CONTESTED LANDSCAPES: THIRD-PARTY CERTIFICATION AND THE BLUE ECONOMY IN WEST AFRICA

by
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Abstract

In recent years, the blue economy has emerged as among the most critical market-based solutions to achieve a 'triple-win' for marine resources, climate change, and fisher's livelihood. Surprisingly, despite the grandiose claims, we continue to know little about how the blue growth strategy can achieve this triple-win. This thesis seeks to address the overarching question: *How has third-party certification distributed political and economic power in West Africa's fisheries, and in turn, how has it been resisted or accepted by fishers?* I argue that the blue economy needs certified fisheries and aquaculture. The corporate seafood regime has led to keystone corporations reorganizing the seafood system to increase their profits through certified products, and by using a sustainable narrative trope that rationalizes and perpetuates access and control to West African fisheries resources. The implication is that certification schemes are orienting fisheries for export instead of self-sufficiency.

I also argue that marginal actors such as small-scale fishers mobilized exclusion and lack of voice to contest and resist corporate control over the global seafood and reconstruct alternative food systems. I posit that these actors challenge the discourses, knowledge, and evidence that tends to entrench a corporate seafood system. I develop a theoretical framework that highlights how different aspects of the relationship between hegemony and corporate seafood regime interfaces with the everyday political economy to understand the persistence of the blue economy despite its contradictions, and the ensuing frictions of resistance

In sum, this thesis addresses a significant gap in the international political economy literature by offering a systematic theoretical and empirical exploration of when a seafood regime becomes hegemonic; and the agency of marginal actors, especially as they negotiate alternative food systems. It thus contributes to seafood regulation and the recent call towards 'thinking ecologically' as well as the broader ongoing debates about the alternative food system and environmental justice.

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ACP	African, Caribbean, and Pacific
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Agreement
AfDB	African Development Bank
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEZs	Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)
FIPs	Fisheries Improvement Programs
FoS	Friend of the Sea
FPAs	Fishing Partnership Agreements
IFFO RS	International Fishmeal and Fish Oil Responsible Supply
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated
MSC	Marine Stewardship Council
MSIs	Multistakeholder Initiatives
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
RSPO	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
TBGIs	Transnational Business Governance Initiatives
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UNCLOS	United Nations Conventional of Law of the Sea
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WARFP	West Africa Regional Fisheries Program

Chapter 1 : Power and resistance: The politics of West Africa's fisheries

1.1 Introduction

One of the enduring trends in the global fisheries sector has been the growing demand for fish. In 2015 alone, fish provided 3.2 billion people with about 20 percent of their average protein intake, and in 2016 global fish production reached 171 million tonnes with a market value of US$362 billion, aquaculture alone accounting for 47 percent of the total and 53 percent of non-food uses are excluded (FAO, 2018, p. 2). With the collapse of North Atlantic fisheries, many industrial fishing fleets have turned southwards to rich coastal waters such as Peru and West Africa. Within the same period, many international organizations and scholars have promoted the blue economy model– the sustainable use of rivers, lakes, and oceans – as a 'triple-win' for marine resources, climate change, and fishers' livelihood (Cohen *et al*., 2019).

Although there is little empirical evidence to explain how the blue economy can achieve this 'triple-win,' the blue growth discourse is nevertheless filled with grandiose claims. For instance, in recent works, the blue economy is heralded as the "new frontier of African renaissance" with immense benefits for "transformation and growth (UNECA, 2016, p. 7). However, the lack of attention to the complex power relations that adorn the blue growth, as well as the mainstream argument that market-driven policy instruments such as standards, eco-certifications, eco-labels, blue bonds, and individual transferable quotas (ITQs) are 'technoscientific practices' and 'apolitical' (Altamirano-Jimenez, 2013, p. 2) detracts from how the blue economy revolves around relations of power and is imbricated in constructing and disseminating hegemonic knowledge regarding truth claims about how nature is to be managed (Andrée *et al*., 2014).

The aggressive expansion of the fisheries sector in West Africa, since the late 1990s, coincided with the decades of the boom in the extractive industry and the revival of a resource-based development strategy. Many have referred to this model as 'extractivism' or 'reprimarization' to denote governments' reliance on foreign capital flows to explore, cultivate and extract natural resources and fisheries for export (Veltmeyer & Bowles, 2014). This was a commodity boom period which undoubtedly enhanced growth and provided states with revenues through fees paid in exchange for agreements to fish in coastal waters and generated significant externalities with profound socio-ecological impacts.

Activities of powerful actors such as keystone transnational corporations (Osterblom *et al.,* 2015), whose operations traverse the globe (Murphy, 2008), fuel the exploitation of marine resources. Keystone corporations are not the only powerful actors in the game, as supranational organizations such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Western governments, and financial actors have continued to push for a corporate seafood system. Osterblom *et al.* (2015) argue that keystone corporations indirectly participate in regional fisheries management organizations and work directly with governments in the developing countries giving them privileged positions in policy arenas and significant resources to lobby and shape global fisheries policies.

Powerful governments utilize their privileged position in the global governance arenas to promote food sustainability models that align with their food and trade interests (Clapp & Scott, 2018). International organizations such as the FAO diffuse norms across borders as their agency enables them to socialize and push forward their interests (Clapp, 2017) through neoliberal platforms (Newell & Taylor, 2017). Through the commodification and privatization of fisheries, financialization diverts resources and shifts power away from artisanal fishers and coastal

communities to corporate, state, and financial actors. Through distancing and abstraction, financial actors work towards externalizing ecological costs, and displacing local communities while enhancing shareholder value (Clapp & Scott, 2018), and fueling 'ocean grabbing' (Knott & Neis, 2017).

Powerful actors such as transnational corporations are deepening asymmetric power relations in the fisheries value chains. Coupled with the weak and fragmented nature of the global fisheries governance, this relationship has significantly affected the socio-ecological dynamics of the fisheries sector in the developing countries. Scholarly analysis of the West African fisheries reflects a more in-depth inquiry into the political economy of seafood. In turn, such an inquiry requires understanding how power is entangled at different levels, spaces, and actors, and how such an understanding may open the space to transform seafood system equitably and sustainably (Anderson *et al*., 2019). One area where these entanglements are unfolding is in the new blue economy paradigm adopted by the African Union.

While existing research has confirmed that the blue economy is reshaping the fisheries sector, uncertainty remains on how policy instruments, specifically, third-party certification – certificates "issued by agents with no stake in the market chains" to address issues of information asymmetry regarding "food quality and safety" and the environment (Almeida, Pessali & de Paula, 2010, p. 479) – may distribute power unevenly in West Africa's fisheries. The fragmented governance structure of the region's fisheries sector elevates this uncertainty.

1.2 Question and argument

How has third-party certification distributed political and economic power in West Africa's fisheries sector, and in turn, how has it been resisted or accepted by fishers? These are urgent questions for regime analysis theorists and critical International Political Economy (IPE) scholars

grasping with "socio-ecological crisis driven by techno-capitalist development" (Dunlap & Jakobsen, 2020, p. 1).

I argue that the blue economy requires certified fisheries and aquaculture. Third-party certification schemes, as market-based policy instruments, are promoted by actors who wish to balance profits with conservation objectives to generate higher demand for sustainably sourced seafood. The corporate seafood regime has led to keystone corporations reorganizing the seafood system to increase their profits through certified products and using the sustainable narrative trope that rationalizes and perpetuates access and control to West African fisheries resources. While proponents of sustainability and equity promote fisheries improvement programs and certification schemes, policy instruments serve, as Anderson *et al*. (2019) explain, corporate interests that can distance and abstract the seafood system to externalize ecological costs, marginalize small-scale fishers while enhancing the profits of powerful actors. I argue that neoliberal policy instruments are not apolitical or technocratic practices but implicated in power relations. These are arenas for 'power struggles,' as Foley and Havice (2016) explain, that disempower marginalized actors – "both politically and in their access to resources, services, and the wealth of the state" (Anderson *et al*., 2019, p.3), "harden hierarchical structures, and legitimize particular forms of expertise" (Winder, 2018, pp. 6–7) in the seafood system.

The sustainable narrative is a neoliberal trope that rationalizes and perpetuates commodification, privatization, financialization, and ocean grabbing – processes, practices, and performances that seek to reconcile growth with sustainability. From a critical IPE perspective, fisheries certification in West Africa is emblematic of the hegemonic food system. West African states have primarily not challenged these norms. They have become significant co-opted actors

in articulating hegemony in the fisheries sector, demonstrating the complexity and entanglement of certification schemes with public authority.

My thesis refuses to read the global seafood system as only hegemonic. Instead, it argues that marginal actors often skirted away in the political economy of seafood, mobilized exclusion and lack of voice to contest and resist corporate control over the global seafood and reconstruct alternative food systems. These actors draw on the food sovereignty movement to challenge the narrow technocratic policy instruments such as 'sustainable intensification' and large-scale aquaculture that are presented as solutions to higher yields and better adaptable to climate change without harming the environment. They challenge discourses, knowledge, and evidence in the seafood system that entrenches corporations' power over small-scale fishers, Indigenous people, and women.

I bring into conversation critical IPE scholarship – neo-Gramscian (Cox, 1983), and the everyday IPE (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007) – with food regime analysis (Friedman, 2005) to show the material, institutional and discursive embeddedness of the blue economy and neoliberal policy instruments such as third-party certification schemes, revealing the discords of resistance, and how the everyday is enacted at the local level. My critical and integrative approach, which I refer to as the *Everyday IPE of the corporate hegemonic seafood regime*, is not contradictory but reflects the growing attempts to understand the persistence of food regimes despite the inherent contradictions (Brown, 2020). My focus on local and global levels and powerful and marginal actors reflects a recent push in IPE scholarship (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007) to expand the field of study beyond merely powerful actors.

I contribute to the literature on seafood regulation and the recent call towards 'thinking ecologically' (Katz-Rosene & Paterson, 2018). By focusing on fisheries 'sustainability

narratives' and the agency of marginal actors, especially as they negotiate alternative food systems, my project promotes environmental justice by imagining a fisheries sector that caters to the needs of small-scale fishers, Indigenous people and women.

1.3 Conceptual issues

In this section, I explore the conceptual issues in this thesis, focusing on how power animates the fisheries sector and how the shift towards non-state market-driven environmental governance through voluntary certification occurs in the context of a corporate environmental seafood regime. This regime has given enormous powers to corporations strategically positioned to push for sustainability in the global seafood value chains in ways that entrench their corporate interests.

1.3.1 Corporate control of the fisheries sector

Since the 1950s, technological advancement such as fishing fleet sophistication – size, speed, onboard refrigeration, acoustic fish-finders, and later geographic positioning systems (Pauly 2019), – a new "ocean legal order" such as the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) enshrined in the United Nations Conventional of Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (Talhelm, 2000, p. 385), and organizational efficiency in the fishery value chains led to the depletion of fish stock in the Northern Hemisphere. With the collapse of North Atlantic fisheries, many industrial fishing fleets have turned southwards to rich coastal waters such as Peru and West Africa. West Africa is one of the three hubs of global fishmeal production. The first is Peru which has the most extensive fishing stocks; the second is China which is the largest importer of fish products, and the last in West Africa, which is at the epicentre of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fisheries, and is most prone to the contest and resistance in the fisheries sector.

This period witnessed the emergence of a 'fishing-industrial complex' (Pauly, 2019). The fishing-industrial complex refers to a tightly coupled economic system made up of industries providing ideas, material and technical support to the marine sector, conservation and fishing, aquaculture farming, harvesting, processing, transportation and delivery of fish products (Pauly, 2019). Seafood, fishmeal, and fish oil are the main end products of this sector. Keystone corporations, lobbyists, international organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), parliamentary representatives, the fisheries epistemic community, and financiers (Pauly, 2019) are the main actors. Others include food activists, artisanal fishers, and numerous non-governmental organizations. These actors wield considerable material, discursive, and ideational power to exert structural power in the broader agro-food value chains. They also "assert hegemonic control over a terrain of political struggle" (Carroll 2016, p. 6) in the fisheries sector.

Take, for example, the enormous power exercised by keystone transnational corporations in the fisheries sector; as few as 13 keystone transnational corporations control 40 percent of the largest and most influential fish stocks and dominate the global seafood value chains (Osterblom *et al.,* 2015). A focus on the material, discursive, and symbolic power of these actors is therefore nuanced, not just because of their financial power, but also because of their roles in private regulation and standard-setting in food safety and quality, and the extent to which their socio-ecological narratives (Katz-Rosene & Paterson, 2018) may impact the fisheries sector.

In Africa, this period coincided with the neoliberal waves of privatization imposed by structural adjustment programs in the fisheries sector as an appropriate solution to commons' tragedy. Privatization redefined "access rights or privileges to open, common, or state-owned fisheries and promoted the private allocation of, and control over, public resources" (Carothers &

Chambers, 2012, p. 39). It also drew the fisheries sector into direct competition with industrial fishing through neoliberal structural adjustments, and subsidies, thereby slowly stifling the growth of artisanal fishers, and eroding their powers to compete in the global fisheries value chains. Governments' involved in the fisheries sector sold off state-owned assets to private investors. Through controversial engagements such as the European Commission Fishing Partnership Agreements (FPAs), as well as fishing licenses granted to Chinese state-owned enterprises, South Korean companies and many others, foreign industrial fleet prowl the waters, benefiting "from the fisheries at the expense of West African countries and their local communities" (Virdin, 2019, np).

While these countries embrace neoliberal and post-neoliberal policy instruments, the growing gulf between the promise and reality of the dominant food system is more apparent. Neoliberal and post-neoliberal globalized agri-food systems have been under attack in the field of critical IPE (Carroll, 2016; Foley & Mather, 2018), contentious political economy (Neville, 2015), cultural and everyday political economy (Elias & Roberts, 2016; Best & Paterson, 2010), social justice and feminism (McMahon, 2011; Cadieux & Slocum, 2015). These last group of scholars have specifically contested a food system that ignores inequalities and intersectionality, by positing that the embeddedness of the seafood system marginalizes many actors, such as small-scale fishers, creating frictions that resist and contest the "coercive uniformity" of corporate seafood systems (McMahon, 2011, p. 409).

A review of this literature reveals that market-based approaches to the environment amongst others not only facilitates the introduction of contested technologies (Newell & Taylor, 2017; Widengård, 2011), intensive socio-ecological impacts (Katz-Rosene & Paterson, 2018) but also the reproduction of capital through "liberal forms of enclosure and exclusion" that in the

context of this research, deprive fishers and coastal communities the benefits of the commons (Bresnihan, 2018, p. 4). It also shows how the globalized seafood systems concentrate power in a small clique of actors through privileging information control and prioritizing scientific and evidence-based knowledge, practices that work against marginal actors. The supposed benefits of market-led governance of the fisheries sector have failed to provide the benefits of food security, coastal development, and environmental protection, especially where "governmentalities start changing into something more 'local' or intermeshed" (Widengård, 2011, p. 44). I explore the power dynamics that play out in the fisheries sector's embedding in neoliberal seafood systems.

1.3.2 Regulation through certification

A rich literature on the modernization of the fisheries sector, both in the global North and the global South, has arisen around the choice of policy instruments, based on the need for 'governance beyond the state' as private ordering increasingly displaces and take control over responsibilities of the state. Synthesizing this literature leads to the preliminary conclusion that neoliberal policy tools are useful in stimulating fishers' active participation in sustainable fisheries (Bresnihan, 2018). Fisheries certification is a market-based soft policy instrument deployed in the fisheries sector "to verify the legality, chains of custody, ecolabelling and trademarks, conservation and development" of the fisheries sector in a multidimensional way that ensures sustainability (Muthoo, 2012, p. 17).

Certification schemes as regulatory tools are at the center of debates around sustainability, especially in the forestry, oil palm and fisheries sectors (Changing Market Foundation, 2018). The recent growth in certification in the fisheries sector is driven by concerns with the growing consumption (Dauvergne, 2010) of fish and fishmeal and fish oil (Changing Market Foundation, 2018; FAO, 2018; Schneider, 2017) and the environmental and social production linked with

food safety and quality (Almeida, Pessali & de Paula, 2010). Among different forms of certification, scholars argue that third-party certification schemes, as independent audits, are better positioned to ensure that standards for food safety and quality are credible (Seele & Gatti, 2017). Moreover, the 'use of independent, science-based expertise' and 'technoscientific values' gives credibility and social legitimacy to third-party certification schemes (Foley & Havice 2016; Hatanaka, Bain & Busch, 2005).

Debates around certification schemes have polarized in two dimensions. In the first instance, functionalist scholars argue that in the absence of effective national and international legislation to address the socio-ecological crisis in commodity value chains such as 'ghost fishing,' voluntary certification schemes step in to fill the void (Changing Market Foundations, 2018). Others regard certification schemes, especially third-party certification, as attempts to reduce information asymmetry, by allowing small and big actors to leverage market forces to improve environmental outcomes. The provision of timely information also enables consumers to make informed choices. This argument, anchored in neoliberal ideology, favours free markets, competition, deregulation, and free trade.

Critical scholars, however, argue that the advantages attributed to certifications are misguided. For example, in an earlier study, Hatanaka, Bain and Busch argue that far from being "an objective or impartial technical tool or institution desirable for the efficient organization and regulations of markets and trade," certification schemes "reorganizes, transforms, and disciplines people and things" (2005, p. 355) with varied implications among diverse actors in the fisheries value chain. Certification schemes reproduce a dependent market relationship between certification-makers based in the global North and certification-takers based in the global South. These schemes work to fortify the "longstanding global relations of domination through the

creation of eco-certification empires that have much in common with colonial-era extraterritorial empires" (Vandergeest & Unno, 2012, p. 358). Moreover, the supposed benefits of market-led governance of the fisheries system fail to ensure food security, the upliftment of coastal communities, and the health of the environment, especially in the developing countries. Others have raised practical concerns regarding corporations such as McDonald's, whose use of the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certifications "makes it more difficult for NGOs and academics to question the sustainability of some products and companies" (Changing Market Foundations, 2018, p. 8). That certification schemes are even voluntary with no legal teeth to bite is often considered its Achilles heel.

Although the debate between functionalism and critical scholars has been extensive, less attention is given to how third-party certification may distribute power unevenly in the global fisheries value chain, especially in the global South. The question of how power animates neoliberal policy instruments in the developing countries has received less attention in part because of the de-politicization of policy instruments. Many scholars and international organizations view certification as objective, apolitical, neutral and technoscientific practices. Recent studies, however, point out that eco-certification in commodity sectors such as forestry, fisheries, agriculture, palm oil and soybeans are arenas for 'power struggles' (Foley & Havice, 2016) that may create winners and losers. The "de-politicization of fisheries management by legitimating practices through fisheries science and resource economics" does not occlude the fact that policy instruments "are, nonetheless, highly political and politicized" (Winder, 2018, p. 6), creating winners and losers among diverse groups. As Winder (2018, pp. 6-7) notes in the case of ITQs, they can "harden hierarchical structures, and legitimize particular forms of expertise."

The focus on power is an integral part of the explanation for the deployment and uptake of certification. It helps illuminate the power relations behind neoliberal attempts to reconcile growth in the fisheries sector with environmental sustainability. Scholars who consider neoliberal policy instruments as hegemonic tools are providing critical understanding into how supposedly neutral and apolitical tools may end up creating structural conditions that favour powerful actors such as corporations and marginalize peripheral actors such as artisanal fishers, Indigenous people and women. What is most jarring for those scholars is that ignoring the political context of policy instruments "not only serves particular interests but also reinforces the order and ideology of the established political world" (Torgerson, 1986, p. 38). Policy instruments mask power. Many scholars have called attention to the impact of certification schemes on social, economic, and environmental relations, property rights and power configuration (Strtoudakis *et al.,* 2016). This scholarship contributes to addressing the gaps where the power relations among diverse actors and policy instruments are ignored or overshadowed. However, there is a lacuna. The agency of peripheral actors in the construction, (re)production, contestation, and resistance to these instruments' uptake is often ignored. This thesis fills this gap.

1.3.3 Contestation and resistance in the fisheries sector

How have scholars explained resistance in the fisheries sector? Many scholars argued that the introduction of neoliberal policies, starting from the 1980s, in the form of structural adjustment programs (SAPs), diminished African countries' ability to meet the needs of their growing populations, especially access to quality food precipitating social mobilization. These protests and resistances were targeted against powerful institutions spearheading the globalization agenda, such as the G8, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The spikes in food prices during 2007 – 2012 also created a wave of

resistances in the fisheries sector. During this period, resistance was a response to the introduction of neoliberal policies that further marginalized those already impoverished in the developing countries.

Scholars focusing on the responses to global food price spikes during 2007 -2012 highlighted the failure of the self-regulating markets on environmental governance, and 'self-protection' against neoliberal policy instruments. Many of these studies have drawn from Karl Polanyi's classic work on *The Great Transformation* (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]). They seek to understand how actors

> *resisted the risks that reliance on the markets could mean, taking collective action to protest shocks to the foundations of everyday life, and to demand public action for protection, part of Karl Polanyi's 'double movement' of increased market forces in social life met by a pushback demanding protection of the social against the market* (Hossain & Scott-Villiers, 2019, p. 85).

These scholars point out how contestation and resistance from diverse actors who are offering alternative food visions, for example, "anti-biotechnology, organic, fair trade, buy local, and slow food" (Penchlaner, 2019, p. 1) is targeted against the neoliberal system as a protective measure. Carroll (2016) described the emergence of the Cartagena Protocol as a 'self-protection of society' against neoliberal hegemony in genetically modified organisms' food economy, by showing how the discourse of 'natural purity' catalyzes this countermovement. Recently, Langthaler and Schüßler (2019) show how activities of powerful agri-businesses dispossessed rural populations, destroyed the environment, and generated resistances from civil society movements.

Scholars also focused on the entanglement between actors resisting the neoliberal food system and the dominant structures they contest (Penchlaner, 2019). They contend that while

many of these actors oppose the market as the best way to organize the food system to address the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) four pillars of food security: supply, access, nutrition, and stability, many of their actions tacitly concede to the dominance of the markets. Certification scheme promoted by environmental NGOs such as Fair Trade tends to reproduce and reinforce a neoliberal food system. While resistant movements aim to offer alternative visions of food systems, they are often constrained and instead mimic market-led solutions. They ignore the hegemony of the dominant food system, thereby informing Carroll's conclusion:

> *In this sense, movements that may initially destabilize or challenge hegemony are reframed in a way that ignores the underlying basis for the opposition, detaching concern for a particular issue from wider opposition to the existing hegemonic configuration. Instead, the narrower issue is resolved through a perspective that reifies or even celebrates the hegemonic discourse* (Carroll, 20016, p. 19).

Other scholars have adopted a bottom-up lens looking at food in terms of the community instead of a commodity by focusing on the agency exercised by peripheral and marginal actors, for example, *La via Campesina*. Starting with the World Food Summit held in Rome in 1996, this movement now encompasses a large swath of social movements who resist the liberalization of trade in agriculture products and the integration of global supply chains (Andree *et al*., 2014).

Neville (2015) developed a contentious political economy framework to show how biofuels' introduction produced resistance and contestations among different actors working at multiple levels using diverse technologies. She shows how agrofuels are contentious, complex and are generating significant resistance from local communities. Veltmeyer and Bowles (2014) and Pasternak and Dafinos (2018) show separately how indigenous people in Canada resist and interrupt commodity flows by maintaining control over their resource frontier to choke the

circulation of capital. In Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta, Watts (2012) shows how violent forms of activism have been utilized to disrupt petroleum pipelines and oil flows. In the fisheries sector, Stonich and Bailey (2002) show the successes and failures of a local organization formed to resist and contest industrial shrimp production. While such a local organization is dwarfed by the abundant resources of the industrial alliance, its ability to work with other global coalitions increased its power.

Many studies on contestation and resistance to neoliberal policy instruments still focus on powerful actors determining environmental outcomes. Even scholars that accord resistance to marginal actors and local social movements tend to see this agency as weak and, at best reactive to powerful global institutions such as transnational corporations, distant-water fishing nations, international financial institutions and supranational organizations, thereby skirting over the agency of marginal actors. This thesis fills this gap.

1.4 Methodology

My interdisciplinary analysis draws together theory in (a) food regime analysis, (b) global ecological, political economy, and (c) the everyday IPE. Critical scholars have drawn on neo-Gramscian analysis to examine the dynamics of new commodity markets and the changing forms of authority. Such an analytical gaze opens the space to visualize how power is contested in three interrelated spaces of discourse, institutions and material capabilities, and how neoliberal policy instruments are often rationalized and legitimated by powerful actors "to shore up their privileged position by accommodating critical challenges and de-legitimating alternative pathways" (Newell & Taylor 2017, p. 109). I draw on neo-Gramscian analysis to reveal the "structures that systematically advantage certain groups" in environmental governance (Levy & Newell, 2002, p. 86). This helps expose the blue economy and certification schemes as a hegemonic policy

instruments that has served to normalize, rationalize, and perpetuate a fishery sector based on the norms of the market economy, and private capital dominance.

Second, I draw on food regime analysis to understand how power works through ideas, material interests and institutions, how power is mobilized and dispersed in the global seafood system, and the contentious nature of seafood emanating from its social and political construction. I delineate a corporate or environmental seafood regime (Friedman & McMichael, 1989), which is embedded in neoliberal common sense and shows the social relations between seafood production, distribution and consumption and power in the global political economy. While this argument could be normative, it chimes with the observation that the current food regime is promoting the blue economy as way to reconcile profits with sustainability. Because recourse to the market and private ordering is a requisite to the intensification of globalization, the current seafood regime has deepened the powers of keystone corporations and financialization. By implications, I use the seafood analysis to show how the material interests of powerful actors play a significant role in environmental outcomes (Campling & Havice, 2018).

Third, I draw from the everyday IPE (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007) to reveal the discords of resistance, and "how political economy is enacted and performed at the local level, by non-elites and via various cultural practices" (Elias and Roberts, 2016, p. 787). This focus is rewarding because it "appears to upset, challenge, and subvert" how we study political economy (Elias and Roberts, 2016, p. 788). Understanding how power works in the fisheries sector, and how it is resisted and accepted, requires shifting attention from an overarching emphasis on "states and markets" to a bottom-up approach that pays closer attention to the "everyday lives and cultural practices that sustain" (Elias & Roberts, 2016, p.789) the global fisheries value chain.

Following the 'everyday-turn' in political economy, feminist scholars have deployed this approach to analyze how the changes in the global capitalist system (Elias & Roberts, 2018), such as *financialization* and ocean-grabbing, are producing gendered political and economic practices at the everyday level, and in turn how such developments generate "everyday forms of resistance to the gendered and racialized logics of global capitalism" (Elias & Roberts, 2016, p. 789). Feminist scholars are particularly interested in how "gendered structures of everyday power and agency" orient the everyday processes in the global capitalist system (Elias & Rai, 2019, p. 201). The everyday lens allows the research to tease out the agency exercised by marginal actors and highlight the arena where "neoliberal reform projects are resisted and challenged" (Elias & Roberts, 2016, p. 789).

My approach is original in its integration of neo-Gramscian and everyday IPE with regime analysis to unearth the blue economy/third-party certification as neoliberal policy instruments; how these instruments are resisted and challenged by peripheral actors, and how power relations shape environmental conditions. Seafood regime analysis offers an opportunity to address how seafood systems – production, distribution, and consumption – are embedded in the global capital accumulation with its seeds of contradictions. However, it is unable to answer the question of the endurance of food regimes in the face of contradictions and conflicts. Instead, there is a need to take hegemony seriously to understand how regimes are established, stabilized and maintained through coercion and consent to shed light on how the blue economy is resilient despite its contradictions. These contributions affirm the importance of a hegemonic environmental corporate seafood regime analysis in understanding the blue economy.

This research is the first to apply seafood regimes in the global South, thereby responding to Foley and Mather's (2018) concern regarding the apparent neglect of seafood regime analysis.

However, its distinctive contribution is offering a conceptual lens to understand when a seafood regime becomes hegemonic. This integrated theoretical framework unearths how power works in the West African fisheries sector and how it is resisted or accepted. By extending the seafood regime analysis to understand the social forces that stand to gain from the blue economy and why West African governments are pushing for its implementation, and the dynamics of exclusion, co-optation, contestation, and resistance, this work contributes to the literature on fisheries regulation (Foley & Mather 2018; Foley & Havice 2016) and social justice (McMahon, 2011; Cadieux & Slocum, 2015).

I employed two different methods –secondary sources and seminar discussions – in tandem to provide a full understanding of the embeddedness of the fisheries sector in West Africa. I consulted secondary sources, including scholarly and policy research on fisheries in Africa, especially from the FAO, the African Union, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to expose the roles and actors behind the adoption of market-based expansion of the seafood sector in West Africa. Through shifting discourses (Hajer, 1995) in the seafood sector, I uncovered the power relations behind ecological storylines and how these frames privilege certain actors and forms of knowledge.

During my participation in the *Political Ecology of Development* course at the *Institut Barcelona Estudis Internacionale*, Spain, I developed the theoretical framework from the course's feedback. This study-abroad program complemented the repertoire of critical IPE approaches I learned while studying the *Political Economy of Food, Fuel and Finance*. When combined, the knowledge garnered from these courses gave the research a robust view of how the global seafood industry value chain "is enacted and performed at the local level by non-elites and

via various cultural practices" (Elias & Roberts, 2016, p. 789), and how these measures are pushing for food sovereignty.

1.5 Organization of chapters

This thesis is structured in five chapters. In the introduction, I set the stage for the research, outlining the overarching questions and the argument that I have explored throughout the thesis. In Chapter 2, I engage with the broader ongoing debates in the governance of the fisheries sector, emphasizing the link between the environment and global political economy in order to understand how power is entangled in the globalized seafood system, how it changes over time and how it can shift from a corporate hegemonic seafood system and neoliberal environmental policy instruments that mask power and reinforce lock-ins that works against marginal actors while entrenching corporate interests. Chapter 3 analyzed the blue economy as a corporate seafood regime to show how neoliberalism changes to adapt to the crisis of accumulation. I show how the blue economy is not likely to promote sustainable fisheries in West Africa as these countries "have signed onto and/or are negotiating trade agreements that make it much harder to implement food import restrictions and protections for local food producers, including the recently-launched African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)" (Grain, 2019, p. 6), what Stephen Gill refers to as 'new constitutionalism' (Andrée *et al*., 2014).

Chapter 4 explores the proliferation of third-party certification and fisheries improvement programs (FIPs) to show how they are hegemonic policy instruments that skew power towards powerful corporate actors and Multistakeholder initiatives (MSIs). Territorial and ethical eco-certification schemes have emerged as counter-hegemonic policy instruments to challenge the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). However, both are embedded in neoliberal attempts to reconcile growth with sustainability and not question the power relations behind neoliberal policy

tools. I then discuss how West African governments' inability to challenge these power asymmetries is generating resistance against corporate control of the fisheries sector and the promotion of alternative visions of a seafood system to realize food sovereignty.

In the last chapter, I conclude the research by reflecting on whether the aims and objectives of the thesis have been met. I summarize the arguments made in the thesis and its contributions to the International Political economy's existing scholarly knowledge. The thesis highlights the utility of an integrated approach that links neo-Gramscian and everyday international political economy with food regime analysis brings to unearth how the asymmetric power relations in the global economy ignite local resistance against the commodification of the oceans. I also extended my framework to understand energy transition in the developing countries. Last, I provide four research agenda and the limitations of the current study.

Chapter 2: Fisheries and the global political economy

2.1 Introduction

Daniel Pauly's recent book, titled *Vanishing Fish*, aptly captures the growing concerns in the fisheries sector (Pauly, 2019). The book points towards three trends that signal the fisheries sector's growth with significant socio-ecological consequences: the excessive fishing vessels, the reduction of the biomass of traditionally targeted fish, and the proliferation of fishmeal factories. Each of these trends manifest in the West African fisheries. As one of the most productive fisheries globally, West Africa should potentially benefit from fisheries through food security, employment, exports and foreign exchange earnings, and conservation (AUC-NEPAD, 2014). Through the recent move towards a blue economy, West Africa could utilize this sector to promote social equity, ecological sustainability, and economic growth (UNECA, 2016).

There is a downside manifestation of this abundant marine resources, however. West Africa has a global record of the highest cases of IUU fishing (Changing Market Foundation, 2018). As the third hub for the global supply of fishmeal and fish oil, the region has witnessed unsustainable pelagic exploitation for feeds instead of human consumption. West African governments have also signed opaque and unfavourable fisheries agreements that do not benefit the region. At the same time, continental bodies such as the African Union and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) are pushing for market-based solutions through the liberalization of fisheries access due to the assumption that the fisheries sector is underdeveloped because "there is inadequate awareness of or capacity to develop more market-based reforms evidence" (AUC-NEPAD, 2014, p. 4). The West African fisheries sector exemplify the contradictions inherent in global seafood production, between trade and sustainability (Clapp, 2017) and the asymmetric power relations in the seafood value chains.

How the seafood system is governed is determined by the "interactions among social forces of production, state-civil society complexes, and world order" (Foley, 2018, p. 1). These interactions have produced a hegemonic seafood system that gives food export preference over self-sufficiency with a significant impact on socio-ecological dynamics and food sovereignty. The fisheries sector's claim towards sustainability is discursively embedded in environmental communication and socio-economic narratives. This embeddedness profoundly creates winners and losers. However, what makes the sector distinct is the knowledge claim towards sustainability. This presumption has found inspiration and roots in the ecological modernization discourse (Dobson, 2007). Solutions towards the crisis tend to follow techno-scientific and managerial practices. For example, aquaculture is promoted as a solution to wild stock depletion without regard to how fishmeal and fish oil entwines with the ecological crisis. Neoliberal capitalism seeks to overcome the crisis of accumulation through ecological fix (Harvey, 2005) and technological fix (Longo & Clark, 2012).

Power is central to understanding the crisis in the fisheries sector. Although 'keystone corporations' (Österblom *et al*., 2015) account for 4 percent of the global fishers, they make up 76 percent of the global fish catches, and rake in about 84 percent of revenues from the fisheries sector (Pauly & Zeller, 2016; Schubauer *et al*., 2017). According to Österblom *et al.*, as few as 13 keystone seafood corporations control 40 percent of the largest and most influential fish stocks and dominate the global value chains. That the revenues of these powerful actors that traverse the globe nearly doubled between 2007 and 2016, suggest the growing momentum towards their "ongoing consolidation process within the global network of seafood production" (Österblom *et al.*, 2015, p. 5).

How does the IPE literature help in explaining how power is exercised and resisted in the fisheries sector? I draw on the neo-Gramscian analysis (Cox, 1981; 1983), to reveal the "structures that systematically advantage certain groups" (Levy & Newell, 2002) in the seafood system. I draw on food regime analysis (Friedman, 2005) to understand the transformation in seafood production, distribution, and consumption. I utilize the everyday IPE (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007) to show the frictions of local resistance, and how the everyday is enacted at the local level. I bring the three into a conversation to reveal how third-certification schemes are hegemonic and how a hegemonic corporate environmental seafood regime underpins the blue economy, and the ensuing frictions and local resistance.

2.2 Deepening the integration of IPE with the environment

The past decades have seen a surge in the scholarship that links the international political economy with the environment, following the 1987 Brundtland Report and five years later, the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Research establishing this link gained traction within this period, following the introduction of 'acceptable' and 'measurable' development goals, which have reinforced the new call for "cooperative environmental initiatives" (Clapp & Helleiner 2012, p. 485). The IPE literature on the environment has been more successful in integrating environmental issues and has sought to address the weaknesses of International Relations literature. In the next sections, I outline some of these strides. I also point to their limitations in integrating IPE with the environment. The overview shows that an IPE approach can help show the link between the fisheries and the global economy. I highlight the power relations that entangles the global economy and fisheries production. Power relations create winners and losers and are sites for resistance and contestation, especially among marginal actors in the seafood value chains.

2.2.1 IPE and the environment

The environment did not always receive penetrating attention from IPE scholarship. This lack of engagement with the environment was a hangover from the discipline of International Relations. A meta-analysis concluded that International Relations scholars had overlooked environmental issues (Pereira, 2017; also see Katz-Rosene, 2019) and urged more attention to environmental issues. In making this call for serious dialogue, these scholars are drawing from Montesquieu's classical argument that "[T]he empire of the climate is the first, the most powerful of all empires" (Livingstone, 2012, p. 92).

Clapp and Helleiner (2012) traced how the International Political Economy of the Environment (IPEE), as a subfield of IPE, emerged to fill the perceived gap between International Relations and the environment. In heading to Susan Strange's call for International Relations and IPE scholarship to focus on the global environmental change (Strange, 1998), IPE scholars have adopted an eclectic and interdisciplinary approach to understanding the implications of changes the global economy and the environment.

For example, critical scholars have questioned the liberal influence on the study of the environment. Clapp and Helleiner (2012) drew attention to the liberal influence on global energy politics and global environmental politics, which has made the IPEE focus on international regimes and environmental concerns narrowly. The narrow focus neglected the "larger structural trends and issues concerning the relationship between the environment and the political economy" (2012, pp. 487). They argue that the focus on treaties, institutions, and regimes tends to obfuscate and marginalize the broader structural trends in the global political economy that have significant implications on the environment. Instead, they suggest that scholars understand that many aspects of the international political economy that have a significant impact on the environment are not associated with cooperative environmental initiatives. Clapp and Helleiner

(2012) identify these trends: the new role international financial markets in the global economy, the role of emerging powerful states, and the high and volatile commodity prices. This thesis draws inspiration from the need to go beyond cooperative environmental initiatives.

The focus on the environment allows the research to tease out how environmental policy instruments tend to privilege powerful actors. It also allows for nuances in how efforts to link seafood trade with sustainability tend to disadvantage marginal actors and "harden hierarchical structures and legitimize particular forms of expertise" (Winder, 2018, pp. 6–7). Nevertheless, the link between IPE and the environment reveals alternative voices that are resisting corporate control and fashioning out alternative seafood systems.

2.2.2 Research linking IPE to the environment

The IPEE scholarship has been very fruitful in uncovering the broader structural trends in IPE that impinges on the environment, such as the globalization of the world economy, especially financialization and its associated consequences on land and ocean grabbing, the intensification of monocultures and climate-smart agriculture, and the environmental impact of corporate concentration in the agriculture input sector and seafood system. Österblom *et al.* (2015) draw attention to the enormous powers of keystone corporations to influence environmental governance and the implications of their powers in fisheries sustainability. In what follows, I focus on how the IPE scholarship has addressed the impacts of these structural trends on the environment: (i) the impact of global value chains (ii) marine frontiers (iii) the role of keystone corporations.

2.2.2.1 The impact of global value chains on the environment

A growing body of literature has explored the impact of natural resource extraction and food production and consumption on the environment. Since the Second World War, global resources

have experienced "growth, scarcity, and uneven access" (Havice, 2012, p. 148), coinciding with the rise of consumption-based economies. According to Dauvergne, the neoliberal era shapes not only what consumers choose to consume, but also "systemic drivers shape the quantities, costs, and the benefits of producing, distributing, and disposing of consumer goods" (2010, p. 1). Others point to the "voracious appetite for profit as the primary force for structuring the globalized seafood system" (Campling & Havice 2018, p. 87) and the deep ecological shadows cast because of the unbridled consumption of global seafood. They demonstrate that the environmental embeddedness in the global capitalist system – whose thrust of excessive production and consumption, and unsustainable growth – is the harbinger of this crisis (Dauvergne, 2010; Andree *et al*., 2014; Weis, 2018; Kallis, 2018; Katz-Rosene & Paterson, 2018; Newell, 2020) and ecological distribution conflicts (Martinez-Alier *et al.,* 2016).

In Weis' metaphor of the "ghost and things" (2018, 134), the growing demand for seafood and fish-related products has been responsible for overfishing and fishing at the bottom of the food web in an unsustainable manner that affects the ecosystem and human livelihoods. It has, for example, been responsible for the growing concerns over over-exploited fisheries. These impacts reinforce the existing asymmetric power relations in the global fisheries system that distort the sustainability narratives.

2.2.2.2 Marine frontiers

IPE scholarship has also explored how the corporate food regime has promoted 'enclosures' through neoliberal capitalism (Carroll, 2016). Enclosures inadvertently exclude small-scale fishers through capital-intensive practices that place keystone corporations, financiers, and donors at the center of agriculture production. Myles Carroll argues we are now in "the era of new enclosures" (Carroll, 2016, p. 2) to describe the commons' privatization. He shows how the

ability to place a patent on a genetic code and establish ownership over a living organism gives keystone corporations the ability to "extract rents or super-profits from dependent farmers through technology use agreements and other means (Carroll, 2016, p. 2).

Dixon (2017) shows how the complex processes of 'frontier making' through climate-smart agriculture has a significant impact on the aquifer in new areas of farming in Egypt's desert. This literature is essential for our analysis because it shows how the fisheries system is embedded in unsustainable production and consumption. Frontier making shows the tenuous link between nature and society as each phase of capitalism corresponds to a particular outcome of the interaction between nature and society.

Recent attention has also focused on marine frontiers to show how the oceans are not inert. These emerging marine frontiers "can be spaces of both openings as well as (en)closures allowing for the creation of new political organizations and institutions" (Ertör & Hadjimichael, 2020, p. 1). Marine frontiers generate attention due to their commodification and financialization, which create specific forms of power relations that skew access to resources. In this context, global fisheries have sought new frontiers as a spatial fix (Harvey, 2005) to facilitate capital accumulation. The social, technological, and environmental costs involved in frontier making such as shale fracking, deep-sea mining, and open-ocean aquaculture, which is informing the discourse of the blue economy, are excessive.

2.2.2.3 The role of keystone corporations

The IPEE literature has also explored how firms, explicitly, transnational corporations shape the global production system and the implications for the environment (Clapp, 2003). Much of this literature has tried to tease out the implications of the interface between non-state actors and state power (Clapp & Fuchs, 2009) on global production and environmental governance. Keystone

corporations utilize structural power (Clapp, 2017), primarily through threats of exit of investments and governance arenas if they feel boxed into a corner through high demanding-regulatory standards (Strange, 1989; Clapp & Scott, 2018). Keystone corporate interests influence the fisheries sector's governance, such as negotiating trade and safety issues.

The structural power of keystone corporations allows them to influence the discourse of sustainability in ways that rationalize and legitimize a neoliberal seafood system and resource extraction in order "to shore up their privileged position in accommodating critical challenges and delegitimating alternative pathways" (Newell & Taylor 2017, p. 111). Keystone corporations such as Trident Seafoods, Skretting, Marine Harvest, Maruha Nichoro, Nippon Suisan Kaisha, and a few others (Österblom *et al.*, 2015) wield significant power to "dominate the governments and multilateral organizations that makeup and enforce the regime's rule for trade, labour, property and technology" (Holt-Gimenez, 2010, p. 2). The use of structural power enhances corporations' ability to exploit seafood and environmental governance arenas to reinforce opportunities for capital accumulation and strengthen their power and to strategically define 'sustainability' in such a way that entrenches keystone actors' dominance.

2.3 Global capitalist fisheries system

The IPEE literature can explain where power lies in the seafood system and natural resource value chains if it 'thinks ecologically" and incorporates marginal actors into its analysis. The focus on treaties, institutions, and regimes has led to "a fundamental misdiagnosis both of the problem and where power lies" (Newell, 2020). Scholars have argued that interrogating the power dynamics in the agri-food sector (Clapp & Fuchs, 2009; Newell & Taylor, 2017) is indispensable in understanding whose interests are being served in the circle of global production, distribution, and consumption. Such a focus equally allows for a deeper

understanding of who has the political power to control, mobilize, and resist access to natural resources. There is, therefore, a need to place power in a proper perspective.

The thesis' usage of 'power' is relational, and chimes with Steven Lukes who defines power as "explicitly relational and asymmetrical: to have power is to have power over another or others" (2005, p. 73). Lukes' three-dimensional power is about power over interests. Power may be exercised as action or inaction; the powerful may be accountable for the consequences of unintended domination, and power may occur in the absence of conflict. Power is exercised through the control of knowledge, where powerful actors ensure compliance through socializing the less powerful. The powerful can control and disseminate knowledge, truth, and storylines that shape what is considered normal and objective. The frames and counter-frames used in storylines and narratives reflect implicit knowledge claims and worldviews (Dobson, 2007) that allow powerful actors to rationalize and legitimize specific interests and challenge alternative viewpoints. Power keeps issues off the agenda table and out of the minds of agents involved in the political activity. Power most effectively ensures compliance when domination appears natural and unchangeable.

This thesis finds common ground with Luke's third-dimension of power by unpacking the dynamics in the fisheries sector to see whose interests are being served by neoliberal policy instruments such as eco-certification schemes (Clapp & Fuchs 2009), and the fundamental ways in which power and interests shape governance (Clapp, Newell & Brent, 2018) in the global seafood system through consent but sometimes coercion. The knowledge of how power works and how it is resisted in the fisheries sector is germane because it underlies the question of who acts and seeks to achieve what purposes through governance? This lens allows the research to leap beyond the conventional *problematic* in IPE scholarship of 'who governs,' or the regulatory

focus on 'who benefits,' who is included/or excluded from decision-making,' 'whose interest is served,' and 'what are the sources of authority and the rules governing the political economy?' While these questions are germane, they tend to obfuscate the contestation and resistance among diverse actors in the fisheries sector. Most importantly, they may privilege global powerful actors (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007), such as keystone corporations, at the expense of peripheral actors, such as artisanal fishers, Indigenous people, and women.

Table 1: Traditional, regulatory, and every day international political economy

Focus	**Traditional/Orthodox International Political Economy**	**Regulatory International Political Economy**	**Everyday International Political Economy**
Question	Who governs?	Who benefits? How is the international system regulated?	Who acts, and how do their actions constitute and transform the world economy?
Unit of Analysis	Great powers	Capitalist world	Everyday actors/elites
Empirical Analysis	Order and maintained by elites	Maintaining of power Unequal distribution	Social transformation
Agency	Top-down	Top-down	Bottom-up

Hobson, J., & Seabrooke, L. (2007).

IPEE scholars have tried to answer the question of whose interests shape neoliberal environmental policy instruments and environmental governance. Newell and Taylor (2017) show how the convergence of material, discursive and institutional strategies privilege incumbent actors in the food regime. It is these dominant actors that can mobilize funding to innovate and introduce climate-smart technologies. Their work unearths the silencing and exclusion of marginal actors in as a proactive effort to provide solutions to the threat of environmental change through existing structural and corporate power configuration. The relationship between governance and businesses is not unidirectional. The latter does not shape rules and norms in

isolation. Instead, corporations are influenced by the dynamic regulatory, discursive, technological, and organizational milieu in which they function.

Others have sought to explain emerging hybrid governance arrangements that depart from conventional typologies and make it difficult to identify who acts and what purposes they seek to achieve through governance. De Graaff, for example, argues against the state-versus market distinction since such "dichotomous representations are both empirically and theoretically problematic" (2012, pp. 532 – 533), preferring instead to focus on hybrid governance arrangements. Her work shows how the state and capital have become entangled in facilitating capital accumulation. Private and hybrid forms of transnational governance are created out of the attempt to proactively accommodate oppositional claims, like a duty to care for the environment, thereby reproducing a corporate-friendly global environmental system (Levy & Newell, 2002).

Understanding where power lies could be gleaned from the relationship between technologies and the market. Many scholars have argued that technologies and the market are self-reinforcing (Clapp, 2017). Narratives of environmental sustainability are rooted in 'efficiency gains from trade' through the deployment of technologies and market-led solutions to address wicked environmental problems. They have questioned the discursive framing of the fisheries industry as a triple-win (Cohen *et al.*, 2019; Barbesgaard, 2019), and as a solution to the collapsing wild fish stocks through new technologies that push for marine aquaculture. As Clapp surmised, "critics from this perspective also draw attention to the environmental costs associated with agriculture trade, highlighting how a narrow focus on economic efficiency obscure trade's ecological impacts" (2017, p. 343).

These scholars draw attention to the fact that power tends to mask the narratives of a triple-win by obscuring "who wins and losses and how, from different ways of organizing

systems of food and agriculture" (Clapp, Newell & Brent 2018, p. 85). Even where there are marginal gains from trade through the deployment of technologies such as open sea aquaculture, these gains are not shared equitably. Markets and technologies tend to exclude others, such as women and Indigenous people, because of market power and control by keystone corporations. They determine the appropriate technologies put in place, and whose interests these technologies serve.

Many scholars have also drawn attention to the increased financialization of different sectors and the negative impact on the environment and marginal actors, as well as the shifting narratives and power relations in the agri-food sector. Financialization leads to a rise in seafood prices, corporate concentration, ocean and land grabbing, and environmental governance (Clapp & Scott, 2018; Knott & Neis, 2017). Issues have also been taken with the financialization of nature, such as the 'Blue Carbon Initiative,' a process that involves the enclosure and financialization of coastal ecosystems such as salt marshes, mangrove and seagrass meadows as carbon sinks, as facilitating land and ocean grabbing with dire consequences for food security. The power and material interests of these actors have become central in determining global seafood and environmental governance outcomes. The lacklustre approach to regulation has led to suboptimal outcomes (Salerno, 2017; Isakson, 2014).

2.4 Critical IPE and environmental governance

Many scholars have argued that the IPE lens provides a "series of powerful and probing insights into the complex and dynamic relationship between the state, economy and society in capitalist democracies" (Hay, 2006, p. 58) – in particular, the hegemony of the global governance institutions. This research project focuses on the blue economy and third-party certification as a strategy deployed by a hegemonic bloc of social forces to embed the fisheries sector in the global

capitalist system. The discursive construction of the blue economy and the elevation of eco-certification initiatives to control the fisheries sector is a material and ideological struggle over the transfer of power over economic factors from the public to the private sector. Here, the construction of 'blue economy' and third-party certification has gone tandem with the neoliberal reforms that have increased the market's power on behalf of the state. The current crisis of the fisheries sector, especially in the fishmeal value chains, amply demonstrates the challenges of the hegemonic policy instruments to achieve consensus. It further promotes a disembedding of the economy from society (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]).

Why has the discourse of the 'blue economy' gained traction despite its skepticism and the inability of its cousin – the 'green economy' – to transform environmental governance fundamentally? Why are eco-certification schemes been promoted in the fisheries sector in the global South despite growing evidence that these market-based policy instruments are disproportionately distributing power in fisheries value chains? Critical IPE scholarship has addressed some of these questions in different ways. Below is a synopsis of the theoretical approaches that have focused on the current form of global environmental governance.

2.4.1 Seafood regime analysis

One compelling way to understand the dominant narrative in West Africa's fisheries sector is through corporate seafood regime or corporate environmental seafood regime. Regime analysis tends to first, prioritize and historicize changes in the global seafood system beginning from the 1870s to the present (Friedmann, 2005), and second, serve as an analytical tool that unearths the social relations between seafood production and power in the global political economy (Foley & Mather, 2018). This approach has been among the most "durable perspectives in agrarian studies since the late 1980s, in large part because it is synthetic and nuanced" and "reflects periodic shifts

in hegemonic regimes which are anchored in the politics of how commodity chains and production systems come to be constructed and coordinated over borders and boundaries" (Buttel, 2001, p. 173).

The seafood regime analysis allows scholars to identify the 'global relations' behind which seafood production is embedded (Foley & Mather, 2018) by answering three overarching questions: (a) what and how is food produced in the international political economy of capitalism (b) where and how is food consumed, and by whom, and (c) what are the social and ecological impact of the global economy on the production and consumption of food under different food regimes (Bernstein, 2015)?

The 1970s global financial crisis ushered in a third seafood regime (1980s onward). This third food regime demarcates neoliberal norms of global market economy and private capital dominance in agriculture value chains (Campling & Havice, 2018), the erosion of state-regulation, the private ordering in food regulation, and the intensification of globalization (Foley & Mather, 2018). The focus is more on industry and food services than agriculture. The third regime has led to the deepening of the powers of corporations that began consolidating under the second regime. Oligopolistic transnational corporations wield significant power to "dominate the governments and the multilateral organizations that make and enforce the regime's rule for trade, labour, property and technology" (Holt-Giménez, 2010, p. 2). The third food regime has seen the subsuming of states under markets and a disproportionate increase in supermarkets' powers in the management of supply chains through the "convergence of environmental politics and retail-led organization of supply chains" (Foley & Mather 2018, p. 14).

Financialization, as a critical feature of the third food regime, is implicated in the shifting narratives and power relations in the fisheries sector. It has given enormous powers to new

financial actors such as long-term investors, financial services firms, pension funds, and many other actors (Isakson, 2014; Salerno, 2017). Financialization works to limit other actors' powers, mainly marginal actors in the fisheries sector, generating resistance towards the realization of food sovereignty and agro-ecological practices in an alternative post-corporate food regime.

The official discourse of the African Union and member states of the Economic Community of West Africa has leaned towards food security. This concept is state-centric, top-bottom, and tends to privilege "states and markets" (Elias and Roberts, 2016, p. 789) and powerful global actors (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007). In turn, food regime theorists go beyond this narrow focus to explore how power operates through ideas, interests, and institutions. They can help draw attention to the role of African governments in supporting a corporate seafood system while doing little to challenge corporations that stymie food sovereignty by dumping fish and fish-related commodities, destroying biodiversity, and dislocating local communities. However, as I show, in response to resistances from social forces, the third-seafood regime has leaned towards blue growth. While this regime engages with the state's supportive role towards exploiting fisheries, it "remains strategically silent on the voracious appetite for profit as the primary force for structuring the globalized seafood system" (Campling & Havice, 2018, p. 87).

The seafood regime analysis is unable to explain the persistence and resilience of the corporate food regime despite its inherent contradictions and resistance from social forces. Would a focus on how a corporate seafood regime becomes hegemonic address this lacuna? I show that understanding the blue economy's resilience in the face of its inherent contradictions can be remedied by incorporating elements of hegemony in the seafood regime analysis.

2.4.2 Neo-Gramscian analysis

In seeking to understand when and why the blue transition has become a neoliberal paradigm in governing the environment in the global South as well as how eco-certification initiatives have become the most preferred mechanisms for ensuring the triple-win, critical IPE scholars have employed neo-Gramscian analysis as a theoretical and conceptual tool to provide some useful intellectual purchase. Of interest here is the concept of hegemony developed from the ideas of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci to provide a fruitful engagement with neoliberalism, the relationship between capitalism and the environment, and environmental governance (Levy & Newell 2002).

A great deal of insight is how governance reproduces hegemony of powerful states, transnational capitalist class, and social forces. I utilize hegemony to explain how the blue economy and third-party certification schemes are established by a so-called hegemonic common sense of neoliberalism. In what follows, I attempt to sketch how a neo-Gramscian analysis seeks to unearth the material, institutional, and ideational power relations in the blue economy and the adoption of eco-certification schemes. I follow the neo-Gramscian call on the need to open the black box of social relations to understand how market forces shape society differently. Following Cox, I aim to provide a more fine-grained explanation for global governance than traditional 'problem-solving-focused' International Relations theorists. As the cliché goes, "[t]heory is always *for* someone, and *for* some purpose" (Cox, 1981, p. 128).

My understanding of hegemony is different from neorealist International Relations theorists. I take side with Cox who argues for a critical theory that takes cognizance of agency, hence emancipatory, and built on a historical perspective that "does not take institutional, social and power relations for granted but calls them into question concerning itself with their origin and how and whether they might be in a process of changing" (Cox 1983, 87). I call into question

the existing material, institutional, and ideational power in the fisheries sector, by paying attention, according to Cox, to "how existing social or world orders have come into being, how norms, institutions or practices therefore emerge, and what forces may have emancipatory potential to change or transform the prevailing order" (Bieler &Morton, 2016, p. 86).

I refuse to conceptualize hegemony in materialist terms as stability. Instead, I also give primacy to the role of ideas. Actors not only use coercion to gain power but also gain "intellectual and moral leadership" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 182). This Coxian understanding of hegemony seeks to unravel "the interaction between particular processes, notably springing from the dialectical possibilities of change within the sphere of production and the exploitative character of social relations, not as unchanging, ahistorical essences but as continuing creation of new forms" (Cox, 1981, p. 132 cited in Bieler & Morton 2016, p. 86). This understanding requires broadening the concept of hegemony to incorporate the "basic processes at work in the development of social forces [of production] and forms of state, and in the structure of global political economy" (Cox 1996: 91). Hegemony then is understood not in terms of domination, but as the socialization process with material, cultural and ideological dimensions.

What makes such a distinction is "because it theorizes not only production and power but also the interactions between transnational governance and the social relations of production in efforts to foster hegemony in the global economy" (Foley, 2018, p. 1). To help explain how the blue economy and third-party certifications have been established by a so-called hegemonic common sense of neoliberalism, I draw from Levy and Newell's explanation of hegemony as "the persistence of specific social and economic structures that systematically advantage certain groups" (2002, p. 86). It is maintained and extended through consent and coercion or alliances among coalition actors (Carroll, 2016). Deliberation is often manipulated through the discourse

of powerful actors. They use the material, discursive, and organizational strategies to protect their corporate neoliberal hegemonic position and the entrenchment of the dominant storylines regarding the global governance of food and the environment (Clapp, 2017).

Powerful actors have also extended their power through discursive strategies. These strategies involve struggles within the realm of civil society that attempt to win hearts and minds and present their position as truthful, scientific, and universal. Keystone corporations have been able to shape the discourse of the environment by presenting themselves as better respond to environmental change by adopting environmental discourses that promote the interest of powerful corporate actors at the expense of local actors. Governments do often latch on the dominant international discourses, such as the triple-win of the blue economy. This is despite a common sense understanding to the contrary that these discourses express the neoliberal policy considering social forces that shape the political order in favour of private capital. Socializing others into these discourses ensures that the "impetus for change does not arise out of vast local economic development… Nevertheless, instead of the reflection of international developments that transmit their ideological currents in the periphery" (Cox, 1983, p. 167).

Powerful actors also have institutional or organizational power that allows them to build coalitions between corporations and institutions to further extend their hegemony. They have often adopted corporate social responsibilities schemes to govern the fisheries sector and the environment. Institutional capabilities allow corporations to offer environmental solutions that secure market positions, credibility, and legitimacy (Levy & Newell 2002). Private ordering and hybrid governance such as eco-certification schemes "emerge out of a desire to proactively accommodate oppositional claims, like a duty to care for the environment, thereby stabilizing the

hegemonic worldview and reproducing a corporate-friendly global governance system (Levy & Newell 2002, p. 84).

The 'historic bloc' denotes the subtle link between the state and political society. The historic bloc in the seafood sector is likely to include states, keystone corporations, the FAO, finance and financialization, and even environmental NGOs. This bloc constructs a seafood sector's imageries that can result in a triple-win, through ecological fix (Harvey, 2005) and technological fix (Longo & Clark, 2012). It seeks to convert crisis into opportunities (UNEP, 2011). In this sense, it deploys an explicit power configuration to material, institutional, and discursive strategies to stabilize the seafood in such as a way that it can detach "global capitalism from the sources of environmental problems, accommodating some mild criticism of consumerism and globalization without allowing the 'fatal connection' the capitalist mode of production and the ecological crisis to be addressed" (Newell, 2008, p. 516).

To illustrate how the blue economy and third-party certification schemes have not questioned but rather fostered neoliberalism, I bring in insights that systematically demonstrate the entanglement between the seafood sector and global capitalism to unearth how neoliberal hegemony distorts this linkage. I show how this entanglement helps to understand the establishment and perpetuation of the market economy's neoliberal norms and private capital dominance in the fisheries sector. The norms of neoliberalism are embedded in the seafood regime and corporate-environmental governance. Developing countries seeking to attract foreign capital must tow in line—coercion and consent work in limiting the options of these countries to resist a seafood regime. The embedding of neoliberal norms and laws of property rights in institutions such as the WTO allows neoliberal policy instruments to embed capital norms into the daily workings of politics, the economy and the society (Clapp, 2017; Carroll,

2016). The organic intellectuals can develop a common sense that reduces the opportunities for resisting neoliberal policy instruments such as the blue economy as they become more embedded in society. Indeed, the power of the state to regulate the seafood industry and the environment becomes severely curtailed, through what Stephen Gill, cited in Andree *et al*., calls the "new constitutionalism" (2014, p. 33) – as governments in the global South sign onto neoliberal commitments.

The neo-Gramscian analysis of hegemony provides excellent insights into understanding the material, discursive and institutional strategies that help explain how certain actors exert hegemony in governing the maritime sector through the private regulation reframing of seafood sustainability in a decidedly asymmetric way that produces winners and losers. These processes tend to affect marginal actors and generate significant global ecological, political, and economic externalities. This lens also helps to understand how the fisheries sector is embedded in the neoliberal norms of global capitalism that serve the interests of corporate actors, emerging economies, and powerful states. The emergence of the blue economy and market-based certification schemes are neoliberal common sense.

Conversely, the exclusive focus on powerful actors' neglects marginal and peripheral actors such as artisanal fishers, Indigenous people, and women. Neo-Gramscian analysis has privileged, powerful global actors (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007), especially their ability to re-orient the 'rules of the game' in the global seafood system to serve their interests (Clapp & Scott, 2018). Such a focus has made it increasingly difficult to observe the marginal actors' agency in the existing global governance structures. Although Neo-Gramscian scholars have focused on the subaltern, the agency of these actors, considered weak or best reactive, is usually discounted. Dissenting voices resisting co-optation do not amount to anything.

Governance is associated with powerful actors, while resistance and contestation are tagged with peripheral actors. Neo-Gramscian analysis, therefore, renders marginal actors invisible, and this is its Achilles heel. Making these actors visible gives the current research a more holistic frame that links the relations of force, i.e., the union of material, institutional, and discursive strategies of powerful actors to the resistance, contestation, and counter storylines from marginal actors in the fisheries sector.

2.4.3 The Everyday International Political Economy

To what extent have previous critical IPE of the everyday engaged with the theoretical approaches of Gramsci? While Gordon (2016), Seabrooke (2007) and Morton (2007) are notable exceptions, such engagements have not been undertaken in the fisheries sector and environmental governance. Why such a gap may be understandable, as the focus of hegemony is about the powerful, and every day is about the mundane, there are many insights in engaging with the two in the seafood sector in the global South where marginal actors are active, not reactively, contesting and resisting neoliberal policy instruments.

IPE scholarship is dominated by the study of powerful actors shaping policy outcomes (Hobson & Seabrooke 2007). Even when critical approaches accord resistance and agency to peripheral actors, such as Stephen Gill's work on the battle in Seattle (Gill, 2000), this agency is considered weak and at best reactive to powerful global institutions such as international financial institutions that are held as the movers and shakers and are capable of shaping the structures and institutions of the global political economy. This top-down focus is, however, regrettable. Foley and Mather (2018) recently show how local users and discounted actors engage in ocean grabbing as a form of 'social justice.' Their argument shows the weaknesses of focusing exclusively on powerful actors as 'ocean grabbers.'

Critical IPE scholars have called for a shift in attention from the traditional "big end of town" to capture peripheral and marginal actors (LeBaron, 2010, p. 891). The traditional regulatory IPE tends to privilege powerful actors and their actions in global politics (Seabrooke, 2007). While such a focus is essential, it nevertheless occludes the possibilities of understanding how "neoliberal reform projects are resisted and challenged" (Elias and Roberts 2016, 795). The flipside is on how focusing on powerful actors could elide the role of and perspective of marginal actors and how their entanglement in the fisheries sector results in diverse *actants* and regulatory tools, knowledge claims, contestable spaces, resistance, and technologies of governance.

I follow Hobson and Seabrooke (2007) in distancing the research from the traditional regulatory IPE for its overemphasis on powerful actors. They contend that the focus on powerful international institutions, international regimes, and neoliberal hegemonic processes is essential but should not be the only focus of IPE scholars. This focus has made IPE scholars privilege powerful actors and institutions in the global economy while marginalizing the agency of peripheral actors. While I also align with Clapp and Helleiner's (2012) caution against the exclusive focus on cooperative environmental initiatives, I depart from their top-down analysis and instead follow Hobson and Seabrooke's concern that such a focus obscures more than it can provide answers to "how [do] the subordinate mediate and at times shape these so-called top-down processes" (2007, p. 4) and especially "how can we understand regimes in the world economy only by focussing on formal institutions without recognizing the many informal regimes that are created by everyday actors" (2007, p. 9).

By so doing, the thesis pushes back at an understanding of hegemony that does not give attention to the agency of marginal actors, as mainly how focusing on "a small number of big

and important things" (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007, p. 1) could obscure the gendered processes that create and sustain resistance in the global fisheries sector (see Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007). The Coxian understanding of hegemony tends to render non-Western agency reactive. It regards hegemony as immutable and located in dominant structures and institutions in the global political economy.

This thesis adopts the 'everyday politics' perspective of the IPE. In doing so, it aligns itself with critiques of everyday life that contend that the domestic political economy and globalizing tendencies matter (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007). The everyday IPE opens the global understanding by showing how material, discursive, and institutional strategies depend on "informal regimes that are created by everyday actors" (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007, p. 9). Elias and Rai argue that the everyday political economy is "both a site of political struggle and a site within which social relations are (re)produced and governed" (2019, p. 201). This is relevant to this research. The regulation and governance of fisheries resources for the global market have significant externalities on the coastal communities generating resistance and contestations. With its marginal actors and diverse performative forms of resistance, the everyday political economy has not been given enough attention in IPEE.

Why does the examination of these seemingly discounted actors help in understanding resistance to neoliberal policy instruments? I argue that the fisheries sector is at the one end, deeply embedded in the global fisheries value chains, and on the other end, generating significant socio-ecological externalities and ecological distribution conflict. By taking food and jobs away from more than fifty million people and a tweak of the gendered opportunity structure of the sector, this has led to significant forms of resistance.

I will incorporate the everyday IPE with a hegemonic corporate seafood regime to explain the transformation in seafood production, distribution, and consumption. The goal is to explain how the corporate seafood regime is embedded in the global capitalist accumulation with its seeds of contradictions. I utilize neo-Gramscian analysis to explain why the corporate regime is resilient in the face of contradictions. Everyday, IPE completes my analysis by bringing marginal actors such as small-scale fishers, Indigenous people and women often skirted away in environmental governance, and how they are contesting the dominant seafood system and offering alternative visions.

2.5 Conclusion

A theoretical approach that can capture the nuances of how power is exercised, and how it is resisted in the fisheries sector must first start with an understanding of the entanglement between the seafood sector and global capitalism. This framework follows these insights to show how the socio-ecological challenges in the fisheries sector cannot be divorced from the hegemony of the neoliberal food system. Whereas many scholars focus on powerful actors, especially on how they rationalize and legitimize neoliberal policy instruments in the seafood industry in order "to shore up their privileged position in accommodating critical challenges and delegitimating alternative pathways" (Newell & Taylor 2017, p. 111), this thesis, instead, broadens this focus to the workings of the everyday IPE in order to account for the intricacies and the everyday forms of contestations manifest in global governance. This requires an in-depth understanding of the power relations and the role of conflicts and struggles among diverse actors, especially peripheral ones. The conflictual relations among diverse actors, powerful and marginal, draws from the contradictions inherent in the processes of the (re)production of the blue economy.

Consequently, this research uniquely contributes to the literature of the governance of the fisheries sector, especially in developing countries. By combining critical IPE scholarship – neo-Gramscian and everyday – with food regime analysis, to explain how the blue economy and third-party certification schemes are reproduced and contested in three interrelated spaces of discourse, institutions and the material capabilities (Newell & Taylor 2018), a complete understanding of how political and economic power has been exercised, and in turn, how it has been resisted or accepted will emerge. The intention is not to downplay the utility of structural change and hegemonic inquiry in IPE scholarship, but rather to show that understanding the fisheries sector's governance necessarily involves taking cognizance of the everyday IPE and how the everyday is enacted at the local level. The intention "is neither to marginalize the importance of the dominant nor reify the agency of the weak. Rather it is to analyze the interactive relationship between the two" (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007, p.15).

Chapter 3 : The blue economy: when a corporate seafood regime meets hegemony

3.1 Introduction

The conference hall was filled to the brim. Over 18,000 participants converged in Nairobi, Kenya, from November 26 – 28, 2018. They gathered to gain a deeper understanding on how the blue economy could facilitate harnessing the potential of oceans, seas, lakes and rivers, particularly for marginalized groups in the global South – small-scale fishers, women, and Indigenous people – and leverage on innovations in technologies to conserve marine resources for future generations.

This *Sustainable Blue Economy Conference*, co-hosted by Canada, Kenya, and Japan, was the first-ever global conference on the sustainable blue economy geared towards supporting the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It built on previous collaborative environmental initiatives, especially the Rio + 20 Conference, and the United Nation's *Blue Economy Conference Paper* published in January 2014. In the paper, "[T]he blue economy conceptualizes oceans as '*development spaces*' where spatial planning integrates conservation, sustainable use, oil and mineral wealth extraction, bio-prospecting, sustainable energy production and marine transport" (UNDP, 2018, p. 3).

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization further promoted the focus on sustainability through the *Blue Growth Initiative* to allow for the sustainable harnessing of marine resources, facilitate cooperation among states, and catalyze development. During the June 2015 World Ocean Summit held in Portugal, participants argued that sustainable ocean management – as a blue economy – "emerges when economic activity is in balance with the long-term capacity

of ocean ecosystems to support this activity and remain resilient and healthy" (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2015, p. 7).

When African countries met during the 33rd African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on February 8, 2020, it was a clear testimony the continental body had shown effectiveness at generating consent towards the blue economy. Its vision of *Developing a sustainable blue economy, increasing momentum for Africa's Blue Growth Strategy* promises to address mistakes in past market-based solutions in the fisheries sector by enhancing inclusion and a sustainable blue economy capable of significantly contributing to the continent's transformation and growth. The Summit built on the existing consensus over the potentials that Africa's marine resources could play in food security, development, and climate mitigation. In the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy (AU 2050 AIMS), the African Union calls the blue economy as the "new frontier of African Renaissance" (UNECA, 2016, p. 7). In the AU's Agenda 2063, the blue economy is Africa's future for socio-economic transformation and growth.

The new focus on inclusion and sustainable intensification have allowed for a more corporate-environmentalist food regime (Friedman, 2005). It has also become a tool for the government, donors, and corporate actors to shape and further the integration of Africa's fisheries into the global food system, specifically through large-scale industrial fishing. African countries are exercising their legislative and coercive powers to allow for the successful localization of neoliberal norms in the fisheries sector. They are attracted by the promise of "improved human wellbeing and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities" (Bond, 2019, pp. 342 – 343).

Many countries have bought into the triple-win narrative and are implementing the national blue economy strategies in their national economies such as South Africa, Mauritius, and

Seychelles. Others, such as Cape Verde, Senegal, Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria, are also formulating strategies to mainstream the blue economy at the national level. The blue economy is gaining traction in Africa. In 2016, the African Development Bank grant-aided medium-income countries $5 million to enable them to formulate a national strategic framework for a transition to Blue Economy and to undertake feasibility studies and pilots. The first grantees – Cape Verde, Morocco, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Guinea, and Nigeria were to lead the way – towards the institutionalizing the blue economy policies in the national context (AfDB & Blue Economy, 2019, p. 8).

While the recent focus on sustainable intensification and inclusion could mean the blue economy will not suffer from the same fate of the green economy, the lack of attention to the "power inequities in the food system" and in the implementation of the blue economy means "the power of dominant food system actors is often reinforced or overlooked" (Anderson *et al*. 2019, p. 4). The blue economy is also consolidating capitalist transformation in the fisheries sector through privatization and enclosure. The former "occurs when access and use rights are limited to select individual(s) or firm(s); enclosure is the political-regulatory progression through which these conditions are enabled and maintained" (Silver, 2013, p. 431). Therefore, the blue economy is rendered intelligible and governed by state and corporate actors through a repertoire of what Dobson (2007) refers to as environmentalism storylines.

Consequently, nuances in the West African blue economy "must also be understood in terms of how discourses, social programs, and even public planning and development interventions, articulate culture and/or identity, and in turn, influence individual and collective behavior" (Silver, 2013, p. 431). Furthermore, as Arbo *et al*. argue, "critical social science is needed insofar as growing interest in the ocean, encapsulated in the conservation and exploitation

agendas, is now turning the ocean into an increasingly important and contested social arena" (2018, p. 2).

Large-scale environmental projects such as industrial fisheries, fishmeal factories, aquaculture and carbon pricing are justified by invoking the logic of fisheries depletion needing improvements, and thus legitimizing a hegemonic corporate environmental food regime that has led to the dispossession of small-scale fishers and coastal communities. Therefore, the blue economy is not neutral and apolitical but embedded in a corporate food system and imbricated in hegemonic knowledge construction that fuels seafood trade dynamics under environmental rationales.

To explain how the blue economy is entrenching a corporate food regime and the type of governance structure unfolding in West Africa, I introduce a theoretical lens of hegemonic corporate environmental food regime. This lens brings together corporate seafood regime and neo-Gramscian hegemony, which attends to the historical focus on the seafood system while identifying the mechanisms in which the blue economy remains resilient despite its inherent contradictions. This marriage also illuminates how African states have provided a conducive national setting for the entrenchment of neoliberal policy instruments in the fisheries sector. Cox (1983) shows how class projects rely on the support of the state apparatus to successfully enact and, in the context of this research, disseminate seafood regimes within and across national settings (Brown, 2020). In isolation, these lenses fail to account for the complex entanglements in the fisheries sector. Instead, by combing them, I can provide different entry points to interrogate power in the food system at different historical epochs, levels, modes, and spaces, and the possibility of transformation.

3.2 Transformation towards a corporate seafood regime

The oceans, seas, lakes, rivers have always been contentious and laden with power. Historically, control and access have conferred power over and above, and access to a vast reservoir of resources. Research shows how the oceans link human activities and environmental conditions with power relations. In turn, many scholars call for a deeper understanding of the technologies of governance and the impact on marine habitat, and environmental justice (Bennett, 2019, p.1). Such a focus requires historiography to explain how a distinct corporate-environmental food regime may intersect and overlap with hegemonic environmental policy instruments, including how the regime can legitimize new forms of governance such as the emerging African Development Bank *Blue Economy Flagship* that is working to "implement the *Feed Africa* strategy in fisheries and aquaculture in close partnership with other natural resource sectors and stakeholders" (AfDB & Blue Economy, 2019, p. 2).

3.2.1 First seafood regime

From 1870 to 1940, West Africa went through the first food regime, also called the colonial-settler regime. European powers controlled West African territories, and these territories were *coerced* into producing tropical cash crops such as vegetable oils (palm oil and groundnuts), cocoa, tea, coffee, and tobacco. Palm oil was highly valued. Its usage as a lubricant for machinery and as an ingredient for food and soap soared. Colonial powers also relied on consent. This facilitated exchanges between the two sides, as colonial powers, imported cheap agricultural products and exported standardized manufactured goods. While many accounts tend to suggest that fisheries during this epoch were only geared towards subsistence, surplus fish was sold, and marketing of dry fish was done within the locality by women and men could travel to long distances to sell dry and smoked fish. McCracken argues against "the common misconception that the commercialization of fishing derives only in the late 1950s and that, previously, fishing

was a subsistence activity unrelated to the spread of capitalism and essentially unchanged over hundreds of years" (McCracken, 1987, p. 414). This argument shows that the importation of fisheries from West Africa could have started earlier than the first food regime suggested by food regime theorists. The structural power center of the global economy was the British Empire.

3.2.2 Second seafood regime

The second seafood regime was distinct because of the massive state intervention in agriculture in both the global North and South. Fiscal and monetary policy tools such as subsidies, quotas, and price supports became the norm, and the private corporate sector took on a significant role in agricultural research (Plahe, Hawkes & Ponnamperuma, 2013). The second food regime focused on exports of agricultural products instead of local consumption. Policies supporting the liberalization of fisheries in Africa were couched in the narrative of growth, job creation, enhanced markets, and an increase in goods, services, and prosperity. Countries needed to remove market barriers in the fisheries sector to reduce food loss and the volatility in the food process. After all, the trade barrier was a hindrance to prosperity. This argument, together with post-colonial states' failure to successfully launch fisheries policies, led many fisheries management at the national and regional levels to liberalize the sector to create a friendly climate for foreign investors.

By the 1980s, West African countries entered a dependent trade relationship with their colonial masters. The Lomé Convention – signed in 1982 to link Europe and Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries – introduced a customs duty exemption of many raw materials originating from ACP members (Enda DIAPOL, 2007). In practice, the rules-of-origin requirements limited free access to the European Community market (Plahe, Hawkes, & Ponnamperuma, 2013). A market-driven fishery became linked to market-based solutions to the

achievement of development goals (AUC-NEPAD, 2014). Fisheries trade became a poster child for coastal transformation, employment opportunities, women empowerment, and improvement in the livelihoods of the poor poverty alleviation. Small-scale fisheries became less viable as industrial fishing turned West Africa to "the fish basket for Western Europe, Russia, and China" (Alder & Sumaila, 2004, p. 156).

West Africa embraced access control through agreements and licenses with distant water fishing nations. These agreements generated ethical issues as they began to negatively impact the environment and the "social structures of African states" (Gegout, 2016, p. 2193). They began to show the contradictions in trade liberalization and fishing agreements. For example, through its taxpayer-funded fisheries subsidies regime, the EU promises to help poor West African countries arrest IUU fishing and has pledged to help these countries monitor and enforce illegal and unreported fishing (Munshi, 2020). On paper, the shift from subsistence to commercial and industrial fisheries should promote fish exports and earn foreign exchange and modernize fishing vessels. In practice, DWF nations do not keep to their bargain, thereby depleting fish stocks due to harmful fishing practices and the degradation of marine habitats (Enda DIAPOL, 2007).

Table 2: Food Regimes in West Africa

Seafood Regime Period	Seafood Regime Features	West Africa's Food Complex
Pre- 1870 *1492 - 1870*	Colonialism, Settlement, and Slavery *Key products:* *Vegetable oils (palm oil and groundnuts), hides, skins*	- Importation of staples - Food shortages
First Food Regime 1870 – 1940	Culmination of Colonialism Rise of Nation-States *Key products:* *Cocoa, Tea, Coffee, Tobacco, Vegetable oils, rubber*	- *Trade monopsonies* - *Coercive labour institutions* - *Corvée*/settler agriculture - Market concentration - Cocoa strike in Ivory Coast
Second Food Regime The 1950s -1980s	Decolonization Independence Modernization of agriculture *Key products:* *Cotton, Cocoa, Tea, Coffee, Tobacco, Vegetable oils, rubber*	- *Regional integration (ECOWAS & WAEMU)* *Crisis in agriculture* - Lomé Convention 1975 - UNCLOS 1982 - EU Common Fisheries Policy 1983
Third Food Regime The late 1980s	Structural Adjustment Programs (the 1980s) deregulation IMF Loans Blue economy *Key products:* *Cotton, Coffee, Cacao, Palm Oil, Rubber, Fish, Fishmeal and Fish Oil*	- *World Trade Organization -TRIPS* - *European Partnership Agreement* *-Private environmental regulations* - *G8's New Alliance for Food Security* - *ECOWAS Rice Offensive* - *AfCFTA* - *CAADP*

Source: Adapted with significant modification from McMichael (2009) and Thompson (2014).

3.2.3 Third seafood regime

The third seafood regime emerged on the heels of the 1970s global food crisis (Friedman & McMichael, 1989). It marked the withering of 'state-regulated agriculture' and the concomitant intensification of globalization (Foley & Mather, 2017). African countries became deeply integrated into the global capitalist system through corporate food supply chains "that gave corporate agribusiness enhanced access to arable land, [*water resources*], labour, and markets in

the Global South" (Plahe, Hawkes & Ponnamperuma, 2013, p. 317 *italicized is mine*). From the late 1980s, the third food regime has also seen the intensification of fisheries trade and the growing powers of transnational corporations in the seafood system (Foley & Mather, 2018). These corporations now dominate the seafood value chains, from production, processing, and marketing as fish becomes increasingly commodified. In 2018, Nutreco, the parent company of the Norwegian aquaculture feed company Skretting announced its full ownership of a joint venture partnership in West Africa.

Like many other keystone corporations operating in West Africa, this company dominates the seafood value chains from feeds to commodity trade to marketing and retailing (Osterblom *et al.,* 2015). In turn, the rise of these actors and their push for seafood liberalization, corporate concentration and control in the sector has raised questions about accountability and responsibility and the socially and ecological sustainability that the corporate food regime may be taking, especially in the developing countries. Overfishing, habit destruction, destructive fishing gear, and bycatch are few of the causes of ecological harm fueled by large-scale industrial fishing in West Africa. Nevertheless, the complicity of the state through a state-capital nexus (de Graaff, 2012) in an unequal trading system further raises concerns over the implementation of market-oriented approaches to fisheries, considering the weak positions of where African governments.

3.3 Implications of a Corporate Seafood Regime

These concerns have prompted scholars to ask whether food regime analysis or food complex regimes are adequate to analyze the transformations in the fisheries sector. In a recent study in India, Brown (2020) addresses the issue directly. He contends that the regime analysis offers an opportunity to address how food systems – production, distribution, and consumption – are embedded in the global capital accumulation with its seeds of contradictions. However, he

suggests this does not answer the question of the endurance of a food regime in the face of contradictions and conflicts. Instead, he suggests taking hegemony seriously to understand how regimes are established and maintained through coercion and consent to explain how neoliberal policy instruments are resilient despite their contradictions. These contributions affirm the importance of a hegemonic environmental corporate seafood regime analysis in understanding the blue economy. This approach contributes to the existing literature by extending the food regime analysis to understand the social forces that stand to gain from the blue economy and why West African governments are pushing for its implementation and the dynamics of exclusion, contestation, resistance and co-optation.

In the sections that follow, the focus is on the contradictions in West Africa's corporate seafood regime. First, I discuss the unequal seafood trading system, paying attention to opaque fisheries agreements. Next, I discuss the role of corporate concentration and the way it structures a dominant food system. I then look at the impact of the corporate food regime on sustainability pointing towards the tensions between profits and sustainable fisheries, and how the implementation of the blue economy policy in West Africa fails to take the hegemonic nature of ocean resources. This requires understanding how the technologies of governance and knowledge are mobilized to embed West African fisheries into global capital accumulation (Brown, 2020). Why does this analysis matter? It offers a nuanced understanding of how the blue economy as a site of power, is deepening and making the third food regime resilient. As I argue, the blue economy is power-laden and imbricated in hegemonic knowledge construction that fuels seafood trade dynamics under environmental rationales.

3.3.1 Unequal seafood trading system

Free Trade, the primacy of the market and the rules of demand and supply to distribute value along the value chain informs the orthodox underpinning of capitalist accumulation (Anderson *et al*. 2019). Trade has been the main path through which commodification has been rendered intelligible. The corporate food regime has equally linked trade with sustainability. West Africa's fisheries sector has been very unsustainable. Unequal trade relationship has been the bane behind this unsustainability. Trade relationships are vital because they help understand who benefits and who loses from the region's enormous resources and the contradictions in the unfolding blue economy's governance. The logic linking trade with sustainability calls for nuances.

Africa's exports of agro-food products emerged during the early contacts with Western and Asian cultures. This trade was simple, but it began to draw the continent into the world's core food system. The 'truly global scale' of fisheries production, distribution, trade, and marketing commenced during the second food regime and became consolidated in the third food regime (Clapp & Cohen, 2009). The corresponding seafood regime has integrated West Africa's fisheries in the global food system in growing volumes and values. Take the example of fishmeal and fish oil. The region is the third hub for the global supply of fishmeal after Peru and China. At the same time, many powerful actors such as the World Bank, international organizations such as the World Trade Organization, and Transnational corporations such as Nutreco and Olvea have consistently firmly pushed for fisheries liberalization.

The neoliberal ethos of fisheries liberalization has been succinctly articulated in the 2008 *World Development Report* on agriculture. The framework for 'new agriculture' would be driven by corporate entities deeply embedded in fisheries value chains that link producers to consumers. In the fisheries sector, African countries have shown high enthusiasm by creating and enabling local institutions to localize these norms. Cox (1983) shows how such hegemonic norms are

established within the national setting of norm originators before the extension to receiving states. They need fertile social and economic settings to survive. Without resisting neoliberal norms, African governments have allowed corporate control and access to marine resources, even as these neoliberal policy instruments are mostly insensitive to local geography. This process is in parallel with an ongoing trend that is orienting West Africa as fisheries exporters based "on the logic of market-based development, privatization and transformation of natural resources – 1.e. land, water, forests and fauna" (Matondi, Havnevik, & Beyene, 2011, p. 180).

No doubt, trade liberalization has seen a significant increase in revenues from exports of seafood commodities and access to markets. It has also increased varieties of food products available to consumers (Clapp & Fuchs, 2009). Nevertheless, the promise that liberalizing access to fisheries will allow West African countries to attract scarce foreign capital remains elusive. Furthermore, the hopes that the Exclusive Economic Zones declaration will deepen seafood liberalization and serve as a springboard for transformation through the fishing access fees, rents and receipts, and indirectly through joint ventures, corporate taxation, and employment creation remains a mirage. Following the Rio 20 + Conference, the expectation that these benefits will occur within the framework of sustainable development began to heighten. West Africa's "fisheries sector is drawn into a competitive industrial system through neoliberal structural adjustments, which harms and threatens the traditional fishing of local fishers and excludes them of being a competitor on equal terms on such an uncontrolled market" (Jönsson, 2019, p. 214). The sustainability narrative has become a form of blue washing.

Specifically, West African countries' fisheries agreements with the EU, Russia, China, Korea, and many others are highly asymmetric with significant impacts on revenues, small-scale fishers, Indigenous people, women, and out-migration (Alder & Sumaila, 2004). This is an

extension of the unequal trade relationship, informing the heated discussions in the Doha Round of World Trade Organization in rectifying the imbalances in the agriculture sector (Clapp & Cohen, 2009). Several accounts show how the types of trade agreements between West Africa and the developed countries play a determinant role in unequal fisheries agreements and IUU fishing (Alder & Sumaila, 2004; Witbooi, 2011). The Lomé Convention signed between Europe and the ACP countries led to an explosion of fisheries agreements with a corresponding implosion of fisheries stocks. This Convention also created a dependency on the European market. It also integrated the region into the global seafood system in a manner that is unfavourable to West African countries and makes them dependent on the developed and emerging economies.

Coastal countries with abundant marine resources have allowed foreign fleets to exploit their marine resources in exchange for financial compensation (Alder & Sumaila, 2004). The promise that distant water fishing nations would cooperate with relevant coastal countries states to enhance the sustainable use of marine resources remains a mirage as the former continues to engage in unbridled exploitation of marine resources without recourse to sustainability (Witbooi, 2011). Seafood trade and market-based strategies have failed to "fundamentally re-orient themselves away from high-capitalist forms of natural/bio-resource extraction" (Anderson *et al*. 2019, p. 4) with ecological and social implications. These disturbing trends are evident in fisheries agreements.

What explains the failure to re-orient the fisheries sector from the global capitalist system? The answer to a large extent relates to the blue economy's embeddedness and its "technologies of governance" (Hellstrom & Jacob, 2017, p. 605), which rests on hierarchical knowledge that privileges universal and scientific knowledge over local, unscientific, and

'situated' knowledge. Arbo *et al*. asked, "whose knowledge is considered in such infrastructures and how do the selection and prioritization of certain forms of knowledge over others influence decision-making and development pattern"? (2018, p. 5). This question is germane because it helps complicate how specific forms of 'knowing' have shaped West Africa's blue economy strategy in such a way that privileges corporate interests. The privileging of scientific and evidence-based knowledge serves to exclude many marginal actors whose experiential knowledge, transmitted from generation, is relegated to the background. Many regional and national fisheries policies are culprit to this appropriation, as for example, this privileged knowledge informs the AUC-NEPAD Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa stance on

> *taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by market-based approaches, by improving trade and facilitation and competitiveness, trade-support institutions, business environment and non-regulatory interventions such as certifications, while minimizing any negative social and environmental consequences, is an essential consideration in the development of this policy and reform* (WARFP, 2014, p. 4).

Technologies of governance reveal how the hegemonic corporate food system has midwifed the blue economy. The blue economy as a techno-scientific practice shapes the ways in which people come to understand and interface with neoliberal policy instruments. The blue economy requires policy instruments to be intelligible and governable, and to entrench a win-win-win discourse. This discourse and the repertoire of equity and inclusion continues to attract African governments. However, the oceans are not neutral but are made intelligible and governable by corporations, governments, and international financial institutions through the invocation of neoliberal logic. Therein lies their embeddedness in social and power relations. In

West Africa, alliances amongst keystone corporations, donors, public agencies, civil society organizations, financial institutions are shaping regional and national blue economy blueprints (Barbesgaard, 2018) that on the face value, are geared towards triple-win outcomes. These blueprints present the oceans as inert, apolitical, and do not engage with the trade-offs between winners and losers. Beneath the surface, however, as the example of Senegal reveals, the blue economy is facilitating investment and extraction in oceans, thereby entrenching a skewed relationship that further excludes marginalized actors (Cohen *et al*., 2019).

Nevertheless, little attention is paid to the type of governance unfolding in West Africa's blue economy. More critical IPE analysis "is needed insofar as growing interest in the ocean, encapsulated in the conservation and the exploitation agendas are now turning the ocean into an increasingly important and contested social arena" (Arbo et al., 2018, p. 2), where market-led solutions are changing the dynamics of access and control linked to financialization and ocean grabbing (Knott and Neis, 2016). These dynamics demand more attention because they stymie policies towards fisheries sustainability, generate ecological distribution conflict, and link the reactive narrative of sustainability to the resistance, contestation, and counter storylines from actors marginalized in the fisheries sector.

In *Euro vs. Yuan: Comparing European and Chinese Fishing access in West Africa*, Belhabib, Sumaila, Lam., *et al*. (2015) provided the most comprehensive analyses of the implication of distant nations' fishing access in West Africa. These authors argue China and the EU pose the greatest threat to fisheries in West Africa, as between 2000 to 2010, the EU reported only 29 percent of its catch from the region while China reported 8 percent (2005, p. 1). They also highlighted the asymmetric bargaining power that has allowed China and the EU to dominate the region's coastal waters sometimes through sharp practices such as reflagging

fishing vessels, that sometimes allow foreign vessels to pay domestic ports and licence fees instead as distant water fleets. These sharp practices have led to a lower capture of revenues and rents, overfishing, food insecurity and inability of local fishers to compete with industrial fleets.

Specifically, Chinese engagements with the West African fisheries have reinforced a commodity export strategy where seafood and fishmeal and fish oil are processed elsewhere. These engagements take place within China's three core aims: diplomacy, ideology, and commerce (Ambe-Uva, 2017). The mainstream view holds that they have the potential to allow West African countries to gain from the emerging competition for access over marine resources, as well as enhance the bargaining power of coastal states through renegotiation of more revenues and fisheries partnerships agreements. Nevertheless, the negative socio-economic and ecological implications have continued to worry many observers. Data on fishing licenses issued to foreign trawlers from four African countries from 2005 – 2016 shows a foreign trawl fleet dominated by vessels registered to China (47 percent), Spain (13 percent), South Korea (12 percent) and Senegal (7 percent) (Virdin, 2019, np). In terms of revenues, in 2015, Pacific Island governments captured 12 percent of estimated total revenues generated by fishing activities while three West African countries received the following percentage of estimated total revenues: Guinea (2 percent), Liberia, (5 percent), and Sierra Leone (8 percent) (Virdin, 2019, np).

Closely tied to fisheries agreements has been the impact of subsidies in the fisheries sector. Several scholars have been critical of these agreements as fisheries' subsidies potentially enhance free trade and deeply integrate local fisheries into the global seafood system, thereby exacerbating economic dependence and the risks of overfishing (Munshi, 2020; Enda DIAPO, 2007). Others have highlighted how EU subsidies have made local fleets less competitive (Gegout, 2016) and lead to a significant rise in fisheries agreements.

West African countries cannot match the subsidies paid by distant water fishing nations. Clapp and Cohen argue that even if these countries have the wherewithal to pay these subsidies, "donors have made a more market-oriented approach to agriculture a condition for assistance" in the corporate food regime (2009, p. 5). These subsidies have led to dumping, allowing West African countries to import fish from the developed countries to meet their nutrition needs. The uneven playing field has made the fisheries sector in developing countries less competitive and prone to unsustainability. In his commentary in the *Financial Times*, Neil Munshi argues that "[F]or decades, heavily subsidized boats – primarily from Spain, France, Portugal, Italy and Greece – have travelled far afield to feed Europe's insatiable appetite for fish" (Munshi, 2020, np). The surge in fishing agreements in West Africa underscores the negative impact on local communities and marine resources' health.

3.3.2 Corporate control of West Africa's fisheries

The focus on transnational corporations in West Africa's fisheries is essential because of their new role in private governance and their hegemonic discourses of sustainability. Corporate concentration and dominance are noticeable in industrial fishing, aquafeed, processing, and marketing. The third food regime demarcates the neoliberal ethos of the global market economy and private capital dominance in the global food system (Campling & Havice, 2018). This dominance has played out in the fisheries sector through a state-capital nexus like the joint ventures in the oil and energy sector (de Graaff, 2012), making it challenging to locate where power lies and how it is exercised.

In West Africa, the winners have been powerful transnational corporations who "dominate the governments and the multilateral organizations that make and enforce the regime's rule for trade, labour, property and technology" (Holt-Giménez 2010, p. 2), not just because they

control a significant share of the market but because they are involved in agenda-setting. They control decision making on both sides of the value chain and seafood trade (Clapp & Cohen, 2009). These oligopolistic corporations dominate the markets and control the information and power to set prices. These trends have been evident in the fisheries sector in West Africa, where corporate concentration and dominance have been behind neoliberal policy instruments such as the Technologies for Agricultural Transformation Program funded by the AfDB to scale-up technologies to support AfDB's Feed Africa Strategy. This program "has a special focus around self-sufficiency of inland fisheries, which is also a WorldFish objective" (CGIAR, 2018, np). While these technologies are promoted to boost aquaculture production and fisheries sustainability, especially towards helping fisheries adapt to climate change, less obvious has been how these corporations control the discourse and not local fishers and the environment.

Recent attempts to "recast modernization trope" (Bergius & Buseth, 2019, p. 57) as 'blue' through a triple-win narrative (Cohen *et al*., 2019; Barbesgaard, 2019), for example, has led to a discourse that prioritizes large-scale industrial fishing and aquaculture. Behind this discourse are companies such as Skretting, a global leader in the manufacture and distributor of aquafeeds. The company has supported aquaculture markets in Africa and has a dominant presence in South Africa. Its parent company, Nutreco, which entered Africa in 2001 by taking shares of Egyptian company Hendrix Misr, had taken full ownership in 2013 and renamed Skretting Egypt (Food Business Africa, 2019). Nutreco recently successfully negotiated 100 percent ownership of Skretting Nigeria, a joint-venture with shareholders of a local fish farm – Durante (Skretting & Nutreco Company, 2018). It also recently acquired premix company AHN South Africa for an undisclosed amount (Food Business Africa, 2019).

Corporations such as Skretting and Nutreco play a significant role in setting the rules that govern their operations in West Africa. Through a revolving door practice where today they are corporations and the next day, corporate regulators show how they can use their influence and power to push for policy instruments that favour them. In this context, they can influence discourses about a sustainable food system, in a manner that favours them. To come back to the question of where power is located, corporations use their power to foster capital accumulation in the seafood industry. Their concentration further gives them extensive latitude and a loud voice over their version on how to organize the seafood system to promote sustainability (Clapp & Fuchs, 2009).

3.3.3 Blue washing the blue economy

Critical scholars have been interested in how corporate interests affect seafood sustainability. They look at the impact on food security, small-scale fisheries, the environment, and consumer sovereignty. Through attempts to govern the oceans, corporate interests have commodified the marine resources with two contradictory tendencies: as natural capital and for profits (Bond, 2019). In Seychelles, for example, the transformation of natural resources into commodities, which is then speculated and traded as 'futures' on commodity markets globally, is taking place under the rubric of blue bonds. The country floated the first sovereign wealth blue bond – a financial instrument to support sustainable marine and fisheries projects – and raised $15 billion from investors (World Bank, 2018).

There is a sense in which the example of Seychelles shows that the commodification of the oceans is promoted as a route to sustainability. Corporate control of the ocean is premised on the need to overcome the crisis of accumulation through a spatial-fix (Harvey, 2005) and technological fix (Longo & Clark, 2012). The agenda hinged on the blue economy model is to

tackle the "multiple and overlapping uses in the ocean and marine environment" (Winder & Le Heron, 2017, p. 4). Through market-driven approaches, policymakers seek to enhance food security and livelihoods, stimulate fisher's participation in the blue economy, and mitigate climate (Cohen *et al*. 2019; Winder, 2018).

Many blue economy programs have emerged in Africa, such as the Seychelles blue bonds (World Bank, 2018) and South Africa's *Operation Phakisa: Oceans* (Bond, 2019). Fisheries resources have received more attention (AfDB & Blue Economy, 2019; Carver, 2019) as "a new frontier for African Renaissance" (UNECA 2016, p. 7) although there is also a recent focus to seabed mining (Carver, 2019; Childs & Hicks, 2019) and Ghana's and South Africa's initiatives to harness energy through the ocean. The fisheries sector has been topmost on the blue economy agenda because fish is a significant animal protein intake in West Africa, as high as 75 percent in Senegal (AfDB & Blue Economy, 2019, p. 2) and holds the potential for fishing, aquaculture, mariculture, feeds, and can support the pharmaceutical, chemical and cosmetic industries, allowing transnational corporations such as France's Olvea to source for fish oil from the region.

Renewable and non-renewable resources are significant sources of revenue for the government and sources of income for households in West Africa (WARFP, 2017). Belhabib, Sumaila and Pauly estimated that about 7 million people in the region earn a living directly from fishing (2015, p. 73). The Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines have provided a framework in which the "blue economy could be harnessed through best management practices, market access, increased local consumption and support through regional economic zones" (AfDB & Blue Economy, 2019, p. 2). Current documentation of West African fisheries stresses the role of small-scale fisheries, and their vulnerability (Belhabib, Lam and Cheung, 2016; Sumaila et al., 2019) and policy initiatives and institutional arrangements towards meeting the Life Below Water

Sustainable Development Goal 14, and the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, with far less attention drawn to the neoliberal implication of these policies.

The blue economy raises important questions about ownership, who benefits and who loses, and how power is exercised. This is important because it pertains to power and inclusion and the contestations against accumulation in the oceans. The contested nature of how the economy materializes as blue has also allowed diverse actors to position their discourses strategically. In this context, the institutional arrangement for governing the blue economy has become a site for debates over how to promote sustainable seafood value chains better. Although many actors feature in these debates, again, corporations have held sway.

West Africa's fishery is mostly artisanal. Policies towards the inclusion of marginal actors through people-centred sustainability (Attri & Muller, 2018), especially social justice and inclusion, are central. The framers of the SDG 14 had these issues in mind. However, the implementation of blue economy programs tends to marginalize small-scale fishers, Indigenous people and women. Even when these marginal actors are involved, "having a voice may be defined more with an expression than as influence" (Polletta, 2015, p. 243) and even when small-scale fishers have "a chance to speak," they lack "the power to choose" (Polletta, 2015, p. 242). Overall, the literature's policy-focused nature gives salience to sustainable small-scale fisheries and coastal communities' interests. In this sense, attention is being given to the disruptive effects of climate change on marine and coastal environment, including living conditions of local fisheries communities, conflicts, and forced migration (Jönsson, 2019; Cross, 2014). Despite these potentials, the fisheries sector faces significant challenges limiting the governments' capability to ensure the sector's sustainability and profitability. It can also contribute to the wellbeing and economic development of Africa (AUC-NEPAD, 2014). The failure of blue

growth policies to manage fish resources sustainably, the impact of climate change, and the global demand for seafood have conspired to affect West African fisheries' potential.

Barbesgaard (2018) referred to blue growth as ocean grabbing. As a neoliberal policy, the blue economy, like its predecessor, the green economy, has sought to emerge as a framework to shape the seafood regime to comply with market dictates. It frames economic development and environmental protection as mutually reinforcing. For instance, IUU fishing in West Africa could be an 'opportunity' instead of a crisis' (UNEP, 2011), requiring market-based solutions. In many ways, the blue economy has followed the modernization trope of the green economy, thereby neglecting the power and material interests behind sustainability. The challenges of decoupling opportunities from crisis is also contested. Transnational corporations allied with international financial institutions and environmental non-governmental organizations such as the World Wide Fund are deploying an inclusion and equity narrative trope as a neoliberal tool to rationalize and perpetuate privatization, financialization and ocean grabbing – processes, practices and performances that in seeking to reconcile growth with sustainability, have led to 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2005), and in turn, ignite local resistance.

Similar to the green economy, the blue economy in the global South is distinct from the North and is about "environmental protection along with modernization, and shift in access and control over green sectors" like fisheries (Berguis & Buseth, 2019, p. 57). Emerging policies in West Africa's fisheries have sought to liberalize access to increase competitiveness through "strong emphasis on markets, deregulation, and free trade" (de Graaff, 2012, p. 540). In parallel, critical scholars have pointed out how such processes ignore the power relations embedded in the agro-food value chains and the ensuing frictions of local resistances. For example, Clapp, Newell and Brent (2018) and Grain (2019) show how climate-smart agriculture is not apolitical but

highly contested. Just like the way the climate-smart agriculture is embedded in the neoliberal narratives of triple-win, Clapp, Newell and Brent argue that "deep-sea mining interests, as well as large environmental NGOs, have successfully leveraged the Blue Economy framework as a new vehicle for enabling finance capital to penetrate marine areas" (2018, p. 81).

West Africa's blue economy model seeks to balance fisheries' sustainability with economic growth. Coastal West African countries have recently pushed for the blue growth strategy to "leverage synergies and maximize the benefits of marine coastal investments for the people, environment, and the economy" through a triple-win approach, especially for small island nations such as Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau (WARFP, 2017, p. 4). In November 2015, Cape Verde adopted a Charter for the promotion of Blue Growth, introducing a framework to coordinate different actors and sectors, especially fisheries and tourism (WARFP, 2017). Despite these, few studies have explicitly focused on the implications of these broader structural trends of the fisheries sector's embeddedness and the ensuing frictions and local resistance that these trends create. Scholars have documented the environmental challenges, corporate dominance, and expansion tendencies of the state in the guise of a blue economy paradigm. Silver et al. argue that states are using the blue economy to enhance their geopolitical significance and "catalysts include ocean acidification, and sea-level rise, overfishing and marine biodiversity loss, a growing consensus regarding the conservation and development potential of the high seas, and interest from some countries in territorializing more ocean space" (2015, p. 136).

The *bluewashing* discourse presents the interests of fishers, external actors, and the environment to be in tandem. In practice, corporate interests and hegemonic knowledge make the blue economy intelligible in specific ways that conflict with the interests of small-scale fishers, Indigenous people, and women. At the same type, this discourse is normalized and legitimized by

dominant state actors (Brown, 2020). These dynamics are behind the West African government's march towards implementing blue growth policies despite their international contradictions. These governments "have signed onto and/or are negotiating trade agreements that make it much harder to implement food import restrictions and protections for local food producers, including the recently-launched African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA)" (Grain, 2019, p. 6). Such entanglements limit their ability to challenge the blue economy or implement it in such a way that benefits small-scale fishers, Indigenous people, and women.

Despite the significant role that women play "in the processing, marketing, and distribution networks with implications for resilient household economies" (AfDB & Blue Economy, 2019, p.2), they are marginalized in the fisheries value chains. In the absence of opportunities for fish processing, Senegalese women have been reoriented towards fish exports despite local shortages. This incorporation in the global seafood trade has further diminished their market power as they are unable to add value to the fish for local consumption. Nevertheless, contestation and resistance and the clamor for alternative seafood systems are also evident. In Senegal and Mauritania, women have pushed for the closure of fishmeal factories that takes their jobs as fish processors (Standing, 2019). This call shows how the blue economy is gendered. Women and other marginal actors are calling for a significant "transformation of the global food system - from a model that favors the industrialized production" to one that rests on "agroecological production and local food system" (Grain, 2019, p. 3).

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter utilizes a novel conceptual approach to explain why the blue economy is implemented in West Africa despite its inherent contradictions and tendency to work against small-scale fishers, Indigenous people, and women. It shows that combining neo-Gramscian

analysis with food regime analysis (understood as a hegemonic corporate food system) can reveal the blue economy's resilience despite its inherent contradictions. The food regime analysis is among the most robust and nuanced approaches in analyzing historical transformation in the global food system, allowing scholars to identify the global relations behind which seafood is embedded (Foley & Mather, 2017). However, it remains deficient in nuances regarding how food regimes are established and maintained. Critical theorists are helping to frame our understanding of the contradictions and resilience of the corporate food regime. Brown (2020) deployed a similar analytic to explain hegemonic food regimes in India.

In this chapter, I show that the blue growth policies are implemented in the fisheries sector in West African despite their deep contradictions. Governments have been receptive to these norms due to claims to inclusiveness and sustainability. The Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines (SSF) pushing for the localization of these norms. Nevertheless, in practice, questions about power have rarely been addressed. Neoliberal norms have led to the commodification of the ocean and have made many to argue that blue growth is about ocean grabbing (Barbesgaard, 2018; Knott & Neis, 2016). Corporate power and concentration have allowed keystone corporations to control agenda setting and influence the discourse of sustainability, pushing for deeper integration of West Africa's fisheries in the global food system. The role of the West African state has been that of a facilitator, receptive of neoliberal policies in exchange for foreign capital, as Cox (1983) suggested. These governments have signed onto fisheries agreements and other neoliberal policies that makes it difficult for them to protect vulnerable and marginalized groups.

However, this role is contested as the state is torn between corporate interests and the interests of small-scale fisheries. The blue economy is therefore not neutral and apolitical but

embedded in the corporate food system and imbricated in hegemonic knowledge construction that fuels seafood trade dynamics under environmental rationales. Contradictions in the corporate food system are the seeds of resistance, and they are sprouting alternative networks that are pushing for food sovereignty.

Chapter 4 : Hegemonic articulation of fisheries certification in West Africa

4.1 Introduction

The International Institute for Sustainable Development's (IISD) report titled "State of Sustainability Initiatives Review (SSI): Standards and the Blue Economy" argues that blue growth requires certified fisheries and aquaculture (IISD, 2016). Many of the crisis that fisheries in the developing countries face such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing could be stamped out by certification schemes. Corporate seafood regime promotes non-state market-driven policy instruments. Many developing countries are now required to introduce market solutions to enhance fisheries sustainability.

Perhaps the best link between the blue economy and voluntary certification is captured in the EKO report which notes that:

> *actors seeking to protect ocean environments have increasingly turned to market-based policies and incentives to better align commercial and conservation objectives. These strategies have included certification schemes, the emergence of eco-brands, small investment funds, and consumer marketing efforts that generate demand for sustainably sourced seafood. Market principles also shape the use of rights-based fisheries management, or catch-share systems, which attempt to integrate property rights into fishing access as a way to incentivize long-term resource stewardship* (Satizabal et al., 2020, p. 212).

Touted by its promoters as the most widely institutionalized certification in the global seafood system, the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) enjoined consumers always to consider the social and environmental impact of their purchases. "[B]y choosing seafood with the MSC blue fish label you're helping to protect oceans, livelihoods and fish for the future" (MSC, nd, np). The website of the Friend of the Sea, a project of the World Sustainability Organization, also

echoed this social and environmental imperative. Its objective is to enhance fishery's sustainability by "reducing IUU products' demand, relieving pressure on global fisheries and allowing fishermen to earn a fair price for their catch" (Friend of the Sea, 2018, np). The two cited examples are amongst the growing rhetoric regarding the push for fisheries certification uptake in the developing countries. Many governments consider fisheries certification as a scheme to enhance food security. In recent times, the African Union is pushing for fisheries certification as a market-based policy instrument that will open the doors for marine-rich countries to access the global seafood market while minimizing environmental consequences.

So, at odds with this 'narrative promise' of fisheries certification, the low uptake of certification schemes and the general resistance to market-led fisheries improvement programs (FIPs) in the developing countries continue to amuse observers. Recent trends towards territorial and ethical eco-certification (Foley & Havice, 2016; Foley, 2018) and the downplay of the social tripod of sustainability underlies how market-based processes are not inclusive. Nor could the focus on sustainability belie the charge of an underlying northern-imposed agenda towards control over resources in the developing countries, and how the contest between global and local actors, and norms in the seafood system plays out. Nevertheless, even as key actors push for FIPs uptake, fisheries certification has remained low. It has not stimulated the active participation of marginal actors – small-scale fishers, Indigenous people, and women – in sustainable fisheries.

This chapter argues that what might best be understood, following Aron Leopold, as "the changing constellation of power and resistance" (Leopold, 2011, p. 391) underscores the complex dynamics of West Africa's fisheries landscape. While fisheries certification aims to benefit all the actors along the value chains, critical approaches that focus on power configurations can reveal the negative impacts on livelihoods of fishers, coastal communities, and rural development. The

marginalization and lack of inclusion in the fisheries sector have led to resistance against neoliberal policy instruments.

4.2 West Africa's fisheries' certification landscape

In contrast to our emphasis on the need to focus on the material, institutional and discursive contexts of Transnational Business Governance Initiatives (TBGIs) (Foley, 2018), it can be argued that fisheries certification seeks to enhance environmental externalities in the production, distribution and consumption of fish and fish-related products along the value chain, and empower producers and marginalized actors. At the inception of the MSC, many assessments echoed these sentiments by pointing to its efficacy towards empowerment and the use of 'independent, science-based expertise' and 'technoscientific values' to enhance credibility and social legitimacy (Foley & Havice, 2016); and open access to niche markets, premiums, and other economic benefits (Le Manach *et al.*, 2020).

In the developing countries, the introduction of certification schemes coincided with the dramatic market transformations and complexity in the global value chains, leading to "a globally integrated food system that affects all regions of the world" (Clapp and Fuchs, 2009, p. 1). This is evidenced in the global food, feed, fuel, and finance crisis in the 2007-08 and phytosanitary and health concerns such as the mad cow disease. These examples demonstrate how economic globalization has accelerated and deepened an interdependent agro-food sector, requiring similar policy instruments in sectors like coffee, forests, palm oil plantations, aquaculture, and fisheries (Foley & Havice, 2016; Foley, 2018). At the same time, there has been a significant increase in private actors and transnational corporations' power. Many scholars allude to the dominance of these actors in the fisheries sector. What is less understood is their increasing roles in private regulation, including in third-party certification of fisheries.

The MSC stands out among all the fisheries certification schemes (Stratoudakis *et al*. 2016; Foley, 2018; Le Manach *et al.,* 2020). It was created in 1987 through the notion that consumers could effectively use their consumption choices and purchasing power to reshape fisheries governance (Foley, 2013). It is a partnership between the world's largest consumer good company (Unilever) and the world's largest environmental NGO (World Wide Fund). The partnership itself, demonstrates the new trend in which NGOs are "leveraging the new power and authority" of transnational corporations "as global environmental regulators" (Lambin & Thorlakson, 2018, p. 384), through Multistakeholder initiatives (MSIs), to minimize the accusations of "greenwashing" (Dentoni & Peterson, 2011).

Table 3: Types of transnational business governance initiatives

Lead stakeholder	**Standard**	**Who sets**	**Who monitors**	**Example**
Government	Voluntary government-led certification	Government, often with input from NGOs, companies, and producers	Third-party	USDA Organic
NGO	NGO certification	NGO	Third-party	Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance
	Multistakeholder certification	NGOs, companies, producers	Second or third party	FSC, MSC, RSPO, FoS
Company	Industry standards	Group of companies	First, second, or third party	GlobalGAP, MarinTrust Responsible Care^{R}
	Company-led standards	Company	First, second, or third party	Unilever Sustainable Agriculture Code

Source: Adapted from Lambin & Thorlakson (2018, p. 371).

By December 2016, 363 fisheries across 35 countries were either MSC-certified or about to be certified, representing 12 percent of global wild capture harvest (MSC, 2017, p. 5). The uptake of certification in terms of size and operations, however, has been heavily skewed in

favour of Northern markets. This discrepancy is even more pronounced in Africa, where despite the significant contribution of West Africa's wild-caught fish to the European market (almost 80 percent of seafood trade is with the EU), the uptake of certification schemes has been marginally low.

The Friend of the Sea (FoS) standard has emerged as an alternative to the MSC and is gaining appeal in the developing countries (Potts *et al*., 2016). It was created in 2006 by the NGO Island Institute, without any form of partnership with transnational corporations. The FoS adopts the guidelines of the FAO by looking at the actual state of fisheries guidelines seeking for certification instead of their potential improvements, consequently making it to rely on the FAO publicly available data with implications for cost reduction for producers. While MSC certification is Northern-dominated, the FoS has Southern-dominance, with Peru alone accounting for 62 percent (Potts *et al*., 2016). Together, the two account for almost the entire stock of certified wild-catch seafood, with the FoS broadening the space for certified seafood, again, despite challenges of sustainability.

Developing countries lag in certification, despite the growing demand for sustainably sourced seafood and major European retailers like Sainsbury, Safeway and Lidl, and North America's Walmart, McDonald, IKEA, and many others. As a response, these countries are adopting FIPs as a waystation towards fisheries certification. Although they are not certification schemes, FIPs are "partnerships between fishers and transnational corporations throughout the seafood supply chain that are intended to help unsustainable fisheries improve their practices" through a carrot and stick approach (Kessler, 2015). The FIPs have been implemented in many developing countries as a prelude to certification. In West Africa, for example, the *Lead Project* is "providing the necessary technical, market and financial support needed to facilitate the

transition to sustainable of fisheries" (Gobin & Baumann, 2020, np). This project, initiated by the MSC and Clamrmondial with support from MAVA Foundation, has targeted Cape Verde, Gambia, Mauritania, and Senegal. It intends to map the financing gaps and benchmark areas requiring intervention focusing on environmental, economic, and social goals in the fisheries sector. However, a recent study on FIPs in the developing countries revealed that developing countries were spending more time on stages one-three of a five-step progression of improvement compared to developed countries (Duggan & Kochen, 2016).

4.2.1 A critical perspective of West Africa's fisheries certification

Critical scholars have taken a swipe at certification schemes. The weak level of certification uptake in the developing countries and in recent times, the proliferation of territorial and ethical eco-certification schemes more than speaks to the nature of neoliberal policy instruments as devices of exclusion (Lambin & Thorlakson, 2018). A report from the FAO provides a comprehensive account of the state of fisheries certification (FAO, 2018). It reports how fisheries certification reflects disparities between schemes, regions, and countries. A few issues stand out from the report. First, despite their growth, fisheries certification and ecolabelling is geographically unbalanced. Despite the enormous marine resources, West Africa has the lowest fisheries certification in the world. This low level is essential because of certification schemes such as the MSC favour large-scale independent and internationally focused fisheries (Lambin & Thorlakson, 2018). However, West African fisheries are mainly small-scale and artisanal, making the prospects of certification very challenging.

Fisheries certification in West Africa has also focused more on pushing fisheries for export than local markets (Sampson *et al.* 2015). This perhaps represents a growing concern over food security and challenges the existence of institutions such as the World Trade Organization

and the FAO, who have been promoting seafood liberalization (Murphy, 2015). The argument that certified fisheries could gain entrance to hard-to-penetrate international markets such as the EU obliviate from the fact that developing countries' priorities are not considered. Certified fisheries that are traded at the international markets are high grade, hence costlier. In turn, West African countries import fish and fish-related products from the global North and other emerging markets like China to replace their 'inefficient' domestic production with 'efficient,' but mostly subsidized food from the global North (Murphy, 2015). The focus on exports against meeting the food security challenges of the region is profound. For example, Nigeria, due to its high demand for fisheries products, must import fish from the developed and emerging economies to meet its protein needs, despite its location in West Africa. Similarly, the export of Mauritania's seafood to Europe while the local people suffer tends to cast doubt on trade liberalization gains. These trends cast doubts regarding the ability of third-party certification as new environmental policy instruments would deepen trade liberalization, and by implication, address the FAO four pillars of food security: supply, access, nutrition, and stability remains contested.

There has also been a growing concern that fisheries certification could lead to the overexploitation of overfished stocks. While certification schemes tend to portray fisheries moving towards certification or certified as sustainable, the implications for overfishing are discounted. Take the example of reduction fisheries in Mauritania, whose small pelagic fishery had undergone FIPs and certified by the MarinTrust. According to the IFFO, "the continued uptake of IP indicates the willingness by applicants to demonstrate improvements and work towards responsible fisheries" (The Fish Site, 2019, np). What is less addressed is how such processes could further the depletion of fisheries resources. France's Olvera has been financing a "FIPs in Mauritania, aimed at helping the fisheries reduction industry become more responsible"

(Standing, 2019, p. 2), and has certified some of its products under both the Friend of the Seas label and through the MSC. Nevertheless, the FAO has expressed concern regarding how governments have frustrated its efforts to monitor fisheries in the region (Standing, 2019).

Concerns that certification schemes could work against marginal actors in the fisheries sector, especially small-scale fishers, Indigenous people, and women, have intensified. Certification schemes are faced with the dilemma of striking a delicate balance between a rigorous and sometimes overly demanding ecological standard against the need to keep the standard accessible to fisheries operating under very different management regimes. In West Africa, certification privileges large-scale fisheries over small-scale fisheries. According to Blackmore *et al*., (2015), small-scale fisheries tend to be disadvantaged vis-à-vis industrial fisheries. Considering that small-scale fisheries and processors dominate capture fisheries in the region, privileging large-scale industrial fisheries has only meant a growing lack of inclusion.

4.2.2 Power configuration in West Africa's fisheries certification

Criticisms levelled against certification schemes in the developing countries tend to suggest only one thing: managerial and technical reforms that involve small-scale fishers could enhance the credibility of these schemes and bring marginal actors into sustainability fold. MSC has introduced reforms such as FIPs and data on small-scale fisheries. The Friend of the Seas (FoS) has also seized the moment to present itself as an alternative to the MSC by incorporating socio-economic factors in its guidelines to make it more appealing to developing countries (FAO, 2018). Its "standard requires compliance with social accountability too, such as appropriate salaries, health insurance and no child labour," among other enhanced sets of standards introduced in 2018 to fight IUU fishing (Friend of the Sea, 2018, np). Fair Trade fisheries has also promised to bring "consumers from the global North to contribute to the empowerment of

Southern producers and workers through the purchase of fairly produced and traded communities" (Staricco, 2019, p. 97). Questions about the dilution and weakening of standards to certify more fishers, the flexibility to accommodate transnational corporations and other powerful actors, and the deviation from social, economic, and environmental justice remain unanswered (Staricco, 2019).

On the one hand, it is not uncommon to hear fisheries managers and NGOs acknowledge that certification schemes can transform production, exchange, and consumption relations in favour of small-scale fishers, Indigenous people, and women. On the other hand, many commentators recognize that certification schemes reproduce inequality between marginal and privileged actors, the power relations between the global North over the global South producers, and privilege keystone actors, especially importers and retailers in the distribution of profits along the value chains. However, they posit that a little tweaking involving partnerships with the developed countries could help developing countries manage their fisheries better. The Policy Framework and Reform Strategy of the Fisheries and Aquaculture (PFRS) in Africa, endorsed by the Head of States and Government, is an essential outcome of such an effort to help align national policies to continental PFRS.

4.2.3 The hegemonic articulation of interests of MSIs

The construction of fisheries certification is a hegemonic policy instruments that masks the interests of MSIs, specifically the globalization trend towards controlling seafood. The blue economy paradigm that emerged at the turn of the century elaborates a noble vision that allows coastal nations to tap into the vast reservoir of marine resources in a triple-win situation. Underneath, however, the technocratic vision reveals who benefits and *cui bono?*

The hegemonic articulation of certification schemes has served to accommodate the perspectives of dominant actors. Certification schemes are new environmental policy instruments that perpetuate the dominance of the market. The contestations over their efficacy and their promotion by MSIs provide insights into hegemony in practice. Staricco (2019) uses the *comprehensive concepts of control*, linking ideology, politics, and the economy to show how dominant actors negotiate their interests, legitimate their domination, and contribute to the reproduction of the hegemonic order.

Fisheries certification schemes in the developing countries mirror the global power relations between the global North and the south. As such, they are considered a northern-imposed agenda to facilitate access to fisheries in West Africa. The global norms from powerful actors are embedded in the global food system that links profits to the health of fisheries in West Africa. Nevertheless, West African governments are also key players in the articulation of hegemony in the fisheries sector, and certification schemes interact with public authority (Lambin & Thorlakson, 2018). Contrary to the claim that certification schemes take place in an institutional void where there is governance without government, it is fair to argue that these schemes do not work in isolation or stand-alone, but through different "ways in which governance actors and institutions engage with and react to one another" (Eberlin *et al*., 2014, p. 2). In the West Africa's fisheries, there are frequent and multiple levels of interactions among certification schemes, private companies, international organizations, civil society organizations and states, especially through regional actors such as the African Development Bank's *Blue Economy Flagship Feed Africa* strategy. These interactions result into competing and complimenting regulatory standards, steering, and norm diffusion. However, these interactions also reflect and entrench power relations due to the asymmetric power among these actors.

Despite their role in facilitating private governance, West African states are weak and fragmented. Institutionally, powerful actors such as the World Bank and the UN FAO have worked with MSIs to co-opt key regional governments, institutions, and West African states to adopt non-state market-driven policy instruments. Co-optation into the adoption of neoliberal policy instruments is a precondition for accessing foreign direct investments and access to international markets. The weak structural position of African states vis-à-vis other key actors, and their willingness to deeply integrate into the global seafood system to access international markets and attract foreign investment has further diluted their powers towards sustainability agenda setting.

Since the 1980s, SAPs opened the fisheries sector in the region to trade liberalization, creating "specific social and economic structures that systematically advantage certain groups" (Levy & Newell, 2002, p. 86). Material interests are also significant in defining sustainability and the type of environmental policy instrument. Placing a label on fisheries allows transnational corporations to determine which fish stocks are sustainable and should be harvested, protected, and exported. Despite the growing concerns over pelagic fisheries in Mauritania, certifying them has exposed them to intense exploitation for export to the EU and Asian markets regardless of the implication these have for food security and the livelihood of fishers in West Africa.

The discursive context of fisheries certification, more than all the others, has served to establish what Levy and Egan (2003) refer to as a "reconstituted historical bloc" (p. 823), involving a "win-win discourse of ecological modernism… market-based implementation mechanisms, and minimal regulatory intrusion upon corporate autonomy" (p. 818). The blue economy paradigm and its focus on certification schemes are marketed as a 'triple-win' for marine resources, climate change, and fishers' livelihood (Cohen *et al.*, 2019), despite the

contradictory evidence that they are less inclusive. Global institutions such as the FAO use their power to diffuse norms. These norms overlook the needs of marginal actors in favour of grand narratives of sustainability.

4.2.4 Competing fisheries certification

MSC is the most dominant fisheries certification scheme in Africa. However, in recent years, there has been a proliferation of certification schemes such as the Friend of the Seas, Fair Trade Fisheries, MarinTrust (previously IFFO RS), among others that are vying for control of marine resources in West Africa. The proliferation and competition among fisheries certification have been a vital issue in TBGI (Foley, 2018), and these voluntary standards compete among themselves to gain market share. Table 1 shows the voluntary sustainability standards engaged and seeking to engage in certifying fisheries in West Africa.

Table 4: Certification schemes vying for control of fisheries in West Africa

Scheme	Summary
Friend of the Sea (FoS)	Sets a standard for third-party certification of both capture fishery and aquaculture products. Provides a label for final products. Fisheries and aquaculture products are assessed worldwide, including a significant number from developing countries.
Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)	Sets a standard for third-party certification of capture fisheries. MSC licences its label for use on the certified product. It assesses fisheries from around the world, although so far most are in developed countries.
Fair Trade	Sets a standard for third-party certification for both capture fishery and aquaculture products. It works to transform the lives of local people and establish responsible, sustainable fishing practices to help feed the world into the future by protecting oceans.
International Fishmeal and Fish Oil Responsible Supply (IFFORS) [MarinTrust]	Sets a standard for third-party audits and certification of fishmeal and fish oil that guarantees the value chain of marine ingredients is responsibly sourced and responsibly produced
Global Aquaculture Alliance (GAA)	A non-profit trade association that developed Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) certification standards. GAA sets standards for aquaculture products, including shrimp hatcheries, processing plants, and shrimps, tilapia, and catfish farms. Standards can be applied to a product from all around the world.
GlobalGAP	An independent, private-sector organization sets voluntary standards for the certification of agriculture products, including aquaculture, but not capture fisheries. It is a business-to-business scheme and has no consumer label. It serves as a practical manual for Good Agricultural Practice that can be used globally.
Naturland	An independent 'organic farmers association' where certification is only one of many activities. Sets standards for organically produced agriculture products, including aquaculture and wild capture fisheries.

Source: Parkes, G., Walmsley, S., Cambridge, T *et al*. (2010). Review of fish sustainability information schemes final report, Rev 1. January 2010; Fair Trade Fisheries. (nd). About us. Fair Trade, http://fairtradefisheries.net/#work [With author's contribution]

Despite the low uptake of certification in the developing countries, the entrance of many standards in the fisheries sector has not escaped the attention of critical scholars. They argue these standards may "lead to fragmentation and sometimes duplication of efforts" (Lambin & Thorlakson, p. 373). The implication for West African fisheries has been two-fold. On the one

hand, it has led to the race to the top, where competing schemes increasingly incorporate sustainable measures to enhance private regulation. The rivalry between the MSC and the Friend of the Sea has led the latter to introduce social standards.

On the other hand, fragmentation leads to a race to the bottom in regulatory standards and practices (Lambin & Thorlakson, 2018). The dilution and weakening of standards are due to the push to certify more fisheries as exemplified by MSC promotion of FIPs in Cape Verde, the Gambia, Mauritania, and Senegal, and MarinTrust certification of contentious fishmeal and fish oil products in Mauritania. These two processes are not contradictory but constitutive, reflecting an entanglement between MSIs, processes and objectives of which hegemony is built, reinforced, and contested.

Critical scholarship contends that "the MSC's lack of engagement with and support of political economies of production and development facilitated the emergence of two forms of producer-oriented counter-hegemonic movements" in the form of territorial and ethical eco-certification schemes (Foley, 2018, p. 2). The MSC has led to a fisheries sector in West Africa that tends to privilege large-scale industrial fisheries over small-scale fisheries, and men over women. While it has undertaken internal reforms such as the Developing World Program and FIPs, these are mainly reputational tools to allow the developed countries to access West Africa's marine resources. There is no evidence that they are enhancing environmental, social, and economic improvements (Sampson *et al.* 2015).

The MSC does not facilitate the inclusion and accessibility of small-scale fisheries. The cost of certification and technical expertise tends to be beyond the reach of West African fisheries. They are also unable to compete against large-scale fisheries who enjoy massive subsidies from their distant water fishing nations. Moreover, the indigenous knowledge of small-

scale fishers is often discounted due to a hierarchical form of knowledge that elevates science over situated knowledge.

Given these, many schemes have emerged with their vision of what fisheries sustainability entails. The Friend of the Sea, for example, has offered an alternative standard that incorporates social criteria, and certification of aquaculture in West Africa. Similarly, the MarinTrust has focused on certifying the most contentious marine resources area in the region to corner the market share. The Fair-Trade scheme aims to enhance the working and living conditions of fishers, increase ecosystem resilience, and harness consumers' purchasing power to increase financial returns from those engaged in the fisheries sector (Spaull, 2014).

When stakeholders feel excluded or marginalized from existing voluntary sustainable standards, or affected in their ability to compete, they form a counter-hegemonic network with their certification. Many governments in developing countries have supported weak standards to compete with more stringent ones. There are also national government-led standards intended to compete and challenge global voluntary sustainability standards emanating from the global North. In the fisheries sector, these standards include the Marine Eco-Label (MEL) Japan, the Iceland Responsible Fisheries (IRF) eco-label and certification program, and the Alaska Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) (Foley, 2018). While they challenge the MSC, they constitute neoliberal policy instruments, and that share the same objectives with MSC.

In contrast, the introduction of ethical eco-certification schemes in the fisheries sector has served to broaden the focus on sustainability. The social tripod receives equal if not more weight than the environmental and the economic. Alternative eco-certification schemes such as Fair Trade Capture Fisheries standards are broader and incorporate empowerment of coastal communities, economic development and social responsibility, and environmental stewardship

(Fair Trade USA, 2017). Ethical eco-certification has been more responsive to the needs of West African fisheries because they target small-scale fisheries (Mereghetti, 2018).

Ethical eco-certification schemes are in a better position to transform power relations in favour of marginal actors such as small-scale fishers, Indigenous people, and women often skirted over by neoliberal policy instruments. Nevertheless, as Foley (2018) argues, eco-certification schemes are embedded in 'neoliberal models of governance and development' that does not challenge the underlying structural power. The broader implication is that both the hegemonic MSC, and counter-hegemonic territorial and eco-certification schemes exude power relations behind neoliberal attempts to reconcile growth in the fisheries sector with environmental sustainability, without any "general structural change or an alternation of prevailing power relations" (Foley, 2018, p. 9).

4.3 Resisting capitalist transformation in the fisheries sector

So far, the thesis has focused on the hegemony of neoliberal policy instruments. Unlike hegemony and power, resistance is not always easy to map out, although there is a normative position in the thesis to 'see' resistance as indirectly reflected in the low uptake of fisheries certification but also directly through how local communities occupy and enclose marine spaces, and contest the appropriation of marine resources. Resistances is not always easy to map, especially in comparison to hegemonic governance technologies. Such backgrounding allows the thesis to argue that the low uptake of fisheries certification is emblematic of the increasing resistance to the commodification of ocean resources with its attendant consequences for livelihoods and the environment.

Despite been marketed as a solution to sustainable fisheries, certification schemes have not fared better in West Africa. Therefore, it is essential to understand the contestation and

resistance to fisheries certification in West Africa through the agency exercised by marginal actors often skirted over in IPE scholarship. Looking outside the traditional 'big end of town' allows for nuances regarding the everyday resistance of marginal actors (LeBaron, 2010) and unclutters certification schemes as policy instruments, practices and sites where neoliberal policy instruments are contested and challenged (Elias & Roberts, 2016).

The increasing resistance to the commodification of the ocean and ocean grabbing has been on the rise (Pederson, *et al*., 2014). There is growing evidence that both national, regional, and international frameworks are inadequate to counteract transnational corporations' power. The global reach of these corporations and their embeddedness in the global food system gives them the structural clout to outmaneuver legal hurdles. States are also key actors in the adoption of market-based governance. Since the introduction of the Bretton Woods-imposed SAPs in the 1980s and 1990s, the state has played a paradoxical role in the liberalization of the economy and privatization of natural resources. It superintended "the corporatization, commodification, and privatization of hitherto public assets" (Harvey, 2007, p. 35). These processes require legal backing, hence the state has consistently fashioned laws to broker private capital accumulation. This means that extant national laws and international policy instruments such as the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (SSF) do not automatically benefit the targeted populations, who are beneficiaries of a policy.

Social pressure or resistance from below serves as a counteracting force to neoliberal policy instruments. In many ways, the pressure may emerge from the everyday practices of marginal actors, but often, besides accommodates 'official' and advocacy groups who can bring to the fore the inherent contradictions and challenges in neoliberal discourses and policy instruments. The interactions among these actors also help frame what is resisted, as resistances

to grabbing may sometimes defend an exclusionary gendered and patriarchal system that benefits a few in the local communities. Scoones *at al*., (2018) argue that resistance against corporate takeover over resources in the developing countries could face challenges due to the absence of alternative visions.

4.4 Everyday resistance against neoliberal policy instruments

In West Africa's fisheries, these resistances have taken two approaches. As a form of defensive resistance, local communities have contested the dispossession, expulsion, and appropriation of their resources (Pederson, *et al*., 2014). This approach involves the use of diverse strategies such a "direct action, mass mobilization and legal strategies as well as bridging with other sectors to pressure key nodes through which ocean grabbing unfolds" (Pederson, *et al*., 2014, p. 44). In West Africa, many instances of resistance fall within this category. In the Gambia, environmental NGOs inside and outside West Africa realigned their activism agenda with small-scale fishers to oppose large-scale industrial fishing, especially the proliferation of fishmeal factories. There has been intense resistance to pollution caused by Golden Lead. This Chinese company, operating a fishmeal factory in Ganjur, exports 32,000 kilograms of fishmeal power monthly with a significant impact on food security and jobs in the region (Jobe, 2020) – clearly shows the power of bottom-up resistance.

Environment campaigns and protests led the National Environmental Agency (NEA) to revoke the licence and sued Golden Lead for environmental damages in June 2017. However, through persistent arm-twisting, the company resumed operation after an out-of-court settlement of $25,000 was made. Suspecting that a high-level government intervention blocked the NEA's initial legal actions against Golden Lead, these activists have dragged the company to court, and the case is still pending (Hunt, 2019). Campaigns against the commodification of the fisheries

and alternative visions – that are increasingly pushing for the inclusion of marginal actors – "offer a glimpse of this potential Polanyian double movement, in which extreme commodification meets not only resistance but in some cases, impressive gains for oppressive people" (Bond, 2019, p. 355).

The alternative form of resistance "is a proactive struggle where local communities occupy and enclose the marine resources," challenging the dominant form of large-scale industrial fisheries (Pederson, *et al*., 2014). Many civil society organizations – the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), the International Collective in Support of Fish Workers (ICSF), the African Confederation of Small-Scale Fisheries Professional Organizations (CAOPA), and the Africa Social Forum – mobilized to challenge the ideological underpinnings of large-scale industrial fisheries and to propose alternative visions. These alternative visions in the seafood system have been about food sovereignty, environmental justice, and recent experiments with 'degrowth' and Latin American *Buen Vivir* (Scoones *et al*., 2018). Resistance struggles that employ these alternatives are emancipatory because they mobilize against the impact of financialized capitalism on the fisheries sector.

In a significant way, alternative visions articulate the material, institutional, and discursive contexts in which power is negotiated in the food system and how this dominant system is resisted by marginal and often discounted actors. This duality is essential because marginal actors must understand the global seafood system's structure before they offer alternative visions, lest powerful corporate interests absorb their resistance. The current food regime seeks to deeply integrate West Africa's fisheries into the global seafood value systems. Alternative visions not only open spaces for participation but also ensure a radical change

between humans and the environment, as well as a radical transformation in the social and political mode of production, consumption, and material existence.

Neoliberal discourse such as the recent declaration of Africa's Blue Economy as the "new frontier" for "transformation and growth" (UNECA, 2016, p. 7) sits uneasily with small-scale fishers, activists, the media, NGOs, and researchers who are concerned with the implications of capitalist transformation on marginal actors in the fisheries sector. There is evidence that neoliberal policy instruments such as certification schemes are not neutral, apolitical, and techno-practices. Instead, they rest on hierarchical knowledge that privilege universal and scientific knowledge over local, 'unscientific,' and 'situated knowledge'. Such a hierarchy relegates the indigenous knowledge of women in the fisheries sector and could alter women's political economy and the ability to exercise agency. Women account for about 27.3 percent of all people employed in fisheries-related activities, but they account for 58 percent of fish processors (World Fishing and Aquaculture, 2014). However, despite their numbers and the critical role in the sector, they are absent in fisheries management in West Africa (Torell *et al.* 2019). In this context, there is a neglect of women's indigenous knowledge to ensure sustainable fisheries.

While many governments are not so sure about the market-based solutions, they tend to embrace non-state market-driven approaches because of the hegemony of the global food system. In many countries, domestic and global economic pressures and deficit budgets create a harsh dilemma that requires the government to side with transnational corporations and supports DWF nations against local communities. Donor agencies, multilateral organizations and transnational corporations have influenced legislation to favour large-scale industrial fisheries. Corporate food programs such as the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, the G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, and the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) have served to marginalize local

communities and destabilize food sovereignty (Kone & Jacovetti, 2016). Free trade agreements such as the Economic Partnerships Agreements are harmful to the social and environmental and fiscal contexts of developing countries as they negatively impact on the local environment.

Many environmental NGOs and civil society organizations have partnered with local communities to resist marine enclosure and external control over their resources. Between 3rd to 13th March 2016, under the slogan "Land is my Life', the Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles (Convergence) organized a caravan for land, water, and peasant seeds. Through their publication entitled "The Convergence's Green Booklet: Advocacy Document," the Convergence sought to raise awareness on resource grabbing in West Africa, including the fishmeal and fish oil subsectors, and to mobilize diverse social movements and organizations to push for their rights (Kone & Jacovetti, 2016).

The Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA) has drawn attention to the "serious concerns about the ecological and social impact" of the booming fishmeal industry in Gambia, Senegal, and Mauritania (Standing, 2019). These resistances are important because the contentious fishmeal industry has been operating under cover of third-party certification schemes. For example, instead of heeding to calls to close fishmeal factories, the French company, Olvea, is financing a FIP in Mauritania to help sustainably manage the fish reduction and push for their eventual certification. This certification is despite the concerns over the decimation of West Africa's small-pelagic and the repeated frustration of the FAO to do external monitoring of the fisheries (Standing, 2019).

Greenpeace also collaborated with small-scale fishers and governments to fight IUU fishing. During the World Social Forum in Senegal, – an annual gathering of anti-globalization activists – the Greenpeace Africa campaigner, Oumy Sene Diouf argued that "[W]e must

tirelessly engage with authorities to ensure that the problems of illegal fishing and overfishing in West Africa are effectively dealt with" (FCWC, 2011, np). Diouf recognized the hegemonic nature of the seafood and called for the decisive steps to resist marine enclosure. As he states, "The people of Senegal have long shown interest in defending their ocean and preserving their marine resources. The time has come for them to take the next step and stand up against malpractices in the oceans" (FCWC, 2011, np).

Resistance to large-scale industrial fishing often faces stiffer government retaliation and securitization of infrastructure, as the case of Gambia demonstrates. The Gambian President Adama Barrow at the inception of his presidency during the Seventh Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in Beijing in September 2016 signed up to China's 'Belt and Road Initiative' (Gbadamosi, 2018). Such entanglements, found throughout West Africa, complicates trade relationships between West Africa and its trading partners, giving foreign partners an edge in exploiting fisheries resources regardless of the implications for coastal communities. Inadvertently, the government finds itself siding with corporate interests against her citizens and closing the spaces for resistance. Nevertheless, the everyday forms of resistance from marginal actors have continued despite the governments' fight-back. The weak uptake of fisheries certification is a site in which neoliberal policy instruments are resisted and challenged by marginal actors in West Africa.

4.5 Conclusion

Despite the increasing push for the uptake of fisheries certification in West Africa, there are few certified fisheries. The growing demand for seafood in the global North has led to the proliferation of certification schemes in different agro-food value chains. These schemes are non-state market-driven, but they interact with public authority. A close examination of the lack of

fisheries uptake in the developing countries reveals the resistance to the material, institutional and discursive embeddedness of neoliberal market instruments. Therefore, these schemes facilitate the global integration of West Africa into the global seafood value chains.

The weak structural position and fragmentation of West African states have made them malleable and vulnerable to fisheries agreements. Their commitment to attract foreign investment and access international seafood markets has further deepened the liberalization of the fisheries sector with dire socio-ecological consequences. Besides, these commitments have negatively impacted food sovereignty in the region. Certification schemes have been part and parcel of these consequences because they are Janus-faced: they promise fisheries sustainability while playing a profound role in the overexploitation of marine resources as in Senegal, Mauritania, and the Gambia.

The proliferation of fisheries certification in the region has led to both a race to the top and the bottom. Despite reforms from the hegemonic MSC to increasingly bring on board small-scale fisheries and the introduction of FIPs as a waystation, evidence shows these have not achieved the stated goals. The FIPs, for example, are just reputational tools to allow access to West Africa's fisheries. Counter-hegemonic schemes such as Friend of the Sea and Fair Trade have focused on social standards and are more promising to small-scale fishers. However, both the MSC and counter-hegemonic territorial and eco-certifications are embedded in neoliberal attempts to reconcile growth with sustainability without challenging the underlying power relations that disadvantage marginal actors.

The certification landscape in West Africa is witnessing a changing constellation of power from dominant to marginal actors. The failure of alternative certifications to challenge the fisheries sector's power relations explains the low uptake and resistance to neoliberal policy

instruments. Since the government has become part of the push for the uptake of neoliberal environmental policy instruments, resistance has mostly occurred against the state and transnational corporations. These are either directly, where local communities contest the dispossession, expulsion and appropriation of resources or the mobilization to occupy and enclose marine resources to challenge large-scale industrial fisheries. In turn, these resistances transverse local to regional and sometimes international level, as diverse actors work at different levels to resist and offer alternative visions of the West African fisheries. These struggles against the commodification of resources, the protection of the environment and resistance to the growing reach of transnational corporations are intimately "linked in the reflection and praxis of the world movement against capitalist/liberal globalization" (Löwy, 2005, p. 24).

Chapter 5 : Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In the last chapter of this thesis, I aim to achieve four primary objectives. First, I seek to reflect on how I have answered the questions I set out in the introductory chapter. The overarching questions have been on how neoliberal policy instruments distribute power in the fisheries sector, and in turn, how it has been be contested and resisted. Second, I focus on the contribution of my novel theoretical framework in understanding the blue economy through the lens of everyday IPE and hegemonic corporate seafood regime in West Africa. To my understanding, no research has employed such a framework before. I also looked at certification schemes and certification wars within a neo-Gramscian lens. Third, I show how this framework can be extended to understanding the recent push for biofuel production and land grabbing in Africa. In the last section, I highlight future research trajectories and areas not covered in this thesis.

5.2 Recapping the arguments

What is missed in many analyses of the blue economy and neoliberal environmental policy instruments like the ITQs, blue bonds, carbon pricing, and the blue economy is how they are embedded in a hegemonic corporate food regime. The corporate food regime serves to entrench the interests of dominant actors while marginalizing small-scale farmers and fishers, Indigenous people, and women. By focusing on third-party certification and the blue economy in West Africa, I analyzed how the neoliberal policies in the fisheries are not inclusive and create winners and losers. I introduced the everyday IPE of the hegemonic corporate food regime to explain the transformations in West Africa's fisheries sector, and how these shifts have deepened the integration of the sector in the global seafood system in a manner that is disadvantageous to many and serves the interests of global capital.

How has third-party certification schemes distributed political and economic power in West Africa, and in turn, how has it been resisted or accepted by fishers? To answer this question, I focused attention on the power configurations behind certification schemes to show how these non-state market-driven policy instruments are not just techno-scientific practices but embedded in hegemonic knowledge that privileges certain forms of narratives and disciplines small-scale fishers to conform to the dictates the global seafood. I argued that third-party certification as a neoliberal policy instrument has privileged corporate actors such as the Marine Stewardship Council and distant water fishing nations. Their neoliberal ethos regard crisis as opportunities and push for the liberalization of the fisheries sector. In West Africa, such a move tends to support fish exports against food sufficiency. Specifically, the focus on exports is the bane of the growing unsustainable fisheries sector. Third-party certification has also led to overexploitation of fisheries.

Moreover, certification schemes are promoted because they can ensure food safety, provide timely information, and enhance sustainability and equity. Meeting the stipulated requirements have been trying for small-scale fisheries, which further have limited access to global markets. Fisheries improvement programs have been adopted instead as a waystation to allow marginal actors to work towards future sustainability and access to global markets and premiums. In many ways, these programs continue to relegate marginal actors to the background in their quest to participate in the fisheries sector. Counter-hegemonic third-party certification schemes such as Fair-Trade Fisheries, MarinTrust, Friend of the Sea, and many others, are considered alternatives to the hegemonic MSC. These standards are responding to criticisms against the lack of inclusion and attention to small-scale fisheries' interests. Fisheries improvement programs such as been promoted by France's Olvea have been adjudged to have

brought small-scale fisheries to the fold and allowed them to access hard-to-penetrate markets. Nevertheless, questions are raised against the time it takes West African fisheries on stages one-three of a five-step progression compared to fisheries in developed countries.

These standards are indeed providing alternative visions on how to organize a seafood system that increasingly responds to the needs of marginal actors. However, both the MSC and the counter-hegemonic third-party certification are embedded in 'neoliberal models of development that do not challenge neoliberal tools' underlying structural power. Third-party certification schemes in West Africa, whether hegemonic or counter-hegemonic, have followed the eco-modernization route that aims to reconcile growth in the fisheries sector with environmental sustainability, without any "general structural change or an alternation of prevailing power relations"(Foley, 2018, p. 9). They reflect dominant market relations that mirror the relationship between the global North and South.

What is the role of West African governments in the blue economy? The blue economy is a hegemonic corporate seafood regime. It has sought to deviate from its predecessor the green economy by focusing on inclusion. The theme of inclusion has been beautiful to African states under pressure to attract foreign direct investments. Governance in the region is weak and fragmented, making these countries not to question neoliberal policies such as the blue economy. Evidence shows how the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the African Development Bank have prioritized the blue economy. The role of West African states is far from simple. They are entangled with donors, distant fishing nations, and transnational corporations in ways that have made simplistic analysis very difficult. In many instances, these entanglements have been in the form of state-capital nexus (de Graaff, 2012), whereby states have become key actors in the accumulation of capital through joint ventures. What is apparent is

that these states having fertile soil for neoliberal programs such as the CAADF, CSA and the blue economy to take root and thrive. Cox (1983) notes this role whereby states provide the national context for the localization of external norms. African countries find themselves sandwiched between the interests of corporations, donors, international financial institutions, and international organizations on the one hand and small-scale farmers, fishers, Indigenous people, and women on the other. The crucible tends to tilt towards the former, especially as these states sign onto neoliberal policies such as the European Fisheries Agreements that restrict their room for manoeuvre. One case has been the Lomé Agreements that entrenched a skewed relationship between the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries with the European Union. These unequal trade relationships have continued to date and seem to have taken an ugly turn with the opening of West Africa as the hub for fishmeal and fish oil.

Why does West Africa matter in the analysis of certification and the blue economy? It is one of the three hubs for the global supply of fishmeal and fish oil, the other two being China and Peru. The region has one of the most productive fisheries globally, mainly because the ocean's currents that wash its coast bring rich stocks of fish. However, West Africa loses to illegal fishing about $1.3 billion a year (Green, 2018, np). It has the record of the highest cases of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing (Changing Market Foundation, 2018) and resistances to (Dobson, 2007) to shore up their privileged positions. West Africa's fisheries also matter because it is at the center of the African Union's declaration of the blue economy as a 'new frontier for Africa Renaissance, ' which would lead to transformation and growth (UNECA, 2016, p. 7). Indeed, among the first six recipients of the African Development Bank Blue Economy Flagship to implement the *Feed Africa* strategy in 2016, four are from the region. Therefore, the most significant transformation in the fisheries sector that could orient the political economy of fishers,

Indigenous people, and women, and generate substantial externalities, resistance and contestation has been from West Africa.

How has neoliberal policy instruments been resisted in West Africa? I argue that unlike hegemony and power, it is very difficult to measure resistance in the fisheries sector. The low uptake of certification schemes can allow us to see how marginal actors are resisting neoliberal policy instruments. These actors are exercising agency through two main channels. First, I show that their agency has served as a defensive resistance, where local communities are contesting the dispossession and enclosure of marine resources. Second, local communities themselves resist and enclose the marine resources, as they challenge large-scale le industrial fisheries. This allows me to conclude that the seafood is not only hegemonic but shaped and reshaped by marginal actors. These actors are actively mobilizing through various channels to contest, resist, and construct an alternative vision of a food system hinged on food sovereignty and lean towards agroecology practices. The alternative visions challenge dominant narratives of triple-win and the blue economy that are bereft of power relations. I explained my argument by drawing on everyday IPE to show how the agency of marginal actors count and how bottom-up approaches are transformative and can draw many local, national, regional, and global actors such to resist the commodification of the oceans.

The fisheries sector faces resistance because it raises a host of socio-ecological challenges that disproportionately affect local fishers, coastal communities, Indigenous people, and women. The failure of self-regulating markets has led to the socio-ecological crisis and diverse forms of resistance against neoliberal policy instruments. In West Africa, this points to the asymmetric power relations in the global economy and the diverse ways framing has become the piston that fires resistance against new forms of accumulation in the oceans. In the blue economy, these

resistances are against contested technologies that have promoted an unsustainable fisheries model that has led to marine depletion and negatively impacted human livelihoods. Unsustainable consumption in the global North, such as the growing demand for seafood, has put much strain on the environment in West Africa. The dominant models employed hardly account for hidden costs of commodification and biodiversity loss, as financialization and activities of transnational corporations are far removed from consumers thereby making it extremely difficult to account for externalities and hidden spillovers from their consumption patterns (Weis, 2018; Dauvergner, 2010; Clapp & Scott, 2018).

Resistance has also occurred in the fisheries sector due to the way commodification and financialization lead to green and 'blue' grabbing (Knott & Neis, 2017; Choi, 2017; Barbesgarrd, 2018; Foley & Mather, 2018). I show how the recent proliferation of fishmeal and fish oil factories and industries suggests transnational corporations, distant water fishing nations, and financiers divert resources and power away from local fishers and local communities – thereby fueling 'ocean grabbing.' The blue economy's discourse is thus subtle governmentality that changes the people's relationship with the oceans by facilitating ocean grabbing.

In such contexts, many local actors are coming together to resist ocean grabbing. In West Africa, they include the Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles, the Coalition for Fair Fish Arrangements, and others such as Greenpeace have organized and mobilized against neoliberal policies in the fisheries sector. While these resistances are often squashed by governments that tend to take sides with corporate interests against her citizens and close the spaces for resistances, the everyday forms of resistance have continued unabated, reflecting the weak uptake of fisheries certification. Certification schemes can thus be a site where neoliberal policy instruments are resisted and challenged by marginal actors in West Africa.

5.3 Contributions of conceptual framework for understanding the blue economy

Many assessments of the blue economy fail to locate it in a corporate food regime. I analyzed the blue economy through a seafood regime analysis to understand the transformation in food production, distribution, and consumption. I also analyzed how such transformations are leading to global accumulation in the fisheries sector. I focused on power as an analytical category, especially the power of transnational corporations who feature prominently in the fisheries sector. The seafood regimes allow the research to explain the transformations in the global seafood value chains, making it possible to point out who benefits and who loses, and where power lies. Therefore, it allows for an understanding of how the corporate food system is embedded in the global capital accumulation with its seeds of contradictions. As I probe further, I realized this does not answer why food regimes are resilient despite their inherent contradictions. Why do seafood regimes become entrenched and resilient despite their contradictions? To complicate this question, I asked, why has the blue economy been implemented in West Africa despite its apparent contradictions, and even when its cousin, the blue economy has failed to achieve the avowed triple-win promise?

The answer I pointed out is because of the hegemonic nature of the corporate environmental food regime. I located a similar argument in the agrarian question in India, where coercion and consent where deployed impetuously to win minds and deepen small-scale farmers in the global food system (Brown, 2020). I followed the need to take hegemony seriously to understand how regimes are established and maintained through coercion and consent to unearth how neoliberal policy instruments such as the blue economy are resilient despite these contractions. Such a lens allows me to affirm how a corporate seafood regime analysis is vital in understanding the blue economy. In this way, this thesis extends the food regime analysis to

understand the social forces that stand to gain from the blue economy and why West African governments are pushing for the implementation of the blue economy despite the dynamics of exclusion, contestation, resistance, and co-optation.

The hegemonic corporate environmental seafood regime analysis has been uniquely positioned to analyze West Africa's blue economy, by paying close attention to the transformation in power configuration in the global seafood value chains. It responds to research that has bemoaned the dearth of application of seafood regime analysis (Foley & Mather, 2018). Its distinct contribution is its efficacy to explain when a seafood regime becomes hegemonic in the global South. It, therefore, draws upon and extends the literature on regulation.

How does my theoretical framework explain third-party certification schemes in West Africa? I draw on the so-called hegemonic common sense of neoliberalism. Explicitly, I define hegemony following Levy and Newell as "the persistence of specific social and economic structures that systematically advantage certain groups" (2002, p. 86). This helps me explain how MSIs use their strategies to protect their corporate neoliberal hegemonic position and the entrenchment of dominant storylines such as climate-smart agriculture and the blue economy. These actors can achieve these through three spaces: through discursive strategies that allow them to win minds through policies that are presented as serving the best interest of the environment and marginal groups while entrenching corporate agenda. The discourse of triple-win, blue growth, sustainable intensification, and inclusion reflect a managerial and techno-scientific practice that "international developments that transmit their ideological currents to the periphery" (Cox, 1983, p. 167).

The blue economy requires fisheries and aquaculture certification. Certification schemes have employed institutional arrangements that allow them to build hegemony. Organizational

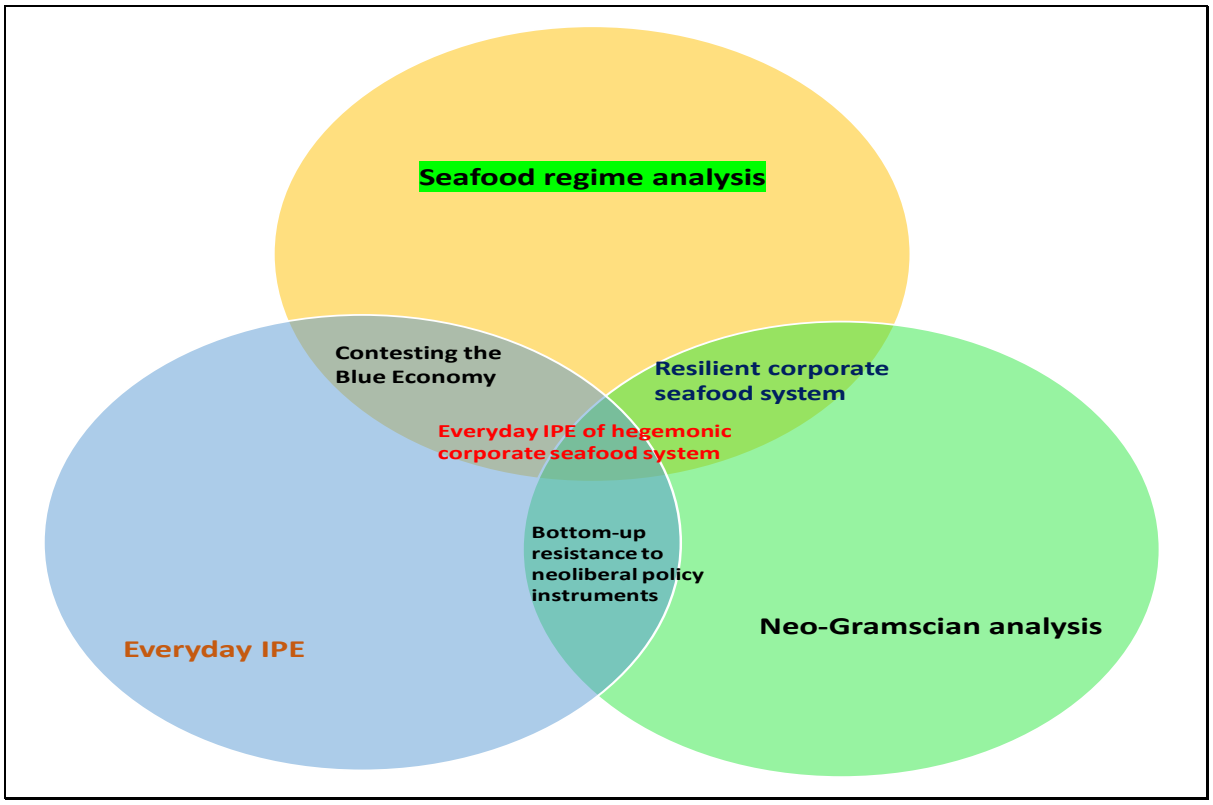
power allows them to govern the fisheries sector. The way MSIs organize certification schemes as environmental solutions that secure market positions, credibility, and legitimacy (Levy & Newell, 2002) points towards power relations. The organizational capabilities of these schemes show they are northern-based and serve the interests of powerful actors. Last, material capabilities have helped define sustainability, where placing a label on fisheries, or enrolling fisheries in fisheries improvement programs allows corporations to determine which stocks are sustainable and should receive price premium/enter niche markets. These capabilities show who has power and who marginalized in fisheries certification. On the one hand, I show how the blue economy is embedded in a corporate seafood regime. On the other hand, I show how the blue economy requires third-party certification of fisheries and aquaculture.

How does the shift from dominant to marginal actors help to explain local resistance in the fisheries sector? Critical IPE scholarship has focused on power relations in the global food value chains, the financialization of agriculture, and the growing power of corporations and non-state actors. Regime theorists have delineated a corporate or environmental seafood regime embedded in neoliberal common sense. The focus of IPE has been about powerful actors such as transnational corporations, distant water fishing nations, the WTO, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, Marine Stewardship Council, among others. Existing IPE scholarship tends to privilege "states and markets" (Elias & Roberts, 2016, p. 789) and powerful global actors (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007). I expand on these studies to focus specifically on the agency exercised by marginal actors often skirted over in the fisheries sector, such as small-scale fishers, Indigenous people and women, who bear the brunt of power asymmetry but also actively resist contest policies in the fisheries sector. I depart from top-down analysis and following Hobson and Seabrooke (2007) draw from the everyday IPE. Refusing to see marginal actors as lacking

agency, I show how small-scale fishers contest the seafood system and offer alternative seafood visions.

The novel integrative theoretical framework combining seafood regime analysis, neo-Gramscian analysis, and everyday IPE allows me to answer how third-party certification has distributed political and economic power in West Africa's fisheries sector, and in turn, how it has been resisted or accepted by fishers.

Figure 1: Component lenses of the *Everyday IPE of the hegemonic corporate seafood regime*



Source: Author's framework highlighting how the integrated approaches interface

In this framework, I have brought into conversation critical IPE scholarship – neo-Gramscian analysis (Cox, 1983), and the everyday (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007; Elias & Roberts, 2016) – with seafood regime analysis (Foley & Mather, 2018) to show how the blue economy

requires third-party certification of fisheries and aquaculture, and how the corporate seafood regime has promoted the blue economy as a tool to balance profits with sustainability, revealing the discords of resistance, and how the fisheries sector is enacted at the local level by marginal actors. This critical integrative framework is not contradictory but reflects a recent call for a shift in attention from the traditional "big end of town" to capture the workings of peripheral and marginal actors (LeBaron, 2010, p. 891). The combination of food regimes with hegemony also reflects the growing attempts to understand the persistence of food regimes despite their inherent contractions. When the seafood regime analysis and neo-Gramscian analysis are used with everyday IPE, it gives my research a robust perspective of how the West African blue economy is governed by states, transnational corporations, and other powerful actors. Neoliberal policy instruments are not inert and apolitical but laden with power. The technologies of governance deployed to render the fisheries sector intelligible to facilitate its deeper integration into the global seafood system, and how this "is enacted and performed at the local level by non-elites and via cultural practices" (Elias & Roberts, 2016, p. 789) becomes evident. Marginal actors are resisting and offering an alternative model of sustainable seafood.

5.4 Extending the Everyday IPE of the hegemonic corporate seafood regime

Consider biofuels in Africa. The implementation of these projects has persisted, often couched in the language of the energy transition. Biofuels, derived from biomass, animal waste and renewable plants, has been touted as an alternative to fossil-sourced energy to mitigate climate change. The growing uncertainty of a post-fossil era, the pressure to diversify energy mix to enhance energy access and competitiveness, and concerns over greenhouse gas emissions have led to renewable policy initiatives such as biofuels production. Since the beginning of the century, under the leadership of the EU, many developed countries introduced renewable

energies targets, which saw a significant increase in the market share of bioethanol and biodiesel (Neville, 2015). The EU enacted the 2003 Biofuel Directive as a policy instrument towards encouraging biofuel production. Biofuels' optimism led scientists, policymakers, and analysts to describe them as a 'silver bullet' where plant-based liquids are poised to displace fossil fuel and help solve the climate crisis while enhancing access to renewables for energy-poor countries and contributing to rural poverty alleviation. This set of optimism substantially shaped the context and surge in biofuel production in the global South. Many of such projects emerged in Africa in the early 2000s in countries such as diverse as Tanzania, Malawi, Ethiopia, Mozambique and South Africa, amongst others, because of the continent's supposedly under-utilized land, tropical climate suited for the cultivation of oil-seed yielding trees, and the presence of abundant and cheap rural unskilled labour. The continent has the highest ratio of bioenergy sources compared to other regions (Lynd, Sow & Chimphango, 2015). National and regional policies to stimulate production and consumption were given teeth by investments from the EU and member states, and other key states such as China, and India, demonstrating that financial innovation is key to the fast-tracking low energy transition. This optimism was short-lived, however.

The Everyday IPE of the hegemonic corporate seafood regime could offer multiple entry vents to analyze the discourses behind biofuels, who benefits and who loses, and where power lies. It would help scholars to probe why the discourses of triple-win persist despite contrary evidence. What role(s) are energy corporations like ADM, Agroetanol AB, BP PLC, Cargill, Longen, Longlive, Pacific Ethanol, and Poet LLC, amongst others playing in shaping the discourse of energy transition? What forms of governance have emerged to govern biofuels in Africa, and how does the local state complicate the unfolding governance structure? Whose voice is loud, and whose voice remains silent? This framework could reveal how the energy transition

narrative trope is a neoliberal tool to rationalize and perpetuate privatization, financialization and land grabbing. These processes, practices, and performances in seeking to reconcile growth with sustainability lead to 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2005) and, in turn, ignite local resistance in Africa. As a contentious political economist explains, the weaning of biofuels' optimism created an uncertain environment, fueling local resistance (Neville, 2015). My framework will adequately address burning questions in the social sciences to expand the analysis of green projects beyond socio-technical futures. I can help to understand how agrofuel systems can become hegemonic.

5.5 Future research trajectories

The thesis provides four areas for further research. Foucauldian governmentality could help explain how neoliberal policy instruments such as third-party certification and the blue economy go beyond the state's domain and are embedded in various technologies or micropower. Besides, 'regime of truths' and calculative knowledge could reveal modes of governmentality that marginalize certain types of actors and lead to the exclusion of particular ways of knowing the blue economy. As a post-structuralist approach, governmentality could shed light on third-party certification schemes and the blue economy as neoliberal tools, regimes of truth, and social imageries that make fisheries intelligible and governable.

A second agenda could be on the impact of emerging economies such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa in the uptake of fisheries certification in West Africa. While these countries interact with West Africa under the umbrella of South-South cooperation, there are concerns that these emerging hegemons may further entrench a neo-colonial relationship and exacerbate the crisis in the fisheries sector. How do these emerging powers interact with the

existing fisheries certification schemes, and how do such interactions increase or decrease the bargaining powers of coastal states?

A third agenda could be to focus on four different methods – historical/archival, interviews, discourse analysis, and ethnography – in tandem to provide a full understanding of the material, institutional, and discursive embeddedness of the fisheries sector. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I could not complete my scheduled archival research. Moreover, due to finances and time constraints, I could not utilize semi-structured interviews. The archival method could help investigate the historical context in which the blue economy's contested image has unfolded in West Africa. It could also allow for bringing together disparate disciplines into a new approach to explore how such representations challenge the dominant view of a 'traditional and backward sector' that needs to be modernized. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with regulatory agencies, NGOs, investors, and representatives of the fisheries communities would expose how certification schemes privilege certain actors. The use of discourse analysis (Hajer, 1995) could uncover the power relations behind the narratives of fisheries sustainability and how these frames privilege certain actors and forms of knowledge. Close ethnographic reading involving following fishers and processors to the factories and export zones could unearth the industry's social relations.

Finally, further research could probe the complementarities and divergences between agro-food certification and fisheries certification in West Africa. The thesis has employed the literature from agro-food regulation to assume that both agro-food certification and fisheries certification schemes are part of the global food systems. Because unlike food regime analysis, the literature on seafood analysis remains sparse (Foley & Mather, 2018). Are there points of

divergence between the agro-food sector and the fisheries sectors that could impact the findings of the thesis?

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