

**Fishing for Answers:** An exploration of fisherwomen's roles and activities in the 'blue economy' of the South African small-scale fisheries sector

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## **Abstract**

Women are globally the backbone of the small-scale fisheries (SSF) sector. However, their economic and social contribution to the sector, have constantly been undervalued and unacknowledged. Even if women are acknowledged and paid for their labour and effort in the sector, their remuneration is less than that of men. This misrecognition of women's work negatively affects their bargaining power within their families and communities and hinders their participation in both state-level institutions and policy-making decisions for the SSF sector. As such, despite progression within the SSF sector and the significant role that they play, women are still subordinate to men concerning investment decisions, technology, and dealing with governmental institutions. The 'blue economy', a policy framework embarked on globally, is meant to harness the social and economic potential of marine life for present and future generations. However, much of the policies and regulations -particularly in the SSF sector- frequently result in 'ocean grabbing', which has dire consequences for fisherwomen, their communities, environmental sustainability, social justice, and gender equality. This exploratory case study uses a Marxist ecofeminist lens to provide an analysis of the complex roles and activities of women involved in the SSF sector in South Africa. Two case-site areas, Kleinmond and Steenberg's Cove, are examined to explore the manifold benefits that they bring to a fishing community, specifically under conditions of a blue economy, which is framed as 'Operation Phakisa' in South Africa. Bringing women's experiences, anecdotes, and struggles to the centre of debates, could further empower them within communities and at broader institutional levels. This study highlights how women interpret and describe their relationship to the ocean as an economy, as well as an integral component of their community. Lastly, the study depicts the nature of the blue economy in South Africa and elucidates how notions of commodification become entangled with environmental protection. Thus, the small-scale fisheries policy, frameworks, and implementation plans are examined in relation to the need to open and strengthen the political space for all small-scale fishers, particularly marginalised groups such as women, to prioritise their rights within regulatory frameworks, as well as to encourage sustainable use of marine resources for the preservation of future generations.

## Opsomming

Vroue is wêreldwyd die ruggraat van die kleinskaalse visserye (SSF) sektor. Hul ekonomiese en sosiale bydrae tot die sektor word egter deurlopend onderwaardeer en nie erken nie. Selfs in die geval waar vroue se arbeid en moeite in hierdie sektor wel erken word, is hul vergoeding minder as dié van mans. Hierdie wanherkenning van vroue se werk is nadelig vir hul bedingingsmag binne hul gesinne en gemeenskappe en belemmer hul deelname aan staatsvlakinstellings en beleidsbesluite vir die SSF-sektor. Ten spyte van vooruitgang binne die SSF-sektor en die belangrikheid van vroue se rol, is vroue steeds ondergeskik aan mans ten opsigte van beleggingsbesluite, tegnologie en omgang met regeringsinstellings. Die 'blou ekonomie', 'n beleidsraamwerk wat wêreldwyd toegepas word, is gemik daarop om die sosiale en ekonomiese potensiaal van die seelewe vir huidige en toekomstige geslagte te benut. Baie van die beleide en regulasies, veral in die SSF-sektor, lei egter gereeld tot 'oseaan-gryp' wat ernstige gevolge het vir vissersvroue, hul gemeenskappe, omgewingsvolhoubaarheid, maatskaplike geregtigheid en geslagsgelykheid. Hierdie verkennende gevallestudie pas 'n marxistiese ekofeministiese lens toe om die komplekse rolle en aktiwiteite van vroue wat betrokke is in die SSF-sektor in Suid-Afrika in twee gebiede, Kleinmond en Steenberg's Cove, te ontleed, sowel as die veelvuldige voordele wat dit meebring vir 'n visvanggemeenskap, spesifiek onder toestande van 'n blou ekonomie, wat omskryf word as Operasie Phakisa in Suid-Afrika. Deur vroue se ervarings, vertellings en stryd in die middelpunt van debatte te bring, kan dit hulle binne gemeenskappe en op breër institusionele vlakke verder bemagtig. Hierdie studie beklemtoon ook hoe vroue hul verhouding tot die oseaan interpreteer en beskryf as 'n ekonomie sowel as 'n integrale komponent van hul gemeenskap. Laastens beeld die studie die aard van die blou ekonomie in Suid-Afrika uit en word toegelig hoe konsepte van kommodifikasie verstrengel raak met die beskerming van die omgewing. Dus word die kleinskaalse visserybeleid, raamwerke en implementeringsplanne ondersoek in verband met die noodsaaklikheid om die politieke ruimte vir alle kleinskaalse vissers, veral gemarginaliseerde groepe soos vroue, oop te maak en te versterk om hul regte binne regulerende raamwerke te prioritiseer, sowel as om die volhoubare gebruik van mariene hulpbronne vir die behoud van toekomstige geslagte aan te moedig.

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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>DEFF</b>	- Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries <sup>1</sup>
<b>EPWP</b>	- Expanded Public Works Programme
<b>FAO</b>	- Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
<b>IR</b>	- Interim Relief
<b>ITQ</b>	- Individual Transferable Quota
<b>MLRA</b>	- The Marine Living Resources Act (18 of 1998)
<b>MPA</b>	- Marine Protected Area
<b>MSP</b>	- Marine Spatial Planning
<b>NGO</b>	- Non-governmental Organisations
<b>SFTG</b>	- The Subsistence Fisheries Task Group
<b>SSF</b>	- Small-scale fisheries
<b>SSFP</b>	- Small-scale fishing policy
<b>TAC</b>	- Total Allowable Catch
<b>TCOE</b>	- Trust for Community Outreach and Education
<b>UN</b>	- United Nations
<b>WHO</b>	- World Health Organisation
<b>WWF</b>	- World Wildlife Fund

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<sup>1</sup> The Department of Environmental Affairs was renamed in June 2019 to the [Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries \(DEFF\)](#), which still incorporates the forestry and fisheries functions from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF).

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# I

## Introduction

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Steenberg's Cove and Kleinmond are quaint coastal fishing towns located in the Western Cape, South Africa. Both are characterised by rich histories, fishing harbours, exquisite sunsets, long walks on the beach, fresh seafood and a general presence of holiday and relaxation. However, if you take a deeper look into these communities, not everything is clear - below the surface is rather troubled water. Women in these fishing communities contribute immensely, both socially and economically, yet they are constantly undervalued, unacknowledged, and neglected within the small-scale fisheries (SSF) sector.

If we delve deeper into this picturesque world, all is not as it seems. Could you imagine fighting for your right to have access to a beach? Could you imagine fighting for your right to be able to harvest food to feed your family at night? Could you imagine fighting for your right to be a woman and be considered a fisher? This is what many fisherwomen engage in, in their daily pursuit of sustaining their livelihood, and indicates some of the current political issues also plaguing women within the small-scale fishing sector.

This exploratory case study focuses on two research sites, Steenberg's Cove and Kleinmond, both small-scale fishing communities which rely on fishing as a means of subsistence and a way of life. Here fishing is imbued with cultural and historical significance. A Marxist ecofeminist lens is used to analyse and elaborate on the complex roles, responsibilities, and activities of fisherwomen residing in these two fishing communities, which form part of the SSF sector. I aim to highlight the challenges experienced by fisherwomen as well as the manifold benefits that they bring to a fishing community. This research transpired while fishers were labouring under conditions of a "blue economy", a global policy framework that is currently framed as 'Operation Phakisa' in South Africa.

Globally, fisherwomen have been the backbone of the small-scale fisheries sector, and form more than one-quarter of the workforce in African fisheries. They engage in more than

ninety percent of post-harvest activities, yet they remain marginalised in terms of what is defined as fishing activities and roles, as well as being involved in the decision-making processes which govern them (FAO, 2020). World Bank research suggests that women account for nearly half of the global fisheries workforce; however, this may be an underestimation as many countries persistently overlook the labour contributions provided by women in the fisheries sector. This is mainly owing to the manifold informal activities that women are involved in, which contribute both directly and indirectly to fishing operations. Even in cases where women have been acknowledged and paid for their labour and contribution, their compensation is still less than the same work conducted by men. A lack of recognition impacts their bargaining power on many levels; within their families, communities, and state-level institutions, and in policymaking for the SSF sector on fisheries resource management (Biswas, 2016:1). Women are further faced with the responsibility of caring for their families, wider communities, and the preservation of the marine environment.

Women's informal contributions, whether in provisioning for fishing trips, gear repairs, handling accounts, and various pre-and post-harvest activities, are often unpaid labour, and not accounted for. Even under circumstances where women are acknowledged and paid for their labour and contribution, their compensation is less than when the same work is done by men. Considering this, the undervaluing of women's labour and roles can lead to a distortion in the socio-cultural and economic costs, whilst also oversimplifying and exaggerating their benefits (Harper, 2016:2). Through women's management and use of natural resources, they provide sustenance to their families and communities. As consumers and producers, caretakers of their families, and educators, women play an important role in promoting sustainable development by their concern for the quality and sustainability of life for present and future generations. Yet, women remain largely absent at all levels of policy formulation and decision-making. Their experience and skills in advocacy for and monitoring of proper natural resource management, too often remain marginalised in policy-making and decision-making bodies, as well as at the managerial level in educational institutions and environment-related agencies.

Studying women in the SSF sector is essential to illustrate that women are not merely marginal players but rather that they are active agents in the production process of fishing and sustaining fishing community livelihoods. Despite their important roles in the fishing sector and communities, little - and unrepresentative research - exists about fisherwomen. There is a need for a comprehensive analysis of women's contribution to the SSF sector, and the many

benefits that they bring to a fishing community, specifically under the conditions of a blue economy. Bringing women's experiences, anecdotes, and struggles to the centre of debates, could further empower them within communities and at broader institutional levels (Biswas, 2016:1). As such, despite developments within the SSF sector and the significant role that women play, they are still subordinate to men in investment decisions, technology, and dealing with governmental institutions.

The numerous ways through which people extract, exploit and care for the ocean has changed significantly over the last century. The potential of the 'blue economy' as a site for economic growth has surged into common policy usage around the globe. The blue economy is often heralded as being central to sustainable development, particularly in the Global South, through combining socio-economic benefits with ecological sustainability and conservation. The framework is divided into three areas, namely social, economic, and environmental, with the focus of bringing them together to support countries' development and preservation of marine resources. Often, however, the economy plays a dominant role in policy and development debates, leaving conservation efforts and social equity side-lined. This holds for multiple African countries where the implementation of the blue economy is focused on revenue generation, with little or no benefits to local communities or ecological conservation and sustainability efforts (Okafor-Yarwood *et al.*, 2020).

Blue economy frameworks proposed within most of Africa, place significant emphasis on economic gains, often leaving traditional livelihoods and small-scale operations (particularly within the fisheries sector) outcompeted by large-scale incorporations and government initiatives (Okafor-Yarwood *et al.*, 2020). Notably, the fisheries sector does contribute a significant amount to the income and food security of many people in Africa (De Coning & Witbooi, 2015 in Okafor-Yarwood *et al.*, 2020). Yet, the ability of the African fisheries sector to contribute to sustainable development and blue growth initiatives is often overshadowed by exploitation, and illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, by both local and foreign fishers (Okafor-Yarwood *et al.*, 2020). The blue economy framework intends to highlight that the oceans are not merely repositories for the extraction of resources and the dumping of waste products. Lesperance (2016) suggests that this paradigm comprises a sustainable development framework for developing countries that will aid in addressing issues such as equity in the access to, development of and sharing of benefits and resources from the

marine sector. This offers scope for reinvestment in human development and the potential alleviation of national debt. However, in 2015 World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) points out two divergent stances on the blue economy. For some, a blue economy means the use of the sea and its resources for sustainable economic development. For others, it simply refers to any economic activity or means in the maritime sector, whether sustainable or not. Thus, it is suggested that principles bridging this gap should seek to ensure that the economic development of the ocean contributes to true prosperity, currently and into the future.

Brent, Barbesgaard, and Pedersen (2018) explain that the blue economy is an ambiguous, vague, and broad term that encompasses multiple ideologies and visions. They believe the essence of the blue economy, to be a powerful mix that focuses on conservation, protein (fish) and energy/extractive ‘fixes’, all intended to enable, guide and structure policy and blue agenda initiatives. The use of the term ‘fix’ is intended to convey numerous meanings, specifically showing a certain way of extraction and production, and how blue economy frameworks seek out new opportunities for capital accumulation, while still providing spaces for current formations of fixed capital. Despite the comprehensiveness of blue economy frameworks, there are irreversible ecological and social contradictions, which create a balancing act of framing actions as... “sustainable and in everyone’s interest” (Brent *et al.*, 2018). Attempting to co-exist with blue agenda frameworks is not easy for fishers, as their spaces and resources, upon which their livelihoods and communities rely, are rapidly being used for other blue capitalist agendas. In response to this, small-scale fishers are resisting and challenging blue growth agendas, mobilising against ocean-grabbing and demanding a re-assessment of blue agendas.

This research seeks to explore an alternative (ecological and socially just solution) to this mix, which is a ‘women fix’, where many fisherwomen are involved in resistance movements, by various means of activism (e.g., co-ops). The intention would be advocating the roles, tasks, and responsibilities (economically, politically and socially) of women as a possible just solution to conservation, energy/extractive, and protein fixes, other than mere helping capital to ensure profits. It is beneficial to include marginalised groups, such as women, as they are often the most negatively impacted by these blue agendas. They are mostly at the forefront of resistance and can provide valuable contributions. Proper implementation of

equitable solutions and balance to these fixes, could hold the key to unlocking success for people and the environment.

Within the context of South Africa, denounced President Jacob Zuma announced the acceptance and launch ‘Operation Phakisa,’ which was designed to fast track the implementation of solutions on critical development issues. This is a results-driven approach that encompasses transparent, clear, and concise goals, plans, and progress monitoring in meeting government-set targets which will boost South Africa’s economy, particularly concerning the ocean economy. ‘Phakisa’ is derived from the Sesotho word denoting “hurry up”, which is applied to encourage the fast-track delivery of priorities in the National Development Plan of South Africa which is a socio-economic development blueprint.

There is a need for a more comprehensive analysis of the roles of women in the SSF sector, and how they contribute towards a fishing community, under conditions of a blue economy, and pushed-through initiatives like Operation Phakisa. Bringing women’s experiences, anecdotes, and struggles to the centre of debates, illustrates their agency, constraints, and hard work within communities and at broader institutional levels. With these considerations, to conduct this research, the literature on ecofeminism, ocean grabbing, and the fishing industry was consulted. This study uses an ecofeminist lens to unearth the roles and activities of women in the small-scale fishing community, who operate under the specific conditions of the fishing industry. More specifically, it will highlight how women interpret and describe their relationship to the ocean as an economy and well-being as an integral component of their community. The policy frameworks of the SSF sector and ‘Operation Phakisa’ were also examined to assess the spaces provided for women to contribute to its formulation, as well as to uncover the nature of the SSF sector and to elucidate how notions of commodification become entangled with environmental protection.

## Research questions

The invisibility of women in small-scale fisheries, the lack of or insufficient tenure rights for women, the lack of basic social services in communities, the poor capacity, and recognition of women along the fishing value-chain, and the lack of gender-sensitive responses to disasters, are some of the current issues plaguing the small-scale fishing industry, which

operates in a blue economy, under the conditions of capitalism. Thus, to acquire a comprehensive understanding of women's roles and activities, struggles, and gaps within formulations of blue economic approaches within the small-scale fisheries sector, the following main research and subsidiary research questions were conceptualised and provided a platform to explore better and understand these complexities.

Main research question (MRQ):

***MRQ:*** “What are women's roles and responsibilities in the small-scale fishing sector, operating under conditions of the ‘blue economy’?”

This further prompted the following sub-research questions (SRQ):

***SRQ1:*** What is the ‘blue economy’ and how does its South African iteration in the form of ‘Operation Phakisa’ affect the lives of fisherwomen?

***SRQ2:*** Who is included in the development of policy on small-scale fishing and how can policy and regulations be altered to accommodate equal fishing rights?

***SRQ3:*** Are women involved in attempts to protect the ocean from environmental harm? If so, how are they involved in such processes?

The format of this thesis is as follows. The first chapter, introduces the basic themes of this exploratory case study, highlighting the focus of the research and touching on some of the main themes which will be discussed throughout this thesis. The second chapter discusses the main literature consulted, determining how the small-scale fisheries sector is defined, who are included in policy and regulations discourses, exploring the current gaps in policies, and how they have been implemented to date. Focus is also placed on the location of fisherwomen in these domains, and what support and access to resources they have. The main notions of the blue economy, Operation Phakisa, and the theoretical framing and positioning of Marxist ecofeminism will be unpacked, and how it serves as an appropriate lens from which to view women in this SSF sector.

The third chapter unpacks the research methodology employed in this research, discussing the case study method, interpretive research approach, the various research techniques of participant observation, interviews, and focus groups, conducted with a snowball sample of fisherwomen. Descriptions and brief histories of both research sites are provided, as well as a brief ethical and reflective section on the research process.

The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters respectively analyse and discuss the findings of the research, linking them back to the literature and theory to help highlight and explain the main themes concerning the two case sites, and the women residing in those communities.

Finally, the seventh chapter, concludes the case study and restates the main points from each section of the research, whilst providing certain recommendations as to how research can further be expanded in this domain.

# II

## Literature Review

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### Introduction

In many fishing communities, specifically within industrialised and state-managed fisheries, women are marginal, invisible, low-paid, underpaid, with severely limited access to fisheries resources, and minimal influence over nature and human interactions with marine resources. This chapter will focus on presenting the relevant literature about this study, surrounding the main research themes, including, the small-scale fisheries sector, women in fisheries, the blue economy, Operation Phakisa, ocean grabbing, policy, and regulations. Therefore, the focus is situated on how the small-scale fisheries sector is defined, illustrating the crucial role that women play and how they are currently positioned in this, by highlighting their roles and struggles. Furthermore, research that has currently been conducted within the blue economy will be used to highlight evident gaps in its policy and regulations and explain how improvements could be made to make it more inclusive of marginalised groups and benefit all ecological, social, and economic areas involved.

The theoretical framework driving this study is the use of a Marxist ecofeminist lens that serves as a holistic catalyst for ecological, political, and social change. This lens offers a way of viewing women in the SSF sector by politicising, as opposed to romanticising, their contributions and providing avenues that can organise women through encouraging interconnectedness with the environment, while also addressing the subjugation of women and other vulnerable populations.

### Defining small-scale fisheries

In managing a fisheries sector, it becomes important to decide what type of fishers and their activities will form part of the sector. Often, smaller-scale operations reside at the bottom of the larger fishing industry and have generally accepted terms to explain myriad activities that form this sector (Pretorius, 2017:11). Without sufficient definitions and demarcations of

how what, and where fishers engage in their trade, it results in a lack of understanding and context, which is vital for effective development and most importantly, the implementation of policies and regulations (Pretorius, 2017:11).

To understand the position of women better within the SSF sector, one needs to understand how this sector is defined. A reason why women are often overlooked within the fishing industry is owing to *how fishing is defined, what counts as fishing, and who is considered a 'fisher'* (Harper *et al.*, 2017). Fishers are typically considered to be those who go out to sea and catch from a vessel, using specialised gear. Whereas those who collect, harvest, and produce products from invertebrates and small fish near shore, are not considered to be fishers. However, scholars have been grappling over the past two decades to delineate effectively between the definitions of traditional, artisanal, subsistence, and small-scale fishers, which are terms often used interchangeably (Sowman, 2006). Small-scale fishing is often an umbrella term used to include a range of activities, spanning from small-group traditional fishing operations, all the way through to the 'formal<sup>2</sup>' fishing sector (Sowman, 2006:61). Historically, the SSF sector has gone uncounted, undifferentiated, and often overlooked within local and national fishing statistics (Smith & Basurto, 2019).

The small-scale fisheries sector (inclusive of both men and women) is not limited to the Global South and confined to the past, as this sector has persisted as a way of life throughout human history, through adaptation, to ever-changing, environmental, social, and economic conditions. Fishing activities are not consistent across and within various countries and should be appropriately defined within each economic and socio-cultural context (Sowman, 2006:61). This indicates a lack of quantitative evidence, which could be used in collaboration with qualitative studies to further enhance fishers' (especially women's) rights with the allocation of permits and access to resources. Ideally, research should expand on the qualitatively rich data of women's fishing activities that can become quantified in terms of contributions to help identify overlooked social and economic contributions by women (Harper *et al.*, 2017), and be used to establish more accurate definitions, policies, and regulations.

For most, the term "small-scale fishery" evokes a mental image of small, traditional-style fishing, using labour-intensive methods with low-tech gear, predominately done

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<sup>2</sup> The use of this term in policies and regulations often invokes a natural divide about what is considered 'true' economic and viable activities, leaving to question, who are involved in the decisions of this and whether local fishers are considered.

by *fishermen* (Smith & Basurto, 2019). This understanding often obscures the wider, complex web of diverse livelihood activities that occur along the SSF value chain. Smith and Basurto (2019) acknowledge, that even the use of the term “value-chain” can be slightly misleading, as it implies a linear organisation of siloed links of fishing activities, that do not intersect or impact one another at various stages of the value chain. Yet, in practice, it is a complex web of various stakeholders and relationships that are constantly adapting and assembling new pathways within the SSF network (e.g., should a fisher not get any catch owing to bad weather, this would impact on post-fishing activities, as others would not be able to clean, prepare and market fish to generate an income). This research considers the SSF sector as encompassing wide-ranging intersecting activities that are undertaken throughout various points of a fishing network by both women and men, including the activities of harvesting from boats and on foot, along with pre-and post-harvest activities occurring on land, which is all dependent upon one another.

Before 1994, the South African fishing industry was controlled by an established white-owned industrialised sector, which systematically deployed its centralised management structure and control by regulating fishing through permits, quotas, and licenses (Isaacs, 2016). Black and coloured fishers were only able to fish on recreational permits (or informally), as inshore marine resources were open access, however, they were not permitted to sell any of their catches, as this was deemed illegal, albeit happening through informal markets (Isaacs, 2016). By the end of apartheid, with South Africa’s first democratic elections, the African National Congress (ANC) established legislation that focused on the upliftment of fishers and their communities through formal and equitable access to marine resources (Isaacs, 2016).

The Marine Living Resources Act (MLRA) 18 of 1998, of South Africa, initially established the fisheries policy and distinguished between commercial and recreational fishers, thereby for the first time acknowledging subsistence fishing in South Africa (Clark *et al.*, 2002:489, Arnason & Kashorte, 2006:46). However, this definition left much to be desired, as it encompassed numerous ambiguous components, which failed to characterise fully the differing sectors, such as small-scale and artisanal fishers. It also did not permit a separation between individuals who could genuinely be regarded as dependent on the resources to meet the needs of food security, from those who pursue their traditional livelihoods by selling of fish resources, but whose needs differ from those of industrial-scale fishers (Branch *et al.*, 2002:476, ASCLME, 2009). It also excluded people involved in post-fishing-related activities, such as cleaning, bait preparation, processing, and marketing, often tasks completed

by fisherwomen. Against this backdrop, the fisheries policy was governed by profit-seeking enterprises which lobbied for quotas to be distributed according to free-market principles, as competitive allocation would contribute to ‘providing stability in the fishing industry’ (Isaacs, 2016). Quotas that were initially allocated did not recognise small-scale fishers, thus, to obtain a quota, fisher organisations were pushed to become entrepreneurial. The MLRA’s (18 of 1998) restricted definition further did not accurately represent the significant number of fishers who identified as food insecure (Sowman, 2006:68). In the South African context, exercise should be cautioned against the loose use of the term ‘traditional’ (this had previously been used to distinguish between large- and small-scale fishing operations), as this dynamic sector tends to modernise its fishing equipment and methods over time (Sunde & Pedersen, 2007:5). For example, fishers who previously made use of cotton nets, and had the resources available to upgrade, would rather make use of nets made from nylon. The ‘traditional’ aspect that remains evident in the small-scale sector in the community’s livelihood strategies are embedded in an interrelated web of complex economic, social, and cultural relations (Sunde & Pedersen, 2007:5).

According to Masifundise<sup>3</sup>, the MLRA’s (18 of 1998) definition required amendments, to ensure that all fishers who exist within the ‘continuum of small-scale fisheries’ are represented (Sunde & Pedersen, 2007:5). In 2014, amendments to the current definition served as a guideline for expanding the parameters of new legislation and national policy, which started to enable fishers to gain more recognition, to expand their capacity to engage with the market, and not be precluded from resources.

Smith and Basurto (2019), in their research, capture the ongoing discourse on defining the small-scale fisheries sector. To date, they highlight that the only large-scale systematic study of a global definition of small-scale fisheries was conducted by Chuenpagdee *et al.* (2006)<sup>4</sup>. Practically, most researchers need to draw on some distinctions and parallel to categorise fisheries. Gibson and Sumaila (2017), in Smith and Basurto (2019), advocate that instead of attempting to find a universal fixed definition to encapsulate the small-scale fisheries sector, it is better to have an imprecise definition that can assist in augmenting interrelated

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<sup>3</sup> This is a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) fishing initiative that focuses on contextualising, promoting, and strengthening food sovereignty within small-scale fishing communities, as well as helping ensure a more democratic socio-economic and political environment.

<sup>4</sup> This was an analysis of national policies in 140 countries on the definitions of maritime small-scale fisheries. The results showed the lack of clear definitions of SSF in many parts of the world, but with an overall degree of consistency in characteristics used to define it.

issues and finding solutions to those. Thus, it is best to try and strike a balance amidst this ongoing debate and acknowledge the issues and limitations to defining the SSF sector, but identifying common characteristics to enable wider conversations around the sector to occur (Smith & Basurto, 2019). Therefore, for the context of this research, the definition as proposed by Masifundise will be used as a departure point, from which to comprehend this dynamic sector: *“The small-scale sector comprises all those who fish for or harvest marine resources on or within the nearshore sector, use no or relatively low technological gear and who have traditionally depended on these resources for their livelihoods, ranging from those who harvest primarily for food security and to put food on the table to those who sell their catch to sustain their livelihoods”* (Sunde & Pedersen, 2007:6).

## Women in the small-scale fisheries sector: a small drop in the ocean

Women are present in all areas of the fisheries value chain, including fish harvesting, processing, distribution, and activism, and contribute to the generation of wealth, the preservation of the ocean, and the maintenance of households and wider fishing communities (Gopal, Hapke, Kusakabe, Rajaratnam & Williams, 2020). As Rohe (2012) stipulates, fisherwomen are particularly independent, resourceful, and engage in economic activities. Thus, the notion that women are not merely marginal players but are active agents in the process of fishing is not new. However, even though their roles in the fisheries sector cannot be denied, minimal research exists about such women (Sundararajan, 2001), particularly within the South African context. In South Africa, women have historically played an integral role in fishing communities, typically through the involvement in the pre-and post-harvest activities of various fishing methods (Williams, 2001). Although women’s integral roles, and activities in fisheries have globally gained significant recognition, particularly within the domain of academia, yet, within broader society, governmental, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international agencies, recognition is not as widely acclaimed, and many of the roles and activities remain largely invisible, unrecognised, and under-or unpaid.

This stems from the case that worldwide, the small-scale fisheries sector has been characterised by a stark division of labour with women only being involved in caring for fishing households, and pre-and post-harvest fishing activities, while men go out to sea (Harper *et al.*, 2017; Gopal *et al.*, 2020). Fisherwomen’s most well-known positions are only thought to be in the processing and marketing of fish and other fishery products (Lentisco & Lee, 2015).

This perpetuates the notion that women participate minimally in fisheries economies. Both men and women are involved in the industry, however, their roles and activities are often different and more encompassing than research indicates, and is often embedded in a rich cultural history of tradition. This perception of the highly gender-segregated division of labour has contributed towards the development of initiatives for SSF, which has often led to dismissing women's valuable inputs into the sector about fisheries resource management and policy decision-making (Lentisco & Lee, 2015).

In recent years, women within the small-scale fisheries sector in South Africa have received some attention through research and the fishers' advocacy and rights activities and protests, which have demanded that a human-rights based (with a strong focus on their rights as women) approach be adopted to fisheries management (Raemaekers & Sunde, 2015). Fisherwomen within local fishing communities also are not always included in networks of small-scale fisheries activists, unless there is a drive from an NGO assisting, or a local community member taking charge of fighting for fisher rights, and more specifically the undermined rights of fisherwomen. Current fisheries research, management, and policy have traditionally focused on the formal, direct, and paid fishing activities, often neglecting other informal, unpaid, or underpaid roles and activities occurring throughout the fisheries value chain, where most fisherwomen are concentrated (Harper *et al.*, 2017; Du Preez, 2018). This results in a situation where men's and women's contributions to the SSF sector are not equally valued, recognised, and represented, frequently excluding women from fisheries decision-making processes.

Through various investigations, it is becoming widely recognised that women do participate and contribute to the fisheries sector in many ways all along the value-chain process. Presently, however, we could be gravely underestimating the size and economic value of the fishing industry (globally) by constantly overlooking and not correctly identifying the contribution of women in the fisheries sector (Harper *et al.*, 2017). Understanding the complex dynamic roles and activities of fisherwomen is crucial for preserving traditional coastal livelihoods, evident within the South African context. It is essential that correct and current data of fisherwomen's activities and roles be reported and tracked, to avoid misinterpretations, or equating work as unpaid and merely as an extension of household work. An example of this is identified in the work of Du Preez (2018) which highlighted that seagrass harvesting in Zanzibar, an activity predominantly performed by women, was considered domestic work, and

therefore not included in the overall official statistics of the fisheries sector. This results in situations of marine resources not being properly addressed in policies and regulations, causing various environmental and livelihood ramifications, as well as distorting women's contribution and relationship to marine ecosystems (Du Preez, 2018).

Research conducted by Gopal *et al.* (2020) highlighted that current statistical information collected by organisations, such as the FAO, often only reflects the global 'primary' fish production sector, focusing on direct fishing activities, of which women worldwide currently make up 14% of the fishers involved. This neglects the indirect and often also unpaid 'secondary' sector, where most women are involved. It also provides even fewer statistics about the small-scale fisheries sector. Failure to represent women properly in fisheries, suggests that policy interventions and implementation may miss the mark at both household and community levels, often causing ramifications for regional and national perceptions of the industry. This also results in markets without proper taxation and regulation (Du Preez, 2018). Qualitative research concerning the roles and activities of fisherwomen within the small-scale fisheries sector can help expand and quantify contributions that can aid in identifying gender inequalities and policy priorities, showing overlooked social and economic contributions by women (Harper *et al.*, 2020).

As indicated in this research, and the works of the likes of Gopal *et al.* (2020) and Harper *et al.* (2017), recognition of women in the fisheries industry is not new, as several decades ago key publications by Chapman (1987), and Nadel-Klein and Davis (1988) highlighted and brought it to the fore. Yet, research about roles, activities, inequalities, and access to resources, which women need and are involved in, particularly in the SSF sector, is still not very clear. Despite research that has documented women's contributions, and actions to advance fisherwomen's rights and inclusion in policy and regulations, achieving gender equity and pushing women's empowerment in the fisheries sector remains a challenge (Gopal *et al.*, 2020).

A common reason for the oversight of women in the fisheries sector is determined by how fishing is demarcated, who is considered a fisher, and what activities count as fishing (Harper *et al.*, 2017). In assessing the quintessential term 'fisherman' it often implies the act of fishing, generally performed by a man. However, upon closer inspection of fisheries locally and globally, there is recognition that while certain fishing activities and roles are more frequently assumed by men, others are dominated by women (Harper, Zeller, Hauzer, Pauly,

& Sumaila, 2012). Information on fisherwomen participation in fisheries decision-making processes is not widely seen within South Africa, research only indicating that they are becoming increasingly involved in Kwazulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. Therefore, there is a lack in the depth of understanding of fisherwomen's involvement and their influence is yet to be fully understood.

Policies and regulations still consider fishing as a distinct form of productive work, which is separate from social reproductive work, perpetuating this underlying gender division between women and men and the various roles that they assume. Research with a focus on women is important, as this would also expand on the notion that fisherwomen take on a triple burden within the SSF sector, being involved in the production of fishing and related areas, similarly productive work in their households and within their communities and context-specific activism (Ashfar & Barrientos, 1999).

Therefore, fisherwomen not only engage in various roles and activities within the fisheries value chain but also simultaneously manage various other daily responsibilities. The triple burden, further depicted by Zibani (2016) includes reproductive work (child-rearing, adult care, domestic work, etc.), productive work (work that is paid or for subsistence means, often considered 'informal'), and political and community work which includes collective community care and fighting for collective human and environmental rights. We can understand social reproduction, as showing how the production of goods and services and the production of life are part of one integrated process and requires a set of tasks (to maintain and reproduce life generationally and daily) to be completed to ensure labour-power. This is reproduced by three interconnected processes; by activities that regenerate the worker outside the production process; by activities that maintain and regenerate non-workers outside the production process; and by reproducing new workers for perpetuating the production process. These activities (which form the very basis of capitalism) are done mostly by women, without pay or acknowledgement by the 'system' (Bhattacharya, 2013).

Women's work is therefore then considered a service more than as work, which is assumed to be "naturally" carried out by women by virtue of being women (Verschuur *et al.*, 2018). Thus, women are continually positioned in the intersection between domestic and capitalist social relations of production and reproduction. Gender division in the fisheries sector is often reinforced by customs, norms, laws, and even practices. Certain fisherwomen's unpaid and unequal work of domestic-, child-, and extended community-care often limits their

capacity to accumulate ‘formal’ experience and capital, network establishments, travel, and more access to alternative markets (Du Preez, 2018). These challenges are often compounded by other social and ecological pressures, which include biodiversity loss, overfishing, changes in fishing laws and tenure rights, impacts from industrial fishing practices, and climate change (Du Preez, 2018).

## The ‘blue economy’: A captured approach of ocean resources

Once remote and filled with vast spaces, our ocean has become a space for accelerated economic development, where government and various corporate stakeholders are promoting an economic development agenda, through inserting notions such as ‘blue economy’ and ‘blue growth’ initiatives in common usage policies around the world (Bennett, Blythe, White & Campero, 2020). Globally, this intensified activity within and around ocean resources has coincided with the growing attention to sustainable resource management and governance. The ocean is claimed to be a “new frontier” (Bennett *et al.*, 2020; Spamer, 2018; Wheeler, 2018) with massive potential for economic growth, by framing the oceans as spaces of opportunity (Bennett *et al.*, 2020).

Gunter Pauli (2010) is seen as the innovator of the term, the ‘blue economy’, which was initially developed to describe a business model grounded in a systemic approach aimed at scientific innovations of marine and coastal environments for the benefit of the environment, to create economic revenue and provide social benefits. However, this concept gained most of its traction and development from three large international conferences: defining the environmental and resource aspect in the Stockholm United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development conference in 1972, unpacking the economic dimension at the Rio United Nations (UN) conference on Sustainable Development, and identifying the social dimension at the United Nations (UN) conference on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 (Eikeset *et al.*, 2018). These three significant milestones culminated in the formation of the “green growth” concept at the United Nations (UN) Rio conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 (also known as Rio +20). One of its broad aims was to refine institutional frameworks to ensure ‘sustainable development’, employing a ‘green economy’ approach (UN, 2014). The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) supported these perceptions and stressed widely to the international community that the focus should also be on maintaining a

healthy ocean ecosystem, through means of sustainable farming and fishing operations to attain sustainable 'blue growth' (Eikeset *et al.*, 2018).

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) (2015:2) suggests that the blue economy and green economy approaches are interlinked concepts in the pursuit of a common sustainable goal. Similarly, UNEP (2015) asserts that the central tenet of blue economy initiatives should parallel the guiding principles of the green economy, which focus on "*improved wellbeing and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.*" Thus, the blue economy rests on the backbone of the 'green economy,' which argues that the economy can expand without negatively impacting the environment, through decoupling Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from resource use and carbon emissions (Ertör & Hadjimichael, 2020) and by leading a vision of environmentally friendly technology, operated by a global policy network made up of various public and private stakeholders (Silver *et al.*, 2015).

The UN adopted ocean development as a part of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), thus the blue economy is interconnected with SDGs in a multitude of ways, particularly in providing livelihoods and employment opportunities in the pursuit of eradicating poverty (UNECA, 2016:9). At the instigation of the island and coastal countries (some of them from the South), the blue economy was used to insert marine economies into frameworks developed for the green economy. In 2015, the United Nations assigned one specific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 14) to focus on the conservation and sustainable use of the seas, oceans, and marine resources in pursuit of sustainable development (Bhattacharya, 2017). In 2016, the UN hosted the first World Ocean conference to support SDG 14, and a commitment to reduce or eradicate harmful fisheries subsidies was made. Pacific small island developing states advocated that for them, a green economy was a blue economy because of the importance of oceans and fisheries to their livelihoods (WWF, 2015). However, as argued by Cock (2014:25), these perceptions often disguise 'blue and green' neoliberal capitalism, by packaging it as sustainable development aimed at solving climate and economic crises. Underlying documents and frameworks towards sustainable development are instead a "promotion of marketisation and the decoupling of economic growth from environmental damage" (Cock, 2014:27), which suggests that blue and green frameworks and agendas are currently a 'wolf in sheep's clothing', without the successful translation into socially fair working policies and agendas.

A blue economy is supposed to provide not only economic but social benefits for present and future generations. It should recognise marine ecosystems as its natural capital, and protect and maintain them accordingly (WWF, 2015:2). It should also aspire for social and economic stability to attain a sustainable blue economy that is inclusive, marked by stakeholder participation, well-informed, precautionary and adaptive, accountable and transparent, holistic, cross-sectoral and long-term, and innovative and proactive. In a recent annual World Ocean Summit, which took place in Abu Dhabi in March 2019, the aim was “*to deepen engagement with the private sector and particularly private capital’s involvement with the ocean [with a vision of] an ocean in robust health and a vital economy*” (Project Aware, 2018 in Cohen *et al.*, 2019). Initiatives that are currently framed around this assertion argue that societies, marine environments, and economies will all benefit; albeit the rationale behind achieving this being an even distribution of gains has been contested (Cohen *et al.*, 2019).

Brent *et al.* (2018) succinctly capture the essence of the blue economy as a three-part “*masterfully mixed and powerful cocktail*” fix, containing the following parts: One part conservation: “*[firstly the] discourse quenches the social thirst for action in the face of climate change by attracting private investment for protected marine areas and sustainable tourism*”. One part protein: “*Secondly, it satisfies the growing global demand for healthy food and nutrition through the expansion of capital-intensive large-scale aquaculture, while brushing off the negative socio-ecological impacts of this technology*”. One part energy/extractive: “*lastly, it refreshes the palate with a burst of wind energy and a splash of new deep-sea minerals without disturbing the familiar and persistent flavour of oil and gas.*” The intention of these fixes, is to amalgamate all three parts into a framework for guiding policies and ocean politics. However, these fixes are not properly guided nor implemented, failing to address the underlying issues of environmental exploitation and the exclusion of small-scale fishers in blue economy frameworks.

Within the context of Africa, the blue economy has brought to the fore that the oceans are not merely places for the extraction of free resources and the dumping of waste products. The term is said to incorporate ocean values and services into the economic modelling and decision-making processes (Lesperance, 2016:9). Therefore, the sentiment of blue growth underlies the notion that the ocean is essential for multiple developments and conservation activities that boost growth in marine protected areas, the ocean economy, marine spatial

planning, and fisheries management with an implied alignment to the social objectives and concerns of small-scale fishers (Bennett, 2018:1; Cohen *et al.*, 2019:1).

Despite the progression and successful documentation of the proposed ideas surrounding the blue economy, another integral part missing is a consensual definition of the term. In the 2015 World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) report on the blue economy, two divergent stances are suggested. For some, a blue economy means the use of the sea and its resources for sustainable economic development. For others, it simply refers to any economic activity or means in the maritime sector, whether sustainable or not. Therefore, principles have been developed to fill this gap and promote a shared comprehension about what characterises a sustainable blue economy (WWF, 2015:1). It is then loosely understood as encompassing aquatic and marine spaces that include seas, oceans, coasts, lakes, rivers, and underground water, which comprises a vast range of productive sectors, such as transport, energy, underwater mining, aquaculture, tourism, and the fisheries sector (UNECA, 2016:5). However, with a lack of a universal definition, Spamer (2018) highlights what Verma (2018:103) contends as a definition of the blue economy as *“the integration of ocean economy with the principles of social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and innovative, dynamic business models.”* This should be interlinked with a sustainable development framework for developing countries (in the Global South) that will aid in addressing issues such as: *“equity in the access to, development of and sharing of benefits from marine resources, offering scope for reinvestment in human development and the alleviation of the crippling national debt”* (Lesperance, 2016:9). This is particular to the smaller and underrepresented stakeholders within this sector, such as small-scale fishers.

Research, however, conducted by Okafor-Yarwood *et al.* (2020) on eight case studies of blue economy projects across the African continent, accentuated that despite governments of African countries having the proper intentions about developing their ocean economies through blue economy initiatives, emphasis was mainly situated on economic outcomes and minimal focus given to ecological sustainability and social equity. It is vital that the blue economy incorporates the needs and concerns of local fishing communities in the planning and implementation of current and future blue initiatives, otherwise it would continue to perpetuate an unequal capitalistic paradigm, where only a small group would be benefiting from the ocean's resources. Researchers focusing on the blue economy around the globe, therefore, have either condemned the blue economy approach or confirmed that it should be termed ‘ocean

commodification' (Bond, 2019). Various authors such as Bennett (2018), Isaacs and Hara (2015), Brent *et al.* (2018), Bohler-Muller *et al.* (2019) also indicates the various negative impacts that the blue economy approach can elicit, if applied hurriedly and incorrectly, and that this approach must embody interconnectedness of local community inclusion, ecological conservation, and economic development, without prioritising one aspect over the other (Okafor-Yarwood *et al.*, 2020).

At the heart of the blue economy is the goal of socio-economic development, without the degradation of the environment. This notion is supposedly embedded in an integrated, participatory, and holistic approach, which promotes the idea that the productivity of healthy ocean and freshwater ecosystems are a pathway for maritime-based and aquatic economies. The 'blue economy' approach promises that areas, where coastal communities are situated, can benefit from the resources. This incorporates the real value of natural 'blue capital' into all aspects of economic activity (Spamer, 2015), where nature has further become embraced as a solution to socioeconomic crises (Silver, Gray, Campbell, Fairbanks & Gruby, 2015). Yet, with the ever-increasing blue economic discourse, the SSF sector is increasingly being pushed out by industrial fishing companies, large-scale aquaculture seafood buyers, MPAs for conservation, coastal development, and industrialisation of seascapes, which are mostly in pursuit of mineral wealth (Cohen *et al.*, 2019).

Moreover, as shown in European and other African-based research, a concern is how value is so often simplified to count jobs and profits created, without full consideration of other aspects involved in these initiatives (Standing, 2017). For example, in terms of shared ecosystems, private and public wealth can have a contrasting relationship, where a beach that is free for everyone to use produces no wealth in the traditional sense, whereas if it were to be sold as a piece of land to a developer, great financial wealth would be generated. Therefore, there are multiple dimensions to understanding the value in the blue economy, which extends beyond profits and job creation. One significant discourse which arose is a stronger focus on gender equality. Men and women in blue economy initiatives are situated differently within ocean economies and therefore require different understandings and regulations.

The small-scale fisheries sector appears to be dominated by men, with minimal recognition of women, and in instances where they are considered along the value chain, it is primarily focused on the processing and marketing sections (Merayo, 2019). This picture does not truly reflect the multidimensional roles and responsibilities that fisherwomen engage in all

along the fisheries' value chain, as this extends well beyond livelihoods to household and community roles (Elapata & De Silva, 2019). Despite their large contribution to the labour force, women often lack access to natural resources, as they are given inferior property rights, and receive benefits that are disproportionately low compared to their male counterparts (UNECA, 2016:33). At the same time, women usually carry out essential household tasks, ensure food security, and are largely responsible for child-rearing. They represent a significant portion of the non-monetised core economy. When data is available about fisheries, it is often not gender-segregated, making it difficult to draw an accurate picture of women's roles in the blue economy sector. Gender disaggregation will contribute to the understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the sector and provide a more nuanced view in the formulation of ideas that respond to stakeholders' needs.

Although there is increasing diversity in the economic activities of the various blue economy sectors, there remains a propensity to exclude and marginalise women as well as other underrepresented groups and youth (UNECA, 2016:34). Therefore, to realise the full potential of the blue economy, an effective inclusion of all social groups, especially women, whose contribution is not well recognised, is required (Elapata & De Silva, 2019). Africa has supposedly propelled and made significant strides in terms of research, knowledge, and technological innovation in pursuit of blue growth, which is evidenced by the initiation of Operation Phakisa.

## Operation Phakisa

Within South Africa, the 'big fast results' methodology underlying Operation Phakisa (Masie & Bond, 2018), announced in mid-2014, by the president at the time, Jacob Zuma, is intended to unlock the economic potential of South Africa's oceans and its coastlines. The 'growth potential' of the plan is seen to be able to contribute up to R 177 billion to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), coupled with the possibility of providing between eight hundred thousand and one million job opportunities. Zuma intended to initiate the growth of ocean-related economic activities through the conversion of nature into capital, in an attempt to extract value from eco-systems, in parallel with similar international processes (Masie & Bond, 2018). A major limitation of Operation Phakisa is hinted at its nomenclature. "Phakisa means 'hurry up' in Sesotho, one of South Africa's eleven official languages, and appears to impart urgency in opening up access to ocean resources, and in ecological concerns. Yet, what has occurred is

slow policy development, weak institutional arrangements, a lack of leadership, and weak stakeholder communications (Vreÿ, 2019). One of the implications of a hurried approach is the neglect of communities' needs and engagements with the environment and the imposition of top-down conservation policies which are resisted by members from disenfranchised communities (Fakier, 2018).

The first phase of Operation Phakisa is led by the Department of Environmental Affairs, with the central focus on four priority sectors namely, offshore oil and gas exploration, marine protection services and governance, marine transport and manufacturing, and aquaculture. This initiative intends to unlock the economic potential of South Africa's South, East, and West coasts. Initially, the governance of the ocean's potential was shared by all departments, which created competition between them rather than initiating holistic planning. As such the implementation of Phakisa has altered this, placing the Environmental Affairs Department as the lead actor (Kings, 2016). The government has recognised the need to balance economic use of the oceans with environmental integrity, through the adoption of institutional frameworks aimed at improving the protection of South African oceans.

Financially, the most essential contributions were anticipated to come from companies promoting shipping investments, port infrastructure, seabed mining, and a new generation of offshore oil and gas extraction projects (Bond, 2018). Yet, these contributions create a metabolic intensification of nature-capital relations, which sees the celebration of an offshore gas discovery amidst environmental awareness, with examples of extreme weather changes, ocean acidification, and ocean warming (Bond, 2018). Therefore it sits in conflict with underlying capitalist tendencies with its associated elements of unfair development, excessive resource extraction, and commodity price volatility which are linked to over-accumulation, financialisation, and globalisation (Bond, 2018). Masie and Bond (2018) argued that the initiation of Operation Phakisa followed from a period of rising discourse between what Jacklyn Cock (2004) referred to as the 'red, brown, and green' resistance movements which included groups such as farmers, mineworkers, climate activists, feminists, and fishers. These groups intended to introduce strategies associated with a 'just transition' philosophy (Masie & Bond, 2018). Notably, an effective 'just transition' for the likes of Operation Phakisa would require 'an alternative growth path and new ways of producing and consuming (Cock, 2013:9).

Therefore, many of the policies and regulations proposed under the umbrella of Operation Phakisa, have been implemented without the full engagement of coastal

communities and their members. Timothy Walker, a maritime specialist in Pretoria argues that the country would need to overcome centuries of ‘inward thinking’ (Kings, 2016) and develop a new thought process about the ocean in a very short period. Nadine Strydom from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) further emphasised the need for an inclusive nature for Operation Phakisa, thus indicating that the implementation should be meticulously thought out, as capitalising from the ocean needs to be in line with the renewability of its resources (Kings, 2016).

Furthermore, proponents of the blue economy approach suggest that adopting a blue economic approach, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals of the current 2030 Agenda, could enhance economic growth whilst protecting the marine environment and its resources through the successful implementation of Operation Phakisa. However, misguided policies, institutional and regulatory frameworks, and inefficiently planned and unregulated coastal development challenge the successful implementation of this approach (Wheeler, 2019). Thus, ongoing trends of degradation and exploitation of marine and coastal ecosystems have been prevalent, and the gap between the Global South and Global North countries in areas of maritime commerce is growing increasingly.

At a global forum, held in Johannesburg in November 2018 by the Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE), Operation Phakisa and the overall framework of the blue economy was likened to the exploitative and environmentally destructive operations of extractive mining<sup>5</sup>. The testimonies of fisherfolk from South Africa, Madagascar, Papua New Guinea, India, and the Philippines converged around a statement that ‘the Blue Economy needs to be exposed as a process of primitive accumulation through the dispossession of small-scale fishers and coastal communities of their territories and maritime resources’ (TCOE, 2019). This assembly was unanimous in its rejection of the ‘blue economy’ as a vehicle for equity and environmental justice, and instead referred to it as ‘ocean grabbing.’ This notion primarily occurs through policies, laws, and practices that are in the process of (re) defining and (re) allocating uses, control, and access of fisheries resources away from small-scale fishers and their communities (Pedersen *et al.*, 2014:3).

This is often implemented with minimal concern for environmental consequences. Powerful economic actors involved in the integral decision-making process around fisheries

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<sup>5</sup> Solari and Fakier (2020).

are ‘ocean grabbing’ through holding and wielding the power to decide how and for what purposes marine resources are used, managed, and conserved (Pedersen *et al.*, 2014:3), without the consideration of fishers and their communities. Therefore, these stakeholders’ central motive is making a profit and extracting value, whilst steadily obtaining control of both fisher’s and fisheries resources and their associated benefits. Despite the growing focus on the preservation of natural resources and the attempt to evaluate the current wave of enclosures targeting the world’s fisheries and ocean and inland water sources; the experiences, rights, and knowledge of fishers (specifically women) and fisheries as a whole remain ignored and neglected in academic and activist circles and the media (Pedersen *et al.*, 2014). With the term enclosure, Pedersen and Barbesgaard draw on Polanyi’s use of the term in stating that; “*enclosures have appropriately been called a revolution of the rich against the poor*” (Pedersen *et al.*, 2014:4). This ‘revolution of the rich’ is progressing and has a devastating impact on the well-being of small-scale food producers, specifically fishers and fishing communities.

As such, the worldwide blue frameworks that emerge (and inform the likes of Operation Phakisa) generally undermine the position of small-scale fish production and systems, while strengthening the position of corporate actors and other powerful players. As illustrated in the literature above, we can further understand this as a trifecta of exclusion. Firstly, small-scale fishers lose their legal rights to fish or harvest marine resources owing to alterations in legal frameworks, which require them to have a market-embedded right to fish (Pedersen *et al.*, 2014:6). Secondly, small-scale fishers, who previously had direct access to their customary fishing waters and land that surround these, are suddenly losing this access (Pedersen *et al.*, 2014:7). This occurs through various forms, including marine protected areas, privatisation of coastal zones, granting of coastal concessions to private companies, to name but a few.

Thirdly, small-scale fisheries are progressively facing a severe decrease in catches owing to both overfishing and the destruction and pollution of marine resources (Pedersen *et al.*, 2014:7). As such, a key driving force underlying these mechanisms of ocean grabbing is the logic of the current economic system (blue economy), where capital accumulation is linked to increasing corporate control over access to land and conservation of natural resources which further dispossess fishers.

## Theoretical framing: Marxism and waves of commodification

A new wave of industrialisation and marketisation is on the surge, in the form of the commodification of the environment (water, land, and air) (Burawoy, 2006:356); the scale of which is only now becoming apparent if one looks at various policy and economic initiatives. Trends point to accelerating economic activity in and around the ocean, against the backdrop of a soaring global population, growing affluence and consumption alongside intensified immiseration, and the need for new sources of food, energy, and minerals (EIU, 2015:8). These activities are grounded in the realm of the commodification of nature, which has accompanied the commodification of labour and money. Therefore, the process marketisation of the ocean is not new but has been increasingly combined with neoliberal processes, such as financialisation, which, in the case of the ocean, affects the fisheries sector, especially small-scale fisheries, through ocean grabbing. This causes negative ecological effects, compounded by the commodified control over licenses and fish quotas (under private ownership it is not always visible how fish stocks are fully managed) in the name of preserving and protecting the ocean.

Neoliberal processes within the fisheries sector which claim to benefit society at large, benefit those who can accumulate wealth. Accumulation, at the heart of capitalism, is produced by the exploitation of labour, and the expropriation of natural resources which is considered to be a free contribution to capital. Society depends on free appropriation from nature, which forms our material basis of work and production. This metabolic rift is where capitalism deprives the earth itself as the foundation of the accumulation of capital. For Marx, nature under conditions of capitalism, “*has become an object of utility, and has ceased to be recognised as a power in itself*” (Eagleton, 2011: 231). Material production allows society to standardise, facilitate, and control the relationship between humanity and nature itself. Nature is crucial to understanding labour, as Foster *et al.* (2011) elucidate, for Marx, all human activity derives its core from nature, where production and work constitute the ‘active human transformation of nature, yet also of humans, the human relation to nature and as humans themselves.’

We, engage with nature and change it, yet at the same time, we change ourselves. As a metabolic exchange between humanity and nature occurs, nature, according to Marx, is an eternal condition, which does not alter. Rather, what alters are the various manners in which

humanity works on nature. Thus, nature supplies our needs, which we cannot live without, yet it is considered external to us, and according to Marx, the way that we supply these needs taken from our ‘inorganic body, nature,’ is the central tenet of our labour (Terzakis, 2010). The degradation of our environment has been driven largely by greed and profit maximisation (Standing, 2017), where the value of nature is always constructed discursively to control its resources and to minimise the access and use rights of its former users (Doerr, 2016). As Foster (2018, para. 32) explains, “...*the expropriation of the earth has invariably been accompanied by the expropriation of humans...through [various] forms of labour and servitude always present at the logical and historical boundaries of the system*”, which allows capitalism to expand and thrive, thereby impacting on minority groups, such as livelihood labourers in the small-scale fisheries sector.

The ocean provides broad-based public goods, which, through the management and government strategies proposed in blue economy initiatives, may heighten, or lead to inequitable capture of these goods to generate private wealth for a select few (Cohen *et al.*, 2019). Fishing rights for only a small, mostly male, group of SSF operate under conditions of financialisation by a select group controlling ownership of licenses, permits and Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs) (Pinkerton, 2017). This is one way in which the blue economy operates under a neoliberal capitalist logic that influences the governance of small-scale fisheries through regulations and policies, such as inducing fleet separation, owner-operator requirements, and various prohibitions.

In attempting to understand the capitalist transformation of the fisheries sector, through the implementation of a blue economy, what can be seen is the emergence of a ‘blue capitalism,’ paralleling what we know as ‘green capitalism’, which is not necessarily an alternative path for development, but rather a ‘wolf in sheep’s clothing, by reducing nature to ‘natural capital’ (Cock, 2014:39), thereby capturing nature as opposed to sustaining it. Small-scale fishers, particularly women resist capitalist transformation, however, in the process are absorbed into capitalist enterprises.

## Theoretical positioning: Marxist ecofeminist lens

Judith Plant stipulates that: “*the rape of the earth, in all its forms, becomes a metaphor for the rape of [women], in all its many guises*” (Sydee & Beder, 2001:282). Ecofeminists generally agree that the domination of women and nature are fundamentally connected (Sydee

& Beder, 2001) and that environmental efforts are integral to overcoming the oppression of women as well as oppression over nature.

In 1974, the notion of 'ecofeminism' was first envisioned by Francoise d'Eaubonne as a connection between ecology and women, specifically, that feminine power is needed to combat ecological crises and systems of male dominance which gave rise to it (MacGregor, 2006: 18). D'Eaubonne held the belief that women are more infuriated by the scale of environmental destruction, as they give birth to future generations, and therefore are more conscious of trying to preserve the world for them (MacGregor, 2006: 18). However, since the term's conception, there have been varied debates, adaptations, and amalgamations of this initial tenant. Charlene Spretnak effectively illustrates that there have been three significant paths that have informed the path of ecofeminism (Schmonskey, 2012; Macgregor, 2006). Firstly, it stemmed from radical/cultural dominance theory which rejected tenants of Marxism and critical theory that held the idea that domination was solely based on money and class, disregarding both nature and women (Schmonskey, 2012). Secondly, was the path of nature-based goddess religions, which were centred on the honouring of women, nature, and peace, void from destruction and domination (Schmonskey, 2012). Lastly, was environmentalism and green politics, as multiple women within various careers of technology, policy, science, and the environment, already had a connection to feminism, but we're more concerned about glass ceilings in the careers of women.

However, more recent updates of the progression of ecofeminism, depict a different story, emphasising the complex root system that sustains it. Various areas, such as anti-toxics, animal rights, anti-nuclear and feminist spirituality are all essential streams into the vast lake of ecofeminism (Macgregor, 2006). Over the decades, ecofeminists have adopted various styles of argument, where most consider environmental and social crises as an inevitable outcome, the damage which is often wrought on society by patriarchal capitalism (Salleh, 2001). Implied in the term ecofeminism, is women's struggle to have rights (human rights) to access natural resources while asserting an ecological position from which such a struggle arises. This connects the exploitation and domination of women with that of the environment and argues that there is a connection between women and nature, which is given meaning by their shared history of oppression (Salman & Iqbal, 2007). Ecofeminism differs crucially from the quintessential 'green political thought,' in that it does not observe the altering of an Anthropocentric view of the world as an end in itself, but rather seeks to re-organise the current

power-based structures and relationships governing it (Thomas & Bhardwaj, 2013). The former thought pattern embedded in a patriarchal framework, focuses on hierarchical thinking, situating more value on what is considered 'up; as opposed to 'down'. It often consists of value dualisms, where pairs are considered opposites rather than complimentary, highlighting the underlying logic of domination, which 'seeks to justify subordination' (Warren, 1999 in Thomas & Bhardwaj, 2013). These conceptual binaries can be described as man/woman, self/other, human/nature, reason/emotion, and so forth. These are used as linguistic strategies to alienate the work and life of women, and various others deemed closer to nature (Salleh, 2001). The importance of understanding this is not the general conception that reality endorses and functions in binary opposite sets, but rather that the former in these sets are believed to be superior to the latter.

At its most basic, Marxist ecofeminism claims that the locus of environmental and social crises can be attributed to the accumulation motive of capital (Solari & Fakier, 2020). It is argued that women and nature are dominated and exploited, as the material and discursive institutions of patriarchal capitalism necessitate this for surplus extraction (Solari & Fakier, 2020). Material ecofeminists seek to shift the examination of naturalising differences, to rather analyse the material structures that create the relationships between nature, women, and men (Sydee & Beder, 2001: 284). For them, the main paradox in capitalism is between reproduction and production. Economically acknowledged and valued formal labour done by men is differentiated from the invisible domestic labours often performed by women, especially those in the global South. Women's roles, which is typically confined to the domestic sphere and associated mainly with 'animal-like' infants, combined with the clear divide between the private and public sphere, ensure that they are always seen as closer, and inextricably linked to nature (Thomas & Bhardwaj, 2013). Thus, women's work is presumed to occur and remain with nature, while men's labour is separated from nature (Sydee & Beder, 2001).

As ecological concerns combined with feminism, ecofeminism has come to be defined as "*the diverse range of women's efforts to save the earth, as well as...the transformations in feminist thought that have resulted in new conceptualisations of the relationship between women and nature*" (Susan Mann in Swanson, 2015:89). Ecofeminism, therefore, is a theoretical approach that underpins the relationship between society, the self, and nature that is built upon qualities of sustainability over destruction, and shared care over the exploitation of nature for profit (Jumawan-dadang, 2015). The suppression of women and nature is not a

biological determined, it is a social construct comprised of intricate relationships that are subject to change (Schmonskey, 2012). The concept of ‘ecofeminism’ provides a platform for this change. It provides a space for thought patterns and organisation to be characterised by the intricacies of our relationship to the environment, which if, used appropriately, assists in addressing the subjugation of women, vulnerable people, and nature. Classifying women and marginalised communities with the environment allows for the recognition of social and environmental injustices created under conditions of capitalism, from an integrated, unique, and often forgotten perspective, which can foster solidarity (Schmonskey, 2012).

However, while providing a space for valuable dialogue and providing insights into disputes of globalisation and its impacts on women and the environment, an ecofeminist lens is limited in addressing the underlying causes and forces that drive globalisation (Sydee & Beder, 2001). Few ecofeminists have navigated the issue of globalisation head-on; however, many have discussed the impacts on women, nature, and society as a whole. This is particularly evident in women contesting capitalism and globalisation from grassroots women’s organisations (Fakier & Cock, 2018). This highlights the need for a more nuanced, comprehensive, and modified lens from which ecofeminism can competently combat these malevolent social complexities.

### (Re)birth of ecofeminism

A common underlying trend pervasive in established ecofeminist theories is the discourse of ‘eco-maternalism.’ This refers to the link between a mothering and caring disposition, and their unique predisposition to care for nature (MacGregor, 2006). This explains that women have natural protective instincts towards home, and family life, ultimately engendering a caring stance towards nature. This grows out of the idea that women’s values and ethics are closer and more in sync with nature than that of men’s values and ethics (Salman, 2007:853). This often results in a romanticisation of women’s relationship with nature, which does not always consider the myriad ways in which ‘*women experience, define, and negotiate their relationship with [nature]*’ (Jamawan-Dadang, 2015:63). For the most part, world environmental problems generally disproportionately affect women, as women’s work, including the critical role they play in livelihood activities, is often linked to the environment.

The majority of previous ecofeminist work is based on this discourse and still prevails in multiple ecofeminist perspectives that have ascended over periods. In line with the definition

provided earlier by Susann Mann, there is not a conclusive and specific definition of ecofeminism, as there are myriad interpretations. However, there are universal principles that are evident within all the variations. One of the core tenants accentuates that the oppression of women is not separate from environmental and social issues (Schmonskey, 2012). Ecofeminists strive to treat women's right to natural resources as a human right. This connects the exploitation and domination of women with that of the environment and argues that there is a connection between women and nature that also comes from their shared history of oppression (Salman, 2007:853).

Recently, ecofeminism seems to be navigated by a demand for a feminism that is driven by women's grassroots organising, which situates emphasis back to women's identities and everyday practises (Macgregor, 2006: 32). This conception offers the chance to ignite global politics and unite social movements, both in the South and North around subsistence needs that are shared by all people, regardless of culture, class, race, ideology, or economic position. Macgregor (2006) argues that the virtues of caring and nurturing need to be linked to a theory of democratic politics and justice, to allow women to politicise as opposed to essentialise these concepts. Thus, ecofeminist writings have progressively shifted away from theory and moved towards a more 'activist' nature, which Macgregor (2006:19) highlights as "lived experience." Ecofeminism can therefore be established as an activist stance and theory by recognising the strength of women's participation in grassroots activism (Sydee & Beder, 2001:282).

Historically, ecological feminism has grounded its discourse in debating questions such as why women are assumed to be more naturally connected to nature as opposed to men's connection, or how do women's gendered roles and experiences grant them specific insight into human-nature relations, and ultimately why women seem to exhibit more concern for the quality of their environments compared to that of men (Macgregor, 2006:1). In attempting to answer these questions and the general evocation of ecofeminist theories premised on maternalism, these have been embedded in Western ideology and granted predominately white-middle class women entry into the realm of politics (MacGregor, 2006:19), thus, excluding a large population of women, particularly from the Global South. This enforces the idea that women are passive caretakers, without consideration of their lives as political subjects. MacGregor (2006) queries why so many ecofeminists affirm women as special caretakers for nature, without considering their lives as political agents, or what the consequences are for women to bear such an immense responsibility. Activism that women engage in should be a

choice to engage in public political life, and not merely as an extension of private roles (MacGregor, 2006:3).

In the contemporary context of a society that is dominated by white men and enforces and constructs women's capacity to care, ecofeminism should politicise and not romanticise their capacity. It should recognise care as a form of work and a moral orientation that has been feminised and privatised in the West and should be justly distributed between society if gender equality and sustainability are to be met (MacGregor, 2006:6). Too much weight is generally placed on the private identities and experiences, and not enough on the public and political dimensions of women's lives. Despite women creating meaningful connections between their mothering roles and engagement with grassroots and eco-political activism, it is often translated and reduced to 'care' (MacGregor, 2006:215), which can often undermine the significance and democratic potential of ecofeminism in the political realm.

The traditional view of ecofeminism expressed the connectedness of nature with women but has not engaged and discussed the cost and consequences to women who engage in environmental activism, nor has it been questioned as to who has control over natural resources. Women's control over natural resources can be crucial for enhancing their well-being, and their bargaining power within and outside the household, particularly within policy and regulation contexts. As such, women's actions and engagement with environmental discourses should be regarded as a form of feminist ecological citizenship, which offers ecofeminist positions that are non-essentialist, oppositional, and democratic (MacGregor, 2006:4). This has the potential for sustainable human-nature relationships as well as to serve as a positive political identity for women to assume, and that allows for the expression of gender-related and environmental concerns, which do not link women (in general) to their private sphere of care and maternal virtue (MacGregor, 2006:4). Feminist ecological citizenship promises an alternative language for articulating the goals of ecofeminist politics, which embraces and extends beyond the language of care.

Part of this research is embedded in a demand for justice, where women, considering their subordinate economic and social status in vast work sectors in the world (such as the SSF sector), are provided with the capacity, resources, and political support they need to maintain their livelihoods, care for the environment, and address their exploitations and vulnerabilities. A Marxist feminist-ecological citizenship theory is beneficial as a lens through which to investigate these concerns, as under capitalist conditions women are often treated as inferior to

men, and nature is often treated as inferior to culture. This is ingrained in the previously mentioned notion that humans are separate from, and often 'superior' to, the natural environment. The domination of women and the domination of nature are fundamentally connected, and the environmental efforts are therefore integral in work to overcome the oppression of women in all domains of society, particularly in the political domain.

# III

## Methodology

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### Introduction

It was argued in the previous chapter that there is a need for more nuanced research in the small-scale fisheries sector, particularly from the perspective of women. Such research would further highlight and expose knowledge gaps that exist on a micro-level scale, concerning women's roles and responsibilities while operating under conditions of a blue economy in the global South. This research focuses on two sites, Steenberg's Cove and Kleinmond. These are both small-scale fishing communities that rely on fishing for subsistence and as a way of life, where fishing is imbued with cultural, historical, and material significance (Solari & Fakier, 2020). This chapter discusses the phases through which fieldwork was undertaken at the two research sites, including a contextual description of these areas. It further illustrates that the research design<sup>6</sup> chosen was an exploratory case that followed a qualitative interpretivist nature, which aided in further exploring and analysing through using a thematic network analysis of fisherwomen's roles and responsibilities and their position in the blue economy.

### Research strategy and design

#### i) Research strategy

The notions of small-scale fishing, the blue economy, livelihoods, ocean grabbing, nature, and the understandings and experiences of policy and regulations are multifaceted and encompassing in nature, as people establish meaning through their interpretations. Therefore, to obtain an in-depth, empathetic understanding and analysis of these concepts, a qualitative research strategy that followed an interpretivist epistemology was employed. Interpretivist epistemology is used because it contrasts the positivist aim of solely explaining cause and effect, as *understanding* is rather the focus of interpretivist approaches to knowledge (Hiller,

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<sup>6</sup> **Research design** refers to the logic employed to link the data that is collected (and conclusions drawn from research) to the initial research questions of the study.

2016:5). Thus, the focus is on emphasising that humans construct and define knowledge as they interpret their experiences of and in the world, as their knowledge is embedded in their experience and bound to their values, morals, and political stances. To understand the situation and realities of fishers, it is first necessary to understand the meanings that change and concerns held for fishers, and not just to understand their actions which often happen as a reaction to situations (e.g., being denied fishing rights with no explanation from the government). This approach centres on how fishers make sense of their lived realities and experiences, and how they attach meanings to them. The experiences of fisherwomen and their communities are essentially context-bound within a particular historical, social and material context in that they are not free from their location, time or the minds of other people (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Therefore, the constructed nature of the world, politics, values, and interests of participants involved in the study and the wider SSF sector formed part of this research.

This choice of strategy allowed observations of fisherwomen and other agents in the SSF sector, from which I could draw an understanding and interpret their behaviours and perceptions. This was primarily done through the collection of subjective data (explained below), which was then further related to the broader notions of the blue economy, ocean grabbing, and ecofeminism. The research design is intended to start bridging the gap in knowledge and understanding of the blue economy in the context of South Africa; particularly the policy formations surrounding it, as well as how fisherwomen and their communities navigate and interact with the blue economy and nature itself.

## ii) Exploratory case study as research design

The use of an exploratory case study is best suited for research contexts in which the research questions are in the form of *'what'*, and the primary goal is to develop enquiry and the initial investigations are about social phenomena, where a researcher does not influence observable events (Yin, 2014:10).

I considered an exploratory case study research design best-suited for exploring the perceptions, dynamics, strategies, roles and activities of fisherwomen operating within the blue economy. This design was chosen as generating exploratory research which would shed light on both the surface and deeper values of the under-explored roles and activities of women within the blue economy. Yin (1984:23) defines a case study research method *"as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the*

*boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.*” Yin further explains that a case study can be used in various situations, significantly contributing to our understandings of individual, group, social, and political behaviours (Hill, 2017:35). In simplifying this, MacDonald and Walker (1975) argue that a case study is an exploration of an instance in action (Simons, 2015:13). The choice of the word ‘instance’ is significant in this definition because it does imply the goal of generalisation. As such, there is a possibility of generalising from the particular, which could yield potential insights of universal significance (Simons, 2015:13), particularly concerning policy and regulation formations impacting the SSF sector and women working within it. This possibility of generalising allows people to share and understand other people’s social experiences intimately, owing to its extended nature. Tellis (1997) states in Hill (2017:37) that this type of generalised engagement through a case study “*gives a voice to the powerless and voiceless,*” which is necessary concerning SSF policy but could also demonstrate the agency of women fishers, who are too easily assumed to be vulnerable and voiceless. Thus, the case study illuminated the complexities and relationships within this realm of fishers and their wider contexts, as the goal was to understand the participants’ perspectives and to reduce an outsider’s top-down influence in the research.

Owing to the nature of this project and time constraints in setting up interviews, talking to various stakeholders, driving to the research site locations (which are very far apart, as well as from where I reside) the case study unfolded over two years (2017 until 2019), which included trying to attend workshops that were scheduled, as well as to be in line with the fishing season, as this does not occur year round. Over two years, also provided the opportunity to see if any systemic changes would happen. Notably, most interviews took place in 2017, however, observations and site visits extended until 2019. Bad weather and other factors which ruled out in-person interviews allowed the data to be written up at different lengths. The use of vignettes and various contextualised descriptions of observations throughout the thesis allowed the research to be explained more easily and thus, therefore, be able to be better understood by a wider audience of readers (Simons, 2015:18).

A case study implies the importance of co-constructing perceived realities (of all the actors involved in the SSF sector) through relationships and joint understandings, affording reflexivity to understand the case (Simons, 2015:18). The true strength of this rests in its ability to allow a holistic view of the phenomena being researched in a ‘real-life context’ (Hill,

2017:36). Therefore, interacting, observing, and investigating fishers within their specific and extended contexts, such as in their homes, at work, and in shops, offered a multi-layered view of the roles, responsibilities, struggles, and overall situation of women fishers and their families.

The research was carefully transcribed, and most information was directly quoted from fishers. It was organised attentively and systematically to avoid misinterpretations and bias as much as possible. This research and writing of the thesis took more time than initially planned and the possibility of this study being locked in time while policies and frameworks changed was real. However, to date, no progress has yet been established, and if it does – hopefully, positively – then the research can be used in archives to ensure similar situations do not occur in other fishing communities, as well as to have documents on fishers' situations and plights.

Conducting research sensitive to participants' time and convenience meant the need to find suitable times to conduct the interviews with fishers, as on several instances the weather predicted was very favourable for fishing. Since the women would therefore be engaged in direct or indirect fishing activities, interviews were subject to rescheduling. This was also the case in instances of political upheaval, where fishers would be taking part in protests or travelling to the Department of Environment, Forestry, and Fisheries (DEFF). However, discussing these schedule changes brought out women's connections to weather patterns, concerns about poaching among their youth, and their intricate political organisations.

Another consideration was the slight language barrier, as most of the fishers spoke Afrikaans<sup>7</sup>, and felt most comfortable conversing in their mother tongue. This created an interesting space, as I had a translator assist with communicating in the local vernacular in sections where I could not keep up a fluid conversation. The intention behind this was to make the participants feel at ease in speaking and embracing the concept of allowing culture to convey meaningful actions (Regmi, Naidoo & Pilkington, 2010). This did enable more intense subjective anecdotes to be conveyed to me, which helped to establish rapport and mutual respect. However, one issue that became quite prevalent from using an Afrikaans white middle-aged woman translator was that some of the fisher's attitude towards her changed, as they would at times speak to her from a distance and with exaggerated respect calling her "*mevrou* (ma'am/madam)". This form of address highlighted the deeply rooted racial and gender tones

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<sup>7</sup> A common official language of Southern Africa.

evident in the Western Cape Province, a legacy still at play in the exclusion of fisherwomen from policy discussions, specifically in the SSF sector. Yet, these occasionally subdued conversations were contrasted by other more excited, clear and powerful interviews when fisherwomen voiced their perspectives loudly and took charge of the interviews. These women included Hermin, Sarah and Rowina. There did not seem to be an issue with the women and myself in terms of the language barrier, as I still mostly spoke as much Afrikaans as I could, which gave a sense of respect towards the fishers, as I opted to rather converse in their mother tongue, and only spoke minimal English to convey any information from my side. The focus group did provide a great space though for conversing, as when one person would start a theme, it would get carried on by another person, who would then either continue in Afrikaans or in English, depending on their preference.

## Research in context

This paper focuses on two research sites, Steenberg's Cove and Kleinmond. These are both small-scale fishing communities that rely on fishing as a means of subsistence and as a way of life, and where fishing is imbued with cultural and historical significance. Through a local network, I had access to key informants that enabled entrance to the respective communities and the fishers, particularly women, who are currently working in the small-scale fishing industry, operating under conditions of a 'blue economy'.

Preliminary scouting of the research sites was done via three means, primarily through a well-known ecology expert at the University of Cape Town, who provided me with the contact details of Hermin<sup>8</sup>, who is an integral participant in the research. I then journeyed 180km to the small town of Mamre, where I was invited into her home, which boasted an exquisite garden, a true testament of her philosophy of 'living from the earth'. I conducted an informal interview to first establish how we would proceed in going to the first fishing community of Steenberg's Cove, where her fisherman son, John, resided. The second means was through a face-to-face introduction at a small-scale fisheries workshop held in Cape Town in May 2017. Here I met a host of fishers and advocates for fishing rights, more specifically, my next vital participant, Sarah, who revealed significant information on the intricate operations of the small-scale fisheries sector. The final means was through an online connection at the local Kleinmond WWF offices, who was, at first, the contact point with other

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<sup>8</sup> All names used in the thesis are pseudonyms unless referring to public figures.

fisherwomen in the Kleinmond area. This informant also provided the means of having a perspective from an organisation, such as the WWF.

### i) Steenberg's Cove

St Helena Bay is a quaint coastal town on the west coast of South Africa, which is characterised by a rich history of being the famous location where Vasco da Gama first set foot in South Africa. It is the only area along the South African west coast where the sun rises across the bay. St Helena Bay boasts one of the largest fishing zones along the coast, abundant in various pelagic fish, such as snoek. However, despite this large fishing zone, only the industrial and commercial sector reaps financial benefit from the sea, whereas small-scale fishers are heavily regulated and unable to benefit from the ocean's offerings, as their forefathers once did. Like the majority of the towns in South Africa, St Helena Bay is segregated spatially in terms of race and class, where on the west lies the 'Golden Mile', and the wealthy white neighbourhoods of Shelly Point, Britannia Bay, and Duiker Eiland. In contrast to the east, where predominately low-income coloured fishing communities reside, such as the neighbourhoods of Laingville, Stompneusbaai, and Steenberg's Cove, which forms one of the central research sites in this study. Initially, this had never had an established harbour due to the area having a very low mean annual rainfall (about 300mm). However, in the 1980s, a fishing harbour and canning factory was set up and employed most of the local people. The factory, after having monopolised the area's catch, eventually closed and pushed a number of the locals into deep poverty without other means to derive a livelihood. This area is defined by a sharp contrast between the beautiful natural coastal surroundings and the industrial factories which overshadows the shoreline (Shultz, 2015: 332).

Steenberg's Cove is the oldest neighbourhood in St Helena Bay and is characterised by informal housing situated near the beach, with lines of hand-caught fish hanging from the doors, and children running and playing in the dirt roads, keeping themselves entertained. Walking along the beach you see fisherwomen and young children harvesting alikreukel and mussels. Evidently, despite the relaxed and laid-back atmosphere of this quaint coastal neighbourhood, myriad real estate and development boards are towering everywhere. The local fisher residents allude to how commercialised elements from the city are imposing on the area, by means of property development, which threatens to evict fishers from their place of residence. This is evident with a case that occurred in 2010, where developers were trying to acquire and displace the fishers residing on the land to develop a waterfront. The residents of

Steenberg's Cove were able to get legal aid and argue that this would disrespect and disrupt the cultural and social importance of the historical graves next to their homes, where the family of residents had been buried. While the nature of these issues and instances manifests clearly in St Helena Bay and are specific to Steenberg's Cove, they nevertheless indicate patterns that become apparent in other fishing communities around the Western Cape, such as Kleinmond.

## ii) Kleinmond

Kleinmond is a small coastal town in the Overberg region of the Western Cape, on the opposite side to St Helena Bay. It is situated between the jagged Palmiet mountain range and the cold Atlantic Ocean. The town's name can be translated as 'small mouth', owing to its location at the mouth of the Bot River lagoon. Strandlopers<sup>9</sup> left evidence of earlier fish traps and kitchen middens<sup>10</sup> that proved that these coastal inhabitants could have been some of the earliest in that area. Kleinmond has a rich history of stories that involve shipwrecks, cattle thieves, and slaves; however, it is more commonly known as a retirement/holiday destination as opposed to a fishing town characterised by historical anecdotes.

The community of fishers who currently reside in the township on the slopes of the Kogelberg mountains, explain that their families initially established themselves at Jongensklip during the mid-1900s when fishing activities first emerged here. In 1948, when the first Village Management Board was established fishers who stayed at or near the present-day Kleinmond harbour, were forcibly removed (WWF, 2015) and situated higher up on the mountain slopes away from easy access to the ocean. Sarah's fisher husband Wally (M67I: 31 January 2018) further related how fishing in Kleinmond dates to 1915 when a small fishing community initially established itself at Jongensklip, which is now the currently commercialised harbour in Kleinmond. There is no evidence of local fishers selling their catch to visitors, but rather of restaurants selling fish (sometimes frozen) at higher prices. Under conditions of apartheid, these families were forcibly evicted without proper compensation and pushed further inland, away from the sea. A clear example of this, is where Wally's family home used to be located, which was near the sea, located where the Kleinmond harbour parking lot is today. Wally and Sarah have six daughters, however, the persistent precarity of fishing means only one daughter remains in the industry: severing the long-standing fishing tradition of their family.

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<sup>9</sup> A coast-dwelling indigenous people.

<sup>10</sup> Anrefuse heaps which signify an ancient settlement, mainly made up of bones, shells, and stone.

More fishers were displaced away from the ocean when the harbour was declared an industrial area in 1954. As previously indicated, Sarah and her husband Wally, my participants, had a house where the harbour parking lot is today. They have since built a home in the informal settlement on the mountain slopes. This settlement is characterised by poverty. At the bottom right-hand side of the Kleinmond harbour is a small World Wildlife Fund (WWF) office, whose ocean mission statement is “aimed at creating healthy oceans that support abundant biodiversity, sustainable livelihoods, and a thriving economy”. This office consists of a table, chair, and computer, indicating that there is not a lot of material resources for fishers, yet they still provide information and education. However, this is vastly different from Steenberg’s Cove, which has no resources of this nature available to members of the fishing community. What became clear during interviews with the fisherwomen of Kleinmond, is that not all of them were aware of the WWF resource, nor was it always used in the best interest of the fishing community.

## Sample and research techniques

The sample of participants for this case study was selected by non-probability purposive sampling, as certain people (fisherwomen and SSF actors) were identified to help obtain the information from the initial research question (Bryman, 2012:416). Through an informal introduction by an informant<sup>11</sup>, the selected sample was invited face-to-face with informants in their community or place of work, to participate in this research. The specific participants chosen were based on who were willing to participate in the study, and who were initially approached by my informant, it was then from those introductions, if anymore women wanted to come forward (particularity in the case of focus groups) that they could if they were happy to also join the study. It should be noted, that additional women did join the focus groups however opted to rather not discuss any information.

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<sup>11</sup> A good informant was someone I could talk easily with, who understood the kind of information needed, and was comfortable providing the information or directing me to who could help find more information. The role of the key informant was to serve as a gatekeeper in helping regulate access to people and information (acting as cultural experts), which otherwise would not have been possible. Ideally, key informants should represent different key access; thus, I had chosen both local members of fishing communities as well as researchers involved in the sector. The selection was based on their competence and the specific information they have, rather than on how representative of the community they are. The initial introduction though to my informant was from a university contact who is deeply involved in fisheries research and has previously used this person in their work.

The participants indicated their preferred location and time to conduct the research. The interviewing process spanned between 45-160 minutes, which was not the initial intention, as going over 60 minutes often leads to social fatigue, yet once fishers got onto a topic, they were passionate about, they were able to talk at great length, which provided better insight into their struggles and joys within the SSF sector.

The principal means of data collection was through participant observation, two focus groups conducted at both research sites (both consisting of only women) which were each made up of four to eight individuals, and then all the participants (ten) engaged in face-to-face semi-structured interviews. It is important to note that the focus groups were conducted to serve more as an 'ice breaker' and get the participants comfortable with engaging in a one-on-one interview, so much of the content discussed was informal general well-being and light conversations about life in general (for rapport building). In further building on the interviews, one of the best ways to understand the functions and workings of the SSF industry and the fishers operating within it was to take part and observe the day-to-day activities of fishers. This underlies the notion of participant observation, which offers a deeper analysis of the intricate workings of fisherwomen and how they engage and react with one another, and allowed a glimpse into the roles and activities they engage in. Preliminary data that was gathered by initially visiting harbour sites and joining in workshops provided insights that helped in developing interview questions, which was used in my focus groups and one-on-ones.

Participant observation required more than merely being in the field and passively observing. Often, after observing an event, such as a workshop, behaviours and social complexities become obvious, as people are not providing information and insights by a directed means, but through their own volition. Using this technique helped build rapport by showing fishers my commitment and interest in their lives and struggles and enhanced my understanding of the SSF sector and women's role within it. This further enabled more invitations to homes within fishing communities and harbours where the women worked, allowing me to conduct more interviews and observe more fishing-related activities and complexities.

The table below depicts who the main participants in the study are.

FISHER	AGE (YEARS)	GENDER	INDIRECTLY / DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN SSF SECTOR	LOCATION
Hermin	60	Woman	Indirectly	Steenberg's Cove
Rowina	55	Woman	Indirectly	Kleinmond
Hanna	66	Woman	Directly	Kleinmond
Welma	45	Woman	Indirectly	Steenberg's Cove
Minkie	48	Woman	Indirectly	Steenberg's Cove
Shirely	45	Woman	Indirectly	Kleinmond
Reena	46	Woman	Directly/Indirectly	Kleinmond
Sarah	60	Woman	Indirectly	Kleinmond
Wally	67	Man	Indirectly	Kleinmond
Christiaan	34	Man	Directly	Steenberg's Cove

The following table introduces you to two of the key informations in this study, and provides some more contextual background as to their involvement in the fishing industry. Later on in the study a more detailed breakdown is provided on the additional activities that some of the other fisher women participants are engaged in.

FISHER	AGE (YEARS)	INDIRECTLY / DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN SSF SECTOR	LOCATION	HISTORY INTO SSF	COMMUNITY ACTIVITY/FISHERIES RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Hermin	60	Indirectly	Steenberg's Cove	She was born into a fisher family, where her father was actively involved in fishing until he passed, and her five brothers are still	Hermin was a volunteer, involved as a health educator within the community raising awareness on HIV/AIDS; she was a supervisor for the platform 2U, which brought youth from the United Kingdom to stay in the fishing community and be

				involved in hand-line fishing. Both she and her husband are not directly involved in fishing activities, but they reside in a fishing community. This fuelled her passion for the industry, and she saw a gap in aiding the degrading circumstances of the community, specifically concerning the youth.	involved in numerous projects; she was also involved in the walking the daisies event, which provided the community the opportunity to provide the meals for the people walking through the town's area; lastly, she was involved in the Green pop and LoveLife programmes in the community. She then became more engaged with Coastal Links and Masifundise and was appointed the vice secretary, among other roles within the organisations, which offered her the opportunity to attend local and international events concerning the small-scale fisheries sector. She was also appointed the caretaker of the interim relief permit in Steenberg's Cove, acting as a representative of the community.
<b>Sarah</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>Indirectly</b>	<b>Kleinmond</b>	Sarah became interested in community work throughout her marriage to her fisher husband, Wally. She could directly see the hardships that the fishing community faced in surviving, especially the direction of the youth. Her husband had been heavily involved with fighting for fishing rights.	Sarah started community work in 2007 with Masifundise to begin a youth group in the Kleinmond, that she led for four. The focus was to get the youth involved in fishing and keep them off the street and away from the plaguing issues of poaching, drug, and alcohol abuse. She progressed to become more involved in the fisheries management resources side. She was initially a catch monitor at the local harbour for several years and then took over as the caretaker for the interim relief permit. She then was a representative of the fishing community and appeared at meetings, workshops, conferences, and protests on behalf of the community.

Initially, I sought to also include some semi-structured interviews with key actors in the Department of Environment, Forestry, and Fisheries (DEFF), specifically with the small-scale fisheries department. However, after over a year of consistent emailing and calling, I was not able to get a positive response from anyone. This is indicative of the struggles that fishers face when they try to get assistance from the department and are met with silence. Owing to the gendered nature of this sector, interviews with two fishermen were necessary to understand where they situated themselves within the blue economy and their relationship with fisherwomen. Conducting semi-structured interviews with a focus group in each research site first (comprising of the research's participants) enabled an intimate and comfortable environment, which allowed my one-on-one interviews to be more fluid and comfortable, as the fishers were more familiar with my presence and could open up a little more concerning intimate information. Semi-structured interviews were best suited for this research, as they offered flexibility by allowing participants to discuss matters that they were comfortable with and it prevented pigeon-holing (Bryman, 2012:471), and pressure to provide specific answers to the specific themes, some of which were considered sensitive by the fishers.

Moreover, semi-structured and unstructured interviewing techniques, have been prominent within gender perspective research frameworks and served well in unearthing the fisherwomen's perceptions and various activities that they were engaged in. Semi-structured interviewing also allowed considerable flexibility, for both the participants and myself, especially concerning time constraints during the research process. This flexible nature allowed an intensive and detailed understanding (Bryman, 2012:469) of the fisher's subjective perceptions of the complex notions of fishing, ocean grabbing, and the blue economy.

I further conducted a policy analysis on the [policy for the small scale fisheries sector in South Africa](#) (there are two, a more simplistic and understandable version, as well as the gazzetted version), so that a holistic picture could be formulated. A policy analysis provides a way for understanding why and how policies have been created and implemented, as well as their potential effects (Browne, Coffey, Cook, Meiklejohn & Palermo, 2018). I focused on an interpretive policy analysis technique that embraces the notions that "*policy problems are not pre-existing givens, but are historically and culturally produced, and that the policy process is understood as a process of discourse and argumentation*" (Browne *et al.*, 2018:7).

This is in line with what Burawoy (2006) suggests, in that sociological research should take a public turn, to ensure connections are forged within society to bring all discourses to the

fore, as labour, social and human rights become involved. The realisation of the full potential of the fishing industry requires the effective inclusion of all societal groups, especially women, youth, local communities, and marginalised/underrepresented groups. Concerning economic development, these groups often face limited access to opportunities and public services, inadequate legal standing, poor opportunities to contribute to value addition, low benefits, and a lack of recognition of the unique and valuable role they could play in society. This is often compounded, as policy frameworks do not consider these areas. To preserve the ocean environment a lot of policies implemented follow a commodified pattern and align with privatising coastal zones, which currently only serves the purpose of a select few investors as opposed to the wider community. On-going policy formations do not always ensure environmental sustainability, social justice and gender equality. This often results in fishers being denied traditional fishing rights. This is seen with the SSF policy, where the updated 2012 SSF Policy represented the latest attempt at providing for fishers, promising economically viable access rights to all bona fide small-scale fishers. However, now in 2021, this policy has still not been translated into positive action, as fishers neither have viable access rights, nor the platform to have equitable value chain participation (Nthane *et al.*, 2020).

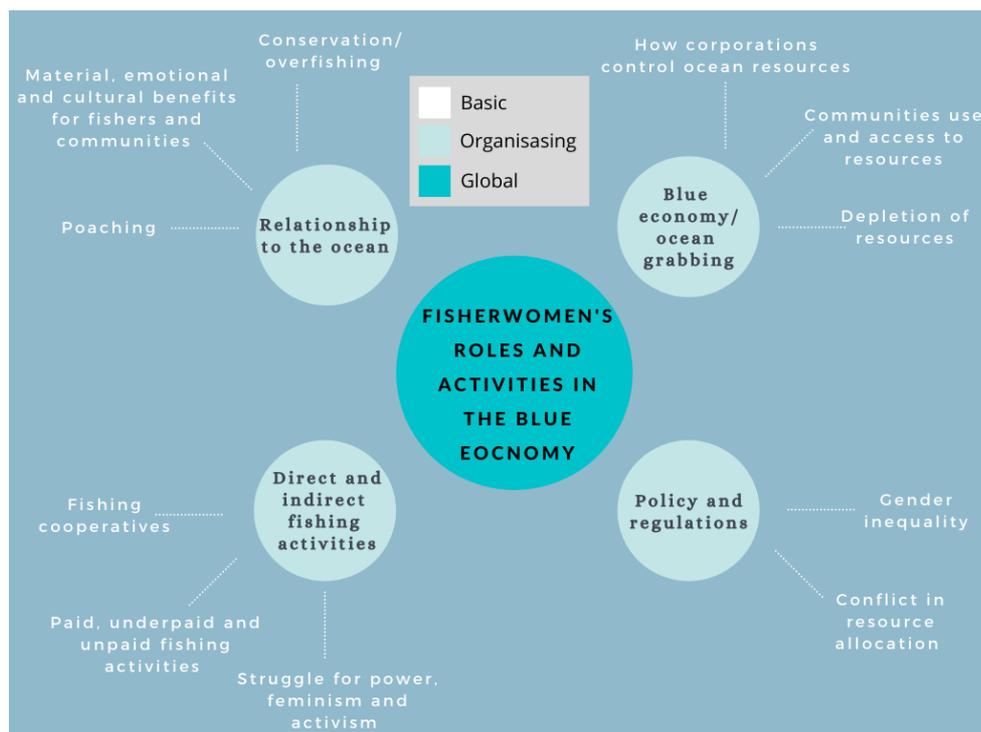
### Thematic Network Analysis (TNA)

All interviews were digitally recorded (with permission) in combination with conceptual notes during and after the interview process. I transcribed all the data collected myself, which enabled me to become closer to the data, and identify emerging themes immediately, whilst becoming aware of the similarities and differences between the various participants' accounts (Bryman, 2012:486). During the transcription process, codes were used to refer to the interviews with the participants and followed the following format: name, man or woman, age, interview or focus group, and the date of the interview (i.e., John, M44I:14 October 2016). This is used throughout the thesis when reference is made to conversations with the fishers. Considering the above information, the data generated from this research were analysed using a thematic network analysis (TNA).

A TNA is a good flexible approach to finding out about people's views, opinions, knowledge, values, and experiences. Initially, I deductively applied TNA, as I approached the data with a few pre-conceived themes, which I based on existing knowledge and theory. This process was employed once I had completed my data collection so that the research could be systematically broken down into themes and patterns, which assisted in exploring relationships

and dynamics that occur between them (Martin & Hanington, 2012:178). This is particularly useful in the complex working of the small-scale fishing sector and the various parts that facilitate the operation of this. This process helped to unearth the themes salient within the data that occurred at different levels, as well as facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001:388). This process assisted in working through the data in a formulaic step-by-step process, which helped to summarise the main themes highlighted by participants and then organise the information according to themes of relevance and importance. Thematic networks are web-like depictions that summarise and categorise the main themes into basic, organising, and global, which are illustrated graphically to remove any notion of hierarchy, allowing fluidity and interconnectivity of uncovered themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001:389).

Basic themes represent the most obvious concepts that occur throughout data and are simple and form into organising themes by connecting data to provide substance to a research argument, position, or assertion about a given reality or situation (i.e., this can be the case of illuminating women's roles and activities within the small-scale fishing sector and their implications) (Martin & Hanington, 2012:178). The macro themes that then emerge from organising themes are global and summarise overarching information from the data and highlight the deeper meanings and complexities that arise from the data, ultimately serving as the heart of a TNA analysed from the data (Martin & Hanington, 2012:178). Figure 1 below depicts the TNA process that was used for initially analysing the data and separating it into themes.



**Figure 1:** Thematic network analysis of research data

TNA aided in exploring the multiple relationships between fishers, their roles and activities, the blue economy, ocean grabbing, and policy and regulations, which are all complex in nature. The focus was to explore the interactions and activities of fisherwomen, particularly concerning the various realities that women straddle. Using TNA and the network structure and breakdown, helped to clarify and identify issues arising within this unpredictable context, impacted by the notions of the blue economy on fishing communities. There were slight limitations, in that my chosen global theme could have ruled out nuances in the data collected from fishers, and the possibility of biased subjectivity. To try avoid this, I was careful not to rely solely on my subjective interpretations and judgement in the process of clustering information and to make sure minimal context and understanding were lost in the translations and interpretation process from Afrikaans to English. This meant that when writing up the content, I left the information untainted and used direct quotes to convey opinions. The information also conveyed by participants were derived from general questions, and I often reiterated what they stated to me back to them to confirm their perceptions.

## Reflections and ethical considerations on research design followed

The nature of a case study allowed for an intimate atmosphere in which I could explore the role and activities of fisherwomen operating within the context of a 'blue economy.' This also enabled the possibility of using more than one location to find similarities or differences which contributed to the overall outline of what fisherwomen engage in and the struggles that they communally face. Focus groups provided the opportunity for unrestricted conversations in a setting that was comfortable allowing the conversation to flow freely and fluidly. However, there were moments where it was difficult to contain the focus group of women as some became passionate when discussing roles and activities as well as personal anecdotes, and would often speak over each other. Despite this, the focus groups served as an ice breaker, which made the women more comfortable during the semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The individual interviews proved very useful as fishers felt that they had the space to express their feelings, even with the guidance of my questions. The logistics of data collection proved to be messy, as there were often days when interviews would be cancelled or rescheduled owing to protests, weather patterns, and community responsibilities. Some interviews were also interrupted by the surrounding noise from fellow marine users, cars from the road, the weather, and the ocean where women were harvesting nearshore species, and loud wind or waves were crashing against the rocks.

All fishers involved in the research agreed that information disclosed within the interview processes could be used for the study, even if some of the information - such as talking about poaching or extra-legal activities - was sensitive. This was of particular concern when some of the fishers disclosed the activities of a fellow fisher who had stolen a fishing permit, as well as information about the harvesting and selling of abalone and crayfish as a means of income. However, no names were ever mentioned, nor was anyone pointed out during site visits, instead these topics illustrated to a certain extent the participants' knowledge and environmental concerns. During data collection, I never saw any extra-legal activities take place nor did this information harm any other individual's role in their community.

The data provided a rich source of exploratory data into the roles and activities of fisherwomen operating under conditions of the blue economy and the various spheres that impact their daily living and livelihood opportunities. This research contributes to a building library of qualitative and subjective data revealing personal and community experiences of fishers and the notion of the blue economy and how policy and regulations impact this. There is still a need for more quantitative data for a clearer reflection of indirect and direct contributions to the SSF to assist in policy and regulations that underlie notions of the blue economy.

# IV

## Discussion and Analysis of Findings

### The illusion of ‘blue justice’ for small-scale fishers: A review of SSF governance and fishers’ responses

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#### Introduction

Owing to the complex nature and relationship of the ocean between the coastal and land environment, there is an evident need to assess challenges facing the ocean from ‘source to sea’ (Koehring, 2019). A more forthright discourse around these challenges needs to form part of the existing ocean agenda, as the blue economy needs to hone in on concerns such as gender equity. This study illustrates that there is a lack of an efficient transformative fisheries council, lack of effective regulation strategies, lack of knowledge on regulations and permits, lack of evenly distributed permit holders, lack of universally agreed on definitions for policies, lack of acknowledgement and empowerment for small-scale fisherwomen, and a lack of communication between stakeholders involved in the SSF sector. Thus, human-rights narratives and approaches that are currently trying to mitigate disputes within the SSF sector, co-exist ineptly with neoliberal policies (Isaacs & Hara, 2015).

This chapter focuses on findings extracted from the research conducted with fishers as well as relevant literature, highlighting the small-scale fisheries sector (SSF) and the current policies, regulations, and permits historically and currently governing it. It unfolds in two ways, The first is a policy-related discussion, briefly describing the sector, emphasising the historic and current nature of permits, regulations, and policies. Secondly, I highlight that SSF policies are currently embedded into a ‘blue growth’ framework, which favours neoliberalism, allowing the opportunity for ‘ocean grabbing’ to occur, which often impacts under-represented groups, such as women and youth. This chapter focuses on findings extracted from the research conducted with fishers as well as relevant literature, highlighting the small-scale fisheries sector (SSF) and the current policies, regulations, and permits historically and currently governing it.

## Opportunities and challenges: Implementing the SSF policy

The Constitution and Bill of Rights for South Africa have been crafted with political and economic freedom in mind, and especially aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of individuals to material resources to promote and sustain their livelihoods and food security. However, South African policies have been heavily influenced by a developmental path embedded in the notions of economic growth and top-down thinking (Isaacs & Hara, 2015). Fishers are often not heard and left out of policy and regulation conversations that involve their livelihoods.

*“Ons noem dit kos op die tafel,”*<sup>12</sup> these words expressed by fisher, Sarah, convey the meaning of the small-scale fishing policy (SSFP) for fisherwomen, and how fishers within local communities feel about them. Her words express the immediacy of the impact of SSFP on the ability of fishers to procure sustenance and to ensure their survival at its most basic level of food security. The meaning emerges from a historical context where, during apartheid, the black coastal fishing communities lost their right to fish and access marine resources, as small-scale and subsistence fishing was not officially recognised as official sectors of the industry (Isaacs & Hara, 2015). Many fishers and communities have been historically marginalised through apartheid practices and previous fisheries management approaches and systems.

Fisheries scholars and policymakers have progressively highlighted the need to include small-scale fishers within policy frameworks, to enable fishers’ equal access within value chains, which include recognition and representation within the processes of fishing, harvesting, aquaculture production, processing, transport, wholesale, and marketing. The SSFP and the Department’s Integrated Fisheries Development Plan and Programme of Action (IFDP), indicate that the government recognises the potential for value addition and job creation through recognising the SSF sector, thereby emphasising that policy plans have been established, but are just not effectively translated into meaningful actions. Small-scale fishing, in general, contributes meaningfully to the lives and livelihoods of coastal fishing communities, often having significant advantages over large industrial fisheries (Sunde, 2014). These include supporting economic efficiency through relative labour intensity, reduced impacts on the marine environment, preservation of cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge, and more widespread redistribution of social and economic benefits to fishers and communities (Sunde,

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<sup>12</sup> English translation: “we call this food on the table,” Sarah (F60I: November 2017).

2014). The end of apartheid brought new legislation development and fishing industry reforms that focused on uplifting fishing communities by ensuring that they could access marine resources (Isaacs, 2015). The MLRA 18 of 1998, allocated fishing quotas to fishers, however, only those defined as commercial, subsistence, or recreational users. Fishers' organisations that formed after apartheid was pressured to entrepreneurialise to obtain quota rights. This resulted in 'community elite restructuring community organisations' (Isaacs, 2015), where they captured access to rights, and many displaced and marginalised fishers lost out on being involved in the formal rights allocation process. New fisher entrants were pressured by the South African government to privatise without any support or protection from the market before they could get access to the Individual Transfer Quota (ITQ) system<sup>13</sup>. The ITQ system was a form of marketisation and privatisation and served to commodify the right to catch fish and marine resources, focusing on economic efficiency as opposed to community equity and welfare (Isaacs, 2015; Pinkerton, 2017). Neoliberalist<sup>14</sup> thinking is deeply entrenched in the thought processes and practises of fisheries management worldwide (Pinkerton, 2017:8). The neoliberal logic that underlies the essence of the Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) system is a type of catch share that is aimed at avoiding expenses that arise when fishers need to use equipment to harvest fish. This avoidance theoretically leads to efficiency that the government can regulate and control.

Neoliberal policies seek to control access to fisheries resources by strengthening property rights and reducing fisheries' efforts to prevent marine resource overexploitation, typically using the ITQ system (Nthane, Saunders, Fernandez & Raemekers, 2020). This system has generated profits, yet these tend to remain in the hands of a few powerful actors, excluding small-scale, indigenous, and artisanal fishers. Unfair distribution of fishing rights has resulted in many fishers losing their traditional and legitimate right to fish, rendering them with no historical stake in ocean resources, with a clear lack of inclusion for those closest to the resources, such as small-scale fishers, and specifically the women who fish and reside in those communities. Longo, Clausen, and Clark (2015) highlight that ITG systems reveal '*social*

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<sup>13</sup> The ITQ system is a quota (permit) imposed on fishers and limits the catch and production of fishing. It allows a certain number of fish species to be harvested annually and is based on the previous years' catches. This allowance is decided by the sustainability of fish species. It often becomes more valuable than fish, and fishermen who get granted this permit and have not been involved in the fishing industry for generations, often capitalise by leasing it out (pushing prices almost to the point where its unprofitable to fish) to other fellow fishers who did not receive one.

<sup>14</sup> Pinkerton's use of the term "neo-liberalism" refers to a political and economic approach which claims to benefit society at large; however, it clearly benefits those who are able to contribute to the accumulation of wealth, and more especially those who monopolise and extract wealth.

*tragedies*' by constant prioritisation of capital-intensive and large-scale systems focused on commodity production. For the fisheries sector in South Africa, continuing allowance of the ITQ system further perpetuates this neoliberal process, which initially sought to widen access to ocean resources and help in the transformation of the fisher's sector. Instead, it resulted in economic and political interests governing the future and developmental path of SSF in South Africa, which opened the net for large fishing enterprises to bring in new entrants into the fishing market.

The need for the incorporation of small-scale fishing into policy frameworks became evident in South Africa when fishers and fishing communities kept being displaced and neglected. In a response to fisheries reform in 2005, there was an SSFP amendment made to the MLRA in 2014, which signified that post-apartheid legislative and policy reforms included and recognised small-scale fishers' rights (Schultz, 2017). As further explained by Sarah<sup>15</sup>, this amendment of the marginalisation of the SSF sector was initially corrected by an Equity Court Order in 2007 – Kenneth George and Others against the ITQ system of allocation, which ordered the government to create a specific policy for the SSF sector within the two years following the court case.

This was created in hopes of local fishermen gaining recognition for rights that had been neglected for so many years. It would enable fishers to have controlled access to fishing and harvesting of marine resources through a temporary Interim Relief (IR) permit measure, whilst the SSF policy was being fully finalised and implemented. Following the implementation of IR permits, community-appointed caretakers currently still control the handling and appointments of these permits, clearly indicating that this method is still firmly ingrained in the ITQ system. This is evident in both research sites of this study<sup>16</sup>, as a single person is elected to be the caretaker of the current Interim Relief (IR) permit for a particular fishing community.

The caretaker of this permit is responsible for communicating the allocated fishing amounts as determined through the DEFF application process for fishing permits, as well as for monitoring the catch, helping with selling the catch, and acting as the fishing community representative in forums or meetings concerning the SSF sector. Despite the progress that has

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<sup>15</sup> Sarah, F60I: November 2017.

<sup>16</sup> In Steenberg's Cove, Minkie is the caretaker of the Interim Relief (IR) permit, and in Kleinmond Rowina is the caretaker of the Interim Relief (IR) permit.

been made in formalising the SSF sector, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, where they have adopted a co-management approach, the granting of access and rights elsewhere in South Africa has been arduous and slow. Thus, as indicated by Sowman (2006), despite the various workshops, task groups, committees, Sowman (2005), Isaacs (2003), Sunde (2003) and Cardoso (2004) argue that the transition has sought to further marginalise fishers in an already vulnerable position. The SSF sector is currently still inundated with issues around communication, definitions, rights, overfishing, and diminished or suppression of allocations for fishing or harvesting of marine resources (Isaacs & Hara, 2015).

The IR permit that was implemented during the revisions of the MLRA, was only intended to provide a temporary solution for granting fishing rights to the various fishers who were not included and did not benefit from the long-term rights process. Notably, most of the fishing participants were themselves or had parents, who had been brought up in the era when fishing was based on a livelihood quota<sup>17</sup> and not a governmental department quota. Fisher and fishing activist, Hermin, explained that her father used to fish openly and catch crayfish, Cape Bream (Hottie), Galjoen, Yellow Tail, and sea molluscs for their household consumption, as well as to sell to community members. Most of these fish types are heavily regulated now. In the past, fishing was a seasonal activity and people resorted to alternative means of income, such as through mini markets, wood shops, alternative odd jobs (i.e., construction or painting), or fruit and vegetable allotments, similar to the present situation. However, people then were not subjected to allocated amounts of catch only.

Before the inception of the IR permits, fishers initially used recreational permits to ensure that their activities be deemed legal to some extent. However, the recreation permit for the West Coast Rock Lobster only allowed a person to harvest four per day, which is not nearly enough for a fisher to make a sustainable living. Thus, this called the initial MLRA into question and created the space for a temporary solution to be put in place<sup>18</sup>. Sarah's husband, together with another fisherman, and DEFF initiated discussions around the temporary use of IR permits, during the period that the MLRA was supposed to be amended, as a form of 'temporary legality' for fishers to continue to pursue their livelihoods. Her husband was then able to apply for and was granted a permit on the IR plan, which they used for two years. However, owing to the lack of progression, her husband and his fellow fisherman revoked their

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Hermin (F60I: 2 November 2017).

<sup>18</sup> Interview with John (M34I: 9 November 2017).

permits and discontinued the relationship with DEFF<sup>19</sup>, as he explained “*daar is te veel kak vir my jy...net vir my om vis te gaan haal*”<sup>20</sup>. The implementation of IR permits occurred while fisher Sarah was still deeply involved with the organisation, Masifundise. She further expressed the fact that these regulations and permits are integral in sustaining livelihoods, however, she also raised her concern for their precariousness, in that they only serve to provide on a short-term day-to-day basis for fishing, without proper communication and implementation of the actual policy.

Consequently, the new policy gazetted by the DEFF in 2012, was intended to be a beacon of new hope to all fishing communities, which would ensure a promising future that would uphold their fishing traditions. The policy aimed to provide amends and recognition to traditional fishers. With this new SSFP amendment to the MLRA in 2014, it did provide significant progress in terms of comprehending the various facets of the SSF sector, and further fed into the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for small-scale fisheries (2014). However, when the time came to develop and implement the fisheries regulations, DEFF missed an opportunity to alter fundamentally the sector and guarantee food security and sustainable livelihood measures within value chains, which would benefit the fishing communities directly, as opposed to the commercial markets and industry (PLAAS, 2018). In September 2016, DEFF gazetted that small-scale fishing rights would only be allocated for 3 years, however, there was no indication of what would happen after this period (Pretorius, 2017). This decision was made without consultation of or informing local fishers, thereby diminishing the effect of the policy, as it was created to ensure all fishing communities were informed and represented in decisions that affect the SSF sector (Pretorius, 2017).

Consequently, translating policy and regulation objectives into workable rights has proved to be a difficult task within legislative frameworks, which have sought to balance economic, ecological, and equity imperatives. To date, however, fisheries management regimes within South Africa have not encapsulated the full meaning of ‘context-specific, resulting in multiple fishers still being excluded from legally recognised access to marine resources since

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<sup>19</sup> Masifundise in the interim asked Sarah to take over this responsibility and be the representative from the community at Kleinmond.

<sup>20</sup> English translation: “There is just too much [drama] for me... [merely to be able to fish].” Wally (M67I: 31 January 2018).

the promulgation of the amended MLRA and unsuccessful implementation of the small-scale fisheries policy.

Therefore, the policy initially developed was not adequate nor inclusive, and after a rights appeal in 2013, DEFF sought to rectify the act in 2016, notably indicating the slow nature of this process. Despite amendments to the SSFP, what was supposed to take two years to implement, has now, twelve years later, still not been sufficiently implemented. Fishers are still not considered in these plans of implementation, as John expressed “*they just roll on like a steam roller with their programme of implementation*”<sup>21</sup>.

Branch *et al.* (2002) highlight seven key issues raised by fishers concerning existing management practices: access rights, the conflict between resource users, permit procedures, ineffective law, and mistrust of management authorities, lack of communication and access to information, unfair regulations and rules, and lack of user involvement in management and rulemaking. Notably, this study was conducted in 2002 and again indicates the slow implementation process and lack of pressure to stimulate change, as the same issues still prevail in Steenberg’s Cove and Kleinmond.

In South Africa, a class action court case was instigated to challenge this ITQ system and a process more focused on human rights was adopted for small-scale fishers through the implementation of the IR permits, and the opportunity to join a participatory process in developing a new SSF policy was initiated (Isaacs & Hara, 2015). Fisher John<sup>22</sup> emphasised that not only do more discussions around the current ITQ system (occurring through Interim Relief) need to be instigated, but also how the market is currently being interpreted. The nature of fishing organisations also needs to be discussed.

The illustration below depicts the changes to fishing quotas, permits, and regulations from 1980 until 2020.

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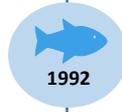
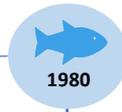
<sup>21</sup> Interview with John (M34I: 9 November 2017).

<sup>22</sup> John (M34I: 9 November 2017).

# A Timeline of Quotas within SSF in South Africa

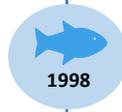
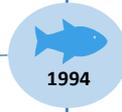
adapted from Isaacs & Hara (2015:8)

Individual Transferable Quotas (ITQs) were initially introduced in South Africa under conditions of economic rationalisation, which served to adapt fishing capacity by resource availability.



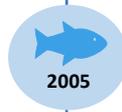
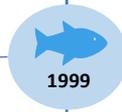
The Schutte inquiry was established and served to identify the socio-economic conditions of fishing communities along the West Coast of the Western Cape. The Fishers' Community Trust was developed to address poverty in fisher households in KwaZulu-Natal, the Northern, Western, and Eastern Cape.

In November of 1994, the ANC government commissioned the Fisheries Policy Development Committee (FPDC), which sought to revise the Sea Fisheries Act No. 12 of 1988.



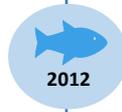
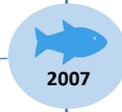
The result of the FPDC was the development of The Marine Living Resources Act (MLRA) of 1998, however, this only recognised and made provision for commercial, recreational and subsistence fishers, and did not legally recognise small-scale fishers. Fishers from all over the country found themselves stranded and unable to legally take their boats out to sea or to harvest marine resources to maintain their livelihoods.

The Subsistence Fisheries Task Group (SFTG) was created to advise and direct the small-scale fisheries sector. The SFTG argued that the current definition of subsistence fishers excluded a large group of fishers who would prefer to gain commercial rights as opposed to 'subsistence' rights.



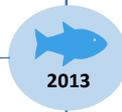
Due to unsatisfactory fisheries reforms, the small-scale Fishers Association together with the Legal Resources Centre, academics, and the Masifundise Development Trust, launched a class-action suit against the Minister of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT). Marine and Coastal management also implemented long-term fishing rights for the commercial sector, leaving out the small-scale

In May of 2007, A settlement was reached with the Ministry of DEAT for the case of Kenneth George and the Others vs. the Minister. Later that year, the fisher's department held a small-scale fisheries summit and developed a national task team to develop a new small-scale fisheries policy for South Africa. During this process, Interim Relief (IR) permits were issued.



The collaborative and new policy for small-scale fisheries in South Africa was introduced and a proposed implementation plan was set to be established.

The Marine Living Resources Amended Bill was gazetted and become law in May 2013 and is known as the Marine Living Resources Amendment Act No. 5 of 2014.



A roll-out plan was devised to support the implementation of the small-scale fisheries policy and regulations were established relating to the policy.

The Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) via the Interim Relief (IR) permit is still governing the market, the policy is still yet to be fully and correctly implemented.



Figure 2: A timeline of quotas of SSF in South Africa

## The Illusion of blue justice

The notion of ‘blue justice’ stems from an attempt to attain social justice for the SSF sector (Isaacs, 2019). Blue justice should promote that coasts, oceans, lakes, and marine protected spaces should provide an enabling environment for small-scale fishers to engage meaningfully and reject their exclusion and marginalisation by the privatisation of oceans, promotion of elite tourism, and for-profit conservation of under/unrecognised people, such as women. Research participants are adamant that small-scale, subsistence and artisanal fisheries sectors do not benefit from current policy and regulations<sup>23</sup>. Instead, only industrial, and commercial sectors benefit from the current policies in place. Other research conducted with small-scale fishers also expressed concerns that the agenda surrounding the blue economy undervalues and undermines the social objectives of fishing communities (Cohen *et al.*, 2019). This correlates with the research data acquired from this study, where John<sup>24</sup> spoke on behalf of his fishing community and explained that blue economy initiatives employ a top-down approach without consideration of local knowledge and practices.

Consequently, the blue economy agenda raises multiple red flags relating to various socio-economic, political, and environmental issues faced by small-scale fishers and their communities. Policies directly involving fishing activities are often established and influenced by neoliberal thinking, which supports various other policies and approaches which, in turn, encourage the development of new uses of ocean spaces (Pinkerton, 2017), impacting on and driving competition between fishers and fishing communities. A critical challenge for establishing ocean governance is to ensure the balance between competing interests, and the realisation of economic potential, whilst avoiding environmental change (Cohen *et al.*, 2019). In parallel, ocean governance needs to also focus on ensuring that the human rights of those who depend on the sea for their livelihood are respected and that growth benefits are equitably distributed.

The ‘blue fixes’ proposed by Brent *et al.* (2018), have been around long before the blue economy agenda arose as a development agenda. However, the amalgamation of all three parts into a framework for guiding policies and ocean politics, is what gives it exponential power in a precarious coalition of stakeholders, using a new language that is detracting from the tangible

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Hermin (F60I: 2 November 2017), John (M34I: 7 November 2017), and Minkie (F48I: 28 November 2017).

<sup>24</sup> Interview with John (M34I: 7 November 2017).

ecological, territorial, and social implications of competing ocean industries (Brent *et al.*, 2018). Delving deeper into these parts reveals the tangible consequences of the implementation of a blue agenda. Keeping in line with this study, a brief outline will be provided for these fixes, however, the focus will be on the ‘conservation fix’, highlighting how current blue agenda initiatives in South Africa are misleading, particularly to local fishing communities, as well as introducing that a possible solution to these fixes, could be an emerging ‘women’s fix’, which should be integrated into these other fixes so that it can effectively transform blue economy discourses and help restructure blue agenda frameworks properly.

### i) Protein Fix

Globally, the prevalent issue is that there is an increasing demand for fish protein, and a plummeting decline in fish stocks (Brent *et al.*, 2018). The ‘protein fix’ for this seems to be the introduction of large-scale aquaculture, which does not include information about the inclusion of small-scale fishers. Inherently, a big issue with this, is that there is a dependency on increasing volumes of fish capture to meet the demands to produce increasing volumes of aquaculture species (Brent *et al.*, 2018). An example of this can be seen with the South African fishing community of Buffeljagsbaai, where numerous capital-intensive abalone (*perlemoen*) aquaculture farms were established on ancestral and community land, with the promise of jobs (Isaacs, 2019). The jobs promised were far and few between and mainly low-skilled. As the current blue economy gains more traction and support, small-scale fishing communities become increasingly marginalised.

### ii) Energy/extractive fix

The energy/extractive fix was fashioned in response to climate change concerns, where the blue economy focuses on alternative emerging industries, such as tidal energy and deep extraction of rare minerals (Brent *et al.*, 2018). This occurs against the backdrop of the gas and oil industry, which is constantly expanding and is currently one of the largest endeavours in the ocean. Thus, the energy fix entails that blue growth policies provide allocations of ocean space to expanding offshore drilling and provide opportunities for new uses of existing ocean infrastructure. It goes nearly without saying, that the ecological impact is significant, contributing to the emission of fossil fuels and carbon. Brent *et al.* (2018), emphasise that current national blue growth policies do not attempt to limit the offshore oil and gas industry, they rather try to take advantage of existing infrastructure.

### iii) Conservation Fix

A contradiction arising from the ‘conservation fix’ is that the goal of investors -who seek profit-making opportunities - coincides with public demands for environmental protection, thus the ‘fix’ is to turn ocean conservation into an appealing investment opportunity that also boosts public relations (Brent *et al.*, 2018). Framing ocean conservation efforts within blue growth agendas in this manner fits into the mainstream ideas of conservation of the last two decades. The notion of “selling nature to save it” enables conservation efforts to pay for themselves by relying on profiteering from conservation, which can later be turned into viable assets for corporations. Thus, in progressively investing in meeting the SDGs, new opportunities and markets can be established to secure investors’ and companies’ long-term prosperity (Brent *et al.*, 2018). Solutions provided by fisheries economists revolve around the conception that fisheries should be incentivised. Naoko Ishii<sup>25</sup>summed this up by stating: “*We cannot secure our ocean’s future without the active involvement of the private sector. Investment in coastal fisheries is both an environmental necessity and a largely untapped economic opportunity.*” This sentiment seems to revolve around the historic belief that the ocean is a limitless basket in its capacity to provide and sustain us, whilst absorbing the by-products of our economies (Spalding, 2019).

A few have termed this ‘for-profit conservation’<sup>26</sup>, which is embedded in the premise that conservation should economically mitigate climate change and conserve the environment, without curbing economic growth (Brent *et al.*, 2018). It is no mystery to come across nature conservation campaigns and advertisements with the logo of international conservation NGOs, such as the WWF, which, together with corporations such as Coca Cola and Nedbank, fund environmental conservation efforts. The question begs, how do establish and trusted environmental organisations get into bed with companies that also contribute to polluting and degrading the environment? At the centre of this, is the notion of market-based environmentalism, where the degradation of the environment and climate change are considered ‘market failures, therefore the solution to rectifying this is by making nature visible and usable for the market system (Brent *et al.*, 2018). This principle is evident in much of the research, articles, initiatives, and marketing campaigns led by the WWF, concerning the blue

<sup>25</sup> Naoko Ishii is the GEF CEO and Chairperson, who spoke at the #OurOceans Conference in 2016.

<sup>26</sup>See articles by World Rainforest Movement (2019): <https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/the-conservation-industry-a-for-profit-sector/>; Dempsey and Bigger (2019): <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/anti.12503>

economy. The WWF's initial study on the blue economy predicted that the monetary value of this new economic sector could contribute as much as \$24 trillion to global economies (Plessis, 2016).

Within the ocean space, ocean governance and regulatory reforms utilised for-profit conservation, heavily rely on historical enclosure processes (Brent *et al.*, 2018), and provide a select few (such as NGOs) governance over protected areas – for instance, as Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) - often neglecting small-scale fishers and their communities, who directly rely on those regulated areas. A few hold the view that the ocean space lacks 'private property principles, limiting profit generation. However, ocean governance within blue agenda frameworks, which promote MPAs, and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) are being considered complementary to solving the property issue, in that resources and ocean space can be measured out, and desired uses/users can be granted access or restrictions from them (Brent *et al.*, 2018). This occurs a lot with small-scale fishers and was highlighted by fishers<sup>27</sup> saying that they are subjected to fishing within certain perimeters, and even if they are fishing there or happen to extend beyond their boundaries – they are criminalised for fishing for their livelihood. This was specific to a situation in St Helena bay and Yserfontien, where fishers were persecuted for fishing in areas designated as conservation spots, yet fishers were never consulted in the demarcation process, nor where they offered an alternative place for fishing, giving them the accompanying rights for this.

#### iv) The Women Fix

*"We the women of South Africa say no to ocean grabbing. Protect our livelihoods. Restore our dignity."*<sup>28</sup>

The case of women is telling. Despite their large contribution to the labour force, women often lack access to natural resources, are given inferior property rights, and receive benefits that are disproportionately low compared to their male counterparts (UNECA, 2016:33). At the same time, women usually carry out essential household tasks, ensure food security, and are largely responsible for child-rearing. They represent a significant portion of the non-monetised core economy. Although there is increasing diversity in the economic activities of the various

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<sup>27</sup> John (M34I: 9 November 2017), Hermin (F60I: 2 November 2017), Reena (F46I: 30 November 2017).

<sup>28</sup> Feodoroff, T., Barbesgaard, M & Pedersen, C. 2014. Marine protected areas in South Africa – ocean grabbing by another name, *Ecologist* [Online] Available at: <https://www.tni.org/en/article/marine-protected-areas-in-south-africa-ocean-grabbing-by-another-name> [Accessed on 13 July 2021].

blue economy sectors, there remains a propensity for ocean grabbing to occur, which often excludes and marginalises women as well as underrepresented groups and youth. Thus, principles and approaches seeking to bridge this gap should endeavour to ensure that the economic development of the ocean contributes to true prosperity, today and into the future.

In furthering the three-part cocktail of Brent *et al.* (2018), we should expand this recipe and consider an emerging ‘women fix’ as a fair solution, as it underpins the ecofeminist ethos that considers those who marginalise, dominate, and oppress women are often the same who dominate and explore nature. The discrimination and neglect often suffered by women, stem from the fact that women are seen as close to or often part of nature, which is a perception often fuelled by a woman’s reproductive function, and women’s ability to produce and sustain life - much as the environment does. Ecofeminism is often missing from discourses on feminism, as often within this paradigm, there is a privileging of certain issues such as political and civil rights, often neglecting issues around agrarian and grassroots feminism. Focusing on a women’s fix enables easier identification of gaps, as well as the opportunity to develop more nuanced discourses for better ocean governance and policies to be implemented that benefit the women involved in the small-scale fisheries sector so that they can fully extract the alleged benefits from blue economy initiatives.

As emphasised by Bennett (2018), Isaacs and Hara (2015), Brent *et al.* (2018), Bohler-Muller *et al.* (2019), and Mills (2016), despite the increasing concern about exclusionary decision-making processes, systems, and lack of social justice, there is still an evident lack in focus on issues of social justice, inclusion, and equal rights of marginalised groups (particularly women) in fisheries, ocean management, governance, and funding. A deeper analysis by these studies reveals that there are fundamental differences in priorities, approaches, and ideologies of the small-scale fisheries sector and those investing in blue economy initiatives. Women play an essential role in the blue economy, yet their work and contribution barely receive recognition and support (UN, 2020). In Africa, it is suggested that the blue economy could shift the global economy in favour of the continent and hold the promise of a new economic and geopolitical order, especially for countries with vast access and connections to oceans, lakes, seas, and rivers (Bhattacharya, 2017). Wheeler (2018, para. 1) argues that even if... “*the blue economy has quite rightly been described as the New Frontier of the African Renaissance...*”, it needs to become truly inclusive, allowing all people to reap the dividends from marine environments and resources (Wheeler, 2018). However, he continues to explain, the marine

industry in Africa is dominated by men, therefore an evident issue is the lack of representation and inclusion of women in the development frameworks of the blue economy.

There has been a strong indication of fisherwomen at the forefront of conserving the ocean, which is borne out by this research. However, what often is seen as an empowering role for women, becomes an extra burden for women, who must then further assume the role of teaching the youth and adults about preserving and sustainable living from the ocean. This is not as simple as it is stated though, as particular men have more control and in that situation, women are sidelined. The participants indicated that they were all raised being taught how to live from the sea and land sustainably. This is evident by the organic nature in which a lot of the older fisher (men and women) generation was raised, eating freshly caught fish, harvesting vegetables from their garden, having fresh eggs from their chickens<sup>29</sup> (embedded in a farm-to-table attitude). It was also indicated that women engaged in garden allotment projects, where fresh vegetables would be grown which would be accessible to the wider fishing community, enforcing the ethos of sustainability.

As such, for some women, when the issues of conservation and poaching arise in conversation, they passionately fight against it. This was indicated by Reena (F46I: 30 November 2017) during our interview at the harbour when a car full of teenagers pulled up and she recognised them as being involved in crayfish and abalone poaching. She claimed: “*Al wat daardie kinders dink oor is net mooi skoene en fancy karre,*”<sup>30</sup> thus indicating that not all the youth are concerned about the ocean sources and traditional lifestyle of fishing. She claimed that they need to re-educate the youth about preserving these marine species. Notably, fishermen from the Steenberg area are minimally involved in the cases of preserving the ocean environment, unless they are heavily involved in local organisations for fishing rights. However, in Kleinmond, there does seem to be more engagement with fishermen, who are involved with WWF (World Wildlife Foundation) projects, which offer incentives for fishers taking responsibility for managing fish stocks and fishing behaviour. There is also the contestation (for both men and women) surrounding the unfair allocation of permits and regulations, which lead fishers to question their integrity and deviate from these to secure fish, what they declare, is one of their basic human rights.

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<sup>29</sup> Hermin, F60I: 2 November 2017.

<sup>30</sup> English Translation: “All that children think about, is fancy shoes and fancy cars.”

*“If we are not going to speak to the people affected most by the lack of transformation, then where are we going to gauge our need for transformation from if we are going to continue to speak to those who do not want transformation.”* These words expressed by small-scale fisher, John, illustrate the dire need for adjustment and change concerning fisheries rights, regulations, and permits (operating under the blue economy agenda), which are currently not benefiting the small-scale fisheries (SSF) sector, and particularly holds no place for women.

## Operation Phakisa: a synonym for Ocean Grabbing

Fisherman, John purports that *“[the] same people performing the same atrocities they did under these periods of racism in our country [referring to apartheid] ... and now [we] are in a democracy which makes it worse for us as small-scale fishers”*. This suggests that there are still colonial structures in place, which have not altered since the end of apartheid. Fishing communities have benefitted very little from the raft of new laws aimed at correcting the injustices of the past. This is reflected in the legislation and management approaches that have historically favoured a few white-male-owned industrial fishing companies. This can be seen with the 95% allocation of the hake catch to two major conglomerate seafood companies, namely Sea Harvest and I & J Fisheries. This allocation was established in 1910, before the establishment of apartheid regimes, and followed well into the colonial rule, indicating that these ownership structures have not changed, nor have they altered to include the SSF sector. Despite the democratic dispensation, fisheries management practises have also marginalised traditional small-scale fishers, which as a result caused many fishers to be unsuccessful in acquiring fishing rights and access to marine resources.

A handbook compiled by the United Nations (2016), *‘Africa’s Blue Economy: A policy handbook’*, states that the blue economy framework should be framed around three key areas, namely, social, economic, and environmental sustainability. A key step emphasised in ensuring an effective policy is implemented for the blue economy is that of establishing ‘ownership’ through; consensus building, communicating the blue economy policy, stakeholder engagement, empowerment of key actors, and the building of a blue economy culture (UN, 2016). However, despite the principles and methods, they are not being effectively translated into action. This is evident from the perspective of fishers, particularly concerning the communication of the blue economy policy, or more specifically around ‘Operation Phakisa’ within the South African context.

There has been no effort in disseminating this information nor has there been any attempt to get more stakeholder involvement of small-scale fishers into the industry, which particularly affects the situation of fisherwomen, who are often still operating on recreational or no permits, owing to the lack of response to demands to the department and government. A challenge for adopting a fair ‘blue economic’ approach is to ensure that competing interests are balanced, along with the realisation of economic potential, without causing irreversible damage to the environment, while simultaneously ensuring that ocean approaches and governance ensure the human rights of people whose livelihoods depend on the sea are supported and respected, and that benefits of growth are equally distributed (Cohen *et al.*, 2019). In cases where this does not occur, and ‘elite capture’ of resources happens, small-scale fisheries need to contend with forms of privatisation of ocean spaces, which can be termed as ‘ocean grabbing’ echoing recent discussions about ‘land grabbing’ throughout large sections of Asia and Africa (Pinkerton, 2017).

This can further be understood as a new wave of ‘enclosures’ and is driven by economic interests relating to newer industrial developments, and ocean conservation, ever contributing to the squeeze being experienced by small-scale fishers (Cohen *et al.*, 2019). As much as land-grabbing encourages food production and economic growth for the ‘west’, ‘ocean grabbing’ strips blue rights (Beerwinkel, 2019). Thus, access to rights, tenure, and inequity experienced by small-scale fishers are further threatened by ineffective, unfulfilled blue economy agendas. Ocean spaces, which fishers depend on for their livelihoods are rapidly being controlled and turned into ports, tourist facilities, new shipping lanes, oil and gas mining areas, and new conservation areas. Notably, if fishers, activists, and fisher movements can defend a particular area, the combined pollution, construction, and contamination signify that it is less likely that fish will be bountiful (Brent *et al.*, 2018). A common denominator is a general exclusion of small-scale fishers from access to fisheries and other natural resources and access to markets through the implementation or reinterpretation of laws, policies, and regulations affecting fishing governance (Pedersen *et al.*, 2014:6). This is often with minimal concern for environmental consequences. Powerful economic actors involved in the integral decision-making process around fisheries are ocean-grabbing through holding and wielding the power to decide how and for what purposes marine resources are used, managed, and conserved (Pedersen *et al.*, 2014:3), without the consideration of fishers and their communities. To date, the Steenberg’s Cove and Kleinmond fishing communities are not aware of Operation Phakisa, nor do they know about the projected ideals of this project. Most news the fishers get is related

to the Total Allocation Catch (TAC), which they follow on the news and/or are informed of in letters or through cell phone messages about their allowance.

A report by Masifundise, Afrika Kontakt, and the Transnational Institute on ocean grabbing shows how the acceleration of market-based fishing policies favouring large-scale marine industries is systematically dispossessing fishers of their means of livelihoods. As stated, a common theme that occurs is the exclusion of small-scale fishers, which are led by ‘grabs’ that are ‘legally hidden’ inside policy, regulation, and conservation documents (Pedersen & Barbesgaard, 2014). Notably, what is generally left out of these documents is the impact of the various decisions on the heritage, livelihoods, and food sovereignty of people who depend on small-scale fishing. Therefore, fishers struggle to ensure that their resource access issues are treated first and foremost, not as a business matter, but rather as a matter of human rights.

## Challenges: small-scale fishers’ experiences of regulations and permits in the communities of Steenberg’s Cove and Kleinmond

Small-scale fisheries have the potential to contribute positively to securing livelihoods and food security for fishing communities. However, they are faced with multiple challenges that they would need to overcome to ensure that they can fulfil these potentials. Isaacs & Hara (2015), Salayo, Ahmed, Carces & Viswanathan (2006), Isalm, Shamsuzzaman, Sunny & Islam (*n.d.*), FAO (1993), and Hauck *et al.* (2002) have identified multiple conflicts that can arise for fishers and these can include the following but are not limited to, the conflict between fishers and their communities; conflict between small-scale fishers and the industrial sector; conflict between fishers and the government; and conflict among fishers themselves.

### i) (Dis) engagement between fishers and external stakeholders

*“The fisheries transformation council is the tool for creating change... but we are missing the plot completely”<sup>31</sup>.* These words by John, depict the struggle and fight facing local fishers, signifying that despite measures being put into place, they do not always translate into positive actions. More specifically, there is the emphasis on the term ‘we’, which indicates that issues stem from both the fishing communities and from the government sector. Within the Steenberg’s Cove fishing community, there is currently a transformative council that

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with John (M34I: 7 November 2017).

contributes towards the decisions concerning fisheries regulations and permits. However, as indicated by John, the members who make up this council are those not socially nor economically reliant on the SSF sector. This is not an isolated case, as fishers from Simons Town<sup>32</sup>, have previously indicated that when they attend open meetings/forums concerning fisheries regulations and permits, many people from the fisheries attend, but are neither directly nor indirectly involved or impacted by the small-scale fisheries sector. John explained that the transformation challenge “*is way over the heads of this fisheries transformation council.*”

This inability of these forums to identify and focus on the challenges of SSF create tension among residents of these areas, creating disunity as opposed to establishing a community built on trust and strength. One of the criteria in the selection of someone to the council is that the person is not involved in political activity. This causes a predicament for fishers, as most are to some extent involved in some form of political justice, fighting for their own, or a family member’s fishing rights. John explains the tension created by this by asking: “*How can anyone expect change if higher-end structures are not willing to speak with people who [are being] impacted*”<sup>33</sup>.

These issues occur on a local level; however, it also seems to be evident on an international level. Brent *et al.* (2018) note that at various Sustainable and World Oceans Summits held aboard, these meetings would typically bring together various stakeholders, including but not limited to Heads of State, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), ocean industry corporations, and ‘impact investors’, to all, discuss the best ‘sustainable’ use of ocean and coastal resources. Notably, the people absent from these discussions are member-representatives of small-scale fishing communities, who rely on marine and coastal resources for their livelihoods (Brent *et al.*, 2018). When they are included, they are often left unheard and become mere representatives under the banner of ‘civil society.

In Kleinmond, fishers, similarly confront severe hardships. Sarah explains that “*Van alle kante af is daar groot probleme [en] niemand kom vra nie*”<sup>34</sup>. Despite the presence of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) office in Kleinmond staffed by a fisheries officer, officials from DEFF rarely, if ever, attend community or local NGO WWF discussions about permits and the

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<sup>32</sup> This information is extracted from my Honours research project, which involved a group of small-scale treknet fishers residing in Simon’s Town.

<sup>33</sup> John (M34I: 9 November 2017)

<sup>34</sup> English translation: “From all sides, there are big problems [and] no one comes to ask [about it]” (Sarah, F60I: November 2017).

regulations with the fishing community in Kleinmond. They further do not address community concerns, but rather focus on conservation. The issue of DEFF not attending discussions or responding to fishing communities is not unique to Kleinmond and Steenberg's Cove.

This was evident in two local small-scale fisheries workshops/conferences, one that I attended in June 2017, and the other was a workshop/round table from which I acquired a detailed report<sup>35</sup> depicting the discussions which were held the following year in April 2018. Masifundise and Coastal Links organised the workshop that I attended, which notably only had an appearance put in by two 'officials' from governmental offices. This was the Minister of Tourism and the head of the DEFF research group<sup>36</sup>. The individual that is most requested (and has historically hardly ever made any appearances) at these workshops and conferences is Craig Smith, who is the head of the small-scale fisheries sector at DEFF, as often all the requests are directed at him.

The main concern raised at this workshop/conference was that the key objectives of the small-scale fisheries policy were not being adhered to and translated effectively. Further, it was highlighted that there is a lack of capacity-building efforts in fishing communities, as well as a gap to assist woman fishers and acknowledge their importance in pre-and post-harvest sectors. The Interim Relief (IR) permit allocated to fishers for non-boat owners are minimal, and more assistance is needed to push for community-based management that offers a marriage between traditional fishers and academics and scientists. Another focus that materialised from the workshop, was the reduction of poaching and various methods that could assist with this. The main tenant of this discussion was that the reduction of poaching would allow marine and ocean life the capacity to regenerate, which would mean that a fisher's total allowable catch (TAC) would be increased or allowed so that they could fish specific species.

An interesting observation which was made about two 'officials'<sup>37</sup> who attended the workshop/conference in June 2017, was that the Minister of Tourism (at the time) skulked into the workshop and wore clothing that nearly covered him completely. He slumped very low in his chair, and covered his face with a cap during the whole session, providing no feedback or inputs into the session. In contrast, the head of the fisheries research group (at the time) was

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<sup>35</sup> This was written by a FINSAs reporter, who works for Fishing Industry News and Aquaculture. They prefer to keep their reporters anonymous to avoid any conflict that might arise from the various reports and minutes that are depicted throughout the workshops/conferences/meetings they attend.

<sup>36</sup> He is the head of the research group at DAAF for Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries.

<sup>37</sup> I have opted to not name these people directly and focused mainly on the people the participants raised.

very conversational and engaged in discussions with various people (including myself). However, he did not provide any comments or feedback about any concerns or questions raised by participants. The head of the research group was more cognisant of the issues being raised as opposed to the Minister, which could indicate that they do not get the reports, or ignore the concerns raised. In support of the latter, later in October 2017 a group of small-scale fishermen travelled from Port Nolloth<sup>38</sup> but were prevented from speaking to Mr Smith, as he could not provide them with information (Jordan, 2017) regarding West Coast Rock Lobster fishing allocations for that fishing season.

Concerning the workshop/round table that occurred in 2018, an overview of the previous 14 years of the small-scale fishing sector was discussed, as well as the progress that had been made to improve understanding in the sector since the amendment of the SSFP in 2012. However, despite a better understanding of the sector, no actions have been implemented to assist small-scale fishers and their communities further. This is specific to a case where DEFF had the opportunity to alter the fisheries regulations, however, they missed the opportunity to transform the sector; and guarantee that value chains would contribute to assisting food security and sustainable livelihoods which would benefit fishers and their communities directly. The same issues were highlighted again and included further discussions around the ITQ system, the interpretation of the fishing market, and the structures and nature of current fishing organisations<sup>39</sup>. This indicates that minimal to no progress has been made regarding these aspects raised by concerned fishers and their communities.

It was also raised by numerous participants during these workshops that there was not sufficient representation from governmental organisations providing meaningful, useful, or any feedback at all. This indicates that despite there being an opportunity for fishers to have a voice and gain assistance, and to have access to knowledge about their sector, it does not necessarily translate into positive action or implementation of current policies.

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<sup>38</sup> This occurred against the backdrop of poor fishers spending more than 6000 ZAR which they could hardly afford to be able to have a conversation with the head of small-scale fisheries, as all their other efforts to receive communication about this FRAP process was being ignored (Jordan, 2017),.

<sup>39</sup> FINSA reporter. 2018. Report on the state of small-scale fishers in South Africa. [Online] Available at: <https://www.fishingindustrynewssa.com/2018/06/20/report-the-state-of-small-scale-fisheries-in-south-africa/> [Accessed on 3 July 2019].

## ii) (Dis) agreement between fishers and their communities

“*Jy moet dit nie net vir jou eie saak doen nie, dit is vir die gemeenskap.*<sup>40</sup>” This statement by fisherman, Wally, established that activities within the small-scale fisheries sector need to be community-based, and not individual-based, such as with the current IR permits. Individual-based behaviours provoke conflicts, which arise during the mismanagement of ocean and marine resources. This is mainly owing to the phenomena of access/entry to resources, as well as with policies and the issuing of licenses and permits. The issues of inefficiency and lack of access to permits, regulations, and resources result in the creation of hostile environments, as fishers are forced to fight each other, or against each other to secure their livelihoods.

There are two cases regarding conflict with community members and fishers which occurred within Yzerfontein and Kleinmond. Near Kleinmond, about 10km before the fishing town, in a small area resides the community of Pringle Bay. A few of the fishers from Kleinmond often head out there to catch crayfish, as it is a very good spot that is not considered an MPA. Residents who reside in that area often assume that all the fishers ‘of colour’ are engaged in poaching activities, and will often contact police or inspectors to search fishers who caught anything from that area<sup>41</sup>.

Yzerfontein is another small fishing town along the West Coast of South Africa. Fishers from Steenberg’s Cove used to be able to catch crayfish from this town, however, this right was withdrawn about forty years ago and it was only recently opened to the fishers for a season. The fishers from Steenberg’s Cove arrived in the area to start catching crayfish and unfortunately, all the residents residing along the beach had contacted the inspectors to check up on the fishers, as they believed them to be poaching. The inspector had claimed that the fishers had too many nets, and needed to hand them over or pay a fine. Hermin explained to the inspector: “*Kak man... sien jy hierso, hier staan nie dat hulle nie moet 10 het nie, daar staan niks op die papier... where is your copy of the permit the regulations*<sup>42</sup>?” She stepped in and provided the permit conditions to the inspector asking him where his copy of the small-scale

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<sup>40</sup> English translation: “You must not [do it for yourself, you should do it for the community] Wally (M67I: 31 January 2018).

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Sarah (F60I: 1 January 2018).

<sup>42</sup> English translation: “[Rubbish] man, [do you see here, there is nothing here on the paper about 10 nets] there is nothing on the paper, where is your copy of the permit the regulations?” (Hermin, F60I: November 2017).

conditions was. The inspector could not answer her and had to call his colleagues to confirm the details. As indicated by fisherwoman Hermin, who was with the fishers at the time, upon numerous occasions these inspectors would allow poaching to occur or themselves indulge in the extra-legal trade. There is a considerable disconnect between communities, officials within the communities, and fishers about fishing and regulations. The current acts and regulations further do not assist fishers, as they are contradictory. Fishers should have the right: to the responsibility of the ocean resources, to fish, and a sustainable livelihood, however, there is a fine line as the ocean is increasingly becoming privatised for for-profit and in the name of conservation.

### iii) Conflict overpower between fisherwomen

The issue of conflict between fishers is particularly evident in Kleinmond, specifically between fisherwomen. This was evident from a situation that occurred within the fishing community between two influential fisherwomen, Rowina and Sarah. Fisherwomen are not set up for success, as the distribution of power among them is minimal and causes fisherwomen to work against each other progressively, as opposed to with one another. One situation that depicts this was during the 2016/2017 fishing season when Sarah was the previous permit caretaker for the community. During this period, she was also heavily involved in looking after children in the community and running a centre for them. When it was time for the renewal of the IR permit, Sarah was not able to go to the department herself, as she was looking after a large group of children (one of them being Rowina's child). She asked her (then) comrade, Rowina, to take her identity document (ID) to the department to complete the forms for her<sup>43</sup>. What occurred then, was that Rowina took the document to the department, with Sarah's ID, however, she filled in her details, removed other fishers' names from the permit list, and included her family members on the list. Once the confirmation of the permit was sent back to Sarah's house, she did not at first suspect anything, however, her husband had a 'gut' feeling that something was wrong and investigated this further. Sarah's husband cautioned to her: *"kyk weer na daai permit en as jy nou kom vir my se daar is niks fout met die permit nie, dan gaan ek vir nou a paar harde klappe gee, so dat jy kan reg kom... haha."*<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Notably, fishers could fill out forms on behalf of other fishers during that period, as there was not tight regulation by the department, which is another case for concern about proper regulation for the sectors.

<sup>44</sup> English translation: "Look again at that permit, and if you tell me [that there is nothing wrong] with the permit, then I will [slap you], so that you can [realise what is happening], haha." Wally (M671:31 January 2018).

To Sarah's dismay, she realised what had occurred and had also identified that the department had allocated to them the incorrect fish type to catch. She then went out to rectify the issue with the department. However, when she drove from Kleinmond to the offices, they were understaffed and told to her that in December the offices would be closing soon and that she would need to return in January when the offices would be open to receive a report. Instead of this, she went to the police and to Cape Nature to report the case, however, they explained she would need to have physical proof of Rowina doing it 'in the act', as they were not convinced, she was telling the truth. Another case where incorrect information and an exclusion occurred, was the case of Fatima "Poppie" Kok, who was simply excluded from obtaining a permit owing to a technicality (FISNA, 2018)<sup>45</sup>. This results from the negligence, incompetence, and unwillingness of DEFF, which creates opportunities for fraud, and further creates disputes and mistrust between fisherwomen. These actions often contradict the small-scale fisheries policy, as it was formulated in line with the human-rights policies and should have been treated accordingly.

Sarah explained that: "*van al kante af is daar groot probleme...en niemand kom vra nie.*"<sup>46</sup> Sarah stepped down the following season as the caretaker owing to her age and the politics which currently plague the SSF sector. However, no proper or formal steps (by both the government and community) were taken to ensure a fair community agreement was reached in terms of who would step up to assume Sarah's role as caretaker of the IR permit. Sarah and other women fishers explained that Rowina took this opportunity to petition to every house in their community, that if they did not vote for her, she would remove certain people from the permit list. Sarah was able to rectify the permit, by threatening to report Rowina to the authorities, as she was involved in poaching crayfish. These scenarios create an environment where women compete against each other to retain or gain authority, and a sense of power in an ever-patriarchal dominated fishing industry.

To date, small-scale fishers are still marginalised in economic value chains and have still been unable to negotiate favourable terms of incorporation into these chains using the SSFP policy. The intended essence of the amended SSFP is that fishers will no longer be allocated limited individual rights or temporary IR permits, but rather that they receive collective rights allocated to fisheries co-operatives (Benkenstein, 2013). The intention is that

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<sup>45</sup> See documentary on Fatima "Poppie" Kok: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7UmQMmbQKZM>.

<sup>46</sup> English translation: "From all sides, there are big problems [and] noone comes to ask [about them] Sarah (F60I: 1 January 2018).

this would allow fishers to rather target multiple fish species, as opposed to being limited to one species. This approach would seek to overcome seasonal variability, and be in line with intended historic, diversified, and economically viable practices of small-scale fishers (Benkenstein, 2013).

## Small-Scale Fishers: Demand for policy reform and implementation

Initiatives and approaches framed around the blue economy agenda intend that societies, economies, and environments will all benefit; however, these win-win-win strategies have been widely contested<sup>47</sup> in that they do not result in sustainable and equitable outcomes – as seen with land issues (Cohen *et al.*, 2019). It has been further identified and argued that the same strategies used on land have not resulted in sustainable and environmentally equitable outcomes. Very little evidence exists supporting its successful outcome for marine resources.

Gomme, Jarre, and Mather (2017) conducted a case study in the Southern Cape line-fishing industry and uncovered a range of stressors that affect small-scale fisheries and their communities. These included poor socio-economic conditions, resource scarcity, and most important policy and regulatory challenges, all contributing to small-scale fisheries becoming increasingly vulnerable to local and global changes that occur in the fisheries system (Gomme *et al.*, 2017). Significant results from this study indicated that 80% of the research participants involved highlighted that their major stressor was the current implementation and lack of implementation of policy and regulations, alterations in the environment, and the impact of commercial fisheries on their small-scale sector (Gomme *et al.*, 2017). Fishers from Gomme *et al.* (2017) study expressed adverse experiences when dealing with any regulatory and policy matters.

This parallels the experience of multiple fisher participants of this study, who emphasised the vulnerability and various stressors experienced by the precarious environment they were in. This particularly stems from slow and improper permit allocations, unsuccessful implementation of the small-scale fisheries policy, and a lack of communication from the DEFF. Fisher John explains that when it comes to the implementation process of the SSF policy: “...*the small-scale fisheries sector is lying to the world.*”<sup>48</sup> He explained that the process of implementation is not happening according to the way the government is portraying it to

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<sup>47</sup> Refer to works by Silver *et al.* (2015), Brent *et al.* (2018), and Barbesgaard (2018).

<sup>48</sup> Interview with John (M34I: 9 November 2017).

international parties, such as the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). The development trust, Masifundise, along with various other fisheries stakeholders, worked together for the development of the small-scale fisheries policy in South Africa. John was one of the stakeholder fishers involved in this process and indicated that they achieved approximately 80% success of all aspects and issues that they wanted to be covered in the policy, which is an incredible feat in the light of the history of the SSF sector over the past few decades.

However, he explains that: *“we have these policies in place, but when it comes to the staff compilation of the department, [you will] see how much staff [are] dedicated towards [the] small-scale [fisheries sector], and how much [staff are dedicated] towards the commercial sector... it is clear to see where the [allocations are] going towards.”* As such, translating policy objectives into feasible rights allocation and management has proved an onerous task within legislative frameworks, straddling the balance between equity needs with economic objectives and ecological concerns (Sowman, 2005). This is indicative of the fact that Interim Relief (IR) permits are still being utilised and that they are firmly ingrained in the ITQ system that favours elite capturing, problematic registration, and verification efforts.

Within the research sites, Steenberg’s Cove and Kleinmond, all means of communication between DEFF, and fishers are done through Short Message Services (SMSs) on cellular telephones. This would include information about requirements and application processes and procedures for permits, and to raise any concerns or issues currently plaguing fishers and their communities. Often, not all fishers have a cell phone, owing to poverty or they have temporarily lost or damaged their phone while out at sea fishing, excluding them from information on permits or current news in the small-scale fisheries sector. This is indicative that communication methods are not functioning as they should be, and vital information regarding policies and regulations is not readily available.

Fishers are not able to afford the luxury of insurance for personal items such as phones, or damage to their boats, thus rendering them further in a precarious position when they are not granted access or rights to their livelihoods. John explained that *“...when the officials do come out to the communities, which is very few, what we tell them never gets heard”*<sup>49</sup>. He further elaborated that they do not take into consideration what the small-scale fishers would want. It

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with John (M34I: 9 November 2017).

becomes a case of if they were heard, and their current needs were taken into deliberation, it would become evident that each community is context-specific, and thus would need additional areas of assistance, which extend beyond the mere rights and implementation of a permit. With that in mind, implementation plans could be streamlined and effective, if they deviated from a top-down approach. They would like to be involved in the decision-making process from the beginning and not just at the end of it.

Mills and Alexandersen (2016) explain that indigenous and traditional knowledge passed from generation to generation forms a wealth of accumulated cultural practices and wisdom, which can serve as the foundation for harmonious working and sustaining of the environment. Sherry Pictou (in Mills & Alexandersen, 2016) further explains that there is a scale operating within fisheries – at one end there are varied conservation schemes, and at the other, there is pure neoliberalism. Traditional fishers are caught up in the middle of this scale, where there is an expectation to commodify the relationship with the ocean on the one hand, and on the other, they are expected to remain outside of marine protected areas and reserves. This assertion indicates the contradictory nature in which current policies, regulations, and marine and ocean stakeholders operate, and demands attention to ensure that traditional fishing knowledge is considered and implemented in conservation, government, and policy programmes and initiatives.

It is evident from the fieldwork that fishers believe the current regulations and rights implemented to be in extreme contradiction with one another. A fisher has the right to fish and the right to have sustainable living, which draws a very fine line, as the ocean increasingly becomes privatised in the name of conservation efforts and profits. This is in line with the notion of Sherry Pictou's scale, and how fishers are caught in the middle of this problem. As uncovered by the fishers and two local small-scale fisheries initiatives, Coastal Links South Africa<sup>50</sup> and Masifundise, there have been and still are persistent faults and discrepancies in the Interim Relief System, which have manifested into devastating impacts on various fishing communities. Various issues that arose from the data collected from the participants<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> This is a mass-based community organisation that was established with Masifundise in 2003 to serve as a vehicle for small-scale fishers to secure their livelihoods and human rights.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with John (M34I: 9 November 2017), Shirley (F55I: 30 November 2017), Hermin (F60I: 2 November 2017), Reena (F46I: 30 November 2017), Welma (F45I: 30 November 2017), Sarah (F60I: 31 January 2018), Minkie (F48I: 28 November 2017), Rowina (F55I: 30 November 2018), Shirley (F55I: 30 November 2017), Hanna (F66I: 30 November 2017), and Welma (F45I: 30 November 2017).

manifested in the form of the late issuing of permits, the inclusion of non-fishermen in beneficiary lists, and persistent allegations of corruption in the allocation process.

In 2017, the fishing communities provided an exhaustive list of grievances to DEFF, which included some of the following issues with the policy implementation: fishing right allocations are too short, not sufficient focus on the youth or vulnerable groups, lack of governmental support, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) disadvantaging fishing communities, lack of marine resources available to fishing communities, fisher security, and lack of communication as well as long-standing fishers who do not appear on the provisional list (PLAAS, 2018). This rests on the back of the issue that DEFF had utilised a technical, bureaucratic, and rigid system, which exclude a large group of fishers, thereby opening a space for privileged capture to occur. In further looking at the struggles facing South African society today, issues such as land dispossession have often targeted the oceans and areas closest to the sea, often displacing communities who survive off the sea and pushing them inland. The community at Steenberg's Cove is one of the last remaining coastal communities to be located at their marine harvesting location, however, they do not hold a significant number of permits to use this resource.

It was further stressed by fishers from the study<sup>52</sup> that they were seeking some form of social protection and services owing to the extent of the struggles that they face, in acquiring permits and rights for fishing. Fishers explained that this could form part of some type of relief, which is something that farmers receive. This could mirror the principles of a road accident fund, where levies could be instilled which would serve to cover sea accidents. John depicted a typical case for fishers, in that when fishers go out to sea to catch fish, they spend about R300 to R400 on petrol for the boat, where the cost is constantly rising owing to inflation. However, what is happening simultaneously is that they are being allocated ever-decreasing rights, placing further pressure on their livelihoods. Reena<sup>53</sup> further elaborated on this, explaining that every time they must go out to sea, they incur a large expense with petrol and fishing supplies for the boat. Sometimes, if they could not afford enough petrol, they would only make it to a certain area out at sea, which would generally be Palmiet, just off the Kleinmond harbour.

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with John (M34I: 9 November 2017), Shirley (F55I: 30 November 2017), Hermin (F60I: 2 November 2017), Reena (F46I: 30 November 2017), Sarah (F60I: 31 January 2018), Minkie (F48I: 28 November 2017), and Welma (F45I: 30 November 2017).

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Reena (F46I: 30 November 2017).

There, they are often not catching any fish, which forces them to go home empty-handed and repeat the same procedure the next day, in hopes of a more favourable outcome.

When fishers do go out to sea, they do not have any protection or assistance should an accident occur, nor is there any type of relief fund that they could apply for if they sustain an injury at sea. John explained a case of one regarding his friend, who had an accident and lost half the palm of his hand, and three fingers, which makes any form of fishing an impossible task, again compromising his livelihood. Fisherman John<sup>54</sup> explained that what they would like to be established, is for the SSF sector to create a ‘sea fund’, as annually fishers utilise a significant amount of fuel going out to sea and harvesting catch. *“We are starting to sound like the department now, not implementing.”* This statement by John revolves around a form of social service that has been offered to fishers, added to basic financial training, however, owing to their destitute living situations, lack of motivation, and ineffective life skills, it hinders them from properly implementing these newly acquired skills.

The SSF sector provides a vital example of how contemporary changes to ocean governance are balancing, integrating, and trading off various objectives and interests (Cohen *et al.*, 2019). The blue economy agenda is rooted in the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), which is religiously aligned with various organisations, such as developmental agencies, FAO, World Bank, governments, regional bodies, and non-governmental organisations (Beerwinkel, 2019). However, as emphasised by Isaacs (2015), for the SSF sector, the UN SDG goals strongly focus on equity, which is not always equal, especially for marginalised, voiceless, and vulnerable small-scale fishers (particularly women) within the blue economy space. This is starting to become evident as organisations<sup>55</sup> are tending to shift away from the implementation of VGGT and the SSF guidelines and focus on the development agenda of the blue economy (Isaacs, 2015). This all culminates in marginalised small-scale fishers competing with blue growth agendas and policies, the UN SDGs, and rights-based fisheries policies, resulting in a loss of access to resources, livelihoods as well as the criminalising of livelihoods.

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with John (M34I: 9 November 2017)

<sup>55</sup> Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) and the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty (SSF guidelines).

## ‘Extra-legal’ activities

The case of ‘extra-legal’<sup>56</sup> activities that are illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU), occurs against the backdrop of the mismanagement of the SSF sector. The use of this notion ‘extra-legal’ implies that these activities extend beyond the parameters of a legal matter, owing to lack of recognition and opportunities, where small-scale fishers engage in these behaviours to ensure that they can sustain their daily livelihoods, despite moral censure and legal sanctions.

An example of this occurs at Steenberg’s Cove among the women who harvest mussels and periwinkles. These women operate under permits that are classified as recreational (they are not allowed to sell these produces) or which do not specify the marine species that they harvest through inshore gleaning. The current approach used to focus on reducing IUU fishing activities has reaped marginal success, as it largely focuses on enhancing conversation and management rules and increasing the compliance of fishing vessels (Isaacs & Witbooi, 2019). There is a strong indication that the issue is not solely a fisheries management problem but a wider international fisheries law enforcement issue. Notable is the fact that extra-legal fishing activities which occur within the commercial and industrial sector are best fought with strategically harnessing criminal-law tools, as they occur on a large-scale transnational level (Isaacs & Witbooi, 2019). However, it is not the same for the SSF sector, which operates on a smaller level, where women (fishers) engage in ‘extra-legal’ activities to ensure that they have food on their tables at night.

Formally, poaching denotes an illegal activity comprising the hunting or capturing of wild animals for personal gain. However, it is often performed by impoverished people to supplement a meagre diet or income. As such, within the SSF sector, this extends beyond the case of legal matters. Methods of dealing with this should understand the context in which these occur. According to Isaacs and Witbooi (2019), ‘extra-legal activities within the SSF sector as a form of resistance against the ever-present apartheid fisheries policies, processes, and regulations. For example, marginalised fishers may express their discontent with fishing rights and allocations through public protesting, or poaching. An illustration of this can be seen with the numerous protests over the years against fishing permits and regulations rallied by fishers.

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<sup>56</sup> This refers to methods of poaching and illegal trade of endangered marine species, such as the West Coast Rock lobster.

“*This is our season of assertive action, if [we] don’t stand [our] ground, [we will] lose things... that’s why fishermen lose things.*”<sup>57</sup> This statement by Hermin encapsulates the final straw of patience, which illustrates the emotional state of the fishing communities in terms of dealing with DEFF and the regulations and permits implemented to control the SSF sector. Hermin further explains this affiliation as a ‘sibling rivalry’, as the fishing communities and the government both ‘care’ for one another and are deeply entrenched in a familial relation of breaking free from the apartheid and its history of destituteness, however, at points in this relationship, deep feelings of disrespect, betrayal, and dishonesty are evident and harboured. Currently, most fishers have been taking the moral high ground, contacting all the right avenues, and using legal aid resource clinics and available information, yet nothing materialises from these efforts<sup>58</sup>. Fishers expend all their energy and the little financial resources they have to fight misdirected permits and regulations, rendering them despondent, hopeless, and still without rights. Fishers are further frustrated owing to the poverty that they are experiencing within their communities owing to the lack of access and rights to resources that directly and indirectly impact their ability to sustain their livelihoods from the ocean. Fishers firmly push the notion that poverty within the fishing communities is a man-made issue that results in them needing to tackle it in ways in which people will understand and react to it, thus fishers make use of dramatic actions to try and get a response.

Protests and marches have been one of the most extensively used forms of action for them to get a response from local governmental structures. The fishers who spearhead these are nicknamed the ‘*ninja warriors*’<sup>59</sup>, and when they engage in these marches and protests, they usually have members from the fishing communities either carrying posters or wearing bandanas with very specific colours to indicate the nature of the protest. These colours are typically black, white or turquoise. Black bandanas are used to commemorate the fishers who have passed away, as well as to indicate a specific struggle that they would be dealing with at the time, such as the lack of or inefficient implementation of regulations and permits, or lack of access to resources and community interventions<sup>60</sup>. Turquoise and white bandanas have equivalent meanings and are specifically worn by the negotiators representing the fishing communities, as they are used to represent the ocean and the behaviours of peace, purity, and tranquillity during conversations with DEFF and the government, in hopes of resolving

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<sup>57</sup> Interview with Hermin (F60I: November 2017).

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Hermin (F60I: November 2017).

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Hermin (F60I: November 2017).

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Hermin (F60I: November 2017).

disputes peacefully. Notably, the members of the fishing community fronting these demonstrations are predominately the women, which directly indicates the full extent of the triple burden that they incur. Women from these fisher communities also spend a significant amount of time in the communities which critically lack proper resources and infrastructure. They further see the direct situation regarding the youth, and how it pushes them to extremes and engage in ‘extra-legal’ activities.

Another form of dramatic action is the physical act of interfering with the equipment, boats, and harbour areas of commercial and industrial fishing companies. Fishers are wanting to make an impact and create a reaction that would demand response because they are frustrated by the lack of and sluggish response from the department. Hermin expresses this by explaining that they are: “*hurting the child that the government is favouring.*” Hermin and other fishers explain that the government favours the industrial and commercial sectors, as they provide a larger economic return than the small-scale fishers. Thus, when issues of permit and resource allocation and ocean depletion arise, the small-scale fishers are first to be targeted. Often, these drastic demonstrations are done because for the marginalised and oppressed, this is perhaps the only way to highlight their struggles and get an immediate reaction against those who oppress them. As Jabeen (2016) explains, ‘*this behaviour is not the essential character of the oppressed; it is the reaction.*’

There were instances claimed by fishers that illegal fishing by the commercial sector was being covered up, and that there is a very specific fisheries officer that operates along the West Coast who is heavily involved in poaching<sup>61</sup>. Allegations and various instances of poaching with officers are not isolated, as with a previous study in Simon’s Town with treknet fishers. There was also confirmation from these fishers, as well as from Sarah, that officials and fisheries officers were purchasing illegal abalone from them.

In another case<sup>62</sup> located in a town (Hawston) located further from Kleinmond, near Hermanus, it has been alleged that nine DEFF officials along with other members of the community have been involved in a large poaching ring in the anti-poaching unit’s office located in the centre of the town. This indicates that there is a wider issue at hand, that does not solely involve fishers and commercial and industrial boats, but rather relates to the need to alter structures and systems of regulation at a local and international level. This fosters severe

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with Hermin (F60I: November 2017).

<sup>62</sup> Article was published on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April, Times Live article Aron Hyman.

tension and elements of conflict between fishers, their communities, and authoritative figures, as fishers are not sure where to place their trust, nor are they certain who has their best interests at heart.

## Conclusion

The blue economy is an ambiguous term, which has attracted a diverse range of stakeholders each projecting their interpretations of policy agendas. It operates on a scale of power, unfortunately, there are evident power imbalances that are present in the SSF sector and policies surrounding it, which hinder the effective balance of social, environmental, and economic objectivism in the blue economy initiative. Despite the comprehensiveness of blue growth agendas, there remain social and ecological contradictions. As with previous historical cases of ‘enclosures’ heads of states generally propose that blue growth agendas can serve to resolve conflicts between competing ocean industries and the stimulation of the economy. The blue economy manifests as a balancing act to frame these conflicts as ‘sustainable’ and serves the interests of all stakeholders. Notably, the people who daily rely on the ocean for their livelihoods (specifically small-scale fishers), have for the most part not been included in blue economy discussions and initiatives.

# V

## The Invisible Women in the Small-Scale Fisheries Sector

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### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the lived experiences of fisherwomen working in, with, and opposing blue economy policies and regulations within small-scale fishing (SSF). Small-scale fishing not only provides economic contributions but is vital for their contributions to ecological sustainability and social justice. As argued in Solari and Fakier (2020), both nature and women are assumed to be passive, controllable, and productive elements, and therefore are often not considered when state and capital embark on ‘new’ trajectories of development and accumulation. This is particularly evident in the case of developmental frameworks for the blue economy, which are not crafted to have women and nature at the heart of development.

This chapter is discussed and analysed using a Marxist ecofeminist engagement, which offers an analysis of the exploitation experienced by small-scale fisherwomen and brings to the fore the various ways in which these women try to resist unfair policies and regulations, impacting the roles and responsibilities they assume. The research data serves as a foundation for how women can form a just solution towards the ‘fixes’ for blue economy agendas. The chapter highlights the significance of fishing as a ‘way of life’, and how women interpret and describe their relationship to fishing, and how it influences and carves out the various roles and responsibilities occupied by them, and how current government policy and regulations, guiding the blue economy framework, influences what type of roles and what their activities are, and how these are performed by fisherwomen. These include women’s unpaid, underpaid, and unacknowledged roles and responsibilities. I conclude by highlighting that a bridge needs to be built between land and sea to incorporate women’s roles and activities into policy and regulations to ensure that women’s intimate and complex relationship to the small-scale fisheries sector, nature, and the people whose livelihoods are dependent on it, are valued and acknowledged. The quotes used throughout this chapter illustrate that the participants spoke Afrikaans and English interchangeably, and often made use of colloquial Afrikaans terms.

## “We don’t have blood in our veins ... we have salt water in our veins”<sup>63</sup>: Fishing as a way of life imbued with tradition and culture

As indicated by the quote above, the act of fishing is permeated with meanings of tradition and culture that are intended to be transmitted to younger generations. Most of the fisherwomen come from generations of fishers where their families have been actively involved in the small-scale fisheries sector. The roles and identities of fisherwomen are materially created from their social relationships with others and their natural environment. They have resided within fishing communities for decades, which further fosters deep cultural and communal connections between fishers and the ocean. Most of the skills acquired and lessons taught about sustainability, living off the land, fishing, inshore harvesting, food preparation, and pre-and post-harvest activities, have been taught through generational family lines, or cultural reproduction. This can be expressed by the following quotes below:

*“Ja my pa is al die jare ’n visserman, hy is oorlede verlede jaar, Oktobermaand. Ek het ’n baie streng pa gehad, maar dit was die moeite werd. Hy was ’n pa gewees, hy het vir ons geleer alles van die see, wat jy moet doen en wat jy nie moet doen nie. Hy het sy eie bootjie gehad, ja, en by hom moet alles reg gewees, alles moet reg gewees het”<sup>64</sup>*

*“You know, we grew up living from the ocean and living from the land. My father taught us, all eleven of us kids everything about livelihoods-based living from the sea...”<sup>65</sup>*

*“Weet jy, my ouers was hierso op die rotse getroud, hierso by hierdie hawe... hulle was deel van die see, getroud met mekaar en met die see.”<sup>66</sup>*

An interesting element running through these quotes is that the skills and generational knowledge acquired by the fisherwomen were taught to them by their fathers (which is often the case concerning livelihood skills), indicating that the reproduction of skills was not

<sup>63</sup> Wally, M67I: 31 January 2018.

<sup>64</sup> English translation: “Yes, my dad had been a fisherman[for many] years, he passed away last year in [the month] of October. I had a very strict father, but it was worthwhile. He was a [real] father, he taught us everything about the sea, what you have to do and what you should not do. He had his own boat, yes, and with him everything had to be right, everything had to be right” (Rowina F55I: 30 November 2018).

<sup>65</sup> Hermin, F60I: 2 November 2017.

<sup>66</sup> “You know, my parents were married on the rocks here, here by this harbour... they were part of the sea, married to each other and married to the sea” (Shirley, F55I: 30 November 2017).

necessarily by their mothers, but by their fathers. This knowledge can still be seen within the new generation of fishermen and their children. It should be noted though, that this reproduction of skills is not necessarily gendered, but rather that the division of labour is.

With this wealth of knowledge passed through families, the majority of the current fishers indicate they do not want to alter their way of living, as they pride themselves in deriving their livelihood from the sea. Small-scale fishing communities are livelihoods-based, and they are focused on trying to preserve their coastal tradition and knowledge of both fishing and the sea environment to ensure the continued existence of this livelihood. However, when John says, “*Jirre nee... this is not for me man,*<sup>67</sup>” he mirrors the sentiment of many other third-generation fishers who either dropped out of or never started tertiary training.

However, fishers do wish to alter the conditions under which they work, such as having more rights and respect for extracting a living from fishing and fishing-related activities. John, who is a third-generation fisher, would love to have his son follow in this family work, along with proper education, so that he can be better informed and preserve the ocean and fight for their community rights to fish and to do so in a sustainable manner. John expresses this in the following way:

*“We cannot make the same mistakes as our parents and grandparents and fight for what is right if we don’t have knowledge.”*<sup>68</sup>

*“if we are going to fail then the next generation will also fail, and we will end up with no small-scale fisheries in thirty to forty years.”*<sup>69</sup>

Notably, these younger generations are not as inclined to continue small-scale fishing, as it does not offer financial or social security for them. Therefore, systemic change needs to occur to ensure this family tradition of fishing and to keep this heritage and way of life in existence. This poses the question of the survival and sustainability of small-scale fishing, as the end of this sector will put local ecological knowledge, fishing skills, and heritage at risk, as well as hinder the possibility of adaptability and enterprise.

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<sup>67</sup> English Translation: “[Jesus] no, this is not for me man” (John, M34I: 9 November 2017).

<sup>68</sup> John, M34I: 9 November 2017.

<sup>69</sup> John, M34I: 9 November 2017.

In ensuring that fishers can sustainably make a living, they are also able to preserve the traditions and customs of this lifestyle of fishing. Fishers have profound respect for the ocean and believe in a very delicate balance of living in harmony with the sea. There is long-standing respect for the power of the ocean, and what it can provide both materially and spiritually for fishers. This can be expressed as follows:

*“As ek daar kom, dan praat sy met my, sy maak my kalm, sometimes is sy rof, en dan is ek ook.”<sup>70</sup>*

*“Jy moet reg met haar lewe, en as jy dit doen, dan jy mag ingaan.”<sup>71</sup>*

*“No my friend, I am not afraid of the sea, ek is bang vir die lug, ek sal nooit op ‘n vliegtuig gaan nie.”<sup>72</sup>*

In looking at SSF issues plaguing South Africa today, land dispossession is the forerunner targeting areas that are closest to the ocean<sup>73</sup>, where the majority of fishing communities have been displaced from the sea, inland to informal settlements, without proper compensation. Steenberg’s Cove, for instance, is one of the last remaining coastal communities to be located at their marine harvesting location, albeit they are not legally allowed to harvest. However, as indicated by the participants from this area and discussed in Chapter Three a new tourist waterfront was planned for the area where the community currently resides, and fishers would have been forcibly evicted from their homes. The then local leaders of the community contested this and argued that they had a child buried on the grounds there, and thus they managed to avoid being displaced further inland. Unfortunately, this did not stop the construction, as gates have gone up around the beach area, privatising sections, and cutting off community members, particularly the women, from harvesting marine species from the shore. The community is not secure, since more tourists are buying properties, which will increase the rates and levies for the community, ultimately resulting in them being pushed out<sup>74</sup>. This

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<sup>70</sup> English Translation: “When I get to the [sea], [she] speaks to me, she makes me calm. Sometimes she is rough and then I am also rough.” (Reena, F46I: 30 November 2017)

<sup>71</sup> English Translation: “You must live right with her[have a good relationship with the sea], if you do that, then you may go in.” (Rowina, F55I: 30 November 2017)

<sup>72</sup> English Translation: “No my friend, I am not afraid of the sea, I am scared of the air, I will never go on an aeroplane.” (Shirley, F55I: 30 November 2017)

<sup>73</sup> (John, M34I: 9 November 2017).

<sup>74</sup> (John, M34I: 9 November 2017).

would significantly decrease the fishing lifestyle and livelihood being directly derived from the ocean.

Fishers' lives and livelihoods are subject to changing zoning acts, infrastructure development and relocations. Reflecting on how some urban areas in Cape Town have been built on the ocean, John stated that the Cape Town harbour is already in the city, with no beach nor sand. John's grandparents used to take steps all the way down to where the DEFF department currently stands, and swim in the ocean. The effects of these acts have trickled down into communities, as they have not been sufficiently compensated with adequate social services and infrastructures, which negatively impacts all people.

In combination with various factors that impact the viability of fishing as a traditional and cultural livelihood, fishers want to impart the need to respect and aid in the preservation of fishing traditions, as it forms an integral historic element of the coastal towns along the South African coast. It is a livelihood that has instilled an age-old attitude towards sustainable and organic living, that focuses on long-term values embedded in strong kinship networks.

### “We have been more at sea than at church”<sup>75</sup>: Roles and activities conducted by fisherwomen

The above quote, expressed by Hermin, (F60I: 2 November 2017) depicts a dual sentiment, which firstly refers to how involved, intertwined, and passionate fisherwomen are within the small-scale fisheries sector. Secondly, a more idiomatic understanding implies the sentiment, ‘to be lost at sea’, which indicates the capriciousness of the small-scale fishing industry, particularly with the undervalued and underpaid indirect activities and roles that women assume. These activities and roles do not follow a conventional system, but rather one that is porous and adaptable. Women participate in all areas of the fisheries value chain; however, research that has been conducted to date indicates that the bulk of their work is concentrated in the post-harvest activity section, including processing, trading, marketing, and distribution of marine resources (Du Preez, 2018).

Focussing on the locations where women work is vital in assessing how far women are from the household, which also provides insight into the mobility of fishers. Fisherwomen's roles and activities are primarily based onshore, in market areas, or vicinities closer to their

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<sup>75</sup> Hermin, F60I: 2 November 2017.

household. This results in the women spending a few hours a day working outside their home for work and then coming back to the routine of household duties. In contrast, men are out at sea all day and are thus physically removed from household responsibilities during the day.

In the households of fishing communities, women and men's roles and activities are both vital to the survival of their livelihoods and the maintenance of their households. Most, but not all women are often involved in more land-based activities, however, at the same time, they are also responsible for sustaining the overall household, maintaining community networks, and keeping up local support networks. These contributions by women are essential to both national and household food security levels, yet are often unacknowledged. Fisher households often function as an economic unit where the roles of both women and men tend to be unbalanced: women mainly control land-based activities, such as net-weaving, processing, and marketing fish, while men are out at sea catching fish (Crawford, 2012). In parallel, "women remain responsible for sustaining the household and preserving support and community networks and structures" (Crawford, 2012). This highlights the crucial contribution of women's roles in the fishery sector and the households, making them valuable contributors.

However, the recognition of women's contributions is not equal to that of men. The dynamics and nature of fisherwomen's work differ from other economic activities; the common misconception is that this work is not always considered 'productive' work, often having low social value attached to it, and seen as mere extensions of the domestic sphere (Decoster & Garcés, 2001; Harper *et al.*, 2017). Underlying this, fisherwomen are dealing with a triple burden, where they are assuming productive, reproductive and community managing work, which demands more gender-responsive policy, regulations, and permits under blue economy frameworks that acknowledge the true value of what is mostly invisible (women's work, nature, and its resources), but which has inherent worth (Decoster & Garcés, 2001).

#### i) Fisherwomen's [under] paid activities in the SSF sector

"*Ons maak ons bestaan uit die see*"<sup>76</sup>, "*dit is ons brood en botter*"<sup>77</sup> these words from Kleinmond fisherwoman and single mother, Welma, and fisherwoman, mother of four, Minkie, capture the essence and necessity of the ocean in securing and sustaining their livelihoods within the small-scale fisheries sector. The majority of the women are locked in a relationship

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<sup>76</sup> English Translation: "We make our living from the sea" (Welma F45I: 30 November 2017).

<sup>77</sup> English translation: "This is our bread and butter" (Minkie F48I: 28 November 2017).

to the fishing industry and operate on the sidelines of large-scale industrial fisheries as meta-industrial workers<sup>78</sup> and are also marginalised by men (Solari & Fakier, 2020).

Most of the fisherwomen interviewed are predominantly engaged with indirect fishing. This involves pre-and post-harvest activities that encompass the preparation of bait, mending of nets, cleaning, and filleting of fish, various fish processors (smoking and salting), and the selling and trading of fish and fish products. Most of the fisherwomen from both Steenberg's Cove and Kleinmond are also involved in small-scale capture, which is the collection of invertebrates from the shore. This is known as inshore<sup>79</sup> gleaning of marine species, which they obtain from the rocky shores. The fisherwomen glean on boulder beaches where plants and marine species live fully submerged in pools and gullies. The gleaning of marine species generally occurs in the upper semi-dry and the lowest zones of the rocky shore which forms part of the intertidal zone where the likes of limpets, periwinkles, alikreukel (known also as the giant periwinkle) and black mussels reside.

*“Die ocean is my lewe... as die water nou lekker lag, dan kom ons uithaal”*<sup>80</sup>, these words expressed by Welma<sup>81</sup>, indicate the intimate connection to the sea, yet volatility of gleaning inshore small-scale captures. It is a contradictory form of work for women to be engaged in, as it occurs in a beautiful tranquil setting without the confines of a hierarchical system, office, and technological applications. Nonetheless without these societal regulations, and commodities, fishing-related activities and roles become highly undervalued and disparaged.

On a typical day that the women would go out to glean, they will get up early in the morning to assess the tide patterns, and should it be low enough they will make their way down, often accompanied by children and grandchildren, on the pristine beach by the rocks where they will fill up empty bread<sup>82</sup> plastic bags with alikreukel and mussels pried off the rocks with

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<sup>78</sup> A hitherto unrecognised class whose labours and value orientation in relation to 'nature' leave them on the margins of the tele-pharamo-nuclear complex. Strictly speaking, meta-industrial categories such as women domestic workers, subsistence farmers, and Indigenous Peoples, are both inside and outside hegemonic capitalism, They are inside in as much as they are essential 'resources' but as 'political' subjects, they are largely outside (See Salleh, 2000).

<sup>79</sup> Any fishing activity that takes place in the ocean up to thirty meters deep, thus requirements for fishing gear is minimal and less invasive than offshore or deep-sea fishing.

<sup>80</sup> English Translation: “The ocean is my life... when the water laughs, then we [take out our harvest]. “When the water laughs” refers to the conditions of the water, and that when they are good, they are low.

<sup>81</sup> F45I: 30 November 2017.

<sup>82</sup> Local brands such as Albany or Sasko bread.

kitchen knives. Once their bags are full, they return home to prepare a portion of the harvest for the evening meal by cooking it with vegetables into a curry. The rest is processed for selling, regardless of the DEFF's legal standards. Processing involves cooking or smoking the molluscs and pickling them into jars which are sold for R20 to R85 each depending on the size of the jar or the species processed.

Selling processed molluscs is coupled with hand-made and embroidered items ranging from baskets, blankets, sandals, and toilet roll holders, sold at festivals and markets around the area, as well as to the local members of the fishing communities. The fisherwomen are all also involved in post-harvest activities when the fishermen arrive at the harbour with their catch of fish, usually snoek, Hottentot and crayfish. On their arrival, women are given a small fee or small portion of the catch that they are then tasked with cleaning and selling to harbourside customers. The women would also fillet the fish to customers' specifications for a small fee between R25 to R60<sup>83</sup> depending on the size of the fish. The meagre prices offered to these women for a quite arduous task are very small. On which they comment with resignation:

*“Mense betaal nie baie nie... maar ek sê dankie vir die Here vir daai bietjie”<sup>84</sup>,*

*“Nee man... ons lewe op geloof, eerlik.”<sup>85</sup>*

*“Ons wil maar net die beste vir ons kinders hê.”<sup>86</sup>*

*“Toe ma’ dis hoe ons sukkel in die lewe.”<sup>87</sup>*

These words expressed by Welma (F45I: 30 November 2017) and Hanna (F66I: 30 November 2017) illustrate the dire situation these women and their communities face, often characterised by frustration, passion, and pain to ensure that they get paid. The payment fisherwomen receive for the various activities or products that they sell is low and too meagre to make a substantial living, despite the amount of time and effort they exert.

Fisherwomen are also not always able to glean marine species or create hand-made products daily. This can be attributed to factors, such as the ever-changing weather conditions, policy, and regulation issues, as well as social reproductive responsibilities. When the

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<sup>83</sup> Welma F45I: 30 November 2017.

<sup>84</sup> English Translation: “People do not pay a lot, but I thank the Lord for the little [that I receive].”

<sup>85</sup> English Translation: “No man... we are living on faith, [honestly].”

<sup>86</sup> English Translation: “We just want the best for our children.”

<sup>87</sup> English Translation: “[It is ok], this is how we struggle in life.”

fisherwomen engage in pre-and post-harvest activities, they are only able to do this work during a specified season that generally spans three months. Within this short period, there are only certain days in which pre-and post-harvest activities can take place, owing to previously mentioned policy regulations and weather patterns. As such, the vulnerability of this sector requires women to assume additional and often underpaid work, above the roles and activities that they already engaged in. A summary of some of the fisherwomen's additional work activities and roles is illustrated in the table on the next page.

FISHER	AGE (YEARS)	INDIRECTLY / DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN SSF SECTOR	LOCATION	ADDITIONAL ROLES/ACTIVITIES
<b>Hanna</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>Directly</b>	<b>Kleinmond</b>	She is a hardworking fisherwoman which is illustrated by her weathered appearance. She works in the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) which subjects her to cleaning rubbish on the beach and in the harbour in the area where she lives for about ten days a month for a payment of R600. This coupled with the fishing activities is not nearly substantial enough, thus a lot of income pooling occurs within the households from pension and child grants, as well as with supplementary incomes from other household members.
<b>Welma</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>Indirectly</b>	<b>Steenberg's Cove</b>	She is a single widowed fisherwoman, who has lived twenty-one years in her fishing community. She initially worked at a fish factory as a fish processor, however, she was raised embracing sustainable fishing practices, she could no longer work for the factory as they were not adhering to this. Thus, she assumed a cook's position at one of the restaurants at Steenberg's Cove where she works in the evenings to support her family. She noted many fisherwomen are not educated and therefore cannot get work in factories and restaurants as they do not have proper curriculum vitae (CV's) that exhibit their experience. Despite her having a part-time job, the pay and working conditions are severely low.
<b>Minkie</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Indirectly</b>	<b>Steenberg's Cove</b>	She has been actively involved in the roles of data monitor, control officer, and most recently as a caretaker of the interim relief permit for Steenberg's Cove. In addition to managing all the administration and regulations with the communal permit and being involved in the pre-and post-harvest activities of caught kreef <sup>88</sup> , she is also involved in very occasional housework cleaning opportunities that arise within the holiday home areas.
<b>Shirely</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>Indirectly</b>	<b>Kleinmond</b>	She has been involved in over thirty years of pre-and post-harvest activities, specifically cleaning and distribution of caught fish at the harbour. She also engages in other "char werk" <sup>89</sup> , to help sustain her four children. She has been cleaning houses in Kleinmond for several years and has managed to build up a reputable name throughout the community (sometimes cleaning up to two houses a day during vacation season), which extends to international tourists who contact her to clean their property when they arrive for their holiday.

<sup>88</sup> This is the local Afrikaans word most used by fishers for the West Coast Rock Lobster.

<sup>89</sup> English Translation: "[part-time cleaning] work."

<b>Reena</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>Directly/Indirectly</b>	<b>Kleinmond</b>	She is a single mother with a 21-year-old son. She has never been married and is not interested in getting married, as she explains: “ <i>Nee ek is privileged, ek het nog nie ‘n man nie.</i> ” <sup>90</sup> Interestingly both her and her son have matric but cannot obtain any work within the community, nor can they leave the area owing to transport and cost constraints. Thus, apart from, the work that she does at the harbour and on occasion Rowina’s kreef boat, she also engages in cleaning houses about two to three times a week for residents in the area. On rare occasions, she will take on entrepreneurial endeavours and buy items (such as household goods, bags, or clothing) and resell them to make a small profit.
<b>Sarah</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>Indirectly</b>	<b>Kleinmond</b>	She is a mother of six daughters and grandmother of thirteen grandchildren. She is not originally a fisherwoman and explains that she came to Kleinmond to find herself a husband. She has now been married and living there for over forty-four years to her long-standing fisherman husband (Eric), who has been heavily involved in fighting for the rights of fishers. Sarah became actively involved in pre-and post-harvest activities of the catch (generally kreef) that was provided by her husband, and later became one of the monitors at the harbour that regulated the incoming catch, which offered a derisory salary. If someone assumes the role of caretaker, they are not granted the opportunity to apply for a fishing permit. After seven years of working as a monitor, she became the caretaker of the interim relief permit in the area. Owing to complex political and socio-economic reasons, Sarah withdrew as caretaker and undertook the venture of starting a fisherwomen’s co-op selling smoked mussels.

*Table 1: Summary of fisherwomen’s additional work activities*

<sup>90</sup> English Translation: “No I am a privileged, I do not have a [husband].”

Despite this additional work, it is rarely enough to sustain their livelihoods and households, thus most of them also sell their recreational kreef catches to the local and international tourists that frequent the harbour bay area. This extends beyond the boundaries of the permit conditions, as according to the legal regulations, recreational permits are only allowed for personal consumption and catches are not allowed to be sold. In the general context of South Africa, and as research illustrates, it is rare that women are solely involved in the direct task of fishing out at sea. There are several reasons for this, which will be further discussed in this chapter. However, three of the participants from Kleinmond, work on small boats which catch kreef on occasion. An illustration of what roles and activities the women engage in on the boat can be seen as follows:

*“Ons gaan uit op die boot, ons kyk wat die manne doen met onse crayfish, kreef, en dat alles reg verloop op die boot. Ja en ons verkoop dit aan die fabriek. Dit is in die Kaap. So is dit ook vir ons ’n inkomste, soos ek byvoorbeeld wat nou net twee dae ’n werk het, dit help vir my om van die boot af dan gaan na die fabriek, dan kom die geld na my, en dan sit ek dit op die tafel, want daar is nie veel om so baie te spandeer nie, soos om vir jouself te verryk nie, verstaan jy?”<sup>91</sup>*

The fisherwomen from Kleinmond assume a much more direct involvement and authoritative stance over the fishing activities, based on their description of ensuring that everything runs smoothly during a trip out to catch kreef. The choice of pronouns they choose to refer to the catch of kreef, such as *“onse kreef”* (*our crayfish*) illustrates a sense of ownership and control over the catch, which is not normally offered to fisherwomen. This indicates that these women are exhibiting more influence within small-scale fishing activities and roles, by the hands-on roles that they assume in helping with the catch, as well as the crucial post-harvest role they play in ensuring that the fish is sold to a company that can better compensate them than the general public. As such, they demand respect by pushing the confines as to how women can participate within the small-scale fisheries sector. However, the fisherwomen who work on these boats do so on an infrequent basis, as most of the time, they are involved with post-harvest activities. An important reason for more women in Kleinmond not participating in

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<sup>91</sup> English Translation: “We go out on the boat [and we watch the men with our crayfish, [and we] make sure that everything runs smooth on the boat. Yes, we sell it to the factories in Cape Town. So, this is a living for. [For example, even when I get off the boat and I have just had two days’ work, its helps to sell it to the factory as the cash comes directly to me, so I can put it on the table at home]. There is not much for you to spend on, to enrich yourself, you understand?” Rowina, F55I: 30 November 2017.

direct activities is attributed to the physical strength needed for the actual act of catching fish. This is especially true for the capture of snoek, as once it has been caught, its neck needs to be snapped immediately to avoid the meat from becoming “*pap snoek*.”<sup>92</sup>

*I am a fisherwoman! Ja, ek het my eie boot, ek gaan self see toe... ek gaan self see toe... om my kreefte trek, want ek geniet dit. Dit is my werk. Dit is lekker op die see, ja dit is lekker. Dit is wat ek doen.*”<sup>93</sup> This is another depiction of a woman engaged in direct fishing activities. Rowina is a fisherwoman who owns her boat and has been involved in the small-scale fisheries sector for over thirty years and was taught everything by her father who was a fisherman in Kleinmond. It is an interesting dynamic to note that the passing on of skills is by the father to his daughter, which is also evident with other fisherwomen. Despite Rowina owning the boat, her crew is mostly made up of fishermen who respect her and any other fisherwomen who occasionally join to work on the boat. This is expressed in the following quote: “*Ja nee, hulle is happy, hulle support dit ja, as dit by die piepie kom dan moet hulle maar omkyk.*”<sup>94</sup>

A day out on the water for Rowina can be explained as follows:

*“Ons is een skipper nê, wat die boot bestuur, dan het ek twee crewmembers, die twee manne wat die net trek. As hulle pootuit is, dan moet ek maar oorvat. Dit is hoekom my arms so sterk is, van net trek, maar dis lekker”*<sup>95</sup>

*“Ons help actually vir hulle, ons moet die aas koppel, ons moet die aas aan die draad ryg vir hulle, of ons sit dit in die net vir hulle, want dit gaan nou uitgegooi word mos nou. Sometimes ons vat die gef, die hak dan help ons die manne trek, of ons help met die bolle, en ons gee vir hulle so bietjie water om te drink.”*

*“Of ons help die kreef meet, want, ja want hulle kannie alles doen nie. Nou trek hulle, nou trek hulle net so ‘n massiewe sak kreef op. Daai kreef moet nou gemeet word, alles, en wat undersize is, moet terug gegooi word. Hulle trek*

<sup>92</sup> This is a local term that refers to the mushy and inedible texture of the snoek meat, which occurs when its neck is not immediately snapped once caught.

<sup>93</sup> English Translation: “I am a fisher woman, yes and I have my own boat, I go to sea by myself, I go by myself to sea to [catch my crayfish], because I enjoy it. It is my work. It is nice on the sea. Yes, it is nice. This is what I do.” (Rowina, F55I: 30 November 2017).

<sup>94</sup> English Translation: “Yes, they are happy, they support it, [however] when [we need to urinate] they have to merely look away.” (Rowina, F55I: 30 November 2017).

<sup>95</sup> English Translation: “[We] have one skipper, alright, who controls the boat, then there are two crew members, the two men [who pull the net]. When they are tired, then I take over, that is why my arms are so strong, [it is because of the net pulling], but it is nice.”

*vyftien nette agtermekaar, so imagine nê, vyftien nette. Om te trek, en te meet, en aas aan te sit, dis te veel vir hulle, dis te veel werk, ja.*<sup>96</sup>

The above quotes indicate the direct involvement of Rowina in the catching process of the kreef. Activities range from managing and maintaining the crew, helping to pull the nets, measuring the kreef, and throwing undersized ones back into the sea. She is currently also the caretaker of the interim relief permit for the community of Kleinmond, and thus controls who can fish as well as their fishing weight allocations. Fisherwomen directly involved in fishing activities is an example of outlier cases specific to these women in Kleinmond, as this is not the case in Steenberg's Cove. The respect offered to these women can be attributed to the fact that Rowina is the caretaker of the permit, and thus also exerts a form of control over who can apply to be on the permit list for the upcoming fishing seasons. This could be indicative of the respect that fisherwomen could receive if proper recognition and support are provided for them within the small-scale fisheries sector.

## ii) Fisherwomen's unpaid activities in the SSF sector

The contribution by fisherwomen globally is continually overlooked, often in part because the term 'fishing' is often, as previously mentioned, associated with men, and more narrowly defined as catching fish at sea, either by using a fishing vessel or using specialised fishing equipment (Harper *et al.*, 2017). Essentially, both men and women are involved in the small-scale fishing sector, however, their roles and activities are different, and should be acknowledged as such. Often known as the 'unaccounted for' dimension within the small-scale fisheries sector, fisherwomen's unpaid social and reproductive<sup>97</sup> activities and roles are the driving backbones maintaining this livelihood by providing inherent value to fishing communities. Within policy statements and definitions, fishing is considered a distinct form of productive activity that is segregated from the activities of social reproduction. As such, what often gets neglected and undervalued, is the social reproductive activities and roles that women assume, which are vital for ensuring the daily maintenance as well as the generational survival of individuals. This is particularly evident in sustaining fishing communities and families, as

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<sup>96</sup> English Translation: "[We] help with the crayfish because they cannot do everything. [They are pulling out a massive bag of crayfish], then those crayfish need to get measured and if they are undersized then they must be thrown back. They pull fifteen nets after each other, can you imagine fifteen? To pull a net, to measure is too much for them, it is too much work, yes."

<sup>97</sup> Social reproduction refers to a set of practices that ensures the daily maintenance and long-term generational survival of humans (Bakker & Gill, 2003).

well as ensuring that there are future generations to continue to fight and uphold the traditions embracing the SSF sector. Unpaid activities conducted by fisherwomen are not measured in terms of finances, thus perpetuating the issue of acknowledgement.

As such, work activities and roles need to be looked at in specific social relations in which they are embedded. All the participants of the study provided information regarding their unpaid activities and roles within the household. Most fisherwomen must engage in unpaid activities and roles in support of their livelihoods and the wider fishing communities. These activities are assumed before and after fishing and gleaning work is done. This starts with the caring of children, particularly younger ones in the households who need to be tended to in the morning (from as early as 04:00 a.m.) before the women can set out to accomplish their fishing and non-fishing related work for the day. If there are older children in high school in the household, they will also assist in some of the household managing tasks, e.g., in preparing breakfast for themselves and younger siblings, before they leave for school, and when they come back.

In a case where women go out gleaning for inshore captures of limpets, periwinkles, and mussels, the younger children not yet in school will join the women in also taking out periwinkles and mussels. This is a tradition that most of the fisherwomen also engaged in as children as expressed by Reena (F46I: 30 November 2018): “*Ons het almal as kinders in die gemeente mos die periwinkles afgehaal.*”<sup>98</sup> From a young age, the children easily navigate their way over sharp boulders and deep gullies, already having a good command of knives to pry the sea creatures off the rocks, as well as deep knowledge, love, and respect for the ocean. Welma (F45I: 30 November 2017) expresses that her child loves the life of fishing: “*Hy is verskriklik lief vir die see, hy is op die strand elke dag.*”<sup>99</sup>

Fisherwomen remarked that they want to teach the children the traditional way of fishing life, as they place significant respect and appreciation from living from the land in such a sustainable manner. Once the women and children are done gleaning, they must go home first and prepare the meat, as described above. Thereafter, with help from the children and other women residing in the household, they clean up the general home space, and if the men arrive back with caught fish for the household, it will also need to be cleaned and filleted. Once this is done, the preparation for supper occurs, which during the fishing season will mostly come

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<sup>98</sup> English Translation: “As children in this community we all harvested periwinkles.”

<sup>99</sup> English Translation: “He loves the sea very much; he is on the beach every day.”

from the sea and is prepared with vegetables into a curry or stew to bring out the flavours of the catch. Notably, the two fishermen also interviewed, indicated that on occasion should they come back after a day at sea, and household tasks still needed to be completed, they would assist with the washing of the dishes, as this aids in healing their hands faster when out fishing all day.

During the day when fisherwomen are out working, specifically in non-fishing-related activities, younger children cannot always accompany them. As such, through a social network in the community, some women take it upon themselves to mind the children during the day. This was an example from one of the fisherwomen, Sarah, who would look after children during the day, providing entertainment and food for them on her account. She cares deeply for children, as she explained she could not bear to see children from her community walking past her house to the school taxi pick-up point with a broken schoolbag and tattered clothing, wondering if they had even had breakfast in the morning before school. She emphasised the importance of social networks and looking after one another to ensure that the community becomes a safer and better-respected place. This also exhibited the social networks of these communities and how they can be critical for the household and the community's survival. These networks can also in a sense exact various costs, as people are required to meet various obligations.

Women incur a significant amount of additional social and reproductive responsibilities that are often disregarded and undervalued in sustaining a fisher household and its members, particularly within governmental regulations, as well as with the previous generation of fishermen, who still strongly embrace patriarchal behaviours within the small-scale fishing sector. Arguably, women form the beating heart of the community, and these contributions by women are what affords the SSF sector to be a viable means by which fishing communities can still survive amidst changing social, economic, environmental, and political conditions.

# VI

## Fisherwomen's Political and Economic Activism against Blue Framework Policies and Agendas

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### Introduction

The lack of attention to women's roles in the fisheries sector means that policy interventions could completely "miss the mark" (Du Preez, 2018) by misrepresenting livelihoods, food, and social security in both the community and household levels. In perpetuating fisher women's labour as 'invisible' and only considered within the private sphere, cases including a loss of employment may go unrecognised, often obscuring the material reality, and resulting in a lack of infrastructure to improve human rights and livelihoods. In adopting an ecofeminist lens, women's access and control over resources are essential for their wellbeing and bargaining power. The lack of focus and information on women and their roles and responsibilities, which also indicate that markets for their produce, such as with cooperatives, remain 'informal' and subject to hyper-exploitation, which provides very little ground for women to maintain control over their work and lives, and further hides the contribution that women can provide towards blue economy frameworks.

Firstly, this chapter unpacks the limitations experienced by fisherwomen, highlighting that poor access to resources, lack of social services, lack of representation, and climate change limit fisherwomen's representation and agency within the SSF sector. This lack of acknowledgement does not contribute to building up frameworks and social structures which will support the environment, women, and livelihoods of fishing communities that rely on marine resources to survive and establish meaning in life. Secondly, it also unpacks women's response to the current failed blue economy policies and agendas through various forms of activism and fighting for fishing rights, by pushing their initiatives for establishing co-operations (with some but limited success to date), as they have been unsuccessful in getting government buy-in for fish farms and access to capital for this.

## Limitations to women's fishing activities and roles

Women's contributions to the various activities and roles executed within the fisheries sector and wider communities cannot be mentioned and engaged in isolation without an understanding of the problems that women face, mainly due to poverty, fisheries regulation, policy development, and globalisation (privatisation). Fishing communities experience various profiles of poverty that vary from place to place, however, some commonalities characterise poverty conditions among most of the fishing communities, which negatively affect women. The participants' perspectives indicate that the main limitations plaguing women's fishing activities and roles, pertain to poor access or lack of sufficient social services, climate change, and lack of proper representation, respect, and acknowledgement of women within the small-scale fisheries sector.

### i) Poor access or lack of social services

A foremost limitation is a lack of or poor access to social services available to people residing in the fishing community. The lack of social services includes the lack of a community centre, no proper transport and high school available in the area, as well as adequate housing (specific only to the one community). The absence of appropriate public transport renders it a difficult task for children to get to school safely, as well as for women to have access to the harbour, markets, as well as other areas where alternative means of work are available, thus making women's ability to engage properly in fishing activities and roles, challenging.

There is considerable concern about the availability of high schools close to both communities. Once a child completes the seventh grade, they are required to travel great distances to further their education at a school that would fit the budget of the household. In both Kleinmond and Steenberg's Cove, the children are required to travel by minibus taxis, which costs between R400 and R600 a month, too high schools nearly 50kms away. Many children do not attend high school owing to financial constraints of needing transport to school. There was also a case, where one of the school taxibus drivers could not take the children to school, thus one of the older matric students decided to drive the bus and take the students to school to write their exams. This indicates the desire of the children to complete their schooling. Notably, most of the fisher parents are adamant about ensuring that their children go to school and can secure an education, as the tradition of fishing declines and no longer provides reliable livelihoods. In situations where children are unable to attend school, women are faced with the

additional social and reproductive responsibility of minding other women's children (from the respective communities) during the day, when their mothers are scheduled to be harvesting marine sources or engaging in alternative means of work (housecleaning, government contract work, fish factory work or restaurant cooking work).

Both communities emphasised the lack of community resources available to assist the people residing within these areas, this is particular to the youth, as well as social development programmes that could further educate and uplift the community. John Abrahams, a local well-respected fisherman in Steenberg's Cove and leader of Coastal Links, highlighted the issue that there is an overall need for social assistance within communities. Specifically, that there need to be more community programmes implemented to keep the youth occupied with activities that inspire them instead of driving them into gangs affiliated with violence, drug, and alcohol abuse. Of more importance is also the need to develop social programs that can guide and educate adult fishers in the community who are in the grip of debt. Most of the fishers operate on a "pay today attitude"<sup>100</sup> from the 'free system', that stems back to the apartheid era, which earned them minimal money on an instant basis for their catch. The pressure of having to provide for the household pushed fishers into the extremes of drugs and alcohol abuse, which still grip them today. The fishers emphasise the need for social protection and social reliefs to assist fishers in times of crisis in the way that farmers receive relief.<sup>101</sup>

An unfortunate picture that has developed over time in fishing communities is the need to sell fish no longer only for food security, but also to satisfy various social ills. This results in a magnitude of issues for fisherwomen, who are then solely faced with all the social reproductive responsibilities of the household, securing food, paying accounts, as well as suffering the abuse that stems from illicit behaviour of husbands or partners who could be under the influence. John (M34I: 9 November 2017) indicates that "*correcting social ills of oneself as a fisherman, [is to] assume responsibility and face [the] consequences... [this is an] area lacking immensely.*" As such, he stipulates that re-education is required for fishers to understand the abuse of drugs and alcohol as well as financial, social, and life-development training skills to improve their livelihoods. ("*[This] is fishing insanity, doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting a different result.*" This adaptation of Albert Einstein's quote by John (M34I: 9 November 2017) depicts that if support is not introduced by locals,

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<sup>100</sup> John, M34I: 9 November 2017.

<sup>101</sup> John, M34I: 9 November 2017.

communities and the government, the same mindset will persist with the expectation of a different result.

## ii) Climate change impacts on fisherwomen

This brief section presents findings obtained from the interactions with the fishers and indicates their perceptions about climate change, and their insights on fishing and marine patterns in their area. Notably, fishers did not place a significant focus on this but did acknowledge that it plays an important role in obtaining their livelihood.

Small-scale fisheries are particularly vulnerable to climate change and variability, which often results in environmental concerns forming a strong milieu within which fishers operate in the industry. There are numerous and complex channels through which climate change can affect the productivity of fishery resources, as well as the resilience of fishers and their dependence on fishing and fishing-related activities as a means of their livelihoods and part of their economic linkages (Allison, Beveridge & van Brakel, 2009:72). Fishers often depend on ocean resources as their main livelihood and generally reside in areas that are highly exposed to human-induced climate change, which impact the levels of distribution and productivity in their daily lives. Climate change impacts SSF through cumulative changes, such as acidification, ocean warming, and the sea level rising, resulting in the maldistribution of various marine species, depletion, and destruction of coral and various other types of marine life. (Turner, McConney & Monnereau, 2020: 436). Fishers often described the impact of climate change on the ocean through bad weather, seasonality when they are unable to fish, depletion of fish stocks, or change in fish behaviour patterns over the fishing seasons.

Women who are involved in the direct catch of marine species indicated that bad weather conditions, such as the South Easterly wind brings very rough sea conditions and allows them to catch crayfish only in very specific months of the year<sup>102</sup>. This is expressed by Reena (F46I: 30 November 2017): *“Depends van die water, as die see rof is kan ons nie gaan nie. Want suid-oos is mos nou baie hierso nou. So eintlik einde Januarie dan is die water bietjie kalmer, Januarie, Februarie.”*<sup>103</sup> They also noted the diminished stock of kreef around the zone they catch in, and thus they indicated that further on at the marine reserve near the bamboo, there are still significant sized kreef to catch with the nets. *“As jy jou net op die sand*

<sup>102</sup> (Reena, F46I: 30 November 2017); (Shirley, F55I: 30 November 2017); (Rowina, F55I: 30 November 2017).

<sup>103</sup> English Translation: “Depends on the water, if the sea is rough [then] we cannot go in, because the South Easter [blows alot]. So actually, only the end of January then the water is a little bit calmer, January, February.”

*gooi ... ja, dan gaan daar niks kreef wees nie.*"<sup>104</sup> These words depicted by Reena (F46I: 30 November 2017) has an idiomatic meaning, implying that if they do not take initiative and travel further out and push the boundaries, they will come home empty-handed after spending a great amount of time and money in getting a boat out to sea. It also refers to the meaning, if one merely casts their net in the same area in the same zone (without adapting due to climate changes), one will also catch nothing. Women fishers are vulnerable to climate change impacts, which is owing to their significant exposure to climate variation, as well as their relatively low adaptive capacity, particularly with the low impact technology that they use to harvest marine resources. Fishers also struggle with migration patterns of fish, which coupled with fighting against other marine species for the 'catch', makes it an arduous task. Marine species, such as the pyjama shark, 'blou haai' (blue shark), seals, and 'pers' (hagfish)<sup>105</sup> make it very difficult to catch kreef.

For fisherwomen, a significant issue impacting them is ocean warming and acidity. This creates changes in the distribution of fish stocks and results in coral bleaching of the local reefs which disrupts the life cycle of various marine crustaceans – a vital species that women glean. This negatively impacts fishers' chances of collecting various species that they can then produce and sell, to earn an income. Fishers who are involved in the harvesting of inshore species noted that climate change has impacted the number of times a week that they can go out to harvest, as the climate patterns have altered ocean patterns (high tide times) and weather conditions (strong winds and rain), which prevent women from going out. The stocks of the species that they are gathering have also declined owing to over-fishing as well as the ages of the species being collected (there are minimal adult species around).

A decrease in fish and crustacean catch and production significantly diminishes women's access to both food and monetary means for survival, which is also coupled with limited access and control over these resources. This is a complex issue that is increasingly preventing fisherwomen's ability to engage in various activities and roles within the value chain of the small-scale fisheries sector. This further streams into direct fishing activities, when climate changes impact the overall catch of fish, so that even the pre-and post-harvest activities that fisherwomen typically engage in are also compromised, as these opportunities diminish when marine stocks decline. Thus, women can no longer be extensively involved in the

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<sup>104</sup> English Translation: "If you just throw your net on the sand, yes, there will be no crayfish there."

<sup>105</sup> It is a slimy blue snake like fish that if threatened will release a type of black ink (Rowina, F55I: 30 November 2018).

fisheries' value chain managing the preparation, marketing, distribution, and selling of the fish – if there is simply no fish left.

Although fishers can adapt to some of these impacts by changing fishing sites, gear, target species, or by adopting dynamic management policies, the scope for adaptation to some major stressors, such as ocean acidification, is limited. Empowering women to respond to these situations is a vital step towards ensuring sustainable human-nature relationships and adequate responses to climate change, as women and children are often disproportionately impacted by this. Women are more aware of environmental impacts and have relevant solutions that can be integrated into policy agendas. The negative impacts of climate change on fisheries are extremely difficult to separate from other anthropogenic threats like overfishing and pollution. Individual efforts to deal with the impacts of climate change in the concerned regions will not be sufficient to alleviate issues. This would need concerted efforts from larger organisations and the government to stimulate better solutions for climate issues.

## Political Activism: Women's response and fight for representation and respect

At the heart of these limitations are the disputes around proper representation, respect, and acknowledgement of women within the small-scale fisheries sector. This includes not considering social reproductive tasks as paid 'work', not recognising women's fishing activities as primary roles, limitations of the definition of fishers and what constitutes fishing, and lack of acknowledgement within the policy and regulation frameworks. Using an ecofeminist lens in unpacking this research helps to situate women's responses for justice, equality and respect around these limitations, as they occur under capitalist conditions, where women are treated as subordinate to men.

Many of the women's fishing activities and roles are often demarcated as complementary to men's fishing work and framed within a household livelihood strategy context. Women's work is seen as a 'support' for their husbands or households. A method of disrupting this thought process is to support more women-focused co-operatives as these empower and strengthens women's role within the household and wider community, empowering them to be driving factors in sustaining livelihoods. By only recognising women's work as secondary, further perpetuates the distorted power dynamics evident in the small-scale fisheries sector.

There are not many women involved in direct fishing activities within the area of South Africa, and as indicated by the fisherwomen of Steenberg's Cove, this is attributed to patriarchal and symbolic ideas surrounding who can and cannot fish. The older generation of fishers is still steadfast in not allowing women on their boats as they believed them to bring bad luck and frighten the fish away. This is also particular to when women are menstruating since men believe it to be a curse to have women's 'blood' on a boat.<sup>106</sup> Fisherwomen are also believed not to have the physical strength to be able to engage in various fishing activities.

The current conceptions and delineations of the terms 'fishers' and 'fishing' have a narrow stance. This does not take into consideration all the roles women assume additionally, as well as their activities that are done inshore (such as the gleaning of shellfish). As such, all the women engaged in inshore gleaning are doing so on a limited recreational permit, or without a permit. Notably, without proper data collection around women's activities and roles, such as inshore gleaning, inefficient conservation programmes can result, as inshore activities are forgotten, often resulting in less attention to be paid to conservation areas, such as coral reefs or rock beds. With these being damaged, they alter and kill off the fishing stock and various marine species that thrive there. Women involved in the direct process of fishing also indicated the lack of sanitation issues on the boats, which render it quite a task initially for women to join on a fishing trip. Interestingly, most of the fisherwomen also referred to themselves as 'women who fish' and not necessarily as a 'fisher' or 'fisherwomen,' this could be attributed to the fact that there are preconceived notions about the definition of a 'fisher', which have been ingrained over centuries and have not been contested.

A big issue raised by the women was their recognition and representation by the government and various small-scale fisheries officials. Rowina (F55I: 30 November 2017), explicated that there are many women (who are mostly) representing fishing communities at government meetings and workshops with the DEFF. Therefore, there is a big influence of women within the political sector of small-scale fisheries management, yet most of the time at these meetings or workshops, they are met with insufficient respect and acknowledgement by officials. All women participants interviewed indicated at some point that they had applied for permits, however, most of them were denied, except for Rowina and Sarah, who respectively are and were caretakers of the interim relief permit (that grants them this access). Notably, without caretakers of the interim relief permit, women fishers would have even less access to

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<sup>106</sup> Hermin, F60I: 9 November 2017.

knowledge and small-scale fishing affairs, as no contact from the government has been made to inform communities (specifically women and their rights within the sector).

“*Die vroue moet ook veg!*”<sup>107</sup> These words indicate how fisherwomen feel about the responsibility to fight for and be involved in the process of the small-scale fisheries sector. Women are significantly involved in protests involving fisher’s rights and regulations within the small-scale fisheries sector especially when demonstrations are organised outside the DEFF department. Women are normally at the forefront of these, and then men follow. They organise all the signage and clothing significant to the events, such as the use of different colours of bandanas to represent various ideas for the protests, including the elements of, calmness, peace, warriors, respect, and ocean sources.

*“We cannot make the same mistakes as our parents and grandparents, and [we must] fight for what is right if we do not have knowledge... if we are going to fail [in this] then the next generation will also fail, and we will end up with no small-scale fisheries in thirty to forty years.”*<sup>108</sup> The quote above expressed by one of the fishers interviewed captures the despair that many fisherwomen experience with regards to representation, respect, equity, and support. It captures the despair at the need to be involved in the community, to guide the youth, and fight for fishing rights. Ironically, though, the majority of the community work involving youth, as well as policy and regulation workshop representation is conducted by women. There is a strong indication of fisherwomen at the forefront of conserving the ocean, which stands out in this research, however, what is often perceived as an empowering role, can also become an additional burden, especially for fisherwomen assuming a teaching role, focussing on conservation and sustainable livelihoods (Solari & Fakier, 2020).

Despite widespread measures to attempt to address women’s marginalisation, there is still an evident absence of powerful rural women’s movements, which indicates that there has been no redress to ensure that the new regulations and policies include women to increase political power and economic independence as an objective (Sunde, 2005). Very little attention has been placed on women’s lack of access to resources and broader social political and economic marginalisation.

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<sup>107</sup> English Translation: “The women must also fight” (Hermin, F60I: 2 November 2017).

<sup>108</sup> Rodwin, M42I: 30 November 2017.

Regardless of the wide range of activities and roles that women assume within the small-scale fishing industry and households, women still actively engage with the political sphere in representing the fishers for their rights to fair regulations and permits, as well as being involved with the wider fishing communities, particularly concerning the youth. Empowerment and agency of fisherwomen can serve as a vital response mechanism to local community problems, where often men are not able to unify and solve issues as effectively (Frangoudes & Gerrard, 2018).

There is a dire need to be involved with the youth to ensure the preservation of future generations in fishing communities. Two of the fisherwomen interviewed provided excellent examples of the wider community work that they have been involved in as well as their involvement (albeit unpaid) in areas of fisheries resource management. The community and fisheries resource management involvement by both women indicate their profound love and passion for the fishing community, as well as the desire to obtain fair small-scale fishing rights, and ensure that there is an opportunity for the youth to progress within the fishing industry. Sarah has been extensively involved in the political atmosphere of the small-scale fishers, which has granted her access<sup>109</sup> to information concerning Operation Phakisa (OP).

Yet, despite this, very minimal information has been communicated to her, nor are there resources that she can use to educate herself or other women on the ‘supposed’ benefits of OP, presented under the idealistic image of the ‘blue economy.’ One of the supposed ‘community initiatives planned by OP is to develop fishing farms that are managed by the local fishers. There is currently one project<sup>109</sup> started in the Eastern Cape by the local fishers, which has proven to be a success and has served as a beacon of hope for Sarah, so that she can use it as an example to be able to connect and approach the government to propose that they start a women’s Tilapia fishing farm in Kleinmond. However, the women’s attempts to create their economic opportunities have delivered, mixed, but more optimistic results. It is therefore towards women’s attempts at co-operatives and the form of their resistance to state and capital, which I turn to next.

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<sup>109</sup> Most of the fisherwomen have no knowledge of operation Phakisa and its initiatives for local communities, as no one has come to communicate anything, nor are there any resources available to demarcate the blue agenda framework set to change the circumstances of small-scale fishing communities.

## Economic Activism: Women's response to blue agendas through fishing cooperatives

A rising and often-unacknowledged area of women's involvement in communities and fisheries' resource management is the drive to initiate more women co-operatives (co-ops) within fishing communities in South Africa. The current creation of these co-ops is often driven and headed by influential fisherwomen, such as *Hermin* and *Sarah*, and are built upon the underlying premise of persistent neglect, underrepresentation, and unfair acknowledgement of women involved in the small-scale fisheries sector. In establishing co-ops, women can be empowered so that unequal power relationships and dynamics can be restructured, and the recognition for marginalised groups (such as fisherwomen and the youth) can occur, which can further provide them with access to social security, improve their entrepreneurship and leadership skills, and provide them with a voice and space to be included in decision-making processes that often, directly and indirectly, impact them (COPAC, 2020:1).

The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) (1995) defines cooperatives as “...*autonomous associations of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.*” They further intend that co-ops subscribe to a certain set of principles and values that support the social nature of their activities. However, it was raised at a global small-scale fishing conference in 2008<sup>110</sup>, that the term ‘cooperatives’ has a historically negative<sup>111</sup> connotation, which is particularly true for the South African context. Nevertheless, it is still a term that is generally accepted to aid in improving the circumstances, solidarity, and resilience of fishers and their communities. It is envisioned that the formation of co-ops contributes to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, through sustainably using and conserving the ocean and marine resources, which fishing communities rely on for their livelihoods. This is intrinsically linked to the achievement of SDG 1 and SDG 2, associated with the elimination of poverty and hunger (COPAC, 2020). Therefore, co-ops play an integral role in facilitating information exchanges, providing fishing communities negotiating power with market intermediaries, the building of partnerships and networks with various

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<sup>110</sup> Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (2012).

<sup>111</sup> In the context of South Africa, the Apartheid regime strongly supported co-ops in the agricultural sector which solely focused on developing a successful class of ‘white commercial farmers,’ without regard for black farmers (Ravinder, 2017:3), who had to engage in ‘stokvels’, which were not recognised formally (Thaba & Mbohwa, 2015:1). This perpetuated poverty and disadvantage for many coloured and black agricultural farmers and fishers, resulting in a lengthy process to rectify these conditions and disparities still evident today.

organisations, and the fostering of sharing indigenous and traditional fishing knowledge (COPAC, 2020) in pursuit of universally recognised sustainable development goals. Co-ops can serve as a mechanism through which small-scale fishing communities can organise themselves and draw strength from one another within their organisation (Rena, 2017:2).

### i) Fishing cooperatives in South Africa

Small-scale fishing in South Africa has been characterised by a system in which individual fishers are often at the mercy of supply chains and have no autonomy over the prices they receive for their catch. Therefore, to secure an income, small-scale fishers are often forced to sell their catch at unregulated prices and to expand their fishing efforts, despite regulations, placing added pressure on an area's already overexploited marine resources (this includes the west coast rock lobster and various other line-caught fish such as galjoen). The initial intention of establishing co-ops within the small-scale fisheries sector was aimed at improving the “*resilience and stability of fishing communities*” (FAO, 2012:2), by shortening the value chain for fishers to have greater access to markets at better prices, and to provide other economic avenues, when fishing cannot be directly engaged. Notably, this requires harnessing new legislation that grants commercial fishing rights and marine management responsibilities to small-scale fishers. This could be accomplished through co-operatives that are intended to contribute to local socio-economic development and help alleviate poverty, requiring support and participation of community fishers, NGOs, businesses, tourism, universities, and various government officials (IssueLab, 2016:1).

An established and formally recognised small-scale fishing co-op can better facilitate a fisher's involvement in policy and regulation decision-making processes. Co-ops are intended to enable fishers to deal with threats against environmental and socio-economic shortfalls, including livelihood insecurity, climate change, poverty, and fisheries policy and regulation mismanagement (FAO, 2012:2). Co-ops can provide fishers with tools and knowledge to improve the management and conservation of marine resources so that they can comply with fisheries regulations (COPAC, 2020). An example of this would be the formalised opportunity for fishers to engage in other economic opportunities (such as selling pickled alikreukel or mussels) to supplement their income when a fishing season is ‘closed.’ The establishment of co-ops can then increase fishers price negotiating, improve pre-and post-harvest facilities, increase market competition, use greater negotiating skills for cost-savvy bulk purchases of equipment, as well as giving them sufficient freedom in choosing their buyers (FAO, 2012:2).

The amended South African small-scale fisheries policy advocates for collective commercial rights for fishers through means of cooperatives. In 2018, two fishing communities, Port Nolloth and Hondeklipbaai were provided with the opportunity to have basic training and registration as a co-op. The idea is that fishers can establish their funds, and fish with dignity under-protected rights, and obtain fair economic value for their catch, which would, in turn, reduce illegal fishing and better protect marine resources. Successful implementation of co-ops encourages fishers to work together in pursuit of legal and economically viable livelihoods to eradicate the historical fragmentation experienced by them.

A key action in the amended small-scale fisheries policy was the specific formulation of women cooperatives<sup>112</sup> to work with a supply chain restaurant as their main marine resource management body and as the main local fishery (IssueLab, 2016:2). This would enable women to play an active role in the value chain process from catch to product delivery. A valuable part of this process is the market demand, and fishers being granted access to build and network with consumers and restaurants, which in turn can build consumer awareness and demand for unique local products, and aid in supporting fishing communities. In collaboration with the establishment of a co-op, a local NGO developed a smartphone application, which would start the move of fishers from a paper-based data collection system to an integrated online monitoring system that can record catch data, provide traceability, inform consumers and create a space for meaningful co-management discussions with various government partners (IssueLab, 2016:2).

*Abalobi*<sup>113</sup> is the smartphone application used by the fisherwomen of this co-op and provides them with an opportunity to manage to sell fish products through an integrated monitoring system, improving their business capacities, and to have the possibility of creating direct connections to consumers through ‘storied fish<sup>114</sup>.’ As consumers are increasingly becoming aware of sustainability, and the idea of ‘storied fish.’ In providing a space for fishers to use this application to connect to consumers, sustainable fishing can occur, which empowers

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<sup>112</sup> This co-op was based in the Kogelberg coast southeast of Cape Town and was operated by 9 women who bought locally caught line-fish species from local fishers in and around the areas of Pringle Bay, and Kleinmond. They sell the product to local seafood restaurants and cut the supply chain by eliminating the middlemen and maximise the price value of local species (IssueLab, 2016).

<sup>113</sup> **Abalobi** is the isiXhosa term for ‘small-scale fisher’. This mobile phone application (‘app’) was developed at the University of Cape Town, under the guidance of Dr Serge Raemaekers.

<sup>114</sup> **Storied fish** refers to any marine product that has a story of its journey from the ocean to the plate. This would include details of how, where, when and the type of produce caught or harvested, and the various places it has travelled between the boat and the consumer.

the consumer, environment, and fishers involved, ultimately eliminating mass industrial companies controlling marine resources. Fishers can conserve marine resources, by getting fair market prices, without middlemen, and sharing their experiences and indigenous knowledge to the end consumer. It allows for a greater reach and support for small-scale economies empowering women (COPAC, 2020).

For the fisherwomen consulted in this study, the formation of co-ops is a type of activism and drive for changing power relations in the potential pursuit of a solidarity economy. A solidarity economy has a systemic, transformative, and post-capitalist agenda, which is ideally suited to a Marxist-Feminist political stance. It focuses on change to the economic and social system that focuses on maximisation of private profit and blind growth and rather situates people and the earth at its core premise (Poirier, 2014). In attempting to link ecofeminism to politics, findings from the research highlight the importance of organising and politicising women's relationship to nature. The formation of co-ops is a good example of developing economic processes and systems that are intimately connected to fisheries realities, preservation of the environment, and fostering collaboration between networks. Co-ops can empower fisherwomen while promoting responsible fisheries by assisting with microfinance, access to equipment and technologies, and establishing higher standards with regards to their products and various produce (FAO, 2012). It also provides a space for processing, packaging, and marketing of value-added products, which can help to create jobs for unemployed women, and steer environmental awareness in line with sustainable economic alternatives for fishers (FAO, 2012). Establishing and correctly implementing women-focused co-ops within the small-scale fisheries sector can greatly empower women's roles within the SSF sector, providing a clear space for them within blue agenda frameworks. This can further result in women gaining more representation in fisheries resource management processes and further work on the legal recognition of fisherwomen and their contribution to the SSF sector.

In pursuit of a co-op as a form of activism, an example can be seen with fisher, Hermin. Despite her extensive involvement with Coastal Links and Masifundise, her reasoning for driving her co-op stems from the issue that meetings and workshops only serve as verbal empowerment platforms, where ideas are exchanged but none are translated into positive action. She emphasised that empowerment is not the wrong subject to focus on (as for her learning is a lifelong process), however, she and other fisherwomen leaders (such as Matilda Niewoud from Buffelsjagbaai) contended that at their age (being already over 50 years of age)

and all the years they have spent fighting for fishing rights, they would like to achieve more practical and tangible changes for women within the structures of small-scale fishing. This fuelled passion and progress for Hermin and Matilda to embark on a quest to help fisherwomen to get appropriate knowledge and skills to sell their fish produce, within the community of Steenberg's Cove.

On one particular occasion, Hermin was allowed to attend a 'slow fish' event sponsored by the World Fishers Forum (WFF), which demonstrated the possibilities of slow fishing in assisting in representing and bringing fisherwomen's plight to the fore. As such, should the women have enough resources as well as knowledge available, they could form a co-op. Notably, it is quite an onerous task to get a co-op to gain traction, thus, attending this event, allowed Hermin and Matilda to organise a marketing and food preparation workshop in Steenberg's Cove for the fisherwomen to attend. It was a very successful event that offered a collaborative learning environment, in which traditional and contemporary knowledge was fused. A local chef was able to help in offering alternative sustainable cooking methods for unique inshore marine species, that fused with traditional cooking methods such as smoking, pickling, or mincing. These included inshore species of seaweed, sea urchins (more commonly known as 'see dorings'), and sea anemones<sup>115</sup>. A marketing consultant also offered the women techniques, ideas, and networks through which the women could market and sell their products, to both local and international people. This also spurred on the initiative to expand the products beyond sea offerings, but also to handmade items such as shoes, crocheted items, and blankets. The women believe that co-ops could aid in progressing and solidifying their economic contribution and position in the SSF and promote sustainable living.

The fisherwomen from Steenberg's Cove are currently involved in a registered co-op "*Weskusmandjie*" that was developed in response to the economic struggle faced by the fishing community in Steenberg's Cove, and women's unemployment. As an alternative to closed fishing seasons and direct capture of fish, Hermin and her group of women sell sour fig jam, rollmops, and pickled bokkoms. The central aim of this co-op is to allow the women to harvest, pickle or smoke, bottle and sell their products, through a legal and recognised avenue, with the hopes of also reviving the notion of 'from sea to table.'

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<sup>115</sup> This is commonly known and identified by the fisherwomen as "sea pussy", due to its physical features, as well as stubbornness, when trying to pry it from the rocks.

They are currently making use of the Abalobi initiative focusing on ‘from hook to cook’ and ‘storied seafood’, which compels consumers to be consciously aware of where their food is coming from, what forgotten traditional and sustainable seafood tastes like, as well as supporting local markets to build on the local economy. This affords them more protection and assistance in the developing, processing, marketing, and selling of their fish and handmade products. “*Weskusmandjie*” is slowly getting underway with the marketing and selling of their current product offerings, however, they are faced with persistent issues regarding regulations and permits. They would like to include limpet and alikreukel pickle, and sea lettuce salt in their product range, but at present, they only have recreational permits for harvesting these species and are thus prohibited from selling them legally. They have applied for small-scale fishing permits and recognition; however, they were denied, and they are now in the process of appealing against these decisions. It is not clear that women have been provided with a clear blueprint and support network to set up co-ops, as there are other examples of women still struggling.

Another smaller co-op, “*Overberg Visse Vroue*” that comprises six women operating within Kleinmond, was initiated by Sarah, a very influential fisherwoman and representative of the local community. The co-op was initiated by Sarah to formulate a platform where women could be independent and empowered as fisherwomen. It is to serve as a platform where women can market themselves as well as their harvested sea products, under the name of “Cloud Twelve.” They focus predominately on selling smoked and pickled mussels, which they are currently selling at local festivals and to locals within the community. Most of the assistance which has been acquired for the co-op has been through volunteer networks, which has not always proven to be successful. An example of such a situation occurred when an individual from a university in the nearby area said they could assist in helping with preparing nutritional labels and obtaining the correctly regulated pH balance for their pickled mussels so that he could legally sell it at a commercial shop. Unfortunately, instead of assisting them, the individual had fetched over two kilograms of mussels to assist in creating and establishing the correct measurements for preservation, however, the person disappeared and never contacted or returned with the contents, despite numerous calls from the women. This shows the vulnerability that fisherwomen are still faced with, despite their efforts to set up co-ops without the necessary support structures. These structures were intended to be provided to the women through the amendment in the small-scale policy. This can leave the women with little faith in

the DEFF and the government with an ever-diminishing hope for creating a women-driven sustainable livelihood.

Despite the setback, Sarah hopes that they are still able to get a contract with local stores, such as Pick 'n Pay or SPAR, to sell their produce. However, other recent negotiations with a local NGO have not proved to be successful or beneficial for the women involved, further disempowering their roles within the sector.

There are both cases of struggling and successfully established and implemented women's co-ops, which can illustrate exploitation and empty promises or women's empowerment that this initiative could have. If women's co-ops could be correctly implemented and monitored, it can provide significant opportunities to preserving the marine environment, and empowering women and their communities, ultimately leaning towards the achievement of SDG 14. These engagements in co-ops are a type of ecofeminist politics that illustrates that through proactive mobilisation, change can occur. Both environmental and social efforts are required to overcome the oppression of women (and nature) as solutions in one domain can create positive impacts in the other. In understanding where social inequalities and environmental concerns intersect, it can be determined where impactful solutions can be found.

This chapter highlighted fisherwomen's limitations within the SSF sector and their communities, specifically their poor access to resources, lack of social services, lack of representation, and climate change. Emphasis was placed on the initiative and agency of women starting co-ops to move beyond simple market-based activities. Yet, these activities are under-acknowledged and void of proper financial support and resources. Other limitations raised involved poor access or lack of sufficient social services, lack of proper representation, respect, and acknowledgement of women within the SSF sector.

# VII

## Conclusion and Recommendations

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As previously stated, the overall aim of this exploratory research was to use a Marxist ecofeminist lens to explore and establish an understanding of the complex roles and activities engaged by fisherwomen operating in the SSF sector in South Africa – in two case study sites, Kleinmond and Steenberg’s Cove – governed by blue capitalism. Therefore, the research engages both the experiences and lived realities of fisherwomen amidst ongoing policy formations and regulations, which do not always ensure environmental sustainability, social justice, and gender equality. The thesis expands on assumptions and implementation of the blue economy and hones in on Operation Phakisa in South Africa and how notions of commodification have become entangled with environmental protection, focusing only on economic pillars, such as oil and gas extraction without consideration of small-scale coastal livelihoods.

In addition to how governance of the ‘blue economy’ and Operation Phakisa relates to ocean grabbing, I now focus on how women interpret and describe their relationship to the ocean as an economy as well as an integral component of their daily lives and community, emphasising it as a ‘way of life.’ The thesis sheds light on two forms of activism by women; political and economic, and relates specifically to their role in establishing fishing cooperatives. The overall intention was to bring women’s experiences, perspectives and activism to light so that it could shed more information into these unresearched and under-acknowledged areas. Another intention with this thesis is that the fishers’ voices expressed here would hopefully be incorporated into future fisheries workshops, conferences, and policy debates, highlighting their strength and power in local communities and at border institutional levels. It is suggested that further investigating and expanding Brent *et al.* (2018) blue fix cocktail to include a possible ‘women’s fix’ to these fixes, would serve beneficially towards understanding the full extent of activities roles and contributions that women provide to the small-scale fisheries sector, and wider blue economy agenda. An expanded understanding of this would enable the process of implementing effective ‘fixes’ that can steer current blue frameworks into the right direction, ensuring, equitable sustainability and enhanced understanding of people’s

relationship with the marine environment. Emerging out of this exploratory research project is several recommendations and suggestions of how this field could further be explored and studied in a more wide-ranging and in-depth manner. These will be discussed with the themes that emerged from the research questions.

## Fighting against the tides: Blue illusion and operation fail

In Africa, the possibility of blue growth is still mostly unattainable as a sustainable exploration of the sea is often not possible owing to inadequate knowledge, technological capacity, and limited investments in this area (Okafor-Yarwood *et al.*, 2020). The blue economy should seek to ensure that the economic development of the ocean contributes to true prosperity, today and long into the future. Action-orientated global strategies within blue economy discourses need to place both people and the environment at the centre of development by taking key barriers in blue economy initiatives that need to be addressed and turning them into opportunities (Njuki & Leone, 2018). Acknowledging the roles of women in the fisheries value chain and the overall sector will help to foster a collective responsibility in the conservation of the ocean and sustainable use of it while increasing more livelihood opportunities, thereby aiding in the reduction of poverty at household levels. As Ndwiga (2019) eloquently puts it, the blue economy can be the: “new frontier of the African renaissance and must not isolate or relegate women to the periphery but aim for substantive inclusion — both in the public and private sector — by deliberately committing to ideas that increase their participation in the management and utilisation of resources”.

We are experiencing a creeping and hidden process of enclosure of our fisheries and marine resources. Ocean grabbing is a concept that is aimed at casting a light on the dynamics that are negatively affecting the communities and people whose way of life, livelihoods, and cultural identity depends on their involvement in small-scale fishing and its related activities. This generally occurs through mismanagement and incorrect implementation of laws, policies, and practices that underlie broader economies, disguised as positive ‘blue frameworks.’ Thus, policies, frameworks, and economies need to strengthen the political space for all small-scale fishers to prioritise their rights as well as to encourage sustainable use of marine resources. To implement a sustainable blue economy effectively, the SSF guidelines and policy are essential tools. Initiatives set forth should prioritise SSF and build on and promote SSF in current and new processes to ensure that they receive proper blue justice. There needs to be an active dialogue

between all blue economy and SSF stakeholders to ensure equitable resource distribution and reduce the marginalisation of under-represented and unacknowledged groups, such as women.

Much of the policies and regulations implemented both locally and internationally are not always well managed, specifically for the SSF sector, and thus do not always translate into positive actions, frequently resulting in consequences for fisherwomen and their communities. A major proportion of women's contribution has a low value attached to it, which is fuelled by their limit to resources, credit, permits, processing technology, facilities, and training (UNECA, 2016:33). Research revealed, a lack of an agreed definition and understanding for the notion of the blue economy and what it should embody, which was exacerbated by fundamental differences in priorities, approaches, and ideologies within the SSF sector, results in an imbalance between economically powerful people, political interests, and politically marginalised groups – neglected in decision-making processes. Illustrating these ideas is not entirely new to the social sciences; however, our ability to influence policy and governance has no traction. Therefore, the issue remains, that clearer regulations and policies informed by the views and experiences of fisher communities need to be developed to ensure that the current blue economy and its ocean governance improve and break the current cycle of appropriation and exploitation. Instead, we need to promote the social, ecological, political, and economic well-being of the small-scale fisheries sector, allowing the views and political will of under-represented groups to be brought to the fore.

Operation Phakisa is not fully inclusive and lacks proper appropriate implementation. It has been rolled out with minimal ecological concerns and allows powerful economic actors involved in integral decision-making processes to 'ocean grab' through holding and wielding the power to decide how, and for what purposes marine resources are used, managed, and conserved. However, there is an indication of governmental organisations wanting to embrace modern governance (such as co-management, ecosystems, and human-rights approach) to managing fisheries, as seen through the gazetting of the new SSF policy in June 2012 (revised in 2014). However, what is currently lacking is the proper translation of this policy (seven years to the date since its revision in 2014) into effective action, in line with Operation Phakisa initiatives, using appropriate fisheries information management systems (FIMS)<sup>116</sup>. A new way of thinking should be adopted to ensure that the translation of policy does not merely stop at

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<sup>116</sup> FIMS is an integrated collection of application and related processes that together support a sustainable management of the SSF sector.

the doorstep of the private domain but addresses deeply entrenched ideas about men's preferential access to and control over marine resources, as well as women's labour, bodies, lives, and livelihoods in coastal communities.

The research further indicated that there are multiple and intersecting gaps; lack of an efficient transformative fisheries council, lack of effective regulation strategies, lack of knowledge on regulations and permits, lack of evenly distributed permit holders, lack of universally agreed definitions for policies, lack of enabling opportunities for small-scale fisherwomen, and a lack of communication between stakeholders involved in the SSF sector. For a more authentic human-rights co-management of the ocean and its resources, fishing rights should be formally allocated to active fishers, both men and women, and implemented in a manner that suits the specific context and needs of fishing communities, as opposed to a 'one size fits all' approach – even if this indicates that current key issues within policies and regulations would be compromised. Thus, human-rights narratives and approaches that are currently trying to mitigate disputes within the SSF sector, still co-exist ineptly with neoliberal policies (Isaacs & Hara, 2015).

Current policies have been heavily influenced by the notion of a developmental path embedded in economic growth and top-down thinking. Thus, we see the continuation of the neoliberal ITQ system, which initially sought to widen access to ocean resources and help in the transformation of the fisheries sector. Following the adoption of the SSF Policy, was the implementation of the fisheries regulations, where the government further missed a vital opportunity to ensure food security, and sustainable livelihoods for small-scale fishers within supported value chains, which could benefit fishers and fishing communities directly. Thus, DEFF carved out a system that excluded multiple fishers and secured a space for elite capture to take place. Concerning IR permits, community-appointed caretakers currently still control the handling and appointments of these permits, clearly indicating that this method is still firmly ingrained in the ITQ system. Thus, by undermining small-scale fisher livelihoods, neoliberalist influences in policy formulation and governance jeopardise the sustainability of community livelihoods and the resources on which they depend. This is further compounded with gender inequality in fisheries, which is embedded in a broader context of the marginality of fishers worldwide, thus fishers especially small-scale are often excluded from the policy and decision-making processes.

## Women's roles and responsibilities in the SSF sector

The use of a Marxist ecofeminist lens offered an analysis of the exploitation and marginalisation of women in the SSF, while also bringing to the fore how women resist and attempt to capture some of the potentials of policy frameworks. Underlying this study, and raised by fisherwomen, is the discourse around the lack of resources, acknowledgement, rights, regulations, and permits. This research initially sought to explore and unearth the roles and responsibilities of fisherwomen within two case study sites, as the intention was to generate a better understanding to help in the pursuit of the preservation of traditional livelihoods evident all along the South African coastline. Research about their roles, activities, inequalities, and access to resources, that they need and are involved in, particularly in the SSF sector, is still not very clear. This renders women's contributions undervalued and misrecognised, often excluding them from decision-making processes involved in policies, regulations, and permits, particularly in the context of the blue economy. A simple reason for the oversight of women in the fisheries sector is how fishing is demarcated, who is considered a fisher, and what activities count as fishing. Consequently, owing to this semantic issue, most of their labour does remain undervalued and often unrecognised, forming an extension of their household work, despite research that has documented some of the women's contributions, and actions to advance fisherwomen's rights and inclusion in policy and regulations.

Exploring the spaces in which women operate in fishing illustrates women's economic and social value in fishing communities and their agentic involvement in the production process of fishing, sustaining livelihoods, and caring for the environment. A lot of the skills and lessons acquired by these women were through generational family traditions that included methods of sustainability, living off the land, fishing, and inshore harvesting as well as food preparations of caught ocean resources. Interestingly, these traditional skills and generational knowledge were passed on through fathers, which indicated that the handing down of skills was not solely by their mother and could signify that if fishermen took on some of the household burdens of social responsibilities, work would be more equally distributed, contributing to the breakdown of gendered hierarchies within the SSF sector, which could lead to more data generation to influence policy and regulation formations.

The research unveiled that women play vital roles in various parts of the value chain in the small-scale fisheries sector, with a mixture of both direct and indirect fishing activities, as well as household and community roles, often resulting in a triple burden that they need to deal

with. These roles and responsibilities were categorised into three areas, defined as underpaid, unpaid, and unacknowledged, based on their recognition by local and broader institutional stakeholders. The majority of the women engaged in what is still termed ‘indirect’ fishing activities, which include in-shore gleaning, and pre-and post-harvest activities, such as preparation of bait, mending of nets, cleaning, and filleting of fish, fish processing, and the selling and trading of fish and fish products. However, in Kleinmond – identified as an outlier situation – some women engaged in more ‘direct’ fishing, where they go out to sea on a boat and use fishing gear to catch snoek or kreef and then sell it along the value chain, often affording them more respect from both local men and women. Research conducted in various other fishing communities along the coast of South Africa could provide a better representation of other women who also engage in ‘direct’ fishing activities, and how it feeds into the treatment of the women by local community members, and the value it could contribute to having their voices heard.

A significant element neglected in policy and regulation formation is the recognition of inshore gleaning, which the majority of small-scale fisherwomen engage in, yet owing to the poor definition of women’s fishing activities, and the fact that inshore gleaning does not entail the use of boats and fishing gear, it is not considered informal policy and regulations. Therefore, intense effort and times spent on wading into intertidal zones, with minimal fishing, for the likes of octopus, seaweed, snails, crabs, urchins, small fisher, limpets, periwinkles, and alikreukel, go unnoticed and unregulated. This ‘extra-legal activity often leads to what is considered a ‘wildlife crime’, as these livelihood practices become illegal in the ‘absence of legislation that supports their livelihoods and cultural practices’ (Nthane *et al.*, 2020).

The activities, roles, and responsibilities engaged by women were further underpinned by additional underpaid and unacknowledged work within their households and communities, in pursuit of sustaining their livelihoods. All the women emphasised that they had to do daily - unacknowledged - roles and responsibilities within their households and communities, which included caring for young children, household work, and the preparation of family meals.

Another facet, that is considered an additional ‘burden’ to fisherwomen, is the lack of acknowledgement of their drive for conservation, equal fishing rights, access to resources, conservation, and sustainable livelihoods for their families and wider fishing communities. Women are still actively engaging and often leading in the political sphere by representing (at various workshops and protests) the fishers for their rights to fair regulations and permits, fair

conservation efforts (preserving for future generations) as well as being involved with the wider fishing communities, by doing work initiatives and teaching the youth. Initiatives included running volunteer and community-based programmes, health educators at a learning centre, and working with local NGO groups in youth and fisheries projects that focus on conservation, sustainability, community resource upliftment, and education. As Frangoudes and Gerrard (2018) state, the empowerment and agency of fisherwomen can serve as a vital response mechanism to the local community and environmental problems (issues of access and sustainability of resources), where often men are not able to unify and solve issues as effectively.

### Women's Fix: conservation, economic and political activism

Too often our thinking about nature ignores the intricate and complex ways in which all living things are interconnected (Cock, 2007:25). Contrary to the more conscious awareness about land and agricultural questions, research relating to the sea and fishing are not widely engaged and remain quite concealed, often encompassing enclosed discussions between fishers and the various individuals who oversee this sector (Dalla Costa & Chilese, 2014:2). Fishers engage with the ocean in the same way as farmers do with their land, as they know best how to cultivate from it. They know when to venture into the sea, they protect it, they know the fish species, the seasons in which they are fished, and the means of catching them in astonishing harmony with their natural environment. Oceans are thus critical to sustaining earth's life support systems and the multitude of people, especially women, who are dependent on oceans for livelihoods, food security, and economic development.

Within the SSF sector, women's roles and activities have been reshaped and remade, in much the same way as nature has been reshaped and remade. In the pursuit of conserving the ocean environment, many policies implemented have tended to follow patterns of commodification and align with privatising coastal zones, which focus on benefiting a handful of investors, as opposed to the wider communities, which often get displaced. This was evidenced in Kleinmond, where first-generation fishers were displaced from the current harbour to the slopes of the Overberg mountain so that the tourist-designed harbour could be built. This also almost occurred in Steenberg's Cove, where a tourism resort and estate were planned to replace the area where the local fishing community resided, yet it was stopped owing to a historical gravesite. This shows that local stakeholders were either not consulted or when

consulted, had little effect or was nearly too late regarding social, ecological, or economic impacts.

Considering conservation efforts, fisherwomen endeavour to teach their children the traditions of fishing communities (as a means of sustainability and preservation for the oceans' resources), which they believe is based on respect for nature and an appreciation for the sustenance that nature provides. This was illustrated through the research as to how children are not only taught how to glean, prepare, and process ocean food, but also how to use all the parts of the fish and cautioned against wasteful behaviours. Women also indicated that they were all raised being taught how to live from the sea and land sustainably, which was evidenced by the organic nature in which they say the older fisher generations raised them to eat freshly caught fish, plant and harvest vegetables from their home gardens and have fresh eggs from their chickens.

Women play an important role in promoting sustainable development through their concern for the quality and sustainability of life for present and future generations. Yet, they are often still absent from policy formulation, and decision-making processes that involve natural resources, regulations, environmental management, and conservation. Through management and the use of natural resources, women can provide livelihoods for their families and wider communities. Their skills and experience in advocacy for monitoring natural resources management is vital for both policy-making and decision-making bodies, as well as through education and environmental-related organisations (UN, 1995). This assumption of women being connected to nature often gets romanticised where women are passively linked to nature and not observed as political agents who fight for human rights as well as the preservation of the environment, and therefore are not heard when the state embarks on 'new' and supposed virtuous paths of development. This is further compounded with women's work being rendered invisible, under-recognised, and unacknowledged. This suppresses women's recognition for their strength, productivity, independence, and influence in the context of small-scale fishing. In politicising women's connection and influence with nature, it can afford them the ability to have a powerful role in influencing sustainable consumption decisions at a local level. For example, this could be through a sustainable shared allotment garden or engaging in grassroots and youth campaigns within local communities.

Sustainable development should correlate with community knowledge and empowerment (Virapat, 2011), in which women, often know of ecological links and

conservation management thus indicating the importance of including women in decision-making spaces and allowing decentralised decisions to be made. In fisheries management, the goal to empower women would require multiple firm and enduring commitments in policy and regulation implementation. This would include the fishers' demands: a commitment to strengthening the rights to natural resources that support women in small-scale fishing; strengthening the rights of women in the informal economy, and lastly, essential services and social support in fishing communities that need to be enhanced. Embracing a 'women's fix', can help further to acknowledge the connection between social and environmental issues, and identify where inequality and environmental degradation intersect. This would enable effective solutions to be implemented within blue frameworks, which will ensure equitable sustainability and a better understanding of people's needs and relationships with the environment.

An interesting theme that emerged was fisherwomen's agency in heading up 'women co-operatives', which are built upon the underlying premise of persistent neglect, underrepresentation, and lack of acknowledgement of women involved in the small-scale fisheries sector. The generation of co-ops provides women with a space to access social security, build on their creative productive and leadership skills, and provide them with a voice to be included in decision-making processes that often, directly and indirectly, impact them. The formation of these co-ops illustrated how women are active agents in organising and politicising their relationship to the ocean – a clear indication of politicising and not romanticising women's connection with nature. Furthermore, the formation of co-ops is another good example of developing economic processes and systems that are intimately connected to fisheries realities, preservation of the environment, and fostering of collaboration between networks. Co-ops empower fisherwomen while promoting sustainable fisheries by assisting with various elements; access to equipment and technologies, finance, and establishing standards for their various products to include them in the market. It also provides a more formalised space to create environmental awareness in line with sustainable economic alternatives for fishers.

Notably, both co-ops discussed in the thesis were organised by the women themselves with very little assistance from other stakeholders. However, when there were instances of help offered, it was not genuine and deceptive, highlighting the vulnerability that fisherwomen are still faced with, despite their efforts to set up co-ops without the necessary protective measures. Therefore, despite women being active agents, they are still vulnerable and have little faith in

local and governmental organisations (like DEFF). These engagements in co-ops are a type of ecofeminist politics that illustrates that through proactive mobilisation, change can occur and alternatives to the hyper-commodification of nature can be developed.

## Women's limitations in their roles, responsibilities, and activities

State and capital continue their alliance in the post-apartheid fishing sector. This is evidenced by the women who fish in Steenberg's Cove and Kleinmond and are exploited and marginalised not only by capital and the state but also by the men in SSF communities. Theirs is a triple burden of production in fishing and related areas, equally productive work in households, and context-specific activism (Ashfar & Barrientos, 1999). Shoved onto the margins of the SSF sector by blue capitalism, they draw on their long-held knowledge of the natural environment – human and oceanic – to resist constructions of illegality and exertions of power by the state, capital, and men in SSF. The research shows that women in small-scale fishing are engaged both in the production of life and the production of the means of life. Their marginalisation in the fishing sector is coloured by constructions of illegality, which is in stark contradiction with their everyday, ecologically sensitive practice drawn from long-held knowledge about the ocean. Therefore, they are still subjected to race-, class- and gender-based exclusion.

The fisherwomen experienced numerous limitations in engaging in their daily roles and responsibilities, which occur from lack of access to resources, poverty, lack of representation, fisheries regulations, policy development, and globalisation (privatisation). Data collected indicated that the main limitations plaguing women pertain to poor access or lack of sufficient social services, climate change, lack of proper representation, respect, and acknowledgement of women within the small-scale fisheries sector. Women's fisheries work is often considered complementary to men's fishing work and framed within a household livelihood strategy context, where the work is seen as a 'support' for husbands or households. Thus, as previously mentioned, a tangible way of disrupting this is through the support of more women-focused co-ops.

## Implications and future research directions

Often in research and policy decisions, gender dimensions are not fully regarded and often become a 'box checking' exercise. In a case such as Operation Phakisa, operating under blue economy principles, gender is not fully inclusive, and the needs of marginalised groups

are not captured, exacerbating existing inequalities. Bringing women's roles and activities through collective organisation, to the fore of blue economic frameworks, can serve as an enabler for Marxist ecofeminist practices, that allows women entrance into participating in ocean management decisions, inspiring political action as opposed to romanticising it. As Silver *et al.* (2015) indicate, we need to extend beyond efforts of just defining aspects of a blue economy framework, to those of adding meaning and practice in different contexts. This is particular to further investigating a 'women's fix' to the current energy/extractive, protein and conservation fixes.

Proper implementation of the current suggested initiatives and policies in concurrence with the establishment of alternatives by policy, research, and advocacy within these narratives need to occur and could offer a more authentic human-rights co-management of the ocean and its resources. Isaacs (2015) accentuates that an integral component of formulating a fair and inclusive SSF policy is to ensure a transdisciplinary approach, which can provide a framework for developing trust, a common vision, and common values. Transdisciplinarity requires the need to include all relevant stakeholders and actors (especially non-academic) within the fisheries industry into decision-making processes. This would also need to be centred around human rights. Notably marine scientists and National Research Foundation (NRF) projects have acknowledged and recognised the importance of social science research; however, the reality is that research geared towards South African fisheries reform remains an academic exercise (Isaacs, 2015). This is evident by the numerous articles and studies completed within the fisheries sector, informing policy and regulations, however, without systemic changes happening. The adoption and acknowledgement of social research within the fisheries sectors needs to be fostered, so that social scientists can work with social actors (fishers) in better co-designing, developing, and informing robust policy recommendations and sustainable implementation plans for the SSFP. A key hope of this study is that it can serve as a starting point to generate more nuanced information, as initially extracted from interviewed fishers, to contribute continually to the building this area of knowledge, so that it can be taken into consideration within policy reformation and most importantly the implementation process. More studies on fishing community households would need to be engaged to get a nuanced illustration of this. This could be done through surveys, focus groups, and open-ended interview questions to extract a holistic view.

Arguably, fisherwomen from the beating heart of the local communities, and these contributions by women are what affords the SSF sector a vitality to endure amidst changing social, economic, environmental, and political conditions. There is a dire need still to build a bridge between land and sea and to incorporate women's roles and activities into policy and regulation analysis as these forms a vital part of the small-scale fisheries sector. Without sufficient representation, women are further subjected to discrimination and unpaid labour, which ultimately negatively impacts the fishing communities, as without the contributions by women, the social fabric would be torn apart.

To support women in fisheries, proper and successful implementation of policy and regulations need to occur and be supplemented with support when needed by the fishers. Fishing communities should be provided with essential and support services in working conditions, and there needs to be a clear indication of strengthening women's rights to natural resources that support them, as well as to boost their rights and power within small-scale economies operating in the SSF sector. Du Preez (2018) accentuates that for effective policy and regulation formulation and implementation to happen, the following aspects need to be considered and incorporated into future research areas. Effective policies and implementation for women's contributions should: have a deep comprehension of cultural, economic, historical, and environmental contexts impacting them; have publicly available disaggregate data according to gender roles to show women's roles, responsibilities, and contributions; have interventions aimed specifically at women underpinning human-rights narratives, and have spaces for women to participate fully, meaningfully and equitably in fisheries governance and decision-making processes affecting local communities and the sustainable use of ocean resources.

To ensure this, research needs to include social and economic contributions through conducting quantitative and qualitative data, so that a more accurate representation of women's work within the SSF sector can be formulated by means of analysing total catch, value to the economy, household contributions, income, food security, and employment opportunities. Further explanatory research (an amalgamation of case studies, including surveys and open-ended questions) on the type of catch, weather conditions required, and methods that women engage in within inshore gleaning, could serve to empower women's work and provide them with more rights, support, and access to resources, but highlighting the gaps in policy and providing the research to inform future policy formations. Research can focus on; the legal

recognition of gleaning, how is gleaning gendered, the implications of gleaning on the environment as a previously undervalued species become a market commodity and the impact of conservation on gleaning activities.

The ability to generate more of this research would enable data to show an accurate picture and provide more rigorous and convincing arguments about the crucial role that small-scale fisheries can play for resource-poor households along the coastlines and specifically focus on women's roles, responsibilities, and activities, so that more generalised assumptions can be put forth. There is still an urgent need to enhance overall knowledge about the correct and full extent to which the SSF Sector is vital to the local economies, as well as the mechanisms through which they contribute to poverty alleviation and the general socio-economic advancement of their communities. In the absence of such data, it will remain an arduous task to raise the profile of small-scale fishers and to attract the attention and support of the decision-makers and various fisheries stakeholders. Research such as this needs to contribute further against the expropriation of the earth, and its abuse of natural resources, by accentuating the social and environmental benefits of the SSF sector, as the SSF policy holds enormous promise for fishers and the preservation of coastal ecosystems in which they operate.

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## Appendices



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### VERBAL CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

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#### Fishing for Answers: An exploration of the interaction between women and the “blue economy” in a small-scale fishing

Hi, I’m Natasha Solari, from Stellenbosch University. I would like to ask you to participate in a project that I’m doing on the roles and activities of women involved in the small-scale fisheries sector. I am conducting this research, as I would like to understand what benefits women bring to a community, how you understand policies affecting you and your family, and how you describe your relationship with the ocean. I am interested to hear what you think and know of this. If you are willing, I will be asking you a few questions which may take about 45-60 minutes. The questions may be asked from you alone or in a group. This will be at your place of choice, when and where it suits you. During the course of this research, I don’t foresee any risk or danger to you and your family. You will not be paid for participating in this research. The research will not reveal your name and what you say will not be told or revealed to anyone else. If I do write or speak about your answers, I will not indicate who has said anything in particular. It is your choice to be part of this research. If you agree, and during the interviews you want to stop, we can do so immediately with no harm to yourself. In agreeing to be part of this research, you can be assured that no harm shall come to you. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please contact me (Natasha Solari) at 078 851 9041/email me at [16593979@sun.ac.za](mailto:16593979@sun.ac.za); Dr. Fakier (supervisor) at 079 521 3295/email at [kfakier@sun.ac.za](mailto:kfakier@sun.ac.za); or Maléne Fouché (department of research integrity and national grants) at 021 808 4622/ email [mfouché@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouché@sun.ac.za).



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## VERBALE TOESTEMMING OM AAN NAVORSING DEEL TE NEEM

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### Vang Vis vir Antwoorde: 'n Verkenning van die interaksie tussen vroue en die visbedryf in 'n kleinskaalse visserye

Hi, my naam is Natasha Solari, van Stellenbosch Universiteit. Ek wil u graag vra om deel te neem aan 'n projek wat ek doen oor die rolle en aktiwiteite van vroue wat betrokke is by die kleinskaalse visserye. Ek doen hierdie navorsing, aangesien ek graag wil verstaan watter voordele vroue na 'n gemeenskap bring, hoe jy beleide verstaan wat jouself en gesin beïnvloed, en hoe jy jou verhouding met die see beskryf, spesifiek onder die kondisies van 'n blou ekonomie. Ek is geïnteresseerd om te hoor wat jy dink en weet hiervan. As jy bereid is, sal ek jou 'n paar vrae vra wat ongeveer 45-60 minute kan neem. Die vrae kan van jou alleen of in 'n groep gevra word. Dit sal by Kleinmond/Steenberg's Cove plaasvind, wanneer en waar dit jou pas. In die loop van hierdie navorsing voorsien ek nie enige risiko of gevaar vir jou en jou familie nie, jy sal nie betaal word vir deelname aan hierdie navorsing nie. Die navorsing sal vertroulikheid handhaaf, waar jou naam en wat jy sê nie aan enigiemand anders vertel of onthul sal word nie. As ek oor jou antwoorde skryf of praat, sal ek nie aandui wie iets spesifiek gesê het nie. Dit is jou keuse om deel te wees van hierdie navorsing. As jy saamstem, en tydens die onderhoud wil jy stop, kan ons dit dadelik doen sonder om jouself te benadeel. Deur in te stem om deel te wees van hierdie navorsing, kan jy verseker wees dat geen skade aan jou sal kom nie.

As u enige vrae of kommentaar oor die navorsing het, kontak my (Natasha Solari) by 078 851 9041 / e-pos my by [16593979@sun.ac.za](mailto:16593979@sun.ac.za); Dr. Fakier (Opsigter) by 079 521 3295 / e-pos by [kfakier@sun.ac.za](mailto:kfakier@sun.ac.za); of Maléne Fouché (Departement van Navorsingsintegriteit en Nasionale Toelaes) by 021 808 4622 / e-pos [mfouché@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouché@sun.ac.za).



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### Confidentiality Agreement

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Project title - Fishing for Answers: An exploration of the interaction between women and the fishing industry in a small-scale fishing community.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ (specific job description, e.g., interpreter/translator) have been hired to \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to -

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher(s)*.
2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the *Researcher(s)* when I have completed the research tasks.
4. after consulting with the *Researcher(s)*, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher(s)* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).
5. other (specify).

---

(Print Name)

---

(Signature)

---

(Date)

*Researcher(s)*

---

(Print Name)

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(Signature)

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(Date)

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines specific to the International Sociological Association (ISA) and approved by the Research Ethics Committee (*Human Research*) at the University of Stellenbosch. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact Maléne Fouché (department of research integrity and national grants) at 021 808 4622/ email [mfouché@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouché@sun.ac.za).



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## Preliminary Interview Guide

### **Welcoming**

1. Introduce myself: “Hi my name is Natasha...”
2. Thank the participant for agreeing to participate within the study.
3. Ensure that the participant has been read and understood and signed the consent form (in English or Afrikaans). Thus, ensure that they are reminded that all information will be kept confidential, and should they want anonymity, they will have pseudonyms, also should they want to terminate the study at any time, they are allowed to do so.
4. Ensure that the participant is reminded that the interview and/or focus groups will be recorded to generate an accurate depiction of their experiences.
5. Remind participants that there is no set right or wrong answer, and that the desired outcome is to hear about their experiences and anecdotes.

### **Preliminary Themes with possible questions**

#### General details about themselves, their involvement in the fishing community

- Tell me a few things about yourself and your community?
- How long have you been living in this community?
- Can you tell me a little bit about what sort of fishing is done here? and how it is done?
- What particular tasks are you involved in the community/household?

#### Households

- Who do you live with in your house?
- What are their ages and how are these people related to you?
- If there are children, do they go to school?
- Do you do any other work besides household and fishing tasks?

#### The Ocean/Environment

- What is your relationship with the ocean?
- Is the ocean important for you?
- What does it provide for you?
- What does environmental sustainability mean for you?

#### Fishing industry and Ocean grabbing

- What do you understand by the term ‘fishing industry’?
- Do you know about operation Phakisa? If so what are your views on this?
- What do you understand about commercial fisheries?
- Do you know about ocean grabbing? If so, how do you define it?
- Do you believe that you have access to local resources?

#### Policy and Regulations

- What do you know about the policies concerning small-scale fisheries?
- Do you have a space where you can talk with government/policy officials?
- Do any government people come to the community to talk about permits/policies/regulations?
- What are the policies around your means of livelihoods?



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## Voorlopige Onderhoudsgids

### **Verwelkoming**

1. Stel myself bekend: “Hello, my naam is Natasha.”
2. Bedank die deelnemers dat hulle ingestem het om deel te neem an die studie.
3. Maak seker dat die deelnemers die toelatingsvorm gelees, verstaan en geteken het. (Engels en Afrikaans). Verseker dat hulle herhinner word dat alle informasie konfidensieël gehou sal word, en indien hulle anonimiteit wil hê, daar skuilname gebruik sal word, en ook dat as hulle die studie op enige stadium wil termineer stop, hulle die reg het om dit te doen.
4. Vereker dat die deelnemers herhinner word daaraan dat die onderhoude en/of fokus groepe opgeneem sal word om ‘n korrektiewe uitbeelding te gee van hulle ervaringe.
5. Deelnemers moet herhinner word dat daar nie ‘n spesifieke regte of verkeerde antwoord is nie, en die gewenste uitkoms is om te hoor van hulle ervarings en staaltjies.

### **Voorlopige temas**

#### Algemene besonderhede oor hulself en hulle betrokkenheid in die visvang gemeenskap

- Vertel my ‘n bietjie van jouself en jou gemeenskap?
- Hoe lank bly jy al in die gemeenskap?
- Kan jy my ‘n bietjie vertel oor watter soort visvang hier gedoen word? Hoe word dit gedoen?
- Watter spesifieke take is jy by betrokke in die gemeenskap/huishoud?

#### Huishoudings

- Saam met wie bly jy in jou huis?
- Wat is die ouderdomme en hoe is hierdie mense verwant aan you?
- As daar kinders is, gaan hulle skool toe?
- Doen jy enige ander werk behawe huishoudelike en visvang take?

#### Die Oseaan/Omgewing

- Wat is jou verwantskap met die see?
- Is die see belangrik vir jou?
- Wat voorsien die see aan jou?
- Wat beteken omgewingsvolhoubaarheid vir jou?

#### Visbedryf en Oseaan gryping (Ocean grabbing)

- Wat verstaan jy met die terme visbedryf?
- Weet jy van Operasie Phakisa? Indien so, wat is jou siening daaroor?
- Wat vertaan jy oor kommersiële visserye?
- Weet jy van Oseaan graping ‘Ocean grabbing’? Indien so, hoe definieer jy dit?
- Glo jy dat jy toegang het tot plaaslike hulpbronne?

#### Beleide en Regulasies

- Wat weet jy van die beleid met betrekking tot kleinskaalse visserye?
- Is daar ‘n spesifieke plek waar jy kan praat met regeringsamptenare?
- Kom daar enige regeringsmense na die gemeenskap toe om te kom praat oor permitte/beleide/regulasies?  
Wat is die beleid rondom jou lewensbestaan?