

MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Unveiling Colonial Legacies. A Postcolonial policy analysis of Ghana's fishing sector through a Waterscape Perspective

verfasst von | submitted by

Emily Chychy Joost BA

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (MA)

Wien | Vienna, 2026

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt |
Degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

UA 066 589

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree
programme as it appears on the student
record sheet:

Masterstudium Internationale Entwicklung

Betreut von | Supervisor:

Mag. Dr. Sara Paloni

Abstract (deutsch)

Koloniale Kontinuitäten aufdecken. Eine postkoloniale Politikanalyse des ghanaischen Fischereisektors aus der waterscape-Perspektive

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit untersucht ob und wie koloniale Kontinuitäten in den heutigen Governance-strukturen in Ghanas Fischereisektor fortbestehend und reproduziert werden. Theoretisch fundiert ist die Arbeit durch postkoloniale Ansätze, insbesondere Gayatri Spivaks Konzept der Subalternen und Frantz Fanons Analyse kolonialer Herrschaft. Darauf aufbauend entwickelt die Arbeit ein „decolonized waterscape“ Rahmenkonzept, welches Küstenregionen und Gewässer als soziokulturell geprägte Orte von Macht und Wissen versteht. Anhand einer qualitativen Analyse ausgewählter Gesetzestexte wird erforscht, wie rechtliche Instrumente, politische Entscheidungen und Durchsetzungsmechanismen historische Ungleichheiten an kolonial geprägten Orten fortführen. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass politische Maßnahmen und internationale Richtlinien Küstenregionen und die Gewässer als kontrollierbare Territorien konstruieren. Dabei werden lokale Wissensbestände systematisch marginalisiert und industrielle, internationale Fischerei privilegiert.

Keywords: Postkoloniale Theorie, Waterscape, Koloniale Kontinuitäten, Ghana, Politikanalyse, Fischereipolitik

Abstract (englisch)

This Thesis examines how legal and policy documents in Ghana's fishing sector reproduce, carry colonial continuities and reinforce hierarchies in the governance of waterscapes. Theoretically, the thesis is grounded in postcolonial approaches, particularly Gayatri Spivak's concept of the subaltern and Frantz Fanon's analysis of colonial rule. Building on this, the work develops a "decolonized waterscape" framework, which understands coastal regions and bodies of water as socio-culturally shaped sites of power and knowledge. Through a qualitative analysis of selected legal and policy documents, the analysis explores how legal instruments, political decisions and enforcement mechanisms perpetuate historical inequalities in colonially shaped spaces. The

results show that political measures and international policies construct coastal regions and ocean sites as controllable territories. In doing so, local knowledge systems are systematically marginalized and industrial, international fishing privileged.

Keywords: Postcolonial Theory, Waterscape, colonial continuities, Ghana, Policy Analysis, Fisheries Governance

*History, despite its wrenching pain,
Cannot be unlived, and if faced
With courage, need not be lived again.*

» Maya Angelou

TABLE OF FIGURES:

FIGURE 1: EXLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE GHANA (SCREENSHOT). SOURCE: MARINEREGIONS.ORG	12
FIGURE 2: APEX CO-MANAGEMENT INSTITUTIONS. SOURCE: CO-MANAGEMENT POLICY 2020 GHANA, P:19	14

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION: COLONIALISM, WATERSCAPES AND ECONOMIES IN GHANA.....	1
1.1 RESEARCH TRAJECTORY: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON RESEARCH INTEREST.....	2
1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVE	3
2. TRACING GHANA'S FISHERIES SECTOR: HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS AND CONTEMPORARY GOVERNANCE.....	4
2.1 HISTORICAL ENTANGLEMENTS OF GHANAS WATERSCAPES.....	4
2.1.1 <i>Indigenous Waterscapes before colonial interventions</i>	4
2.1.2 <i>Colonial Interventions and the Transformation of Fisheries</i>	5
2.1.3 <i>Regulation, Exclusion and Colonial Political Economy</i>	6
2.1.4 <i>Postcolonial Efforts to Reclaim Fisheries Sovereignty</i>	7
2.2 GHANA'S CONTEMPORARY FISHING SECTOR:.....	9
2.2.1 <i>Geography, Governance and Legal Frameworks</i>	9
2.2.2 <i>Sectors and Scales of Marine Fishing in Ghana</i>	10
2.2.3 <i>Global Context: Exclusive Economic Zones and Fisheries Regulations</i>	11
2.3 KEY ACTORS:.....	13
2.3.1 <i>Local Communities, State Institutions and International Actors</i>	13
2.3.2 <i>Institutional Interactions and Power Dynamics</i>	15
3. STATE OF THE ART: ON COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL POLICIES IN THE FISHING SECTOR AND FISHERY GOVERNANCE	16
3.1 FROM RESOURCE MANAGEMENT TO OCEAN GOVERNANCE	16
3.2 SECURITIZATION OF WATERSCAPES.....	17
4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WATERSCAPES AS SOCIAL SPACE – A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE	19
4.1 POWER DYNAMICS AND UNEQUAL ACCESS TO WATER.....	20
4.2 DECOLONIZED WATERSCAPE FRAMEWORK.....	21
4.2.1 <i>Integrating Fanon and Spivak into the Waterscape Framework</i>	21
4.2.2 <i>Waterscape and Colonial Legacy</i>	25
4.4 TOWARD A DECOLONIZED WATERSCAPE FRAMEWORK	25
5. METHODE: A QUALITATIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF POLICY DOCUMENTS	26
5.1 POSITIONALITY & LIMITATIONS:.....	27
5.1.1 <i>Positionality:</i>	27
5.1.2 <i>Limitations:</i>	28
6. ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK	29
6.1 THEME 1: GOVERNING AND FRAMING WATERSCAPES THROUGH POLICIES	29
6.2 THEME 2: FORMALIZATION VS. LOCAL PRACTICES AND KNOWLEDGE.....	29

6.3 THEME 3: SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS	30
7. EMPIRICAL PART: ANALYZING GHANA’S FISHING POLICIES FROM A DECOLONIZING WATERSCAPE PERSPECTIVE	30
7.1 MATERIAL CORPUS	30
7.1.1 <i>Overview and description of the material corpus: legal and policy documents of the fishery sector in Ghana</i>	31
7.2 DATA ANALYSIS PART I: OVERVIEW OF THE CODING SYSTEM AND THE KEY THEMES.....	35
7.3 RESULTS OF THE POLICY ANALYSIS	42
7.3.1 <i>Governing and Framing Ghana’s Waterscapes</i>	42
7.3.2 <i>Formalization vs. local practices and knowledge</i>	50
7.3.3 <i>Socio-ecological impacts (waterscapes and livelihoods)</i>	59
8. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: COLONIAL DIS/CONTINUITIES IN THE GOVERNANCE OF GHANA’S FISHERY SECTOR	67
8.1 REPRODUCTION OF COLONIAL STRUCTURES IN GHANA’S FISHING POLICIES.....	70
8.1.1 <i>Spatial Control and Territorialization</i>	70
8.1.2 <i>Epistemic Violence and the Silencing of Local Knowledge</i>	70
8.1.3: <i>Socio-Ecological Impacts and Livelihood vulnerability</i>	71
9. OUTLOOK: SHIFTING TOWARDS RECLAIMING WATERSCAPES	71
9.1 REFORMING LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS	72
9.2 ADDRESSING GENDERED EXCLUSION AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE	72
9.3 BEYOND FISHERIES AND TOWARDS CROSS-SECTORAL ACTION.....	73
LITERATURE AND RESOURCES:	75

1. Introduction: Colonialism, Waterscapes and Economies in Ghana

Coastal populations alongside West Africans Shore have had extensive historical and cultural connections with waterbodies. The ocean has been central to their daily lives, providing sustenance but also enforced their cultural identity. Focusing on Ghanaian coastal communities, they have established strong links with fishing as a livelihood and spirituality as a guiding force that is rooted in centuries-old traditions and religious beliefs (Freduah, Fidelman, and Smith 2018; Pardie and Benjamin Betey Campion 2022). Fishing villages across West African societies understand the immense significance of every aspect of marine life. They have acquired expertise in their craft by e.g. employing specific boat-building techniques passed down through generations and sharpening navigation skills over years at sea, all of which are integrated into their way of life. (Adjei and Sika-Bright 2019)

Colonial empires had various interaction with Waterscapes as well as indigenous techniques that utilized nature. However, there was a tendency to dismiss these techniques to suppress and furthermore claim superiority over indigenous people and their land. Through the establishment of colonial rules, the cultural and social life of indigenous people has been oversimplified. That also applied to waterscapes whereby colonialists declared water as insignificant to indigenous cultural practices, referring to them as "cultureless ahistorical voids" (Hough-Snee and Eastman 2017:136). Nevertheless, identifying different practices such as fishing and traditions associated with Waterscapes illustrate a rich history of cultural life and understanding of the interaction between human and nature. A closer examination of this subject reveals the prevailing colonial narratives and ideologies in Ghana's fishing sector today.

This thesis aims to analyze Ghana's fishing policies and regulatory frameworks through a decolonized waterscape lens. The waterscape framework is used to interrogate how colonial legacies continue to shape the governance of aquatic

spaces, in particularly the fishing sector. The core focus is on unpacking how legal instruments, policy decisions and enforcement mechanisms reproduce power imbalances rooted in colonial structures. This analytical framework seeks to critically examine how state regulatory systems intersect with broader socio-political histories and contemporary economic dependencies in the field of the fishing sector in Ghana.

1.1 Research trajectory: Background information on research interest

From March until July 2023, I visited Ghana and stayed on the compound of family friends. Living close to the ocean allowed me to witness first-hand the centrality of marine spaces in coastal communities. Alongside my informal observations I conducted brief, open conversations with community members, which, while not representing formal ethnographic fieldwork, nonetheless informed my understanding of the local context. These impressions and experiences are not part of the empirical data. However, they are crucial to the development of my research interest and inform my theoretical perspective on the subject matter.

Initially driven by an interest in gendered labor and coastal life, my observations, research and conversations soon turned toward broader issues of economic hardship and shifting power structures. Several people shared that they could no longer afford to buy the very fish they depended on (even fished by themselves) daily, while observing and hearing of the intensified amount of competition. The increased presence of larger, often foreign-controlled fishing vessels, particularly linked to the investment and operations of Chinese corporations, was frequently topic and a source of frustration.

These conversations and observations lingered with me. After I returned from Ghana, I began to engage more deeply with the academic literature and policy documents and these impressions began to merge into a clearer research focus. I was interested in how such developments were embedded in legal and institutional frameworks and how these in turn reflected broader histories of

power, access and authority. The thesis therefore takes these everyday impressions as a starting point to engage more deeply with the legal architecture surrounding Ghana's fishing sector. It explores how colonial legacies continue to influence the ways Ghana's fishing waters are governed and regulated today. While the lived experiences of fishing actors remain important, the core analysis centers on the regulatory framework that shapes interactions with the fishery waters and the broader power dynamics they reflect and reproduce.

1.2 Research questions and objective

"The production of a body of written knowledge, carefully archived during colonial rule and inherited by post-colonial governments and scholars, have shaped the contemporary production of knowledge and ensured the continuity of economic priorities set during the colonial period." (Akyeampong 2007:174)

The quote above underscores the central concern of this thesis: that colonial logics do not end with formal independence but instead become embedded in institutions, regulations and knowledge systems that continue to inform and influence the governance of Ghana's fishing sector today.

By critically examining regulatory texts and institutional structures through a decolonized waterscape framework, the thesis aims to understand how governance practices continue to carry forward colonial logics and transform social spaces, by asking: How do legal and policy documents in Ghana's fishing sector reproduce and carry colonial continuities and reinforce hierarchies in the governance of waterscapes?

2. Tracing Ghana's Fisheries Sector: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Governance

By providing a historical context, this chapter lays the groundwork for understanding current challenges in Ghana's waterscapes and the contestation of dominant historical narratives that continue to shape governance and fishing policies. Eurocentric worldviews regarding Ghana's waterscapes were often reinforced while indigenous knowledge systems and local practices were disregarded. A key aim of this chapter is to highlight these historical influences, to offer alternative understandings within a postcolonial framework and trace them to the contemporary governance of Ghana's Fisheries.

2.1 Historical Entanglements of Ghanas Waterscapes

The historical trajectory of fisheries in Ghana can be broadly divided into three phases: pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial. Each period has been marked by distinct patterns of resource utilization, governance and socio-economic transformations. This section traces these transformations from pre-colonial governance through colonial intervention to postcolonial fisheries governance.

2.1.1 Indigenous Waterscapes before colonial interventions

Before Colonial/European trade contact, fishing in Ghana was predominantly an artisanal activity, embedded in the social and economic structures of coastal communities. The Fante and Ga people, among others, engaged in fishing using dugout canoes and traditional nets. Fishing techniques included the use of cast nets, hand lines and traps, to ensure sustainable fishing. Women played a crucial role in processing and distributing fish, securing food for local consumption and trade. The sector operated within communal resource management systems, were indigenous knowledge guided fishing practices and efforts of sustainability and conservation. (Pardie and Benjamin Betey Campion 2022)

2. Tracing Ghana's Fisheries Sector: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Governance

Fishing was deeply integrated into the cultural and spiritual practices fishers of coastal communities, including taboos and customary rules governing this practice like before: "Each fishing community had its day of rest, when fishing was forbidden ostensibly for religious reasons, as well as for conservation reasons. Both people and nature needed rest. So the Ga could not fish in the sea on Tuesdays, and lagoon fishing was banned on Fridays." (Akyeampong 2007:177).

2.1.2 Colonial Interventions and the Transformation of Fisheries

Since Ghana is situated on the West African coast, European travelers who navigated beyond Northern Africa frequently arrived at its shores. From the 15th century onward, European expeditions by the Portuguese, Dutch, British and other were often framed as heroic voyages of discovery. Popular narratives, such as "the mention of Columbus [which] invokes the age of exploration, [...] and an invocation as well of forms of connection between Africa and Europe" (Bayo Holsey 2008:162) have romanticized these journeys, covering up their exploitative character and the exoticization of Indigenous populations. Early European interactions with coastal communities were often marked by mutual curiosity and the development of trade relationships.

The Portuguese, arriving at "the Gold Coast, first called "the trade of gold", and later "the mine of gold" and still later, generally, "the Mine" or "Mina" [...]" (Adu-Boahen 2012:166) in 1471, initiated a trade network that included – like the given names would suggest - gold, ivory and timber. However, as European involvement deepened, these interactions became increasingly characterized by dehumanization, particularly with the introduction of Christian missionary activity, which imposed a rigid framework of value upon Indigenous societies. (Nunn 2014). The economic exchanges evolved into systems of forced labor, slavery and resource extraction. By the seventeenth century, European traders had expanded their operations, establishing large forts to imprison enslaved individuals before their forced transportation across the Atlantic. (Diouf 2004:284f.) European forts along the coast facilitated the commodification of

2. Tracing Ghana's Fisheries Sector: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Governance

marine resources, with coastal communities becoming integrated into global trade networks (Adu-Boahen 2012:166f.).

The colonial administration recognized the economic potential of Ghana's fisheries rather late "[...] only in the 1930s and receiving its first regulatory law in the Gold Coast in 1946 (Fisheries Ordinance Cap 165)." (Akyeampong 2007:174). By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, British colonial authorities introduced regulatory frameworks that significantly altered traditional fishing practices and encouraged mechanization and industrial fishing. The introduction of motorized vessels marked the beginning of a shift from subsistence to commercial fishing. Foreign companies dominated the fishing industry and restructured the allocation of resources in favor of production oriented towards export and economic growth. (Ayilu et al. 2023b; Overå 2011)

2.1.3 Regulation, Exclusion and Colonial Political Economy

Fishing posed a stable form of income in Ghana since long: "during the 1950s, the country was a known Powerhouse [...] because of its advancement on semi-industry fishing in international fishing zones" (Alabi-Doku et al. 2020:12). With that being said, European traders relied on indigenous fishermen to supply fish for trade and sustenance. However, colonial policies significantly shaped marine property rights and access.

Walker 2002 highlights the significance of shifts in the decision making process over the fishing industry: "[...] the colony made decisions about the fishing industry from the perspective of European models of fishing and in the interest of colonial economic imperatives, both of which had transforming impacts on Gold Coast fishing communities and the methods by which they captured fish." (Walker 2002:395). These interventions therefore profoundly altered traditional fishing practices. They disrupted communal water management systems and imposed regulatory frameworks that privileged industrial over artisanal fishing (Dantzig 1978:17).

Colonial legal systems altered traditional practices and further reinforced economic hierarchies that privileged European economic interests and the

2. Tracing Ghana's Fisheries Sector: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Governance

“liberalization of marine spaces” (Walker 2002:395). This shift led to an open-access regime that allowed Europeans secure involvement and benefited Ghanaian elites to monopolize fisheries resources by marginalizing local communities. Regarding my research interest, this offers insights into the role of governing the fishing sector as an economic value to be harnessed.

The Fishing Ordinance of 1946 was a pivotal colonial policy, which regulated access to marine resources, licensing and sustainable measures. These regulations were intended to promote sustainability, however another effect was, that they disproportionately benefited European actors and a few wealthy Ghanaian's who could afford to comply with the licensing requirements (Justice et al. 2020:13). The marginalization of artisanal fisheries resulted in increased economic disparities and reduced local control over fishing territories. Colonial policies also introduced exploitative labor conditions, compelling local fishers to work under European power, further deepening socio-economic inequalities.(Walker 2002:395)

Additionally, colonial authorities introduced taxes and licensing fees that disproportionately burdened small-scale fishers. Industrial trawlers, operated mainly by foreign actors, depleted fish stocks, disrupting traditional fishing cycles. The growing dependency on imported fishing technology also placed local fishermen at an economic disadvantage.

2.1.4 Postcolonial Efforts to Reclaim Fisheries Sovereignty

More so after gaining independence in 1957, the Ghanaian government under Kwame Nkrumah sought to regain control of the fisheries industry. A major step towards reducing foreign dominance in the industry, was the establishment of the State Fishing Corporation (SFC) in 1962. The construction of the Tema Fishing Harbor and the acquisition of state-owned trawlers aimed to modernize the sector and increase local participation in offshore fishing (Alabi–Doku et al. 2020:12).

Despite these efforts, structural challenges persisted and economic downturns in the 1970s and 1980s impacted Ghana's fisheries. The introduction of

2. Tracing Ghana's Fisheries Sector: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Governance

Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the 1980s by neighboring countries limited the access of Ghanaian fishers to foreign waters, which led to overfishing in local marine environments. Furthermore, this was marked by the rise of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which was worsened by weak enforcement mechanisms. The government's reliance on foreign aid and investments to modernize the sector led to policies that favored industrial fisheries over artisanal fishers, thereby undermining local livelihoods (Ayilu et al. 2023a; Okafor-Yarwood and Onuoha 2023).

The Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the 1980s and 1990s further complicated the situation. International financial institutions encouraged trade liberalization, which resulted in an influx of foreign fishing fleets and a decline in state support for local fishers. Ghanaian fishers had to compete with heavily subsidized foreign trawlers, which depleted marine resources at a high rate. Meanwhile, declining fish stocks forced many artisanal fishers to adopt unsustainable practices, such as light fishing and illegal transshipment. (Ayilu et al. 2023a:803f.)

Throughout history, women have played an essential yet underappreciated role in Ghana's fishing industry. While men dominated the act of fishing, women controlled post-harvest processing, marketing and distribution. However, colonial and postcolonial economic policies often overlooked women's contributions, limiting their access to financial resources and decision-making structures. The introduction of industrial fishing further marginalized women, as large-scale operations favored male-dominated labor forces. (Adjei and Sika-Bright 2019)

The Gender Mainstreaming Strategy (GMS) introduced by the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MoFAD) in 2013 aimed to address gender inequalities by promoting women's participation in fisheries governance. Nevertheless, cultural norms and economic barriers continue to restrict women's opportunities, making further policy interventions necessary (Ameyaw et al. 2020). Women's traditional roles in processing and trading fish remain essential, but their participation in policy-making and resource management must be strengthened to ensure equitable development in the sector. Gender is an

2. Tracing Ghana's Fisheries Sector: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Governance

important topic, which is why I mentioned it here. However, including and analyzing this topic would exceed the scope of this thesis.

2.2 Ghana's contemporary fishing sector:

In the Chapter above I addressed the historical trajectories whereby this Thesis aims to understand how they continue to shape regulation and power relations of Ghana's Fisheries today. To do so, this Chapter aims to outline Ghana's contemporary Fisheries Sector.

2.2.1 Geography, Governance and Legal Frameworks

Ghana's fishing sector holds a vital economic significance for coastal communities. Moreover, it offers ground for examining how colonial interventions continue to shape patterns of access, resource exploitation, gender division alongside the workload and environmental degradation. Management has been for long a top-down approach which highlights the implications of state interests over community (CO-MANAGEMENT POLICY FOR THE FISHERIES SECTOR 2020:ii)

Ghana is geographically situated between Togo and Côte D'Ivoire with ocean access to the Gulf of Guinea. The coastline can be divided into West, Central and East and stretches up to around 550km, which includes the territorial sea. It further includes the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which was established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982. This impacted offshore fishing for many coastal fishing communities.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MOFAD) and the Fisheries Commission (FC) oversee the management of fisheries in Ghana. The Fisheries Act 625 (2002) and the Fisheries Management Plan are key regulations and focus on sustainable use of marine resources and conservative efforts.

2.2.2 Sectors and Scales of Marine Fishing in Ghana

Marine fishing conducted in Ghana can be divided into 3 main sectors and targeted scales ranging from small to medium to large scale often characterized by the type of vessel in use: Artisanal, Semi-Industrial (Inshore) and Industrial.

Small-scale practices are generally defined as those that produce a limited amount of goods, with the output being used for personal consumption as well as for local markets. Artisanal fisheries fit this description since they typically yield a small quantity of fish that is then consumed by the community or sold on local markets. They are mostly family-/local-based and use manual and small gears whereby the techniques are very much based on static gears such as nets, lines, seines. The fishing operations happen mostly inland or coastal and are heavily impacted with the rise of industrial fisheries that are contributing to overfishing and economic strain.

Looking at the artisanal sector in Ghana, it is dominated by local fishing communities, especially in the Western and Central Regions. Fishing is mostly conducted with the use of small dugout canoes and is therefore generally considered small-scale fishing as mentioned above. Nevertheless, according to FAO's Fishery and Aquaculture Profile of Ghana¹: "The artisanal subsector is responsible for over 70 percent of the total fish production [...]", which makes this sector particularly interesting for the Thesis. Different fishing gears are used and mostly produced in the local fishing communities, which are long lived and handed-down traditions of net making. The gears vary forms based on the operation mode, beach or deep sea. Therefore, fishing gears "[included] purse seines ("poli/watsa"), beach seines, drift gill nets (DGN), and surface set nets." The different operating modes differ between operations from the beach, where beach seines are used, as well as hooks and line canoes which operate in the deep seas.

Semi-industrial Fisheries count as medium scale fishery and are practiced in inland and marine waters for its purpose goes beyond human and individual consumption and is sold on local and international markets. Therefore, they

¹"Ghana - Fishery and Aquaculture Country Profiles." Accessed April 17th, 2025. <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/facp/GHA>.

2. Tracing Ghana's Fisheries Sector: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Governance

require larger crews and active and passive gear, as well as larger vessels that can also be motorized. These Fisheries can be seen as a cross between artisanal and industrial fisheries because they use tools from both.

Large-scale industrial fisheries are characterized by the presence of big crews, motorized vessels and larger active gear, such as trawlers. These are mainly practiced in marine waters and operate for human consumption, but larger-scale processing is used for other agricultural outputs such as fish oil. International stakeholders are particularly interested in this sector and this interest is likely to continue in the future. (Ayilu et al. 2023c)

2.2.3 Global Context: Exclusive Economic Zones and Fisheries Regulations

Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) were established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982. According to the UNCLOS (1982), within the EEZ, “the coastal State has sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing the natural resources” (United Nations 1982)Art. 56), whereby these are including living and non-living resources. Ghana signed UNCLOS on the 10th December 1982 (United Nations Treaty Collection n.d.) and ratified it on the 7th June 1983, marking its formal commitment to the international legal framework governing oceanic space. Following this, Ghana formally established its EEZ through national legislation in 1984, defining its maritime boundaries (Fig.1) and granting the state jurisdiction over natural resources within those waters. The EEZ has since become a critical legal boundary for Ghana to manage both living and non-living resources marine resources, particularly in the face of increasing threats such as illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. This challenge is underscored by the fact, that Ghana has received two “yellow cards” from the European Union, most recently in 2021, as warnings for failing to take sufficient action against IUU fishing within its jurisdiction.²

² “Ghana Gets Second Yellow Card, Risks Losing EU Seafood Export Market.” Accessed July 29th, 2025. <https://www.seafoodsource.com/news/environment-sustainability/ghana-gets-second-yellow-card-risks-losing-eu-seafood-export-market>.

2. Tracing Ghana's Fisheries Sector: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Governance

While this international integration may suggest a move towards sovereign marine governance, it also illustrates how Ghana's postcolonial identity is shaped and constrained by global legal and economic regimes. I want to note here again, that international legal frameworks are shaped within historically unequal global power relations, which continue to privilege the economic and political interests of the Global North (Anghie 2005).

From a Waterscape perspective, the EEZ reveal a deeper imbalance: with global legal and economic structures dictating how marine spaces are governed, the social and cultural realities of coastal communities are often marginalized in these frameworks.

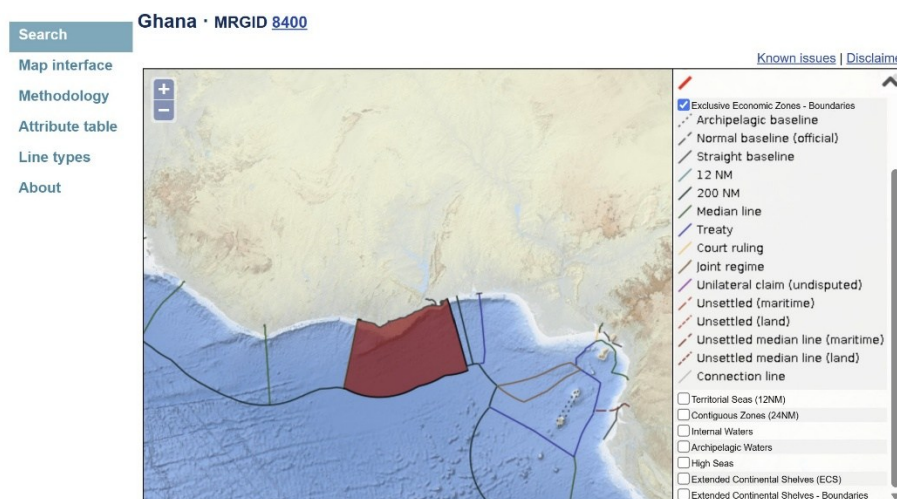


Figure 1: Exclusive Economic Zone Ghana (Screenshot). Source: Marineregions.org

To regulate fishing activities, ensure sustainable use of marine resources and prevent illegal practices which would be harmful to the environment and local economies, the Fisheries Regulations, 1979 (LI 1235) were introduced in Ghana.

It was implemented by the Commissioner who was at the time responsible for Agriculture. These regulations were enacted under the Fisheries Decree, 1979 (AFRCD 30) and addressed emerging concerns such as overfishing, illegal fishing methods as well as unregulated foreign fishing activities in Ghanaian waters/EEZs.

2.3 Key Actors:

Ghana's Fishing Sector is shaped by multiple actors whose interests and mandates intersect and/or conflict. The following part will identify primary stakeholders

2.3.1 Local Communities, State Institutions and International Actors

The Fishing Community in Ghana represents the primary group within Ghana's maritime spaces. These communities are characterized by high social capital and informal mutual aid. Freduah, Fidelman and Smith (2018) note: "As a community norm, the fishers are always willing to help each other keep their boats and gears away from the effects of storms and waves." (Freduah et al. 2018:68). These communities serve as a means of knowledge transfer as well as a place for the negotiation of norms that inform the day-to-day operation and resources.

In addition to the fishers, local Civil Society Organizations are important actors in the sector. Specifically, the Ghanaian NGO Hen Mpoano can be named and is working towards the inclusive and integrated management of coastal and marine ecosystems. They can act as mediators between local communities and the state.

The governance structure of Ghana's fisheries sector is composed of interconnected institutions whose mandates reflect both national development priorities and international commitments. Key actors include the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MoFAD), the Fisheries Commission and the Ghana Shippers' Authority (GSA). These actors collectively govern marine resources through policy design, implementation, regulation, and international partnership.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the institutional hierarchy is centralized, with strategic authority flowing from the Cabinet through the Minister of MoFAD to the Fisheries Commission. This structure is supported by advisory bodies which provide specialized expertise for policy formulation. Below the Commission level, the management is subdivided into species-specific committees and

2. Tracing Ghana’s Fisheries Sector: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Governance

represents the technical operationalization of fisheries governance.

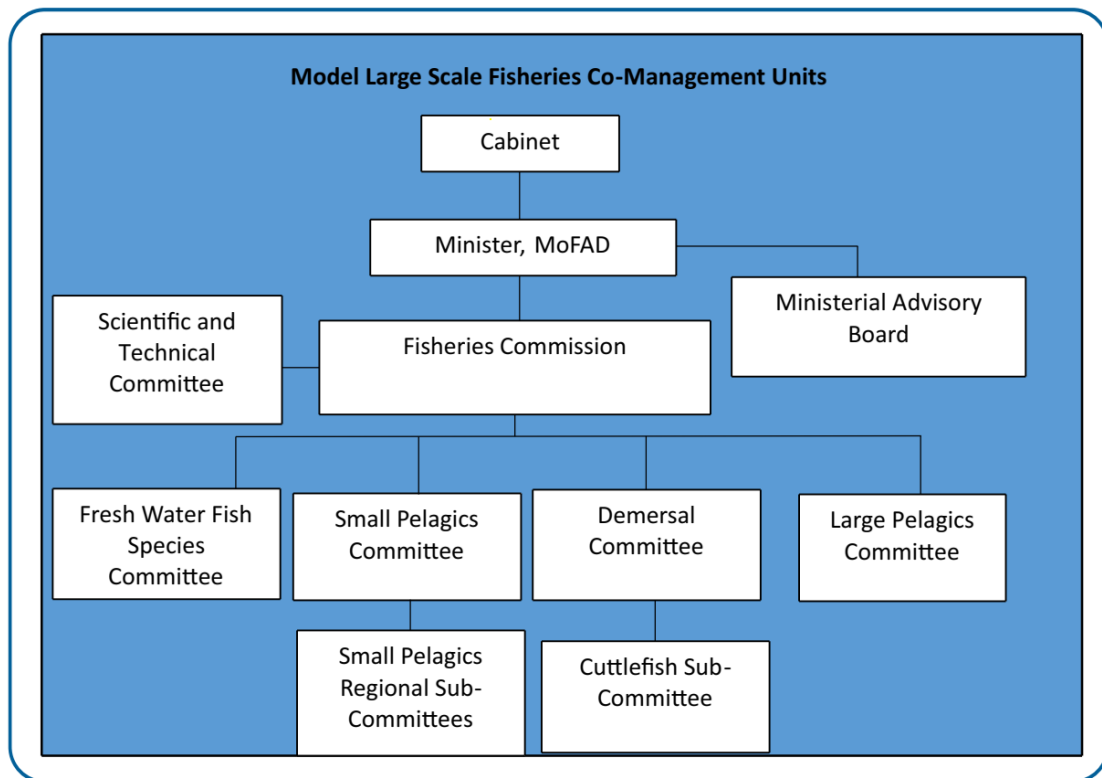


Figure 1: Model Large Scale Fisheries Co-Management Units

Figure 2: Apex Co-Management Institutions. Source: Co-Management Policy 2020 Ghana, p:19

The MoFAD in Ghana was founded “to ensure the accelerated development of the fisheries and aquaculture sector for national development. [...]to formulate and implement sector policies and strategies.” (MoFAD 2024:5). Alongside other Programs and Policies such as the Social Development Policies, the MoFAD adopted policies, that align with their objectives as well. The policies therefore intersect the different areas of policy making to ensure a broader approach to development and tackling challenges exemplified in one of the 7 policy objectives: “Mainstream Science, Technology and Innovation in all socio-economic activities; [...]” (MoFAD 2024:5).

Nevertheless, MoFAD's key functions include creating and executing policies for the fisheries sector in alignment with national goals. It supports aquaculture growth to boost local fish production and ensures the enforcement of fisheries laws to safeguard resources. The ministry promotes sustainable fisheries management and conducts research on relevant socio-economic issues for

2. Tracing Ghana's Fisheries Sector: Historical Foundations and Contemporary Governance

policy-making. Additionally, it coordinates sector interventions and oversees premix fuel distribution to fishing communities (MoFAD 2024:5).

The Fisheries Commission³ is provided by the constitution and counts as a natural resources commission. It acts as the implementing agency of the MoFAD and was established under the Fisheries Act, 2002 (Act 625).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United States (FAO) plays a important role in aligning Ghanaian fisheries policies with global sustainability standards by offering technical assistance, coordinating donor-funded initiatives since they partnered with the Ghanaian Government in 1978⁴. FAO is a agency of the United Nations, with its goal to defeat hunger. The current Country Programming Framework (CPF) for 2023–2025 in Ghana outlines three core priority areas, including sustainable natural resource management and food security (FAO, 2023). However, limited public access to updated documentation constrains a full assessment of ongoing implementation activities.

2.3.2 Institutional Interactions and Power Dynamics

Although the Fisheries Commission operates under MoFAD's authority, their practical coordination is often fragmented by overlapping mandates and resource constraints. Furthermore, the engagement of international donors reinforces top-down approaches since global sustainability programs can inadvertently bypass local knowledge systems. While international partnerships have the possibility to strengthen regulatory capacity, they can also reproduce dependencies on external funding and global governance norms.

The bureaucratic control and regulation of Ghana's fishing sector were introduced under colonial rule, laying the foundation for today's management systems. The systems which were in place before fostered adaptive maintenance based on generational knowledge as well as social accountability. In contrast, colonial administration imposed centralized, technocratic

³ Note: It is quite hard to access the Webpage and gain information from the Commission. The page further doesn't seem to be updated since the last informational post dates back to the 3rd of October 2023.

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/ghana/en> (accessed: 10.12.2025)

3. State of the Art: On colonial and postcolonial policies in the fishing sector and fishery governance

governance models – characterized by licensing, monitoring and enforcement – that redefined access to marine resources and criminalized many indigenous practices. Such narratives and the criminalization of indigenous practices was one tool of colonial supremacy and supported racial as well as cultural hierarchies which were used to justify colonial exploitation (Sotelo Eastman and Hough-Snee 2017). This shift further sidelined local actors and knowledge bases and transformed fishers from autonomous actors of their waterscapes into subjects of state and market regulation.

3. State of the Art: On colonial and postcolonial policies in the fishing sector and fishery governance

The academic discourse surrounding fisheries governance has undergone a paradigm shift since the start of this research in 2022. The field has moved from a discourse dominated by sustainability as a biological metric, towards a critical interrogation of Blue Justice and the Blue economy as political projects. (Ayilu et al. 2023a; Kassah and Asare 2022) This chapter maps this shift to a multi-layered understanding which integrates economic, social and political dynamics. Furthermore, does it identify where postcolonial perspectives in connection with a waterscape framework offer new insights.

3.1 From Resource Management to Ocean Governance

The 20th century, in regard to the fishing sector, was heavily influenced by a natural science paradigm that prioritized the concept of Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). MSY served as a standard for global fisheries management and formula to calculate the largest catch that can be taken from a species stock over an indefinite period. (Maunder 2008)

3. State of the Art: On colonial and postcolonial policies in the fishing sector and fishery governance

The inherent logic of MSY requires making a complex aquatic ecosystem quantifiable and furthermore rendering the ocean legible for administrative control. Through that process the Waterscape is stripped of its social, cultural and historical ties and replacing them with a focus on industrial efficiency. A transition in the discourse is noted in “Ocean Governance: Knowledge Systems, Policy Foundations and Thematic Analyses” 2023 by Partelow, Hadjimichael and Hornidge. They argue that these policy foundations exist within a hierarchy of knowledge production: “[...] many actors worldwide are dependent on the research, which is conducted by the knowledge systems financed, organised and fostered by the above-mentioned nation states. These dependencies lead to international asymmetries, a limited range of databases and analyses, restricted access as well as gaps in our understanding of what the ocean is.” (Partelow, Hadjimichael, and Hornidge 2023:30).

The transition from managing fish to managing capital and therefore the shift from resource management to ocean governance opened the Blue Growth agenda from the early 2012s (Bennett et al. 2021). It transformed into the more recent term of Blue Economy with key events such as the “Blue Economy & Finance Forum” in June 2025. A shift in terminology towards sustainability is evident, however, the underlying power dynamics remain consistent with a extraction style favoring actors/agendas from the global North.

3.2 Securitization of Waterscapes

The push for a Blue Economy has necessitated an increase in maritime security and surveillance. Recent scholars such as Okafor-Yarwood and Onuoha (2023) have interrogated whose security is being prioritized. They argue, that maritime security in Africa is characterized by an elitist orientation which is driven by “the selective framing of what constitutes threats and the associated resourcing of responses to counter them, often dictated by foreign interests and evidenced by United Nations resolutions on maritime security on the continent”(Okafor-Yarwood and Onuoha 2023:947).

3. State of the Art: On colonial and postcolonial policies in the fishing sector and fishery governance

The selective framing of threats can be understood as a crucial postcolonial mechanism. It defines threats – Okafor-Yarwood and Onuoha (2023) mention piracy and IUU fishing – primarily in ways that align with global trade priorities. Consequently, structural threats faced by artisanal livelihoods (such as displacements and threats by industrial fleets and loss of coastal access) are systematically ignored.

The work of Gupta, Bosch and van de Vliet (2025) bring an understanding on how these structural injustice manifest in proposing a framework of “Water System Justice”. While their research primarily addresses water as a resource within Earth Systems boundaries, their framework offers a underutilized lens for the fisheries sector and connects very well with the Scholars mentioned previously: “This raises critical questions about whose interests are served by securitization and how alternative frameworks, such as justice-based approaches, can challenge these.” (Gupta, Bosch, and van Vliet 2025:3)

Ghana’s fisheries face multiple challenges today, including overfishing, climate change, as well as competition between artisanal and industrial fishers. The review of the State of the Art reveals that socio-economic crises and security failures are topics of the current discourse around Waterscapes. However, the ‘historical permanence of colonial legal structures – a concept explored in other regions such as Asia by Lo and Li (Lo and Li 2025) - remain largely unexamined in current policy analysis regarding West African policy analysis.

Taken together, the reviewed literature shows a fragmented, yet evolving field of fisheries governance. Earlier approaches were dominated by technocratic and biologically grounded modes such as the Maximum Sustainable Yield. More recent scholars has shifted towards political and economic analysis of ocean governance and the Blue Economy. (Gupta et al. 2025) These perspectives increasingly address issues of inequality, exclusion and conflict resolutions between industrial and small-scale fisheries. Furthermore, critical work on securitization and water justice explores how global governance frameworks priorities certain threats and actors that align with the interest of the Global North.

4. Theoretical Framework: The Significance of Waterscapes as social space – a Postcolonial perspective

Despite these advances, the historical dimension of these governance structures remains less explored. The persistence of colonial legal frameworks and their influence on fisheries governance in West Africa is insufficiently addressed. There is a need for a framework that can account for the entanglement of power, history and aquatic space. This thesis contributes by combining postcolonial theory with a Waterscape perspective to analyze legal and policy texts in Ghana's Fishery Sector. In the following Chapter I will establish this theoretical framework.

4. Theoretical Framework: The Significance of Waterscapes as social space – a Postcolonial perspective

This Chapter will discuss the theoretical Framework for the Thesis question: How do legal and policy documents in Ghana's fishing sector reproduce and carry colonial continuities and reinforce hierarchies in the governance of waterscapes?

Research into the interaction between water and society has been conducted across various disciplines, including natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences. Waterscapes, within the disciplines of political and social sciences, extend beyond physical waterbodies to examine the interrelations between people (in their communities) and water systems (Karpouzoglou and Vij 2017). In this analysis, I furthermore connect Fanon's and Spivak's theoretical insights to the concept of waterscapes to examine how colonial legacies remain embedded in Ghana's fishing sector.

Social science approaches, in contrast to natural science approaches which often focus on the ecological or hydrological characteristics of water systems, challenge traditional narratives that construct binary divisions between land and sea or categorize individuals solely as in this example: farmers or mariners. This dichotomy disregards the nuanced spheres where individuals engage in both farming and fishing activities, as noted by Dawson (2018): "farming-fishermen

4. Theoretical Framework: The Significance of Waterscapes as social space – a Postcolonial perspective

or fishing-farmers” (p. 2). Recognizing these hybrid identities allows for a more comprehensive understanding of societies historically and contemporarily shaped by water environments. However, it is crucial to note that colonial as well as postcolonial regulatory frameworks often resist this complexity.

The term "waterscapes" serves as a guiding framework throughout this thesis, exploring how colonial powers exploited and reshaped water systems to serve European interests, thereby impacting local fisheries and social relations. When looking at the fishing sector through a Waterscape perspective, fishing becomes more than a source of income and economic sector. Regulating the fishing sector has direct impacts on the livelihood of coastal communities and therefore colonial rulers were not just intervening on an economic level but changing the cultural landscape.

4.1 Power Dynamics and Unequal Access to Water

Kevin Dawson’s *Undercurrents of Power* (2018) critiques terrestrial perspectives that treat water merely as a border for land-based events or as an intercontinental highway: “Terrestrial perspectives [that] treat water as a border for land-bound events and an intercontinental high-way, concluding that cultural creation was restricted to land.”(Dawson 2018:2f.). Instead, Dawson highlights water as a space for cultural interaction and production. He argues that the interactions occurring within these aquatic spaces were instrumental in shaping traditions and cultural identities, particularly within the African diaspora.

This perspective underscores the importance of analyzing waterscapes through a postcolonial lens. For instance, Swyngedouw’s *Social Power and the Urbanization of Water* (2004) explores the socio-political implications of water flows, demonstrating how water systems influence urbanization and societal power structures.

The term “waterscapes” encompasses the idea of interconnected freshwater and saltwater systems as spaces that actively inform group identities and cultural practices. Dawson (2018) extends the concept of “seascapes” beyond

4. Theoretical Framework: The Significance of Waterscapes as social space – a Postcolonial perspective

saltwater to include freshwater systems, recognizing the amphibious cultural spaces where land and water intertwine. Related terms such as “hydrosocial territories” and “resource frontiers” highlight similar connections between water and society. However, this thesis adopts “waterscapes” as its primary framework due to its emphasis on socio-cultural and political dynamics.

4.2 Decolonized Waterscape Framework

The integration of the waterscape concept with postcolonial theory provides a tool for understanding the interconnected social, political and environmental dimensions of the fishery sector in Ghana. This framework emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing colonial continuities that have marginalized waterscapes as cultural spaces. For instance, in the context of Ghana’s fishing sector, a decolonized waterscape framework can:

1. Reclaim traditional governance systems disrupted by colonial rule.
2. Amplify the voices of marginalized actors, such as small-scale fishers and women, in policymaking processes.
3. Challenge global economic systems that perpetuate neocolonial resource extraction.

As Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017) observe, colonial powers often imposed negative connotations on aquatic environments, framing them in opposition to “civilized” land-based spaces: “Water was a natural place for culture, pleasure, and spirituality. Conversely, white people formed negative connotations of aquatics, deploying them to support claims of racial and cultural superiority and colonial designs.” (Sotelo Eastman and Hough-Snee 2017:137). Such narratives supported racial and cultural hierarchies that justified colonial exploitation of water systems.

4.2.1 Integrating Fanon and Spivak into the Waterscape Framework

The quote, “For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white”(Fanon 1986:12), highlights Frantz Fanon’s critique of colonialism’s extensive psychological and structural violence and continuity of such. I want to use this

4. Theoretical Framework: The Significance of Waterscapes as social space – a Postcolonial perspective

statement as an entry point to interrogate how Western development frameworks and policies continue to inform structures and decision-making in post-colonial contexts such as Ghana's fisheries governance.

Both Fanon and Spivak operate within the broader field of postcolonial theory, which critically analyzes and challenges the enduring legacies of colonialism in contemporary societies. Postcolonial theory highlights how historical processes of colonization continue to shape economic, political and cultural structures, often subordinating/repressing the Global South to political and economic priorities of the Global North. This theoretical lens allows to examine how colonial histories are inscribed in systems of governance and resource management, such as Ghana's fishing sector.

Fanon's (1986) analysis reflects the colonial construction of the black subject as continuous striving for validation within a framework imposed by the colonizer. The claim that "the black man's destiny is white" highlights how colonialism did not merely exploit resources but fundamentally reordered and defined social and psychological realities. Fanon locates this process within a material and economic structure and argues, that "If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: -primarily, economic; -subsequently, the internalization-or, better, the epidermalization - of this inferiority." (Fanon 1986:13). This underscores that colonial subjectivities are not only psychological but are produced through economic relations that continue to shape postcolonial governance and development trajectories. Therefore, Fanon's insights extend beyond individual psychology and can be applied to the field of international development. As discussed in contemporary development debates, scholars increasingly draw on Fanon to argue that colonial patterns of recognition persist in the privileging of Western models of progress, governance and economic organization as universal standards. (Developing Economics, 2023)⁵ Drawing on that, development can be understood as a continuation of colonial power through epistemic and

⁵ Developing Economics. (2023, October 9). *Decolonising development with Frantz Fanon*. <https://developingeconomics.org/2023/10/09/decolonising-development-with-frantz-fanon/>

4. Theoretical Framework: The Significance of Waterscapes as social space – a Postcolonial perspective

institutional means, whereby postcolonial states are compelled to align with externally defined benchmarks of modernity.

As Ania Loomba (2015) further argues, Fanon's work ultimately inverts dominant colonial assumptions since "it is colonialism that is now seen as psychopathological, a disease that distorts human relations and renders everyone within it sick" (Loomba 2015:147). This shift relocates dysfunction from the colonized subject to the colonial system itself and provides a critical lens through which contemporary development and governance frameworks (such as policies) can be understood as continuations of these relations. This theoretical perspective is relevant in postcolonial contexts today. In these contexts policies, economic systems, and development strategies often derive from or conform to Western paradigms instead of being rooted in local frameworks.

In the following, I want to concretize these theoretical insights in the context of Ghana's fisheries' governance. In Ghana's fishing sector, the regulatory frameworks and international agreements governing marine resources often reflect priorities shaped by institutions of the global North. These structures reflect colonial patterns, where traditional modes of resource governance (e.g. community-led fishing practices) are subordinated to systems aligned with global trade and market demands. Through the reliance on foreign expertise, aid and technologies to manage waterscapes, a dependency that mirrors Fanon's critique of colonial domination, is being maintained. The "destiny" of Ghana's waterscapes therefore appears externally defined, which resonates with Fanon's notion of a subject navigating a world structured by external norms. Fanon (1963) further addresses this dynamic through his critique of the colonial gaze, which is embedded in institutional and economic systems that objectify the colonized populations and reduce them to units of labor within systems of production. The process strips individuals and communities of their multidimensionality and social complexity. It adds another layer and shows how the loss of self-recognition is structurally produced. Fanon explains that the colonial gaze becomes internalized by the colonized individuals themselves. The colonial gaze therefore becomes a lens through which the colonizers see

4. Theoretical Framework: The Significance of Waterscapes as social space – a Postcolonial perspective

as well as the colonized people come to see themselves. They are subjected to the “white man” as the ultimate point of reference. To decolonize the mind is also to decolonize the space, specifically the waterscape as a governed and lived environment.

Building on this, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak extends Fanon's critique further by interrogating how colonial power erases the agency and voice of the colonized in her influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?". The subaltern for Spivak is defined by their inability to be heard within hegemonic discourses. Their very subjectivity is denied by the structures that constitute them: “If we remark that the British boasted of their absolute equity toward and noninterference with native custom/law [...] may be read in J.M. Derrett's remark: “The very first legislation upon Hindu Law was carried through without the assent of a single Hindu” (Spivak 1994:93).

Spivak's concept of ‘epistemic violence’ further describes how dominant knowledge systems systematically exclude the subaltern. The exclusion of certain knowledge bases is conceptualized by Spivak as silencing, and I will in a later chapter discuss its connection to the fishing governance in Ghana.

Spivak's statement that the subaltern cannot speak (Spivak 1994:104) aligns with Fanon's observation about monopolized recognition. Fanon's statement that "For it is implicit that to speak is to exist absolutely for the other" (Fanon 1986:17), further reinforces this connection and highlights how voice and recognition are granted within dominant epistemic frameworks.

The fishing communities in Ghana are not merely excluded from policymaking; their exclusion is intrinsic to the structure of governance that prioritizes industrial-scale operations, foreign investment and export-oriented strategies (e.g. foreign investments in industrial fishing). These communities, often represented as "beneficiaries" of development projects rather than active agents, remain trapped in a sphere where their knowledge and voices are rendered politically marginally. Therefore, do they continue to negotiate their humanity and recognition within systems that render them invisible.

4.2.2 Waterscape and Colonial Legacy

Connecting these insights to the concept of waterscapes allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how colonial legacies persist in Ghana's fishing sector. Waterscapes are not merely physical spaces; they are deeply embedded in historical, social, and political processes. Ghana's coastal zones and fishing communities were shaped by colonial resource extraction, where the priorities of European powers disrupted traditional governance systems and commodified natural resources.

Today, this legacy persists in the form of overfishing by foreign fleets, environmental degradation, and regulatory frameworks that prioritize global markets over local needs. The waterscape becomes a site of struggle where colonial-era hierarchies are reinscribed. For instance, local fishers, who rely on artisanal methods and possess intimate knowledge of marine ecosystems, are often marginalized by policies favoring industrial trawlers.

4.4 Toward a Decolonized Waterscape Framework

Building on the theoretical foundations of Frantz Fanon and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as well as integrating them with the concept of waterscapes, this thesis proposes a decolonized waterscape framework as an analytical lens for examining fisheries governance in Ghana.

Fanon's analysis highlights how colonial power operates through the internalization of hierarchical norms that shape how postcolonial states define progress and development. Spivak extends this critique by demonstrating how these structures systematically silence subaltern voices through processes of epistemic violence which renders e.g. small scale fishers present but politically less audible. Combining these insights with the waterscape perspective offers an analytical lens to explore such power relations as spatially and materially embedded in the governance of aquatic environments. It allows for an understanding of waterscapes as a space where colonial legacies, economic dependencies and knowledge hierarchies intersect. A decolonized waterscape

perspective therefore moves beyond viewing fisheries governance as a purely technical environment but conceptualizes it as a site of historically rooted power struggles over resources and knowledge.

In this thesis, I define a decolonized waterscape framework as an approach to analyze fisheries policies by 1. Tracing how colonial and postcolonial power structures shape regulatory frameworks; 2. Identifying whose knowledge and voices are included or excluded in decision-making processes; 3. Examining how global economic systems reproduce dependencies within local waterscapes. The framework is relevant for policy analysis because it shifts the analytical focus from policy outcome alone to the underlying power relations, epistemologies and historical continuities embedded in policy design and implementation. It enables a critical examination of how postcolonial waterscapes can challenge established power dynamics and integrate marginalized perspectives.

The next chapter applies this framework to the analysis of policies surrounding Ghana's fishing sector.

5. Methode: A qualitative thematic analysis of policy documents

For analyzing the data, this research uses a theory driven qualitative thematic analysis of selected fisheries policy documents in Ghana, as described in the material corpus. The aim is to identify recurring patterns and power structures that reflect colonial continuities and social exclusions in current fisheries governance frameworks. This approach focuses particularly on the intersections of postcolonial and waterscape-informed questions.

The thesis' theoretical Waterscape Lens requires an interpretive and theory-driven approach to text analysis that seeks to highlight the social, political and historical dimensions hidden within the policy. These non-manifest layers include, for example, how certain actors (e.g. local vs foreign fishers) are rendered visible or invisible, or how global economic imperatives are prioritized

over local livelihoods. Therefore, thematic analysis is suitable, since it allows “for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns/themes within the data” (Braun/Clarke 2006, in: Deutschmann 2014:6).

The analysis is primarily deductive, meaning it is based on pre-defined analytical categories that stem from the theoretical framework outlined earlier in this thesis, especially from authors like Fanon, Spivak and Dawson. These categories include colonial governance logics, epistemic exclusion, global dependency(influence), and resource-based framings of water. At the same time, the method remains open to inductive insights, allowing refinement.

Following the principles outlined by Deutschmann (2014), the analysis is conducted in a structured yet flexible way: policy texts are first examined and read, then coded and categorized according to the themes. After this, the thematic segments are interpreted through the theoretical lens, linking textual patterns to broader structures of power, exclusion and postcolonial continuity.

In this sense, the analysis serves as a practical translation of the theoretical frameworks discussed earlier. It bridges the gap between abstract concepts and concrete textual indications. This method allows me to understand how governance of Ghana’s waterscapes is discursively constructed and how these constructions reflect or challenge historical colonial legacies and social exclusions.

5.1 Positionality & Limitations:

My research is situated within a qualitative and interpretive framework whereby I see the need to address my positionality and the limitations of the study. Moreover, its relevance stems from the use of a decolonized waterscape framework, which explicitly interrogates knowledge production, representation and the legitimation within policy processors.

5.1.1 Positionality:

The thesis is informed by the analysis of policy documents and academic literature but also by empirical impressions gained during a three-month stay in Ghana. Interactions with individuals living in coastal communities and

engagement with local contexts have contributed to shaping my perspective and deepening the understanding of fisheries as lived environments. These experiences provided insights that extend beyond textual analysis and highlight everyday realities of those whose livelihoods depend on marine resources.

At the same time is this research conducted from the position of a student based at a European university, which implies a degree of distance from lived realities of fishing communities in Ghana. This positionality reflects broader asymmetries in global knowledge production, where academic research is often embedded in institutions of the Global North. While this research attempts to critically engage with these structures, it cannot fully escape them. Furthermore, my own Black identity and being of mixed European and west-African descent, informs the research process in embodied and reflexive ways. It shapes access and interpretation, which offers sensitivity to questions of race, marginalization and representation.

5.1.2 Limitations:

I want to acknowledge several limitations. First, the fisheries sector in Ghana is characterized by rapid evolving political, economic as well as more emergent environmental dynamics. Ongoing policy changes, shifting international partnerships and emerging development initiatives mean that the findings of this thesis represent a snapshot within a continuously changing landscape. While the research draws on a wide range of sources, it cannot fully capture all recent developments or the full complexity of the sector.

Second, Ghanas (coastal) regions are characterized by diverse ethnic groups with varying fishing practices and social structures. This thesis does not aim to provide a comprehensive ethnographic account on these differences and therefore cannot fully account for intra-community variations and local power relations.

Third, access to data on precolonial fishing traditions and early emerging policies are limited. Much of this knowledge is transmitted orally and through community-based practices which are rarely systematically documented or widely accessible. As a result, the analysis of precolonial systems remains partial and mediated through available, mostly colonial-era literature.

Lastly, while this thesis seeks to amplify marginalized perspectives and scholars through a critical theoretical lens, it relies primarily on secondary data and policy documents. This creates an inherent tension, as the voices of small-scale fishers and local communities are often filtered through institutional or academic representation.

6. Analysis Framework

To analyze the colonial legacies embedded within Ghana's fisheries policies, this section's aim is to operationalize the decolonized Waterscape as described in chapter 4.4 as the primary analytical lens for this thesis. It is structured around three analytical themes, which function as a lens through which I examined the material corpus, described in Chapter 5.

6.1 Theme 1: Governing and Framing Waterscapes through Policies

This theme analyzes how the state conceptualizes and claims the waterscape, merging Fanons (1986) concept of the monopolization of recognition with the Waterscape theory's focus on spatial control. Within this lens, policies act as tools to reorder the ocean into state-controlled categories such as Exclusive Economic Zones. This Theme is investigating mechanisms that the state uses to justify its authority by adopting Eurocentric benchmarks of "progress" and international regulatory standards. I reveal patterns in resource management that remain rooted in colonial power dynamics and prioritize state and global interests over local realities.

6.2 Theme 2: Formalization vs. local practices and knowledge

This theme analyzes the conflict between state-sanctioned expertise and lived expertise of fishing communities. It merges Spivaks (1994) concept of subaltern and epistemic violence with Waterscape theory's focus on how knowledge

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

determines access to and power over resources. Within this theme I analyze the process where the state uses bureaucratic formalization to monopolize and invalidate local practices. I reveal how silencing mechanisms of artisanal fishers manifest in policy documents, such a top-down-management approach.

6.3 Theme 3: Socio-ecological impacts

This theme analyzes the consequences of policies on the livelihoods of fishing communities, the negotiation of resources (+ depletion) and underscores the coast as fluid socio-political space. Within this theme, sustainability issues are analyzed as symptoms of a power hierarchy that prioritizes global market demands over local survival. I furthermore analyze the role of linguistic and formalization of regulations within Ghana's fishing sector to understand colonial-era-impacts.

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

7.1 Material corpus

The thesis builds on a layered and interdisciplinary material corpus to analyze the colonial legacies which are embedded within Ghana's fisheries policies and governance. The material includes legislative texts, policy frameworks, academic literature and is layered with field-based empirical observations. These sources offer a comprehensive basis to critically explore how historical power relations and postcolonial policies have shaped Ghana's coastal waterscapes. It allows for a deeper understanding of the gap between formal, top-down governance frameworks and lived realities. In this chapter, I will describe each data source in detail without starting into the analysis, which will be the focus of Chapter 6.

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

To provide clarity on the nature of the documents, it is important to differentiate between an Act, a Regulation and a Plan, since all these three sources are part of the material corpus.

Act: The Act is a legal framework which is typically passed by a legislative body such as Parliament. It outlines the general rules and principles to govern but requires a separate body to implement them.

Regulation: Regulation is a binding legislative instrument which is created to provide specific details and enforceable rules for an Act. Therefore, it is more specific than an Act and gives detailed guidance on how to implement the law in practice.

Plan: A Plan is a strategic, non-binding policy document, which outlines the government's objectives and priorities for a specific sector, such as the fishing sector, over a defined period. While it does not hold the force of law, it is an important tool to understand the state's strategic intentions and frameworks.

7.1.1 Overview and description of the material corpus: legal and policy documents of the fishery sector in Ghana

At the center and core of my material corpus are Ghanaian legal and policy documents that regulate and structure the country's fisheries sector. These texts provide a systematic view of how state institutions conceptualize, manage and intervene in aquatic environments.

The earliest and hardest to access which is why it will not be in the corpus itself but noteworthy is the Fisheries Ordinance (Cap 165) from 1964 which was introduced during British colonial rule in the 1930s and represents the earliest formal attempts to regulate fishing in Ghana, what was then the Gold Coast. (Akyeampong 2007; Alabi–Doku et al. 2020)

Following Ghana's independence in 1957, the **Fisheries Regulations LI 1235 (1979)** emerged as a transitional regulatory framework under the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and signed by the Commissioner responsible for

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

Agriculture. It is a legislative instrument enacted by the Ghanaian government to regulate fishing activities across the country and comprises of 15 Regulations. It outlines a licensing system for motorized fishing vessels, specifies minimum mesh sizes for nets and imposes prohibition on the use of explosives or poisonous substances in fishing. Additionally, it introduces rules concerning the ex- and import of live fish, seaworthiness standards for vessels (e.g one compass (Regulation 10)) and mandatory navigation lightning for fishing boats operating at night. The regulations are structured into 15 numbered sections and are supplemented by multiple definitions of licensing forms and technical requirements. (Fisheries Regulations, 1979. n.d.)

The **Fisheries Regulations, 2010 (L.I. 1968)** was enacted in 2010 and made by the Minister responsible for Fisheries under the authority of the Fisheries Act, 2002 (Act 625). The document serves to provide detailed regulations and to operationalize as well as enforce the provision of the Act. It specifies 79 Regulations and provides rulings on a wide range of topics. Key areas which are covered include: the licensing and identification of fishing vessels, regulations on fishing nets and methods as well as the establishment of Fisheries Monitoring Centers. Moreover, it contains an extensive section on aquaculture, which includes different permits to operate vessels as well as the import/export of fish.

Another key policy source is the **Fisheries Act 625 (2002)** and its later amendments. It is a comprehensive legal framework established by the Republic of Ghana to govern the management, conservation and development of the fisheries resources in the country. The Act establishes the Fisheries Commission and outlines its mandate, functions and governance structure. It includes provisions related to the registration and licensing of fishing vessels as well as enforcement mechanisms, fisheries monitoring & surveillance. Lastly, it includes the establishment of Marine Protected Areas. The Act is structured into parts and sections and details different aspects such as offences, penalties, the establishment of specific committees (e.g Fisheries Settlement Committee) and ministerial powers for the enacting of regulations. (Fisheries Act, 2002 (Act No. 625 of 2002). n.d.)

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

The **Fisheries Management Plan of Ghana 2022-2026** is a strategic document, that outlines the national policy for the management of the marine fisheries sector. As it is a "Plan", it does not hold the direct legislative power such as an Act or Regulation. It serves as a roadmap guiding the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MoFAD) and the Fisheries Commission to ensure the long-term conservation of fish stocks. It is a revision of the 2015-2019 plan, which emphasizes the importance of a broader, ecosystem-based approach to the management of the fishing sector. It is backed and guided by scientific data and structured into 6 chapters. Those Chapters cover the background, key policy drivers and objectives, a description of the fisheries sector, institutional frameworks and a result framework. It also reflects international commitments such as the SDGs, Agenda 2063 and the Paris Climate Agreement, therefore situating Ghanas fishing governance within this transnational policy landscape.

The National **Fisheries Co-Management Policy** was introduced in 2019 by MoFAD and the Fisheries Commission, with technical and financial support from USAID's Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP). This policy marks a discursive and institutional shift toward decentralized resource governance. It outlines procedures for the establishment of Co-Management Committees at both small-scale and large-scale levels and gives details on their composition, appointment processes and operational responsibilities. The policy further describes the governance structure and is linking national, regional and community-level actors. The Policy is specifying roles for supporting institutions such as local government units and civil society organizations. It is structured into thematic sections covering legal justification, policy objectives, stakeholder roles and implementation strategies. Furthermore, it includes a glossary and conceptual clarifications to support interpretation and application.

The Policy is not a law but a normative policy document and while it doesn't hold legislative power, it signals the state's intention in recognizing as well as institutionalizing traditional knowledge and local participation in decision-making. Therefore, it plays a role in this thesis.

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

The **Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (2022-2025)** (MTEF) was published by Ghana's National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) as a strategic document and guides the development priorities over a four-year period. Unlike other sector-specific policy instruments, this framework outlines national development priorities across multiple sectors including fisheries. It is structured into thematic chapters on economic, social, governance and environmental dimensions and describes the government's strategic development goals as well as indicators. The relevance of the Framework for this Thesis lies in the policy objectives on sustainable fisheries resource management. It further reflects international commitments such as the SDGs, Agenda 2063 and the Paris Climate Agreement, thus situating Ghana's fishing governance within a transnational policy landscape. This document contributes to understanding how national planning and agendas embed and reproduce particular development discourses that have roots in colonial administrative logics, while furthermore, responding to global governance norms.

Most of the policies describe the actions and impacts that fishing has on the environment as well as considering the economy. Integrating a Waterscape informed lens can open the analysis to further investigate the social dimension.

The Fisheries Management Plan of Ghana 2022-2026 and the Fisheries Co-Management were not part of the same formal coding process. Instead, they served as contextual sources. They provided important insights into the contemporary landscape and helped me to frame the analysis as well as proving a basis to understand discursive shifts over time. The Medium-Term Expenditure Framework served as an overview of national development priorities, which helped to further state the fisheries policies within a broader governmental and international context.

7.2 Data analysis part I: overview of the coding system and the key themes

To address the research question: “How governance practices carry forward colonial logics and transform social spaces”, this analysis employs a deductive thematic framework derived from postcolonial and waterscape theories, concluding in the decolonized waterscape framework (Chapter 4.) The three key themes: 1. Governing and Framing Waterscapes; 2. Formalization vs. Local Knowledge; 3. Socio-Ecological Impacts; were operationalized through codes applied to legal and policy documents. This chapter presents the findings and explores, how these themes manifest in Ghana's fisheries governance. Each section will contextualize the results within the broader theoretical and historical framework. The coding process was performed using MAXQDA and involved the systematic application of the codes to the documents with the aim of identifying overarching themes. I used legal and policy documents in distinct ways to support my research process. The Fisheries Regulation 1979 (LI1235), the Fisheries Act 625 (2002) and the Fisheries Regulation 2010 (LI 1968) served as my primary data sources for the qualitative thematic theory-driven text analysis. These were further broken down into codes, to allow for a more detailed analysis of the data. The following table provides a detailed overview of the Themes and more specifically the codes explored in this thesis. Furthermore, it provides a representative quote from the material as well as a short interpretation of its application. However, the interpretations are further elaborated in the Results chapter.

Theme 1: Governing and Framing Waterscapes through Policies

This theme focus is on how the state establishes its authority and control over Ghana's aquatic territories and resources. It examines legal and institutional mechanisms that are used to define, frame and manage it.

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

Code	Quote	Interpretation
Control over and Access to Territorial Waters	FISHERIES REGULATIONS, 2010 (L.I. 1968): (1) A Ghanaian registered vessel shall report immediately to the appropriate authority the sighting of a vessel fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Ghana that appears to be unlicensed or unregistered in Ghana. (p. 17)	This quote highlights, that the exclusive economic Zones are the defining frame of the waters where Ghana holds sovereign power over. The Waterscapes are therefore framed here as a sovereign territory which is being policed. Furthermore, the "Ghanian registered vessels" become enforcers of this power as well – policing each other.
Definition of Resources and fishing categories	FISHERIES REGULATIONS, 2010 (L.I. 1968): (2) The mesh size is to be measured when the net is wet and by an approved flat gauge or with callipers. (p. 9)	This quote shows how the mesh size itself is regulated and the way it needs to be measured, bringing it into a strict bureaucratic logic. Furthermore, standardized tools like "approved flat gauge or with callipers" emphasizes on the state's constant involvement in every step of action and its top-

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

		down management approach.
Mandates and Power on an institutional Level	Fisheries Act 625, 2002: (1) For the purposes of enforcing this Act, an authorised officer shall have the same powers of arrest as a police officer (p. 37)	The state's power to enforce its will becomes evident in this quote. The law gives a specific institution a direct and enforceable mandate by granting authorized officers the same power as a police officer. This demonstrates how the state's power is physically manifested.
Colonial Legacies and global norms	FISHERIES REGULATIONS, 2010 (L.I. 1968): (2) Where there is a change in policy arising out of an International Agreement or Convention, to which Ghana is a signatory, the fishery management plan prepared under sections 42, 43, 44 and 45 of the Act may be modified to conform to the International Agreement or Convention.	Through this quote it becomes evident how the governance framework is designed to align with international standards. Further does it explicitly mandates "to conform", which highlights a post-colonial dynamic of continued external influence and prioritization over more locally suited regulations.

Theme 2: Formalization vs. Local Knowledge and Practice

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

This Themes focus is on the tension between state-imposed formal regulations and traditional knowledge and practices of local fishing communities. It examines how the formalization of knowledge and practices are described through the data.

Code	Quote	Interpretation
State-certified competence	Fisheries Act 625: (b) a certificate of seaworthiness is issued for the vessel by the competent authority or by the International Association of Classification Societies.	This quote shows how competence is defined and validated through formal and external certification processes. It mentions an "International Association", which illustrates how these standards are globalized. It shows the privileging of a specific state-sanctioned form of expertise over informal, local-based skills.
Top-down management	Fisheries Act 625, 2002: (3) A fishery plan or review of the plan shall be submitted to the Minister who shall submit it to the Cabinet for approval, and the plan shall come into force at a time specified in the approval	This quote addresses a clear top-down management approach. It shows how the entire planning and implementing process is centralized at the highest level of government and further needs the approval of

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

		<p>the Cabinet and Minister. This structure fails to address and includes local stakeholders from formal decision-making processes and positions the state at the top.</p>
Standardized gear and methods	<p>FISHERIES REGULATIONS, 1979 (LI 1235): Regulation 5— Importation and Selling of Certain Type of Fishing Net Prohibited.</p>	<p>This quote describes the states' control over fishing equipment. Moreover, this regulation describes it through addressing the prohibited methods. By banning certain gear, the policy imposes formal methods as well as standardized, government sanctioned tools.</p>
Exclusion of local knowledge	<p>Fisheries Act 625: consult with foreign governments and in particular with governments of states sharing the same or interrelated fish stocks,</p>	<p>This quote shows how the policy explicitly mandates consultation to foreign governments regarding shared fish stocks. This highlights how space is regarded as a means of economic gain rather than living space and prevailing local knowledge.</p>

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

Theme 3: Socio-ecological impacts (waterscapes and livelihoods)

This Themes focus is on how Socio-ecological impacts are mentioned in the data. It examines the institutional mechanisms to preserve the interplay of local livelihood and ecological wellbeing.

Code	Quote	Interpretation
Livelihood vulnerability	Fisheries Act 625, 2002: 4) A foreign fishing vessel in a place in the fishery waters shall be operated in a way that the activities of local and artisanal fishermen and fishing vessels are not disrupted or in any other way adversely affected. (p.23)	This quote reveals a key aspect of vulnerability, which is the need for the state to legally protect the local fishing sector from being “adversely affected” by foreign vessels. It showcases that foreign vessels hold power and therefore addresses a power imbalance wherefore locally needs to be protected. The protection is limited to the “activities” instead of the coast as a living habitat.
Conflict Resolution Mechanisms	Fisheries Act 625, 2002: An authorised officer may, in arresting a person or seizing a fishing vessel which the officer has reasonable grounds to believe has acted in contravention of this Act, use the force that is	Conflict resolution as it comes up through this quote is framed as a punitive and even violent measure backed by the state's authority and threat of physical power “the force”. It positions

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

	reasonably necessary in the circumstances to effect the arrest. (p. 39)	the state as the ultimate authority and arbiter of disputes. Moreover, this becomes evident in laying the power in the hands of the officer who "has reasonable grounds" which becomes enough as a claim to use force.
Resource depletion	FISHERIES REGULATIONS, 1979 (LI 1235: No person shall within Ghana take or destroy or attempt to take or destroy any fish by the use of dynamite, gelignite or other explosive substance, or by the use of any noxious or poisonous matter. (p. 1)	This quote directly addresses a method that causes immediate resource depletion. This is done through strict legal prohibition backed by state power. Yet again, this further has implications on how the Waterscape is regarded as a resource that needs protection.
Colonial era impacts	FISHERIES REGULATIONS, 2010 (L.I. 1968): "nifa-nifa" is a local name used for the drift gill net whose introduction coincided with the changeover of driving on the left side of the road to the right side of the road in Ghana in 1974;	This quote addresses the colonial-era impact on local knowledge through the terminology of local terms used to describe a fishing net. This demonstrates how local cultural and linguistic knowledge is shaped and recontextualized by

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

		colonial legacies. However, the “changeover” is not directly connected with British colonial rule and the timeframe “1947” is another indication which brings the context that is not directly addressed.
--	--	---

7.3 Results of the Policy Analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative thematic analysis of the legal and policy documents of Ghana's fishing sector described in the Material Corpus (Chapter 5.1). The data analysis explored and differentiated several key themes that highlight the enduring influence of colonial power structures on Ghana's fisheries governance today. In the following sections, these themes are in detail by systematically examining how they manifest in. In the following section, I analyzed each theme through a two-step process. Step one is the contextualization supported by direct quotes and examples from the material corpus Step two is the description where I give a detailed explanation of the theme and its theoretical ground as well as its relevance to the research question.

7.3.1 Governing and Framing Ghana's Waterscapes

The analysis of the selected policy documents reveals that the state exercises control over water and ocean environments through a formalized system of resource definition, territorial demarcation and institutional mandates. As established in the documents, the government framework highlights how water bodies are not merely physical spaces but are constructed as governable territories through legal and regulatory mechanisms. Therefore, theme 1

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

unpacks how legal and policy documents formally define, categorize and assert control over Ghana's water and ocean environments and their resources. Through this analysis, I gained understanding of the legal and discursive construction of waterscapes and how historical power relations – colonial legacies – manifest in these definitions.

Under this result, I concluded 4 codes which I applied to the policy documents.

Code 1.1: Control: Territorial Waters and Access

As previously noted, global waters are clearly subdivided into territorial waters through the implementation of the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), which are governed by the specific countries under whose jurisdiction they fall. This circumstance is therefore fundamental to all policies concerning Ghana's ocean waters and environment, which appeared after 1982. Ghana signed the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982, which established the EEZ there. Consequently, there is no mention of this specific territoriality in the Fisheries Regulation, 1979 (LI 1235), as it predates this international agreement. Since the EEZ pose a specific control mechanism, I analyzed the Data to understand, how EEZ are a measure in Ghana's policies.

The EEZ is mentioned only once in the Fisheries Regulation, 2010 (LI 1986), under Regulation 34 "Vessel sighting report":

“(1) A Ghanaian registered vessel shall report immediately to the appropriated authority the sighting of a vessel fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Ghana that appears to be unlicensed or unregistered in Ghana.”

In this regulation, the responsibility for enforcing the EEZ is transferred to the fishers themselves. However, the document does not specify and clearly define who has access to control of the waters, nor does it specify the “appropriated authority” to whom such reports should be directed. The regulation also doesn't describe what an EEZ or territorial waters are. Furthermore, access to the waters is not explicitly defined in either regulation; Regulation 51: “Access to Data” (Fisheries Regulation, 2010 (LI 1986) is mentioned.

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

In contrast, the Co-Management Policy addresses the EEZ directly, outlining both the concept of territorial waters and access. This policy demonstrates a more explicit use of the term EEZ to define management areas: "an EEZ wide management area" (Co-Management Plan p.13).

The Fisheries Regulations, 2010 (L.I. 1968) furthermore describes limitations and use of territorial waters as "fishery waters". Moreover, the Fisheries Act 625 also describes its control over the territorial waters through fishery waters. The Act describes the purpose of its control as being "to meet the liabilities of the Commission in respect of the monitoring, control and surveillance of the fishery waters" (Fisheries Act625 p.IV-714). A clarification on what fishery waters are is enclosed in the document. It is linked to the exclusive economic zones "'fishery waters" includes the waters over which the Republic has fisheries jurisdiction or sovereign rights, including reverie systems, internal waters, territorial sea and exclusive economic zone and any other waters over which fisheries jurisdiction may be claimed from time to time;" (FisheriesAct625, p. 57)

The mandatory licensing system is a primary mechanism for the state to control access to its waters and the prohibition on explosives and certain nets, which reinforces states authority to dictate the terms of use and therefore control within the space. The Fisheries Regulation, 1979 implement this mandatory licensing system for motor fishing vessels. Regulation 1(1) states: "A licence for a motor fishing vessel shall be in the form set out in the First Schedule to these Regulations". This regulation defines a legal barrier to entry for fishing operations, requiring official state approval.

Code 1.2: Definition of Resources and Categories

This code examines how resources and fishing categories are defined in the different policy documents. The understanding of how they are described and established is very important, since they form the foundation for the legal implementation and administration of fisheries. The analysis shows that the documents take varying approaches to defining key terms, which affects the consistency of governance.

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

In the Fisheries Act 625, under the section "140. Interpretation", a total of 75 terms are briefly described. "Regulation 79 — Interpretation" in the Fisheries Regulation 2010 (1968) mentions 47 terms. In contrast, the Fisheries Management Plan of Ghana 2022-2026 only lists seven terms under the "Definition" section. The other policy documents lack a section of interpretation/definitions. Terms, described in the previously mentioned Management plan, such as "Maximum Economic Yield (MEY)" or "Stock" are more focused on economic and biological units of measurements rather than on fundamental definitions like "fish" or "fishery waters", which are described in the Fisheries Act 625. This suggests a shift from a focus of a broad, administrative definition to specific, management-oriented terminology.

The shift in how terms are defined is furthermore highlighted by the different descriptions of the same concepts over multiple documents. The descriptions in the policies appear to be intended for government officials and furthermore to be accessible to fishers, which is evident in the way they are articulated. For example, the Fisheries Management Plan of Ghana 2022-2026 provides a detailed, scientific definition of sustainable yield:

"Sustainable Yield: The average catch that can be removed from a stock over an indefinite period without causing a further reduction in the biomass of the stock or adversely affecting recruitment and reproduction of the stock. This could be either a constant yield from year to year, or a yield that fluctuates in response to the changes in abundance" (p.6)

In contrast, the Fisheries Act 625 provides a much simpler and more direct definition:

"**sustainable yield**" means the quantity of fish that can be taken from the resource from year to year without danger of collapse or stock depletion; " (p. 60)

An interpretation of sustainable yield is not given in the Fisheries Regulations 2010 (1968).

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

The language in the Act is simpler and suggests an attempt to make the legal framework more understandable to a broader audience, which could include the local fishing communities it governs. However, the Management Plan suggests a clearer definition.

The resources are categorized in different ways across the documents, which leads to differentiated regulatory treatment. For example, the Fisheries Regulations, 1979 (LI 1235) make specific distinction between different types of fish and vessels. Categories such as “tuna vessel” or “motor fishing vessel” are used to establish different fees and permit. The Fisheries Management Plan 2022-2026 expands on this categorization by dedicating a full section to the breakdown of the fishing sector. It distinguishes between the Artisanal, Semi-Industrial, Industrial Bottom Trawl and Tuna sectors. Therefore, it highlights that the regulatory approach is tailored to the specific characteristics of each fleet. This clarifies how the resource is conceptually divided and integrated into a specific set of regulations. A categorizing mechanism has therefore implications for the governance and administration of fisheries, as it allows for different control mechanisms and restrictions depending on the category.

Code 1.3: Mandates and Power on an institutional level

The policies formally grant authority in specific government bodies and officials, thereby centralizing power. The establishment of the Fisheries Commission in the Fisheries Act 625 is a central element of Ghana's modern fisheries governance. Part One of the Act is entirely dedicated to the “Establishment of the Commission”, highlighting its foundational role. The Act does specify the purpose of the Commission as being the primary body for managing Ghana's fishery resources and furthermore consolidating decision-making power on a institutional level.

Moreover, the Act outlines the specific functions and powers of the Commission, which include granting and revoking licenses, regulating fishing activities and ensuring the enforcement of the fisheries law. Section 2 of the Act states: “(1) The object of the Commission is to regulate and manage the utilisation of the

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

fishery resources of the Republic and co-ordinate the policies in relation to them.” (p. 6). This section describes how the mandate gives the Commission broader authority to implement policies which govern all aspects of the Sector.

Furthermore, the Act describes the internal structure of the Commission, including the appointment of its governing body, the Council and the roles of the Director and other key officers. A formal chain of command for the implementation of policies becomes evident through this institutional hierarchy. For instance, the Director of Fisheries is given the specific responsibility of supervising administrating the Division of the Commission. They formalize the relationship between the governing body and its executive branch. The people in these positions are also responsible for negotiating contacts with international players. Moreover, positioning the Commission as the primary representative of Ghana's fisheries interest on the global stage.

A significant aspect is furthermore the institutional centralization of power. The Acts structure and language serves to create a clear administrative structure for resource management. While earlier policies like the Fisheries Regulation 1979 delegated powers to specific officers like the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, the Fisheries Act 625 (2002) establishes and consolidates power within the Fisheries Commission. That gives it explicit legal authority and formalizes its role as the central governing body. Within the administrative structure of the Commission, it defines the roles of individual officers and ministers itself, thereby strengthening state control over the fisheries sector.

However, this centralized authority is not entirely unified. The Fisheries Act 625 (2002) allows for the delegation of power, which decentralizes certain functions. According to the Act, the Council has the authority to “delegate in writing to a regional agriculture authority of the Ministry, the Commission's role in the process of licensing local industrial and semi-industrial fishing vessels or any other functions under this Act in respect of local industrial and semi-industrial fishing vessels.” (p. 18). This shows that the state's power is not just consolidated in a single point but also distributed through a formal system of delegation to regional authorities, which is crucial for the implementation on the ground and policies across different parts of the country.

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

A wider enforcement network extends the power of the Commission itself. The police, for instance, play a role in enforcing fisheries regulations on the ground and are acting as the physical enforcement of the state's authority to conduct patrol, detain vessels and prosecute violations. Similarly, the Bank of Ghana is mentioned in the Fisheries Regulation 2010 (L.I. 1968) as reference: "(e) Bank of Ghana approval for financial aspects of the Purchase Agreement where applicable;" (p. 4) and is involved in the financial aspects of this governance. The Bank of Ghana has different described responsibilities such as the collection and management of revenue generated from the fisheries sector, which includes licensing fees, fines and other financial penalties. This highlights how the states' control is more than just regulatory but economic and disciplinary, with power distributed across different institutions.

The fisheries Management Plan further details this institutional framework, dedicating a whole section – Chapter 5 - to the "Institutional Framework, Implementation & Monitoring". This chapter names and describes the roles of important stakeholders, including non-governmental institutions (NGOs) and international partners such as USAID, the EU and the World Bank. This highlights, that the institutional framework of Ghana's fisheries governance extends beyond its national borders, with key decisions and policies, that are being shaped through collaboration and negotiation with international actors.

Code 1.4: Colonial Legacies + global norms

The policies which govern Ghana's Fishing Sector are reflecting a complex intersection of the continuity of colonial structures and the integration of contemporary global norms. This Code highlights how power is manifested in legal mandates and through linguistic and financial regulatory practices that carry historical weight and respond to international pressures. As a key aspect of post-colonial governance, the continuation of administrative practices rooted in colonial past are being addressed. The Fisheries Regulation 2010 (L.I. 1968) explicitly formalizes a linguistic hierarchy by mandating English as the medium of communication. Regulation 26, requires official communication and

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

documentation, including applications and certification, to be conducted in English: "English Language as a medium of communication. The Master or the second officer of an industrial fishing vessel shall be persons who can read, write and speak English language." (p. 15). This creates a significant barrier for local fishers who may not be fluent in English. It effectively marginalizes traditional knowledge and reinforces a top-down form of governance. The need for a Certificate of Competency, as noted in the Fisheries Regulation, 1979 (L.I.1235) and the Fisheries Act 2002, further institutionalizes this notion, as it is a formal document written and administered in English. Moreover, the linguistic dominance is complemented by a financial one. The policies reveal a preference for the US Dollar over the local Ghanaian Cedi for fines and certain payments. As an example: the Fisheries Regulations, 1979 (L.I.1235) outlines fines and violations in US Dollars. This practice positions the Ghanaian state as a regulator, operating in global currency and aligning its financial structures with international markets and actors rather than exclusively with local economies. This has a direct impact on investments and how local currency develops.

The policies further address the governance of foreign vessels, which can be noted as a key area where national sovereignty intersects with international interests. The Fisheries Regulations 1979 (L.I.1235) as well as the Fisheries Regulation 2010 (L.I.1968) setting specific fees for Ghanaian-owned tuna vessels calling at Ghanaian ports in US Dollars, underscoring the early recognition of foreign and industrial fleets. The Fisheries Act 625 further details fines for offenses by local industrial or semi-industrial vessels in US Dollars, with fines for other cases specified in "penalty units". However, the fines for foreign vessels are set higher. The differentiation in fines highlights a dual system of justice where foreign vessels are treated differently than local ones, a practice that can be seen as a legacy of colonial concessions to international powers.

While these colonial structures endured, the policy landscape has also shifted to incorporate contemporary global norms. The Fisheries Management Plan 2022-2026 is a prime example. It explicitly references international partners, including the USAID and the EU as key collaborators in developing and implementing fisheries policy. This demonstrates a move from internal, state-

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

centric approaches to externally influenced ones. The plan also aligns its objectives with global sustainability goals, such as the SDGs, particularly SDG 14 (Life Below Water). This integration shows how Ghana's fisheries policies are increasingly and further shaped by a pressure to conform to global environmental and governance standards.

Historically shaped power relations and Institutional Control: The legal construction of Ghanas Waterscapes

Taking the four codes together, they argue that Ghana's fisheries governance is constructed through a highly formalized and state-centered framework which defines waters, resources and authority in legal and administrative terms. Territorialization (Code 1.1) and the categorization of resources (Code 1.2) transform marine environment into governable units, while institutional mandates (Code 1.3) centralize decision-making power within state structures. It further extends it through interconnected enforcement and financial systems. However, these mechanisms are not neutral but embedded in historically shaped power relations. As shown in Code 1.4, colonial legacies persist through linguistic hierarchies, monetary practices and international partnerships which further shape governance frameworks. The findings reveal, that Ghana's waterscapes are actively produced through legal and discursive practices that reproduce asymmetrical power relations rooted in both colonial continuities and contemporary global governance regimes.

7.3.2 Formalization vs. local practices and knowledge

The analysis of the selected policy documents shows how the states control over the fishing sector has created distance to local and community practices. This disconnect stems from a push to formalize and standardize the industry with tools such as licenses and competence certificates, which are used to define and regulate the access of a fishing ground. A top-down governance approach becomes evident and generates a clear tension between state-sanctioned

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

knowledge and the traditional practices and communal knowledge that have long guided local fishing communities. Furthermore, the growing international participation plays a crucial role in formalized and standardized practices.

Moreover, it is important to note that while some described practices may have roots in local knowledge, they are often frozen in time once formalized. A status quo is set and these methods are often not completely reevaluated or allowed to evolve alongside local communal practices, which continue to adapt and change in response to environmental shifts and lived experience.

Code 2.1 State-certified competence

This code analyzes how the competence to conduct fishing and/or lead fishing vessels is controlled and implemented by state policies. Moreover, there are many penalties described if the regulations are not followed or if certificates are not at hand. The policies establish a system where the right to engage in fishing practices is tied to state-certified competence rather than traditional or inherited knowledge. This is a clear mechanism of control, since it defines who is authorized to fishing activities. The formalization of skills through licenses and certificates such as the "Fishing Coxswain's Certificate of Competency." stated in Regulation 12 in the Fisheries Regulations, 1979 (LI 1235), creates regulatory barriers. This process displaces traditional modes of knowledge transfer, which are often based on oral traditions as well as apprenticeship within communities. By requiring formal, state-sanctioned certifications – which as stated in Code 1.4 also include linguistic hierarchies – the policies effectively invalid local knowledge systems and favor specific, institutionalized forms of expertise.

The regulations describe a clear system in which the state asserts its authority over everyone who wants to engage in fishing and under which conditions. However, this is not simply about requiring a permit to fish but furthermore about controlling the very means of production. The Fisheries Act 625 (2001) explicitly centralizes the control, stating under section 141. 1 "(1) No person shall undertake in Ghana the building of any motor fishing vessel unless he has been granted a licence to do so by the Secretary for Industries in consultation with the Secretaries for Transport and Communications and Agriculture." (p. 61). This

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

mandate ensures that the entire process, meaning from the construction to operation, is overseen and sanctioned by a governmental apparatus.

The policies formalize multiple layers of certificates by mandating specific credentials that people and vessels must have. The Fisheries Act 625 showcases that through a detailed hierarchy of required certificates for the manning of motor fishing vessels, among those are exemplified: "First Class Fishing Certificate of Competency (Unlimited)", "Second Class Engineer's Certificate of Competency (Fishing)" (p.31). This system creates a clear chain of command and a set of standards that can only be met through formal training and examination. There is no inclination in the data, that suggests that the competences can be gained through lived experience or apprenticeship, but only as something to be certified and officially validated. Furthermore, the Fisheries Act 625 also made another layer visible where they require "an Able-bodied Seaman's Certificate of Competency issued by the competent authority" (p. 31), a concept that carries historical weight and connects to broader notions of physical capability and discriminatory standards in a way that exclude individuals. The concept of certifications extends beyond the individual to the equipment itself. Vessels themselves need a certificate of seaworthiness, which is described through the required length and other parameters, which are also a requirement for foreign vessels. The Fisheries Act 625 mandates that all vessels, including foreign ones, must hold this certification and therefore reinforces the idea, that the state's power goes beyond national borders and aligns with international standards.

The Fisheries Act 625 (2002) and the Fisheries Regulation 1979 (LI 1235) both refer to a "competent authority" as the body responsible for granting these certifications as well as specific "Licensing Officer". The Fisheries Regulation 1979 (LI 1235) even specifies the fee for the previously stated Fishing Coxswain's Certificate of Competency, which further cements the state's role as the certifier of competence and the collector of those fees. The centralization reinforces the top-down management style - which will be addressed further in Code 2.2 – and ensures that the state remains the gatekeeper to the profession. It becomes evident, that non-compliance is met with clear penalties, indicating that the

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

states formal regulations are backed by punitive measures to enforce the control. However, the exact procedure for obtaining these certificates remains unspecific in the documents, which suggests a discretionary power held.

The Fisheries Regulation 2010 (LI 1968) extends the control to the biological aspects of the industry by heavily addressing fish seed certification and fish breeding permits. The move from controlling the how and by whom of fishing to controlling the what underscores a clear and pervasive effort to formalize every aspect of the sector. The frequent mention of permits and licenses in the documents highlight this. Furthermore, it is interesting how the topic of certifications and official approvals show up throughout the Fisheries Management Plan since they are not described or deeper mentioned here. They come up in the Chapter 6 of the Management Plan in form of a table column "Means of Verification" (p.34f).

Code 2.2 Top-down management

The process of standardization through certification and licensing as described in Code 2.1, is further a core tool of a hierarchical top-down management structure within Ghana's fishing policies and sector. The state imposes a uniform set of rules and standards that apply to all fishers and vessels, rather than adapting to local practices. This pre-defined Framework, which prioritizes institutional validation, is implemented without a clear discussion of ground-level needs. This highlights a governance style focused on control and regulation from above rather than a bottom-up management.

A shift in the language and accessibility of policy documents is evident. While the policies include language of cooperation, there is also a clear emphasis on control and enforcement mechanisms directed at fishers. The Fisheries Act 625 states under Section 64: " (2) An access arrangement shall provide for the allowable allocation of fish which shall not exceed a level consistent with the conservation and management of fishery resources, provide for the protection

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

of local fishermen [...]” (p.23). It furthermore notes an objective to “(g) promote co-operation among local fishermen and advance development of artisanal fishing;” (p.6). However, the language of “promote” is not binding and these statements contrast with the focus on enforcement and penalties. There are no further notions of the implications of not promoting the co-operation.

A potential break and clearer addressing on how to tackle this clear top-down approach is the mentioning of the Co-Management Policy which according to the Fisheries Management Plan 2022-2026 was “initiated in 2018 and completed in 2020” (p. 14). While older policies include vague language of cooperation, the co-management policy is clear about its intention to include a wider range of stakeholders.

The focus on state control is also evident in the establishment of a dedicated enforcement unit. The Fisheries Act 625 gives the Minister the power to appoint the head of this unit: “(6) The Minister shall, in consultation with the Minister responsible for Defence, appoint the head of the enforcement unit.” (p. 37). A entire Chapter in The Fisheries Act 625 (2002) named “Monitoring, Control, Surveillance and Enforcement” supports this point. Furthermore, do the Fisheries Regulation 2010 (LI 1968) and the Fisheries Management Plan 2022-2026 also reinforce that, the latter one mentions a previous plans objective (2016-2019) “building the institutional capacity of relevant law enforcement agencies to enforce the fisheries laws, “ (p. 11). The emphasize on building enforcement capacity, rather than on empowering communities locally, indicates where the focus of the management structure lies. Even though the mentioning of incorporating local actors more, there is no naming of an enforcement unit of such. Showcasing yet again a top-down approach of management.

Code 2.3 Standardized gear/methods

This code analyzes how the policy documents showcase the standardization of fishing gear and methods. The standardization is closely linked to Code 2.1, as state-certified competency plays a crucial role in regulating the use of equipment. The policies define acceptable practices and tools, which contrast

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

with traditional methods and create barriers to access fishing. The standardization of certain gear is evident in the clear regulations regarding vessel length, which is also a topic mentioned in Code 2.1. Additionally, nets are heavily regulated, and permits are required to use seine nets in rivers – specification which doesn't include open ocean waters – as stated in the Fisheries Regulations 1979 (LI 1235). The regulation notes:

“Regulation 3—No seine net to be used without permit.

No person shall use a seine net in any river unless a permit in the form set out in the Third Schedule to these Regulations for the use of such net has been granted by the Director of Fisheries or any persons authorised by him to act on his behalf;” (p.1)

These standards do not mention local practices as a framework, which suggests a hindrance in access to traditional fishing practices.

The restriction on permits is further tied to specific requirements for gear. For example, a permit for a seine is not granted if the mesh size measures less than 50 millimeters when it is stretched diagonally (p.1). This requirement highlights a clear mechanism of control, as the way gear is measured also plays a role in its compliance. This can also be observed in the other documents and showcases that the policies control highlight what gear is acceptable and furthermore how its compliance is physically verified. This focus on what is prohibited, instead of highlighting specific local methods, demonstrates the state's role in dictating acceptable practices through exclusion. This control extends to the equipment carried on fishing vessels. The Fisheries Regulation 2979 (LI 1235) specifies required equipment for motorized fishing vessels, including lights, which are also regulated by the length of the vessel. The Fisheries Regulations 2010 (L.I. 1968) goes even further and conclude the required shape of the lights: “(a) two all-round lights in a vertical line, the upper being green and the lower white, or a shape consisting of two cones with their apices together in a vertical line one above the other; a vessel of less than 20 metres in length may instead of this shape exhibit a basket;” (p. 10).

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

The Fisheries Act 625 clearly addresses that the possession of fishing gear deemed prohibited is subject of sanctions and fines (p.53). Under “Section 8 Prohibited fishing methods”, the Act lists several fishing methods that are not allowed, when fishing in Ghana waters. Methods which are permitted are not specified under a separate section, which reinforces the policy's focus on regulating and penalizing what is not allowed. There is no section that documents and includes as well as specifies existing practices. The Act furthermore explicitly describes the role of the minister in regulating gear: “The Minister, acting in accordance with the advice of the Council, shall by regulations prescribe the types and sizes of gear or devices that may be used for fishing including prohibited nets and the relevant fishing activities.” (p. 33). A reinforcement of the centralized, top-down approach to management becomes evident through this part. Foreign vessels are also subjected to these regulations and are not permitted to use fishing gear that is prohibited within Ghana's water.

However, the control is not static, as the policies also mention a continuous process of review and re-evaluation. The Fisheries Act 625 states to give the Minister the authority to “prescribe the types and sizes of gear or devices that may be used for fishing including prohibited nets and the relevant fishing activities.” (p. 33) Analyzing the term “prescribe”, it indicates a standing power to create or revise regulations. Therefore, the legislative power allows the government to continuously re-evaluate and update the regulations without having to pass a new Act each time. The Fisheries Management Plan of Ghana provides a clear example and is evidence for this process. A periodic update of the Management Plan, as the 2022-2026 plan replaced the previous 2015-2019 version, highlights a structured process of review/revision. However, the mechanism for incorporating local input into this process is not explicitly detailed in the policy documents.

Code 2.4 Exclusion of local knowledge

The formalization of the sector and the top-down management approach relate to the limited presence of specifically claimed local knowledge in the documents.

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

The prime focus in the policies is on environmental and economic concerns, naming stock assessment as an example, while the social dimension which includes community livelihoods is mostly absent. The policies language focuses on nature as a living space for fish and a regulated space for economic activity connected to it. The impact of these regulations on the local community is furthermore not addressed as a main regulatory point. Its absence is evident in how certain terms are classified and in the approach on how practices are defined. While local terminology like “nifa-nifa” is described in the Fisheries Regulation, 2010 (L.I. 1968) as “a local name used for the drift gill net whose introduction coincided with the changeover of driving on the left side of the road to the right side of the road in Ghana in 1974” (p. 31), this mention serves as a linking to the historical change of driving sides in Ghana. Its mentioning serves to formalize and archive the term rather than to acknowledge its cultural significance. The connection between the change of driving sides and a drift gill net is not further specified in the regulation, however it could suggest a connection to the break with British colonial rule. Especially the mentioning of the changeover from the driving side from left, which is the case for the United Kingdom supports this. Therefore, this can also be regarded as a significant archiving of cultural preservation and emancipation of colonial ruling. The policies take a similar approach to defining the materials used. The “manila rope” can be mentioned here which is linked to the local abaca plant (p.30). In both cases, the local name is reframed within a standardized and regulatory framework.

The word “traditional” itself is notably rare. It appears only once in the Fisheries Act 625 to describe artisanal fishing as the “traditional canoe fishing carried on by a citizen” (p.56). The single reference of the word is interesting as it acknowledges traditional practice. However, this practice is then subject to the same heavy regulations and licensing requirements as other forms of fishing. The phrasing “carried on by a citizen” suggests an inherit right to fish, which, when analyzed against extensive regulations found throughout the documents, proves not to be the case. This highlights a paradox of how recognized traditional methods are not exempt from state control. Its absence from the more recent Fisheries Regulation 2010 (LI 1968) and the Fisheries Regulation 1979

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

(LI 1235) further suggests a move away from traditional knowledge bases in the regulation.

Furthermore, the lack of clarity in certain policy statements also contributes to the disregard for local practices. The Fisheries Act 625 mentions the “promotion of joint venture arrangements, technology transfer agreements and transfer of technology and experience” (p.19). However, the word “promotion” is not defined, which leaves it open to interpretation without a clear framework for how and to what extent it can and should be implemented. The lack of specificity, particular when compared to the highly detailed penalties and regulations, suggests that while the policies may register and acknowledge certain goals, the primary focus remains on control and enforcement. The documents focus on prohibitions, such as the ban on explosives or specific types of nets, negating the integration of different local methods.

Standardization and Exclusion: The Marginalization of Local Knowledge in Ghana's Fisheries Governance

The four codes illustrate a structural tension between formalized governance systems and locally embedded fishing practices. State-certified competence (Code 2.1) and the top-down management approaches (Code 2.2) is characterized by an emphasis on enforcement, penalties and the centralization of authority which leave little room for bottom-up adaptation or the integration of community specific needs. Adding the standardization of gear and methods (Code 2.3) further alienates local fishers by prioritizing exclusionary regulations over the documentation or validation of existing sustainable practices. Moreover, limiting access for those operating outside institutionalized systems. Code 2.4 further explores a paradoxical relationship with ‘tradition’. While terms like “traditional canoe fishing” are acknowledged, they are immediately subjected to the same stringent licensing and regulatory frames as industrial fleets. Collectively, these codes demonstrate how formalization and standardization in Ghana's fisheries governance create systemic barriers to local participation, privileging state and international interest over community base knowledge and

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

adaptive practices. This Result argues how fisheries governance not only regulates practices but reshapes knowledge hierarchies and therefore reinforcing historically rooted patterns of epistemic and social inequality,

7.3.3 Socio-ecological impacts (waterscapes and livelihoods)

The analysis of the selected policy documents reveals how the governance of Ghana's fisheries sector has significant socio-ecological impacts. Central to these impacts are the formalization and standardization processes discussed in Result 2. The analysis revealed the creation of a disconnect between the policy sphere and the lived experience of local fishing communities, whereby the emphasis laid on resource control and enforcement. Moreover, the collaboration with international actors contributes to challenges such as livelihood vulnerability and resource depletion. The policies describe the Waterscape as a resource to be managed rather than a culturally rich space

Code 3.1 Livelihood vulnerability

This code analyzes how the policy documents frame economic and social parameters, specifically the absence of the term "livelihood" and the clear focus on formal economic concepts such as "employment".

The Fisheries Act 625 states that "(2) A fishing licence shall not be issued for a canoe unless the canoe is owned by a citizen, a company or a partnership registered in the Republic under the relevant law in which the shares are beneficially held by a citizen (p. 19). This Regulation showcases a clear aim to ensure that economic benefits of fishing activities remain within the country. However, it establishes a formal framework around ownership, which does not address the everyday live realities of local fishing livelihood. Furthermore, the focus is drawn on legal ownership rather than on the informal and community-based economy.

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

The stated “beneficial ownership” in the Fisheries Act 625 serves as a key example of the disconnection between the policy’s economic goals and the welfare of local fishers. The law refers to shares, which should be beneficial to a citizen. However, it doesn’t clearly state if the shares are connected to the fish caught by the canoe or the company that owns the canoe. It reads more towards the shares of the ownership of the canoe and therefore open loopholes for foreign actors to use e.g. Ghanaian “fronts” to register vessels. Through that, foreign-owned industrial trawlers are allowed to operate under the Ghanaian flag, meanwhile, the economic benefits and control lay outside of the country in foreign beneficial owners. This practice can be referred to as “Saiko” (Owusu et.al, 2025). It involves illegal transshipment of fish from industrial vessels to local canoes, which do provide a short-term source of income but moreover directly compete with the artisanal fishing sector and overfishing. The policy’s focus on formal legal ownership instead of addressing the realities of power and capital relations therefore facilitates an exploitative character as well as undermining the livelihoods of local fishers, it claims to prevent.

The regulations’ emphasis on formal aspects of fishing also becomes evident in the definition of specific requirements regarding the fishing vessel and crew. The Fisheries Regulations, 1979 (LI1235) addresses for example the need to board “(a) an inflatable life raft of a size to accommodate all the members of the vessel’s normal crew, the type of life raft to be approved by the Licensing Officer;” (p. 4). The wellbeing of the crew in case of an emergency is evident in this provision. There are furthermore mentions of life belts and other technical requirements for the safety of the crew members. The Fisheries Regulations, 2010 (L.I. 1968) further formalize the safety aspect by requiring that “(3) A person responsible for the safety of a canoe during fishing operations shall possess a Certificate of Competency issued by the competent authority as in Form E of the Schedule.” (p. 15). The policies show a focus on describing the designation of a person who is legally responsible for the safety of the vessel, rather than mandating that all members of the crew have safety skills such as first aid. This could indicate that while the policies aim to create a safe environment through technical equipment, they do not address the human capacity for safety. They do not seem to be a priority within these formal

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

regulatory frameworks. The idea, that Waterscapes are an economic space governed by technical regulations, instead of it being a communal space is reinforced again.

The previously mentioned top-down management emerges in this code as well in the documents' approach to civil society. The Fisheries Regulation 2010 (L.I 1968) mentions "a Civil Society Organization" (p.24) as a representative on a committee regarding aquaculture establishments. The organization is mentioned alongside formal government bodies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the Attorney-General's Department as well as the Fisheries Commission. The placement suggests and places it as a formalized entity within a state-centric framework rather than an independent organization of local communities. The Fisheries Act 625 furthermore mandates that the Fisheries Commission, "in collaboration with District Assemblies with fishing communities, ensure the enforcement of the fishery laws including by-laws made by the District Assembly" (p. 6). The mention of fishing communities here presents a view of co-operation, that is driven by as well as subject to state-level enforcement.

Code 3.2 Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Through this code, I analyzed the policy mechanisms that address conflict, particularly between local and foreign actors as well as the enforcement of regulations. It revealed a system reliable on juridical and punitive approach as mentioned previously. The structures of the policies are to assert state authority and resolve disputes and conflicts through legal channels. The approach highlights the disconnect from livelihoods of artisanal fishing communities and furthermore reinstates the top-down approach. It is evident in several key areas, including the aim to protect artisanal fishers, the establishment of a settlement committee and the use of financial and punitive measures.

There is a specific provision included in the Fisheries Act 625, which states to explicitly protect local fishers from foreign vessels. The Act 625 reads: "A foreign fishing vessel in a place in the fishery waters shall be operated in a way that the activities of local and artisanal fishermen and fishing vessels are not disrupted

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

or in any other way adversely affected” (p.23). This subsection appears to be designed to safeguard the interests and operations of artisanal fishers. However, the Act fails to specify a clear control mechanism to ensure that it is not being contravened. Moreover, the enforcement appears as a reactive process, which relies on penalties rather than a proactive prevention approach. The policies do establish an Enforcement Unit and as previously mentioned in Code 3.2, involve fishing communities in some capacity. Nevertheless, the focus appears to be legal repercussions after a contravention has occurred. There is no mention of a monitoring system designed to prevent conflicts from happening in the first place.

A top-down as well as reactive approach becomes furthermore visible in the establishment of formal committees to address conflict. The Fisheries Act 625 outlines the establishment of a “Fisheries Settlement Committee” and mandates, that the committee “shall regulate its own procedures and shall in its deliberations act with fairness and in accordance with natural justice.” (p. 9). The analysis reveals how a seemingly simple used language of the policy is more deeply embedded in a formal legal tradition. “Fairness” and “natural justice” in the context of law are well-defined legal concepts rooted in the British common law system⁶. When taking a closer look at for example on natural justice, this principle guarantees the right to a fair hearing before a decision is formed and the rule against bias which means that the decision-maker must be impartial (Mister 2014)⁷. Therefore, a legalistic framing establishes a committee as a formal semi-judicial body which underscores the state's power as the ultimate judge of disputes. The heavily regulated and state-sanctioned framework on dispute resolution methods highlights yet again the top-down notion as well as hindrances of access for local fishers.

⁶ “Review of Fairness and Natural Justice in the House's Standards System - Committee on Standards.” Accessed August 29th, 2025. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmstandards/1183/report.html>

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

The approach becomes more evident in the relation that the Policy documents describe between the states authorized officers to enforce the law and the broader fishing people. The policy documents describe, how authorized officers, who are responsible for the enforcement of the law are allowed to “use the force that is reasonably necessary in the circumstances to effect the arrest.” (p. 39). Moreover, the authority of these officers is protected, since “threatening language” or “insulting gestures” towards them are an offense regulated through the Fisheries Act 625. The analysis concludes that the states enforcement mechanisms are strongly backed by the assertion or authority to the threat of legal and physical force. Moreover, the use of technology for enforcement through “Photographic evidence” as stated in the Fisheries Act 625, highlights the reliance on formal, technological and state-driven systems of control and monitoring rather than as mentioned previously a system to prevent.

Code 3.3 Resource depletion

Through this code, I analyzed how the policy documents frame the topic of resource depletion and the mechanisms put in place to address it. The policies define the marine environment as well as the resource – fish – as quantifiable units that need to be protected through control. The analysis though this code yet again reveals a strong focus on formal regulations and state enforced measures as the main governance approach.

The foundational perspective of the Fisheries Act 625 is rooted in the idea of “sustainable exploitation”(Fisheries Act, 625: 5). In connection to that, the Act provides a simpler and direct definition to the Term “sustainable yields” - as mentioned in Code 1.2– which frames the approach to resource management. The more recent Fisheries Management Plan provides a more detailed and scientific definition of the same term, which shows that the concept and its approach was adapted over time. This concept informs regulatory mechanisms such as closed seasons as well as the restriction of specific gear, which is addressed in the Fisheries Regulations 1979 (LI 1235) and the Fisheries Regulation 2010 (LI 1968).

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

The described formal and technical approach of the governance is further evident in the conservation mechanisms described in the policy documents.

The Fisheries Act 625 establishes a “closed season” and grants the Commission the power to declare a period during which a ban is placed on any fishing activity in specified areas. How these bans correlate with or integrate traditional knowledge and local traditions is not specified. Similarly, the Fisheries Act 625 implements another management mechanism through the establishment of zones – not the EEZ. These zones “shall be used exclusively by small semi-industrial vessels, canoes and recreational fishing vessels” (p.43). This provision appears to protect artisanal fishers from large vessels as well as an aim to tackle overfishing through those. However, the states control and power to territorially manage the Waterscape becomes evident here.

Moving to another key focus the Regulations describe is the conservation of physical habitat and fish life. The Fisheries Regulations, 1979 (LI 1235) explicitly prohibits “to take or destroy any fish by the use of dynamite, gelignite or other explosive substance, or by the use of any noxious or poisonous matter.” (p. 1). This is restated and expanded in the Fisheries Regulations, 2010 (L.I 1968), which mandates, that e.g by-catch must be released without causing it harm. These regulations are framed as legal prohibitions but designed to prevent physical harm to the ecosystem. They fail to highlight the promotion of environmental protection and communal responsibility.

The Fisheries Regulations, 2010 (LI 1968) addresses food security and linking conservation directly with human needs. The mandate describes: “for personal use or for seafood shall not dump fish that is suitable for human consumption.” (p. 16). Yet again addressing the issue of food security through a prohibition rather than a broader strategy to ensure food access.

As a last result under this Code. The policies also extend their formal control to a growing segment of the sector: Aquaculture. The documents treat this as a highly regulated industry that is formally integrated into the state's governance framework. The Fisheries Regulations, 2010 (LI1968) establish strict rules for aquaculture, including requirements for an environmental permit from the

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Furthermore, it includes the adherence to a separate set of “National Aquaculture Guidelines”. Regulation 61 in the Fisheries Regulations, 2010 (LI 1968) explicitly states that the operations shall not degrade the environment, the introduction of new species is prohibited unless it is approved or compromise food fish. This extends the states' reach from wild capture fish to a manufactured environment, which reinforces its power to define and control all aspects of the resource production rather than the protection of the eco-system as a main focus.

Code 3.4 Colonial-era impact

Through this code, I analyzed how power is manifested in legal mandates as well as in linguistic and regulatory practices that carry colonial weights and furthermore respond to international pressures. An important finding is the continuation of administrative practices rooted in the colonial past. Notably, the foundational legal documents themselves are exclusively written in English with no official translation into local languages available. This highlights a structural and significant barrier for local fishers who might not be fluent in English as well as defining the access to political participation. The Fisheries Regulations, 2010 (LI 1968) further formalizes the linguistic hierarchy by explicitly mandating English as the formal medium of communication – as mentioned in Code 1.4 as well. Regulation 26 “English Language as a medium communication”, requires all formal and official communication as well as documentation to be conducted in English. Meaning, to be able to participate in fishing practice, fluency in English is a requirement that when looking at it has deeper impacts on local livelihoods. The legacy of colonial-era administration becomes evident, it governs through a foreign language and bureaucratic procedures, thereby transforming the Waterscape into a space where the state-sanctioned language becomes a tool of control.

This notion is further reinforced by the formal legal framework itself and can be linked to Code 3.2, where terminology such as “natural justice” in the context of resolving conflicts was mentioned. The term “natural justice” is a direct legacy of British colonial rule which reflect the integration of English common law principles into Ghana's legal system. In the United Kingdom (UK), natural justice

7. Empirical Part: Analyzing Ghana's fishing Policies from a decolonizing waterscape perspective

encompasses fundamental procedural rights, such as the right to a fair hearing and the rule against bias. (Dicey 1889; Dickinson 2025) The terminology in Ghana's policies underscores the broader theme of colonial continuity in Ghana's legal framework, where British-imposed structures persist in shaping postcolonial governance.

The documents further address financial hierarchies, which can be seen as continuing legacies of colonial-era trade and power imbalances. The Fisheries Regulations, 1979 (LI 1235) outline fines, that "may be prescribed to be paid in convertible foreign currency". This practice is further detailed in the Fisheries Act 625, which states that fines for foreign and industrial vessels are to be paid in American Dollars: "except that where the payment relates to a foreign fishing vessel the amount shall be paid in American dollars". This highlights that the penalties for foreign actors are designed to be substantial on a global economic scale. The use of foreign currency for foreign players further reinforces the idea of the Waterscape as a global economic space, governed by international financial norms.

The policy landscape has further shifted, to incorporate contemporary global norms. The strict formalization of regulations becomes evident in the length of the Fisheries Regulations 2010 (LI 1968) compared to the Fisheries Regulations, 1979 (LI 1235). This links to the need to regulate and manage international players. While the Fisheries Regulations 1979 only mentions "foreign" twice and did not address "international" at all, the Fisheries Regulations 2010 has expanded significantly. Moreover, it formalized the inclusion of international actors and the global economy. The Fisheries Management Plan of Ghana 2022-2026 is another prime example of this, since it explicitly references international organizations and referred to partners such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union (EU). It can be described as a dual-layered framework, where colonial structures of power coexist with modern legal global dependencies.

8. Discussion and Conclusion: Colonial Dis/Continuities in the Governance of Ghana's Fishery Sector

Livelihood Vulnerability and Resource Depletion: The Socio-ecological Consequences of Formalized Fisheries Governance

Taking the four codes together, they explore that fisheries governance in Ghana is characterized by a disconnect between formal governance and local realities. The formal economic frame of the sector (Code 3.1) and the reliance on juridical, top-down conflict resolution mechanism (Code 3.2) demonstrate how safety regulation focus on technical compliance rather than human capacity and therefore reinforcing a view of waterscapes as economic spaces. Simultaneously, approaches to resource depletion (Code 3.3) frame the marine environment as a quantifiable and controllable resource, which is governed through technical and prohibitive measures. Code 3.4 underscores the enduring colonial legacy which becomes evident in the use of English as the sole administrative language and the financial privileging of foreign currency. Those mechanisms create linguistic and economic barriers that exclude non-literate or local language speakers from participating. The findings show that fisheries governance in Ghana reinforces livelihood vulnerabilities and reproduces historical inequalities in access, participation and benefit.

8. Discussion and Conclusion: Colonial Dis/Continuities in the Governance of Ghana's Fishery Sector

This chapter discusses the findings of the policy analysis by connecting them to the theoretical framework of decolonized waterscape perspective. The discussion demonstrates how colonial continuities can be explored in the structure of fisheries governance in Ghana through spatial control, epistemic violence as well as socio-ecological impacts on livelihoods. In the following I will theoretically situate these findings, show how they reinforce each other within Ghana's fishing sector and what it reveals about postcolonial governance.

The postcolonial state often operates within inherited systems of power that continue to reproduce structural dependencies rather than dismantling them. To analyze these dynamics, I drew on Spivak's concept of the subaltern. Spivak

8. Discussion and Conclusion: Colonial Dis/Continuities in the Governance of Ghana's Fishery Sector

(1994) conceptualizes this condition through the figure of the subaltern, whose exclusion is structurally embedded within global governance frameworks. This theoretical lens is critical for understanding how Ghana's fisheries governance, despite its formal sovereignty, remains constrained by external expectations and hierarchies. In the following apply Spivak's framework to Ghana's participation in international institutions, which illustrates how authority over waterscapes is reinforcing their character as political spaces structured by unequal power relations. Ghana's participation in international institutions such as UNCLOS and its compliance with EU fisheries regulations reflect a negotiation of international surveillance over its sovereign marine space. This dynamic aligns with the decolonized waterscape perspective, which emphasizes waterscapes as contested spaces of power. Ghana's compliance with UNCLOS and EU fisheries policies reflects a broader pattern, where local knowledge and agency are subordinated to global governance frameworks. The reliance on the standardized gear (see Code 2.3) and the persistence of top-down management approaches (Code 2.2) serve as examples of the constraints of sovereignty.

In this context, sovereignty is formally asserted, yet substantively constrained. Spivak's notion of silencing is evident: local engagement is confined to the lowest levels of participation in this hierarchal system, whereby international regulations and state-level policy occupy the upper levels of authority. Although consultation mechanisms exist, the structural design of the policies showcases limitations on influences and therefore silence voices of artisanal fishers at the broader scale of decision making. It reflects a broader pattern of exclusion where those most affected by decisions are least able to influence them, which positions local actors as objects of governance.

These dynamics resonate strongly with Fanon's concept of monopolized recognition. Fanon describes how colonial powers imposes the colonizers language, culture and systems of value as the only legitimate framework for recognition. This is evident in one of the findings in the policy analysis, where English is established as the official medium of communication within fisheries governance in Ghana (Code 1.4). This reflects how access to governance is mediated through a linguistic framework inherited from colonial rule. Language

8. Discussion and Conclusion: Colonial Dis/Continuities in the Governance of Ghana's Fishery Sector

here functions as a gatekeeping mechanism. By institutionalizing English as the necessary language of regulation as well as certification, fisheries governance only recognizes those who are fluent in this colonial language while non-fluent fisher remains structurally disadvantaged. Recognition becomes tied to the proficiency of the colonizer's language, reinforcing hierarchies of legitimacy and competence.

The findings of this thesis demonstrate that these hierarchies are not limited to questions of participation and recognition. Result 3 highlighted how socio-ecological impacts like the declining fish stock or rising conflicts are addressed in policy primarily through technical and regulatory responses instead of structural reflections (Code 3.2). Depletion and overfishing are framed as issues of compliance and enforcement through which the responsibility is predominantly placed on local actors. Broader structural inequalities within industrial and international fishing regulations receive less critical engagement.

Viewed through a decolonized waterscape lens, this framing explores how space is governed materially and ideologically. Waterscapes become areas in which economic extraction is prioritized over relational and livelihood-based understandings. Artisanal fishers as mentioned above are positioned within these systems, which regulates them as economic units instead of their socio-cultural ties to the space. A continuity of colonial governance, where resource control was central and local population were managed in relation to extraction becomes evident. Fanon analysis helps to shed light on the depth of this dynamic. If colonial supremacy operates by restructuring both space and subjectivity, then the marginalization of artisanal livelihoods within contemporary fisheries governance reflects a hierarchy of value in which certain forms of production and economic rationality are elevated above others. Industrialized and export-oriented practices are addressed as modern and legitimate and small-scale practices are depicted as informal and inefficient. Through this notion, policies and therefore fisheries governances reproduce a developmental logic, that aligns progress with external models and global frames which further embedding structural dependencies.

8.1 Reproduction of colonial structures in Ghana's fishing policies

Bringing these strands together, this thesis has demonstrated how legal instruments, policy decisions and enforcement mechanisms in Ghana's fisheries sector actively reproduce power imbalances rooted in colonial structures. By analyzing Ghana's fisheries policies through a decolonized waterscape framework, the interconnected dimensions of colonial continuity can be presented.

8.1.1 Spatial Control and Territorialization

The formal establishment of Ghana's marine spaces through Exclusive Economic Zones, licensing systems and institutional mandates transform waterscapes into governable economic territories. This process mirrors colonial practices of resource extraction, where access and control were centralized under the state and global actors, often at the expenses of local communities. The Fisheries Act 625 (2002) and Fisheries Regulation 2010 (L.I. 1968) for example, frame waterscapes as explored in the analysis as spaces to be policed and exploited, rather than a socio-cultural landscape that is integral to coastal livelihoods.

8.1.2 Epistemic Violence and the Silencing of Local Knowledge

The governance framework prioritizes state-certified competence and standardized gear/methods, which can be necessary but harmful when marginalizing traditional knowledge systems. As Spivak (1994) argues, this epistemic violence renders local fishers' voices inaudible within political spaces. The imposition of English as the official language of governance (Code 1.4) further solidifies colonial hierarchies and is acting as a gatekeeping mechanism that excludes non-fluent fishers from participation and furthermore their livelihood. This aligns with Fanon's (1986) critique of colonial recognition, where legitimacy is tied to conformity with external norms. This could be described through fluency in the colonizers' language (English) and adherence to globalized standards.

8.1.3: Socio-Ecological Impacts and Livelihood vulnerability

The policies analyzed address resource depletion and conflict through technocratic solutions that disproportionately impact artisanal fishers. The framing of overfishing as a compliance issue, instead of a structural problem driven by industrial and foreign fishing fleets, reflects a neocolonial developmental logic.

Concluding and based on the research conducted, the analysis confirms that colonial continuities are active structuring forces in Ghana's fishing governance. These continuities are not just historical residues. They are dynamic processes reinforced through legal frameworks that territorialize and commodify waterscapes, Institutional practices that silence local knowledge and prioritize external validation and lastly developmental narratives that set progress equal with industrialization and global integration.

Ghana's fisheries governance therefore transforms waterscapes into regulated economic zones, where authority, recognition and legitimacy remain structured by historically embedded hierarchies. The research question can be addressed affirmatively: Ghana's fishing policies carry forward colonial logics that are enacting social spaces in ways that perpetuate dependency.

9. Outlook: Shifting towards reclaiming Waterscapes

The findings of the thesis reveal how Ghana's fisheries governance is shaped by its colonial history and its prevailing notions in contemporary policies. However, the next step is to ask: How can a decolonized waterscape framework help move beyond these inherited hierarchies, dismantle structural inequalities as well as centering marginalized voices? This outlook explores pathways toward that and emphasizes that decolonization is not a singular act but an ongoing process of reclaiming agency and redefining development through a decolonized waterscape framework.

9.1 Reforming Legal and Institutional Frameworks

As demonstrated throughout the thesis, decolonizing fisheries governance through the decolonized waterscape framework cannot be understood as a singular intervention. It is a multilayered, continuous process that requires structural and institutional shifts, which means to go beyond revisiting existing legal and policy frameworks. There is a need to critically reflect on how they are implemented and enforced within the waterscape. Further research should therefore examine how current enforcement mechanisms operate in practice and negotiate power imbalance that the framework seeks to dismantle. Addressing these imbalances requires a more equitable approach to governance that ensures accountability across all levels and challenges concentrations of power within global economic networks.

A shift toward more inclusive governance would require recognizing local fishing communities as active agents whose knowledge and practices are essential in shaping applicable and context-sensitive solutions. Having that in mind, further research is needed to document and integrate this knowledge base. Moreover, it needs to evaluate how governance can reflect the realities of those most affected by its outcomes.

9.2 Addressing Gendered Exclusion and Local Knowledge

The analysis points to the need to critically address the gendered dimensions of fisheries governance within a decolonized waterscape framework. The limited recognition of gender within policy documents reflects a broader pattern of intersectional marginalization. Centering gendered experience and roles in future research is key to exploring how gender equity can be embedded in governance structures. Additionally, research should explore how gender intersects with other dimensions such as geography to shape access to resources and participation in decision-making processes. I see ethnographic engagement and participatory action approaches in further work as essential

tools to amplify marginalized experiences, visibility and participation within the waterscape.

Moreover, the framework must challenge epistemic violence that silences local knowledge. What counts as “expertise” in fisheries governance (see code 1.4) is defined through technocratic approaches. Future research should explore expertise and how traditional ecological knowledge such as communal resource management systems can be included. That could also be established through the creation of platforms for knowledge exchange between these different actors.

9.3 Beyond Fisheries and towards cross-sectoral action

While the thesis focuses on fisheries, the decolonized waterscape framework is not limited to this sector. It can further be extended to other domains such as housing, coastal living and land-use policies, to explore how colonial legacies shape access to resources and spatial inequalities. Future research could therefore explore how these (colonial/historical) legacies manifest in infrastructure development or land ownership, by applying the framework to identify cross-sectoral strategies for equity.

Broadening the scope of the analysis could help scholars and policymakers to ensure that decolonization efforts are interconnected and treating the waterscape as part of a larger struggle for spatial and resource justice.

This outlook serves as an invitation to expand and deepen the application of the decolonized waterscape framework in new contexts and sectors. It stands as a call for collaborative action among different actors such as policymakers, scholars and most importantly communities whose livelihoods are at stake. The task is to actively build alternatives that reclaim waterscapes as spaces of justice, collective reflection and action. For now, this is it.

*It's not only, that the subaltern cannot speak, but the colonizer will not listen.
Those in power often develop a curious but symptomatic deafness. (Spivak
1994)*

Literature and Resources:

- Adjei, Joseph Kingsley, and Solomon Sika-Bright. 2019. "Traditional Beliefs and Sea Fishing in Selected Coastal Communities in the Western Region of Ghana." *Ghana Journal of Geography* 11(1):1–19. doi:10.4314/gjg.v11i1.
- Adu-Boahen, Kwabena. 2012. "The Impact of European Presence on Slavery in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth-Century Gold Coast." *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* (14):165–99.
- Akyeampong, Emmanuel. 2007. "Indigenous Knowledge and Maritime Fishing in West Africa: The Case of Ghana." *Tribes Tribals* 1.
- Alabi–Doku, Bortey Nketia, Sun Chen, Akwasi Ampofo-Yeboah, and Berchie Asiedu. 2020. "Ghana's Fisheries Policies; Evolution and Performance." *Asian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Research* 11–22. doi:10.9734/ajfar/2020/v7i130107.
- Ameyaw, Anita B., Annette Breckwoldt, Hauke Reuter, and Denis W. Aheto. 2020. "From Fish to Cash: Analyzing the Role of Women in Fisheries in the Western Region of Ghana." *Marine Policy* 113:103790. doi:10.1016/j.marpol.2019.103790.
- Anghie, Antony, ed. 2005. "Colonialism and the Birth of International Institutions: The Mandate System of the League of Nations." Pp. 115–95 in *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law, Cambridge Studies in International and Comparative Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ayilu, Raymond K., Michael Fabinyi, Kate Barclay, and Mary Ama Bawa. 2023a. "Blue Economy: Industrialisation and Coastal Fishing Livelihoods in Ghana." *Reviews in Fish Biology and Fisheries* 33(3):801–18. doi:10.1007/s11160-022-09749-0.
- Ayilu, Raymond K., Michael Fabinyi, Kate Barclay, and Mary Ama Bawa. 2023b. "Industrial and Small-Scale Fisheries Relations in Ghana: A Political Ecology Perspective on Blue Economy Exclusion." *Journal of Rural Studies* 102:103085. doi:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2023.103085.
- Ayilu, Raymond K., Michael Fabinyi, Kate Barclay, and Mary Ama Bawa. 2023c. "Industrial and Small-Scale Fisheries Relations in Ghana: A Political Ecology Perspective on Blue Economy Exclusion." *Journal of Rural Studies* 102:103085. doi:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2023.103085.
- Bayo Holsey. 2008. *Routes of Remembrance : Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bennett, Nathan James, Jessica Blythe, Carole Sandrine White, and Cecilia Campero. 2021. "Blue Growth and Blue Justice: Ten Risks and Solutions for the Ocean Economy." *Marine Policy* 125:104387. doi:10.1016/j.marpol.2020.104387.

CO-MANAGEMENT POLICY FOR THE FISHERIES SECTOR. 2020.

Dantzig, A. van. 1978. *The Dutch and the Guinea Coast, 1674-1742: A Collection of Documents from the General State Archive at the Hague*. Accra : GAAS, 1978.

Deutschmann, Anna. 2014. "Inhaltsanalysen Qualitative Verfahren der Textanalyse und Textinterpretation."

Dicey, A. V. 1889. *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*. London : Macmillan and Co.,.

Dickinson, Andrew. 2025. "Natural Justice in Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Judgments." in *Natural Justice in Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Judgments*. Brill Nijhoff.

Diouf, Sylviane A., ed. 2004. *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*. Boydell & Brewer.

Fanon, Frantz. 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Pluto Press.

Fisheries Act, 2002 (Act No. 625 of 2002). n.d. Retrieved July 8, 2025. <https://www.ecolex.org/details/legislation/fisheries-act-2002-act-no-625-of-2002-lex-faoc034737/>.

Fisheries Regulations, 1979. n.d. Retrieved July 8, 2025. <https://www.ecolex.org/details/legislation/fisheries-regulations-1979-lex-faoc005314/>.

Freduah, George, Pedro Fidelman, and Timothy F. Smith. 2018. "Mobilising Adaptive Capacity to Multiple Stressors: Insights from Small-Scale Coastal Fisheries in the Western Region of Ghana." *Geoforum* 91:61–72. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.02.026.

Ghana gets second yellow card, risks losing EU seafood export market. n.d. Retrieved July 29, 2025. <https://www.seafoodsource.com/news/environment-sustainability/ghana-gets-second-yellow-card-risks-losing-eu-seafood-export-market>.

Gupta, Joyeeta, Hilmer J. Bosch, and Luc van Vliet. 2025. "Water Security Reframed Using Water System Justice and Earth System Boundaries, Foundations, and Corridor." *Frontiers in Water* 7. doi:10.3389/frwa.2025.1520853.

Justice, Attobrah, Aboagye Emmanuel Mensah, Afrane Sandylove, and Ampah Dankwa Jeffrey. 2020. "The Law of Marine Fishing: Challenges and Coping Strategies for Sustainable Marine Fishing in Ghana." *Journal of Fisheries Science* 2(2). doi:10.30564/jfsr.v2i2.2116.

- Karpouzoglou, Timothy, and Sumit Vij. 2017. "Waterscape: A Perspective for Understanding the Contested Geography of Water." *WIREs Water* 4(3):e1210. doi:10.1002/wat2.1210.
- Kassah, Jemimah Etornam, and Cephas Asare. 2022. "Conflicts in the Artisanal Fishing Industry of Ghana: Reactions of Fishers to Regulatory Measures." Pp. 99–118 in *Blue Justice: Small-Scale Fisheries in a Sustainable Ocean Economy*, edited by S. Jentoft, R. Chuenpagdee, A. Bugeja Said, and M. Isaacs. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Lo, Kwai-Cheung, and Hung-chiung Li. 2025. "Entangled Waterscapes in Asia." in *Entangled Waterscapes in Asia*. Brill.
- Loomba, Ania. 2015. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge.
- Maunder, M. N. 2008. "Maximum Sustainable Yield." Pp. 2292–96 in *Encyclopedia of Ecology*, edited by S. E. Jørgensen and B. D. Fath. Oxford: Academic Press.
- Mister, Nicola. 2014. "General Principles." <https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/pay-benefits/grading-and-job-evaluation/changing-existing-posts/regrading-posts/rolling-regrade-1>.
- Nunn, Nathan. 2014. "Gender and Missionary Influence in Colonial Africa." Pp. 489–512 in *Africa's Development in Historical Perspective*, edited by E. Akyeampong, J. Robinson, N. Nunn, and R. H. Bates. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Okafor-Yarwood, Ifesinachi Marybenedette, and Freedom C. Onuoha. 2023. "Whose Security Is It? Elitism and the Global Approach to Maritime Security in Africa." *Third World Quarterly* 44(5):946–66. doi:10.1080/01436597.2023.2167706.
- Overå, Ragnhild. 2011. "Modernisation Narratives and Small-Scale Fisheries in Ghana and Zambia." *Forum for Development Studies* 38(3):321–43. doi:10.1080/08039410.2011.596569.
- Pardie, Pamela Parnarkie, and Benjamin Betey Champion. 2022. "The How in Fishing and Fish Processing: Traditional Artisanal Fishing and Fish Processing Practices among the Ga People of Ghana." *Maritime Studies* 21(4):501–17.
- Partelow, Stefan, Maria Hadjimichael, and Anna-Katharina Hornidge, eds. 2023. *Ocean Governance: Knowledge Systems, Policy Foundations and Thematic Analyses*. Vol. 25. MARE Publication Series. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Review of fairness and natural justice in the House's standards system - Committee on Standards. n.d. Retrieved September 3, 2025. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmstandards/1183/report.html>.

Literature and Resources:

- Sotelo Eastman, Alexander, and Dexter Zavalza Hough-Snee. 2017. "6. Surfing beyond Racial and Colonial Imperatives in Early Modern Atlantic Africa and Oceania." Pp. 135–54 in *The Critical Surf Studies Reader*. Duke University Press.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1994. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*. Routledge.
- United Nations. 1982. "United Nations. (1982). United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea: Part V – Exclusive Economic Zone."
- United Nations Treaty Collection. n.d. Retrieved June 12, 2025. https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXI-6&chapter=21&Temp=mtdsg3&clang=_en.
- Walker, Barbara Louise Endemaño. 2002. "Engendering Ghana's Seascape: Fanti Fishtraders and Marine Property in Colonial History." *Society & Natural Resources* 15(5):389–407.