the world of fisheries management development programmes by the European Union, and how a social justice approach to the inclusion of artisanal fishers could be beneficial to future implementation of monitoring, control and surveillance measures. The research also carries direct implications for the follow-up programme that was discussed, the West Africa Sustainable Ocean

Programme, and the potentially detrimental effects of its widening in scope in terms of recognition, representation, redistribution and capabilities justice for artisanal fisher communities.

8. Conclusion and policy recommendations

This thesis assessed the European Union-funded fisheries management development programme PESCAO, and its follow-up programme WASOP, as case studies on the basis of its impact in terms of social justice for artisanal fisher communities in West Africa. Artisanal fisheries form the cornerstone of coastal communities in West Africa, and are essential for the food security of millions in a region that faces a number of fisheries governance challenges. West African waters are notorious for illegal fishing practices and overfishing by foreign and domestic industrial fleets, and evidence-based fish population management lags behind due to lack of available data and enforcement mechanisms.

Theories employed in this thesis were radical environmental justice based on the works of Fraser and Schlosberg, expanding justice from being concerned merely with economic redistribution to also include political representation and cultural recognition, as well as capability to live life to the fullest; Lensink & White's conceptualisation of aid dependency, which posits that new forms of dependency arise when a country cannot achieve a certain goal in the absence of foreign aid; and the historical-materialist concepts of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic alliances in policy-making. Data was gathered through careful document analysis as well as four interviews with five actors involved in the PESCAO programme.

In order to illuminate various aspects of the programmes, this thesis employed the cyclical methodology of historical-materialist policy analysis, subdividing the analysis in, first, an exploration of the context of West African fisheries to expand on the challenges they face and on

the essential nature of artisanal fisheries for the region's economy and food security. It then delved into an actor analysis, setting apart two loose ideological alliances of actors within the PESCAO programme with common goals, yet different interests and levels of influence over the direction of the programme. The analysis then continued on to a play-by-play exploration of the tangible results of the PESCAO programme for artisanal fisheries in terms of socio-environmental justice, an observation on the apparent backsliding of certain states with regards to their fisheries management, linked to the concept of aid dependency, and a look ahead to WASOP, a programme that is even more ambitious and idealistic, aiming to expand the "Blue Economy" when the challenges in fisheries still require much attention.

In response to the question of which interests largely prevailed in the resulting policies of the PESCAO programme, this thesis identified two groups that, though they largely agree on the challenges facing fisheries in West Africa, seemingly disagree on the best methods and potential pathways to solving these problems. The first group, the hegemonic group within the PESCAO programme, was dubbed "institutional idealists", a group of state and supranational actors that largely looked at modern, European Union-style monitoring, control and surveillance systems and infrastructure for inspiration on how to reduce illegal fishing in West Africa and improve control over their waters. The second group, dubbed "pragmatists", consisted mostly of non-state actors such as the WANSFAFA platforms, that unite NGOs and artisanal fisher interest groups. This latter group, much weaker in influence over the programme, did experience a number of advances in terms of socio-environmental justice, meaning their interest were heard and acted upon to a certain degree, but did not form the core of the programme. This made interventions such as the reification of WANSFAFA as a severely outvoted member of the steering committee seem like class compromises rather than true advances in the short run, and points to the governance structure of these programmes retaining 'historical-materialist state-like' skewed strategic selectivity that

largely excluded participation from artisanal fisher communities, treating them as subjects of analysis more than true partners in policy-making.

Following the conclusion of the PESCAO programme, this thesis observed a certain loss of interest among states such as Mauritania and Senegal for the continuation of the fight against IUU fishing in the region. This is partially explained through the relations of aid dependency these fisheries development programmes produce, whereby the programmes essentially function as a magnifying glass for policy makers on the fisheries policy domain, leading to increased interest and investments from states. Ultimately, these investments, funded in large part by the European Union 11th European Development Fund, might ultimately prove unsustainable for states when funding stops, and policymakers lose interest. In the case of PESCAO, for example, continued monitoring, control and surveillance at sea is both a costly and intensive enterprise that governments might not wish to pursue with the same fervour as during the runtime of the development programme—which would then call into question whether the limited *acquis* in terms of justice for artisanal fishers under the programme will truly prove long-term.

While it is hopefully clear that the concerns about fisheries management and illegal fishing in West Africa have not yet gone away, the follow-up programme WASOP risks falling into the same trap of overambitiousness of its predecessor. While it does continue some interventions in fisheries of its predecessor, it also seeks to expand the policy domain beyond fisheries to a wider Blue Economy perspective, which will include more actors, more economic interests, and risks marginalising artisanal fishers as a group that made some strides towards better representation and recognition during PESCAO. More than anything, this thesis argues for caution and inclusivity on the part of policymakers in the implementation of this ambitious development programme.

There is undeniable value in these programmes, insofar as they help coastal states to exert more control on the economic value of what is theirs under the Law of the Sea, to comply with the multilateral agreements they have bound themselves to and to improve the working conditions of

people in the fisheries sector. Nevertheless, a critical assessment of their setup and growth-orientation can reveal the potential risks they incur of moving away from human practices to capitalist practices of ocean-grabbing, thereby further alienating artisanal fishing communities. Note that the BBNJ is a binding agreement, whereas the VGSSF are voluntary guidelines. Within the ever-increasing importance of the Blue Economy rests a perilous confusion in priorities. The creation of marine protected areas is non-negotiable, but the place of artisanal fishing communities risks being in constant flux depending on the definition of the Blue Economy being implemented under WASOP and in the years following its conclusion. The value of PESCAO rested in its clarity and inclusivity - the goals were unambiguous and widely shared, and the programme's implementation was in large part based on demand rather than blind supply. Its pitfalls were that the way these goals were addressed did not involve artisanal fisher communities, the undeniable base of West African fisheries, nearly enough, nor did some of the efforts go far enough in formalising the scientific assessment and management structure. If the West African Sustainable Oceans Programme is to be a responsible and successful follow-up, it needs to truly implement the short paragraph on lessons learnt from previous programmes, provide upon its promise of a human rights-based approach, take into account not only the BBNJ, but implement the VGSSF to their fullest extent as it is under the CSF-SFAD, build on the expertise created under PESCAO among state and civil society actors, and implement a comprehensive dialogue about the Blue Economy across scales as promised, from intergovernmental organisations and governments to the artisanal fishers of St Louis and Nouadhibou. As long as fisheries governance in West Africa remains opaque, prone to influence from potentially predatory (Blue Economy) industries, vulnerable to IUU fishing, and, ultimately, unsustainable, food security will continue to be at risk, and local artisanal fishing communities are at the frontline. By no means does this research consider capacity building programmes such as PESCAO and WASOP to be the silver bullet to solve this, but if implemented conscientiously, truly transparently and inclusively, they can certainly be of help.

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