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 **MAVA**
FONDATION POUR LA NATURE

EVALUATION MONETAIRE DES SERVICES
ECOSYSTEMIQUES FOURNIS PAR LES HERBIERS MARINS AU
SENEGAL, CABO VERDE ET EN GUINEE-BISSAU

AUTEURS

University of Portsmouth

Grégoire Touron-Gardic, Athanasos Argyriou, Toby Meredith, Nuria Bachiller-Jareno, Ocgéna Rusten Charles, Richard Teeuw, Andrew Lundgren, Jamie Donald-McCann, Kieran Deane, Ewan Trégarot, El Hadj Bara Dème, Pierre Failler

CCMAR, Universidade do Algarve

Ester Serrao, Karim Erzini, Coral Aranda and Carlos Morell

IMEDEA

Nuria Marba, Iris Hendricks

Azul e Verde

Antonio Araujo

CRODT

Modou Thiaw

Universidade Tecnico do Atlantico

Rui Freitas, Gnilane Diouf

IBAP

Aïssa Régalla, Emmanuel Dias

CIPA

Amadeu Mendes Almeida, Iça Barry, Filipe Tobana Nhanquê

Fondation Mava

Salla Ba

Autres partenaires

Elisabeth Mayé Diouf (Institut de la Pêche et de l'aquaculture, Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Sénégal), Marina Miralles (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Espagne), Rizky Eko Muliawan (Universidad del País Vasco, Espagne), Marta Ximenis (Universitat de les Illes Balears, Espagne), Tamara Smith (Universidade do Algarve, Portugal), Abdou Aziz Ndiaye (DAMCP, Sénégal), Nuno Fernandes (Casco Antigo), Henrique Queiroga (CESAM, Universidade de Aveiro)

ILLUSTRATIONS

Thierry Caroff

thierrycaroff@yahoo.fr

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RESUME EXECUTIF

1. Le milieu marin est toujours plus exploité et impacté par les actions humaines directes telles que l'extraction des ressources, la pollution, et la modification des habitats. Dans le même temps, les mers et océans sont aussi indirectement touchés par le changement climatique (CDB, 2018). La plupart des stocks de ressources halieutiques sont actuellement en état de surexploitation (FAO, 2019), tandis que l'état de santé des écosystèmes côtiers et marins s'est détérioré, entraînant une perte de fonctionnalité de ces écosystèmes (Tregarot et al., 2020). Or le littoral de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, long de plusieurs milliers de kilomètres, abrite des habitats naturels dont les services écosystémiques sont essentiels au maintien d'un cadre de vie adéquat pour les populations qui y vivent (Greenpeace, 2019).
2. Un élément important des écosystèmes côtiers ouest-africain est les herbiers marins. Les herbiers marins sont l'un des habitats les plus importants et les plus productifs de la planète (Duarte & Chiscano, 1999 ; Grech et al., 2012). Ils sont connus pour leurs services écosystémiques conséquents : ils atténuent l'énergie des vagues, réduisent les flux de courant et la turbulence, ils contribuent à la production de biomasse halieutique et sont impliqués dans le traitement des matières organiques et des bactéries présentes dans l'eau. Leur capacité de séquestration du carbone est comparable à celle des forêts tropicales (UNEP-WCMC, 2016). Ils représentent également d'importantes zones de nurserie et d'alimentation pour de nombreuses espèces marines (Terrados & Borum, 2004).
3. Malgré leur grande importance, les herbiers ne sont que peu connus et étudiés en Afrique de l'Ouest. Ces manques de connaissances sont en partie dues à l'identification tardive de cet habitat au Sud de la Mauritanie. Par ailleurs, les herbiers font face à de nombreuses pressions dans la région. Les menaces qui ont été identifiées de façon récurrente ont été la destruction par le développement côtier, la pollution par le ruissellement industriel, l'apport excessif de sédiments causé par la déforestation, l'enlèvement ou la destruction physique des herbiers par la pêche ou la navigation ainsi que l'élévation du niveau de la mer et l'acidification des océans (Figure ci-dessous). La senne de plage a par ailleurs été identifiée comme l'engin de pêche le plus destructeur, suivie par le chalutage (Vegh et al. 2022).

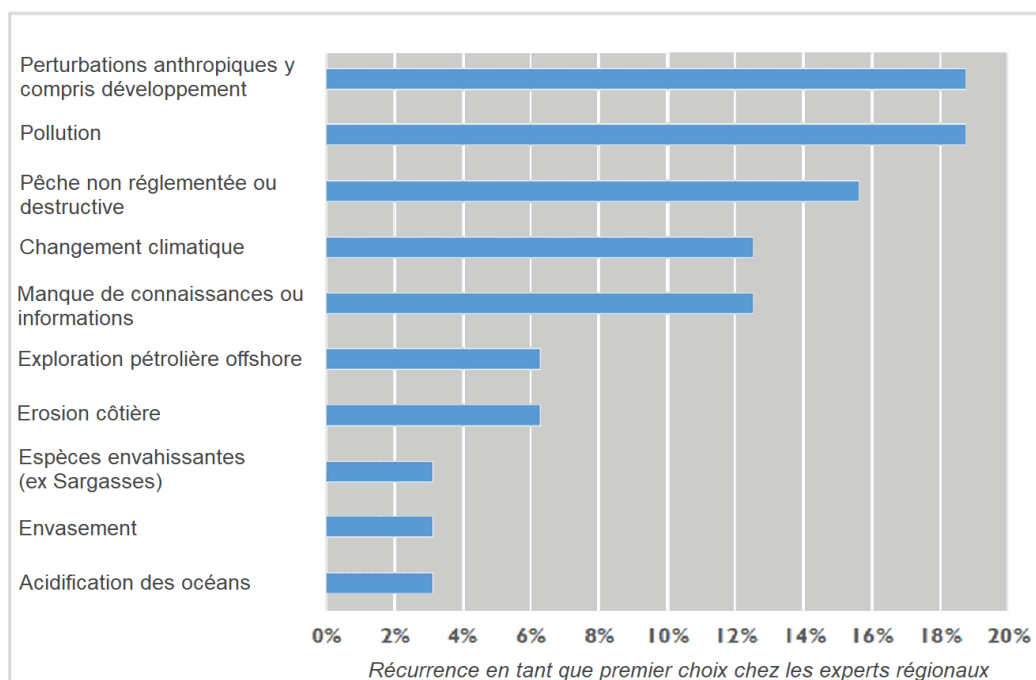


Figure 49 dans le rapport (voir Section 8 « Les menaces sur les herbiers ») : Perception des principales menaces pesant sur les herbiers d'après les acteurs de la conservation marine dans la région. Source : *Projet Resiliensea (Vegh et al., 2022)*.

4. L'une des premières étapes pour améliorer la connaissance des herbiers marins dans la région consiste à en perfectionner la cartographie. Les cartes réalisées dans ce travail à l'aide d'images satellites, de relevés de terrain au Sonar et de plongées sur site ont permis d'estimer la surface des herbiers marins dans les trois pays de l'étude. De la sorte, les surfaces sont de 67,34 km² au Sénégal, 1,14 km² en Guinée-Bissau et 0,14 km² au Cabo Verde, pour un total de 68,63 km². Les surfaces d'herbiers sont relativement denses au Sénégal, composées de trois espèces (*Cymodocea nodosa*, *Halodula wrightii* et *Zoostera noltii*). Les herbiers du Cabo Verde, composés de *Ruppia maritima*, sont aussi relativement denses. À l'inverse, les herbiers de Guinée-Bissau, uniquement composés de *Halodule wrightii*, sont très éparés. En outre, la faible densité des herbiers en Guinée-Bissau complique considérablement les tentatives de cartographie. De façon générale, la surface estimée de ces herbiers est en accord avec les rares études antérieures dans la région (Mériaux & Sémelin 2014 ; Ngur et al., 2011). Le suivi cartographique des herbiers marins devrait passer par la maîtrise de l'intelligence artificielle (Machine learning) pour identifier les zones d'herbiers marins dans la zone intertidale, sur la base des nombreuses archives en images satellites. Les changements dans l'étendue des herbiers marins pourraient ainsi être mesurés depuis les années 1980. Un premier travail de lecture de ces images satellites est en cours d'élaboration par l'Université de Portsmouth. Une dernière recommandation sur l'aspect « cartographie » concerne l'analyse des fonds marins à l'aide de Sonars. En effet, il semble pertinent d'analyser les signaux des Sonars, car ils sont sensibles aux rhizomes des herbiers marins. Le potentiel des données acoustiques « Sonar » pour cartographier l'étendue des rhizomes d'herbiers marins semble intéressant, lorsque ces analyses sont complétées avec des échantillonnages ponctuels de végétaux et de substrat par des plongeurs. Les zones de travail pourraient être présélectionnées grâce aux analyses des images satellites PlanetScope. La poursuite de telles études pourrait susciter de grandes retombées.
5. La valeur monétaire du service de production de biomasse halieutique dans les herbiers marins du Sénégal et de la Guinée-Bissau a été estimée sur la base des densités de poissons (n/m²), des paramètres biologiques, de la modélisation de la biomasse, des prix du marché du poisson au Sénégal et de la superficie totale estimée des herbiers marins dans chaque pays.

La valeur économique des espèces de poissons commerciales utilisant les herbiers pour leur cycle de vie est estimée entre 1,834 milliards de Fcfa (2,6 millions d'euros) en 2018 et 5,306 milliards de Fcfa (8,1 millions d'euros) en 2019, avec principalement des espèces démersales (à savoir *Pomadasys jubelini*, *Epinephelus aeneus*, *Diplodus cervinus* et *Diplodus bellottii*) et certaines espèces pélagiques (*Sardinella maderensis*, *Mugil curema* et *Sphyraena guachancho*) représentant la majeure partie de la valeur économique. En Guinée-Bissau, la valeur économique des 10 principales espèces commerciales a été estimée à 61,58 millions de Fcfa (94 000 €), *Pomadasys jubelini* étant de loin l'espèce la plus importante. Dans les petites surfaces d'herbiers marins au Cabo Verde (0,14 km²), il n'a pas été possible d'estimer les densités de poissons et, par conséquent, seule la diversité associée aux herbiers marins a été enregistrée. Compte tenu des différences dans les prix du marché du poisson dans d'autres études menées au Portugal, en Espagne, en Australie et aux États-Unis qui ont utilisé des méthodologies similaires, les valeurs estimées pour le Sénégal et la Guinée-Bissau sont comparables et soulignent la contribution importante des habitats d'herbiers marins à l'approvisionnement en poissons par leur rôle de nurseries et en tant que réserve alimentaire pour bon nombre d'espèces halieutiques. Enfin, des recherches plus approfondies doivent être menées pour caractériser les espèces halieutiques vivant dans les herbiers marins de la région (taille moyenne, âge maximum, conversion taille-masse, mortalité...).

6. La biomasse totale d'herbiers marins le long des sites ouest-africains variait entre 3,88 grammes de poids sec par m² et 38 761 ± 57,66 grammes. Les zones d'herbiers du Sénégal ont une biomasse plus importante que celles du Cabo Verde et de la Guinée-Bissau (Figure ci-dessous). La biomasse surfacique des herbiers marins en Guinée-Bissau était la plus faible, ne représentant en moyenne que 3,6 % de celle du Sénégal. La biomasse totale d'herbiers marins dans les parterres monospécifiques de *Cymodocea nodosa* dans le secteur « Delta Saloum 3 » était supérieure à la biomasse moyenne rapportée dans le monde pour cette espèce (Duarte & Chiscano, 1999). À l'inverse, la biomasse totale des parterres monospécifiques d'*Halodula wrightii* le long des côtes du Sénégal et de la Guinée-Bissau était inférieure à la moyenne mondiale pour cette espèce (*ibid*).

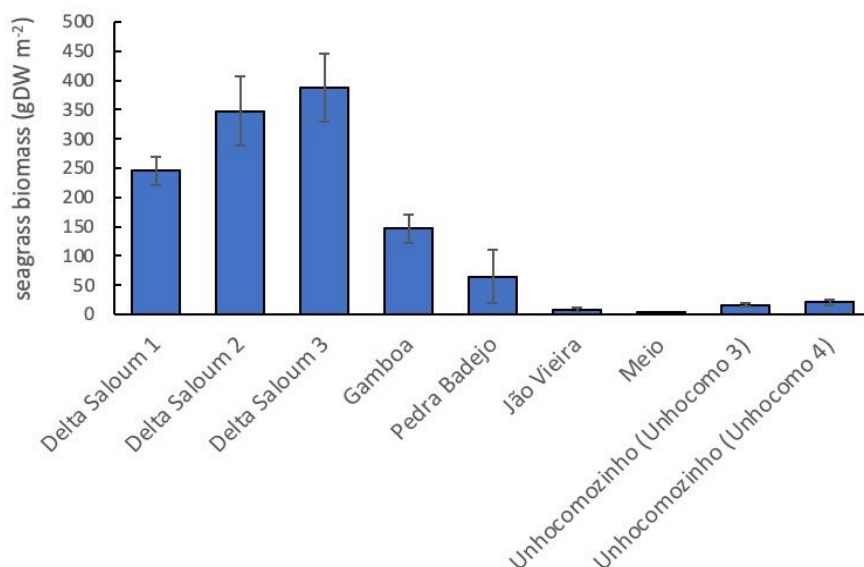


Figure 39 dans le rapport (Section 3 « Séquestration du carbone ») : Biomasse totale dans les herbiers marins du Sénégal (Delta Saloum 1, 2 et 3), Cabo Verde (Gamboa, Pedra Badejo) et de Guinée-Bissau (João Vieira, Meio, Unhocomo 3 et 4). Aucune donnée sur la biomasse n'est disponible pour Joal (Sénégal).

7. Le taux d'accrétion de carbone estimé dans la zone « Delta Saloum 2 » (Sénégal) est de 194,6 tonnes de C par an (soit 713,62 tonnes de CO₂ par an). Par extrapolation, il est estimé que les

herbiers marins du Delta du Saloum séquestrent 726,37 tonnes de C par an (soit 2663,36 Mg CO₂ par an). Les résultats préliminaires indiquent qu'il n'y a pas d'accrétion nette de carbone à Joal, ou du moins la technique de datation au ²¹⁰Pb n'est pas en mesure de détecter l'accrétion de sédiments dans cette zone. Compte tenu des taux d'accrétion au Sénégal (0 - 0,17 tonne C par hectare et par an) et de la valeur médiane du taux d'accrétion dans le monde (0,23 tonne de C par hectare et par an), les herbiers marins du Cabo Verde pourraient séquestrer, au maximum 3,22 tonnes C par hectare et par an (soit 11,81 Mg CO₂ par an). En outre, les sédiments présents dans les 50 premiers centimètres de sol dans le Delta du Saloum et à Joal stockent respectivement 163 000 tonnes de C (ou 598 500 tonnes de CO₂) et 84 900 tonnes de C (ou 331 400 tonnes de CO₂), dont une partie pourrait être rejetée dans l'atmosphère si les herbiers marins étaient dégradés.

8. Au Sénégal, avec 2663,36 tonnes de CO₂ séquestrés chaque année au prix de 73 534,56 Fcfa par tonne (prix à la tonne estimé à partir des documents nationaux relatifs à l'Accord de Paris sur le climat), la valeur économique est de 197,394 millions de Fcfa chaque année. Au Cabo Verde, avec un taux de séquestration de 11,81 tonnes CO₂ par an et un prix de 466 825,36 Fcfa par tonne (aussi estimé sur la base des documents nationaux relatifs à l'Accord de Paris sur le climat), cela correspond à une valeur de 5,557 millions de Fcfa chaque année. En Guinée-Bissau, étant donné que l'analyse du taux d'accrétion de carbone n'a pas pu être menée à bien, la valeur économique correspondante n'a pas pu être calculée (néanmoins, la valeur économique aurait été très faible en raison de la faible densité et des petites surfaces d'herbiers marins dans le pays).
9. Grâce aux grandes étendues d'herbiers le long de la petite côte, la valeur économique estimée du service de protection du littoral est impressionnante : 21,71 milliards de Fcfa/an, grâce à leur capacité d'atténuation de la houle. C'est une valeur équivalente au coût nécessaire pour la construction de plusieurs kilomètres de digues en béton chaque année. De plus, la protection assurée par les herbiers marins est compatible avec de telles infrastructures, car les deux peuvent être combinées avec succès. Les perspectives de recherche au sujet du service de protection côtière sont nombreuses : analyses *in situ* de l'atténuation de la houle et de la stabilisation des sédiments, modélisation de la propagation des vagues dans les herbiers marins par rapport aux zones sans herbiers marins, etc. La caractérisation des facteurs abiotiques (courants, vent, houle, etc.) peut également être utilisée par la suite dans des sujets transversaux tels que le tourisme, les sports nautiques et l'aménagement du territoire.
10. Malgré les fortes pressions pesant sur les écosystèmes côtiers, les herbiers ont un rythme de filtration des eaux intéressant, puisqu'ils permettent de traiter annuellement plus de 41 tonnes de nitrates, dont plus de 40 pour le Sénégal. Par comparaison, la station d'épuration de Joal traite annuellement 1,784 milliard de litres d'eau, pour des quantités de nitrates situées dans le même ordre de grandeur. De la sorte, les herbiers au Sénégal traiteraient des quantités de nitrates à un rythme qui n'a rien à envier aux stations d'épuration de taille importante. En prenant en compte le prix de traitement « à la tonne » de nitrates par les stations d'épuration dans la région, la valeur monétaire pour le service de traitement de l'eau fournie par les herbiers est d'environ 23 millions Fcfa/an (167 575 Fcfa/an au Cabo Verde, 22,87 millions de Fcfa/an au Sénégal et 133 883 Fcfa/an en Guinée-Bissau). Au-delà de cette estimation relativement modeste, les herbiers représentent une solution de traitement efficace, bon marché et facile à mettre en place (Deniz, 2019). Or le développement rapide de la région (et notamment de l'agglomération de Dakar) pose de sérieux problèmes en termes de qualité des eaux. Les autorités peinent à mettre en place des contrôles stricts, tandis que les normes d'antipollution ne sont que peu respectées (Faye, 2017). Les perspectives de recherche relatives à ce service écosystémiques sont elles aussi intéressantes. En premier lieu,

il serait nécessaire de réaliser des études *in-situ* pour quantifier plus précisément la fonction de traitement de l'eau par les herbiers marins.

11. De façon générale, les services culturels sont difficilement appréhendables. D'autre part, les herbiers marins sont très peu connus en Afrique de l'Ouest. Dès lors, la convergence de ces deux aspects – à savoir la valeur des services culturels des herbiers marins en Afrique de l'Ouest – semble difficile à conceptualiser. Une condition rédhibitoire permet toutefois de simplifier cette réflexion : une entité doit être connue et appréhendée par ses usagers, afin qu'elle puisse posséder une valeur culturelle. Par conséquent, les herbiers marins ne peuvent pas posséder de grande valeur culturelle à l'heure actuelle, étant donné que cet habitat n'est encore valorisé. Seule la valeur des activités touristiques liées indirectement au tourisme (le « Turtle Watching » dans les AMP de Joal-Fadiouth et de Sangomar au Sénégal, où la présence de tortues est liée à la présence d'herbiers marins) a pu être prise en compte pour estimer la valeur monétaire des services « culturels » fournis par les herbiers marins. Le chiffre d'affaires annuels lié à cette activité est de 8,375 millions de Fcfa par an (12 786 euros).
12. L'ensemble des services écosystémiques investigués totalisent une valeur de 5,84 milliards de Fcfa (8,92 millions d'euros) par an (voir Figure ci-dessous). Cela équivaut à 85 millions de Fcfa (130 000 euros) par km² et par an. Cette valeur représente une manne financière importante dans les pays étudiés, d'autant plus qu'elle ne représente que la « partie visible de l'iceberg », c'est-à-dire les aspects quantifiables des services fournis par les herbiers marins. La bonne condition écologique des habitats naturels marins et côtiers représente aussi et surtout une condition *sine qua non* pour le développement ultérieur de toute activité économique.

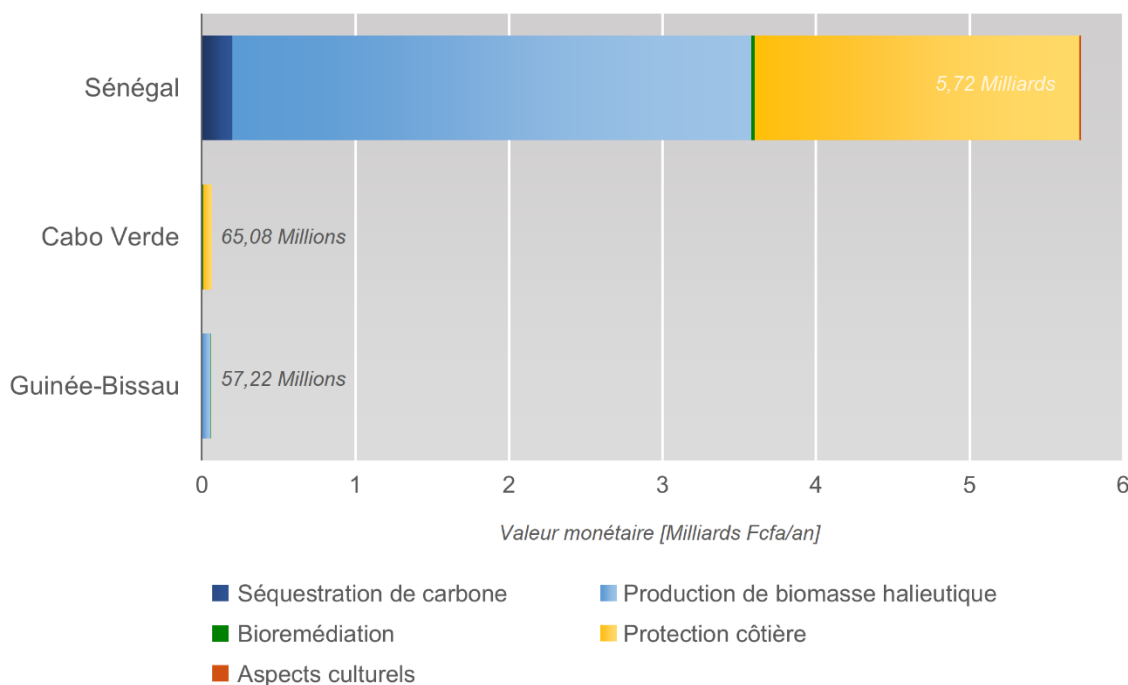


Figure 46 dans le rapport : Estimation de la valeur économique des services fournis par les herbiers marins au Sénégal, Cabo Verde et en Guinée-Bissau

13. Dans les pays de la zone d'étude, le Sénégal est le pays dont les herbiers sont les plus abondants. Concrètement, la contribution des herbiers reste toutefois modeste lorsque le taux de séquestration de carbone est comparé aux objectifs d'atténuation contenus dans les documents nationaux relatifs à l'Accord de Paris pour le climat. Néanmoins, ce constat pourrait être sujet à des estimations à la hausse dans le futur. En effet, dans le cas où les surfaces d'herbiers soient plus importantes que ce qui est actuellement convenu, alors la contribution des herbiers serait plus importante pour l'atteinte des objectifs de l'Accord de

Paris. Il en va de même si le taux de séquestration était estimé à la hausse dans le futur. Par ailleurs, la contribution des herbiers est bien plus importante dans d'autres pays : la séquestration de carbone par les écosystèmes marins et côtiers de Mauritanie, par exemple, où les herbiers sont très abondants, serait équivalente à 22% de l'objectif du pays vis-à-vis de l'Accord de Paris (Trégarot et al., 2018).

14. Le stress généré par l'activité pétrolière et gazière offshore peut entraîner des conséquences néfastes pour l'environnement. L'exploitation au Nigeria, en Côte d'Ivoire et au Ghana, par exemple, a eu des impacts désastreux sur les écosystèmes marins et côtiers. D'importantes quantités de polluants ont rejetées dans l'environnement, ce qui a considérablement modifié le paysage marin et terrestre des régions côtières. Ces polluants étaient notamment composés de boues de forage, de déblais, d'huile et de graisses, de sels, de sulfures, de matière solide en suspension, etc. Des changements de température et de pH, ont aussi été décelés, de même qu'une augmentation de la concentration de l'eau en métaux lourds. En outre, les rejets ont entraîné une augmentation de la demande biologique en oxygène et de la demande chimique en oxygène (Ukoli, 2005). Cela a causé la destruction de vastes zones de forêts de mangroves (les herbiers marins ne sont pas mentionnés mais probablement inclus) et de zones de pêche, de même qu'un déclin des stocks de poissons, crabes, mollusques et bigorneaux et de l'abondance d'oiseaux (Kadafa, 2012 ; Adelana et al., 2011). Outre les déversements majeurs de pétrole et de polluants, les opérations pétrolières et gazières ont de nombreux effets secondaires qui impactent aussi la biodiversité environnante. Il s'agit notamment de la création de pipelines et d'autres infrastructures sur les fonds marins, de l'augmentation du trafic maritime, des produits chimiques courants, des eaux usées, des fuites, de l'eau produite, des gaz d'échappement, etc. (Kark, 2015 ; Ogolo, 2021 ; Cordes, 2016). Au Sénégal, l'exploitation offshore va commencer prochainement dans des zones à fort enjeu environnemental, ce qui ne manque pas de susciter des inquiétudes. Des projets d'exploitation sont aussi en cours de développement en Gambie et en Mauritanie (par ailleurs, la Mauritanie a d'ores et déjà abrité des zones d'exploitation offshore).
15. Dans le contexte actuel, la protection de tous les herbiers, même ceux de surface réduite, est cruciale pour garantir la diversité génétique actuelle, et afin que les herbiers de l'Afrique de l'Ouest soient résilients et en capacité de s'adapter aux changements climatiques. En effet, les parterres peu denses d'aujourd'hui constituent la réserve de gènes pour les potentielles étendues immenses de demain. Face aux menaces multiples et parfois diffuses sur les herbiers marins, il est essentiel d'agir en ayant une vision intégrée. En effet, la préservation de l'environnement côtier et marin au sens large est un thème qui doit faire intervenir tous les acteurs, et ceci à tous les niveaux spatiaux et de gouvernance. La notion de transversalité est essentielle pour organiser et structurer les actions de conservation.



LISTE DES ABREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------------|---|
| AMP | Aire marine protégée |
| BP | British Petroleum |
| BVLOS | Beyond visual line of sight |
| CAR | Carbon Accretion Rate |
| CART | Classification and Regression Trees Analysis |
| CICES | The Common International Classification of Ecosystem Services |
| CFV | Commercial fisheries landings value |
| CCNUCC | Convention-cadre des Nations-Unies pour le changement climatique |
| CDN / NDC | Contribution déterminée au niveau national à l'Accord de Paris sur le climat |
| CPDN / INDC | Contribution prévue déterminée au niveau national à l'Accord de Paris sur le climat |
| DW | Dry Weight |
| EBSAs | Ecologically or biologically significant area |
| EEZ | Economic exclusive zone |
| ESA | European Space Agency |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization |
| GDP | Gross domestic product |
| GEE | Google Earth Engine |
| GES | Gaz à effet de serre |
| IBAs | Important Bird Area |
| IPBES | Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services |
| INDC / CPDN | Intended nationally determined contribution |
| KBAs | Key Biodiversity Area |
| LMMAs | Large marine mammal areas |
| MEA | Millenium Ecosystem Assessment |
| ML | Machine learning |
| MSGBC | Zone « Mauritanie – Sénégal – Gambia – Guinée Bissau – Guinée Conakry » |
| NDC / CDN | Nationally determined contribution |
| NDVI | Normalized Difference Vegetation Index |
| NDWI | Normalized Difference Water Index |
| OM | Organic Matter |
| PNBA | Parc National du Banc d'Arguin, Mauritanie |
| PRCM | Partenariat régional pour la conservation de la zone côtière et marine |
| RAMPAO | Réseau régional d'AMP en Afrique de l'Ouest |
| RFV | Recreational fisheries landings value |
| RM | Reef Master App |
| SAR | Sediment Accretion Rate |
| Satellite EO | Satellite Earth Observation |
| SVM Processing | Support Vector Machine Processing |
| TEEB | The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity |
| UICN | Union internationale pour la conservation de la nature |
| UVC Survey | Underwater visual census survey |
| VET | Valeur économique totale |
| ZEE / EEZ | Zone économique exclusive |

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INTRODUCTION

Contexte

Les herbiers marins sont des prairies sous-marines et intertidales qui sont très similaires aux plantes terrestres (Angst et al., 2014) et qui possèdent certaines de leurs caractéristiques : un système végétatif composé de parties aériennes (rameaux de feuilles) et de parties souterraines (rhizomes et racines) (De los Santos et al., 2021). Il existe plus de 60 espèces d'herbiers marins dans le monde (Kirkman & Walker, 1989). Ces végétaux sont présents dans les zones côtières peu profondes car ils ont besoin de lumière pour leur croissance. Certaines espèces sont partiellement submergées, formant des prés intertidaux, tandis que d'autres se retrouvent à de plus grandes profondeurs jusqu'à 50 m.

Les herbiers marins revêtent une importance majeure, car ils sont à l'origine de nombreux services écosystémiques qui sont bénéfiques à la planète et aux humains : service de séquestration de carbone (Duarte et al., 2013), service de nurserie pour les petits poissons pélagiques (Trégarot et al., 2020), service d'épuration de l'eau (Trégarot et al., 2018), service de protection des côtes contre l'érosion côtière (Lamb et al., 2017), etc.

Cet habitat côtier et marin pousse partout dans le monde, à l'exception de l'Antarctique (Hily & Job, 2015). D'après l'Atlas mondial sur les herbiers marins, ces derniers couvrent environ 10% des zones côtières mondiales, soit 500 000 km² (UNEP & Short, 2018). Certaines espèces sont présentes dans toutes les régions du globe, tandis que d'autres sont exclusivement présentes dans les zones tempérées ou tropicales (Figure 1).

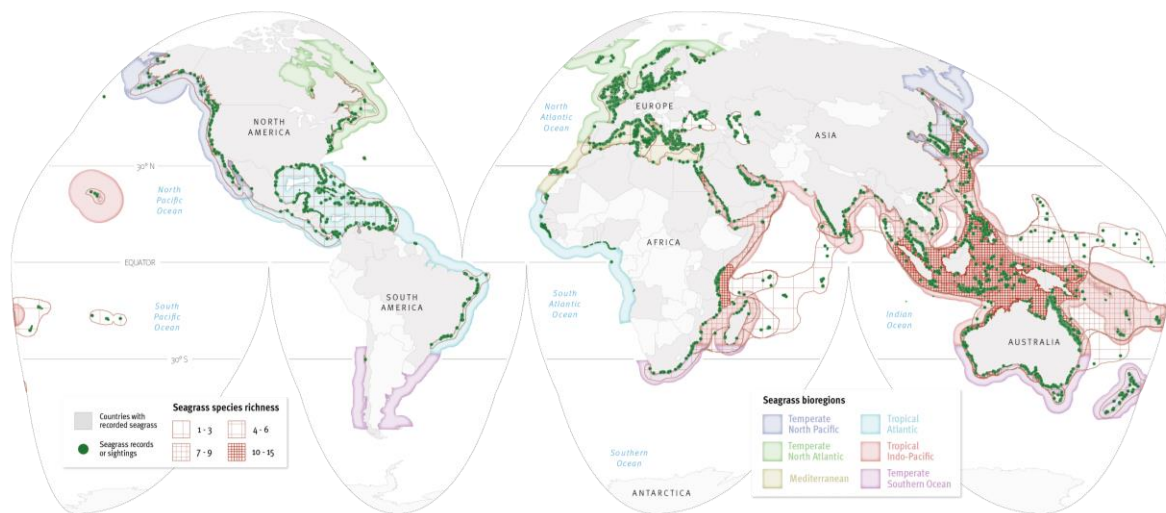


Figure 1 : Distribution mondiale des herbiers et des zones biogéographiques. Source : PNUE & Grid-Arendal (2020), basée sur les données de Short et al. (2007) ; UNEP-WCMC & Short (2018).

En Afrique de l'Ouest, les herbiers marins s'étendent le long des sept pays côtiers de la région (Figure 2). Les pays situés dans la portion méridionale abritent trois espèces (*Cymodocea nodosa*, *Zostera noltii* et *Halodule wrightii*), tandis que les pays situés dans la partie septentrionale n'en abritent qu'une seule (*Halodule wrightii*). A noter que l'archipel du Cabo Verde abrite aussi l'espèce *Ruppia maritima*, dont la présence n'a pas encore été attestée dans les autres pays de la zone (De Los Santos et al., 2022). *Cymodocea nodosa* est une espèce tempérée qui est toujours immergée dans des eaux peu profondes et relativement abritées comme les lagunes et les estuaires côtiers. Cette espèce colonise de grandes superficies et forme des herbiers denses. Elle possède de longues feuilles aux bouts dentelés et un rhizome rose brun. Dans des conditions défavorables et au cours de la période hivernale, elle perd ses feuilles, mais le rhizome (c.-à-d. le système racinaire) persiste pendant

plusieurs années. *Zostera noltii* est une espèce tempérée capable de se développer sous des conditions climatiques très différentes. Elle est particulièrement fréquente dans les zones intertidales où elle est exposée à l'air durant les périodes de marée basse. C'est une espèce naine, qui forme des pelouses sur des substrats meubles envasés et riches en matière organique. Elle possède des feuilles longues de 4 à 20 cm avec une partie supérieure arrondie et souvent courbée au centre, tandis que le rhizome est jaune brunâtre. Elle est extrêmement sensible à l'eutrophisation, à la turbidité et à la pollution des eaux.

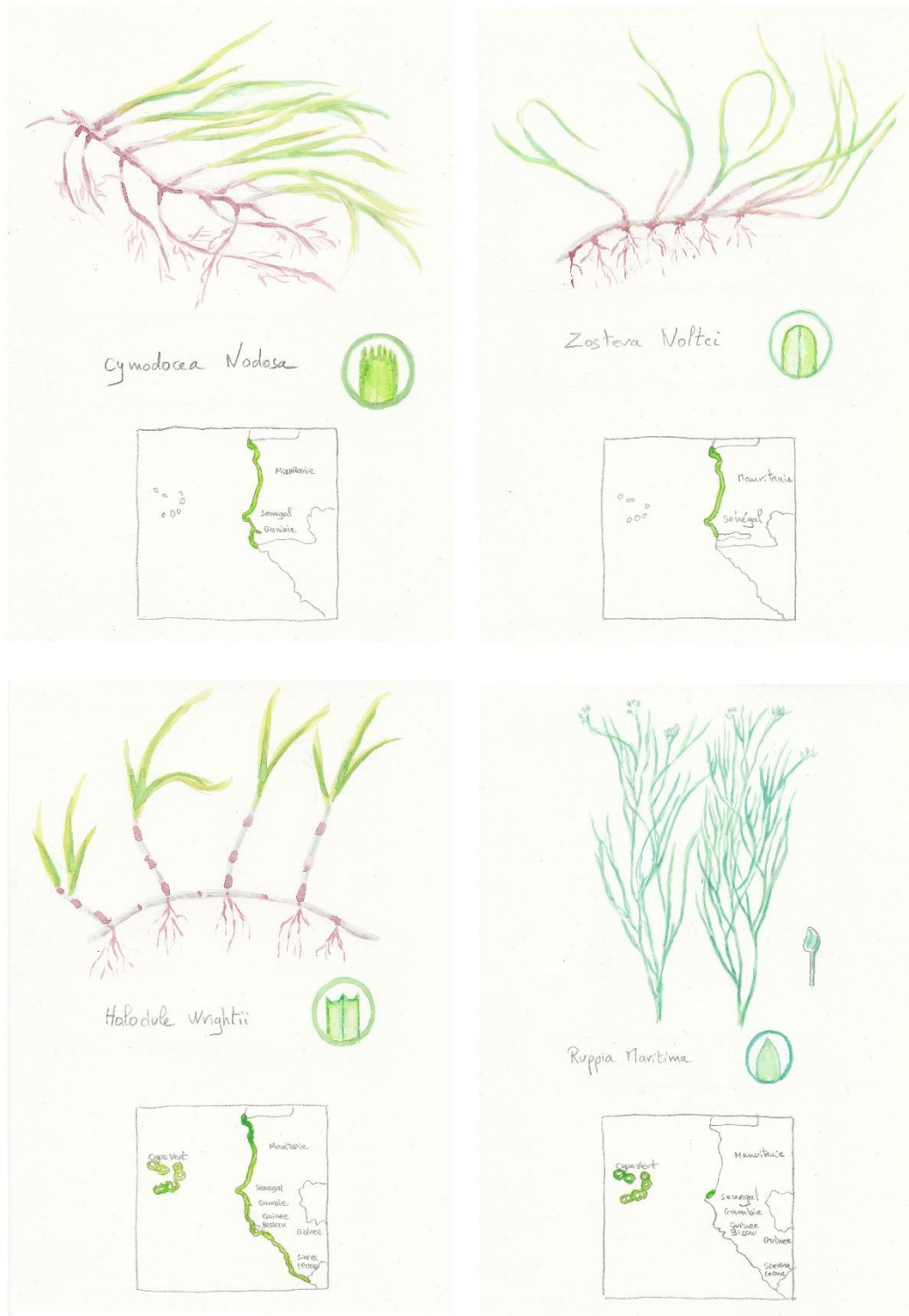


Figure 2 : La répartition des quatre espèces d'herbiers marins recensées en Afrique de l'Ouest. Source : de Los Santos et al., (2022) basé sur Resiliensea (2018)

Quant à *Halodule wrightii*, c'est une espèce tropicale que l'on retrouve dans les zones intertidales. Cette espèce est surtout présente dans des milieux abrités ou semi-abrités comme les rives peu profondes, les estuaires ou les lagunes. Elle se caractérise par un feuillage bi-dental et un rhizome blanchâtre. C'est une espèce de petite taille et qui forme généralement des herbiers clairsemés. Enfin *Ruppia maritima* ne fait pas l'unanimité quant à son classement en tant qu'herbier marin, puisqu'elle peut compléter son cycle de vie en dehors d'un environnement marin (De los Santos et al., 2021). Cette espèce se trouve aussi dans des eaux saumâtres, salines ou hypersalines, dans des marais salants, des lagunes et lacs salés, etc. Néanmoins, l'Union Internationale pour la Conservation de la Nature (UICN) classe le genre *Ruppia* parmi les herbiers marins.

En dépit de l'importance des herbiers marins, ces derniers sont confrontés à de nombreuses menaces anthropiques (Unsworth et al., 2019). De la sorte, les rejets dans l'eau de polluants d'origine agricole, domestique ou industrielle affectent profondément la structure, la stabilité et le fonctionnement des écosystèmes marins, au point de constituer une menace pour la survie des herbiers marins (Figure 3). En outre, les pressions cumulatives dues à l'exploitation côtière, au ruissellement des nutriments et aux changements climatiques ont entraîné depuis des décennies une baisse continue de la superficie des herbiers marins dans le monde (Estes et al., 2011), ce dont n'échappent pas les herbiers situés en Afrique de l'Ouest (Resiliensea, 2018). Selon le Programme des Nations-Unies pour le Développement (PNUE), 7 % de la surface de cet habitat marin disparaît chaque année dans le monde, soit l'équivalent de la perte d'un terrain de football toutes les 30 minutes (PNUE-UNEP-WCMC, 2020).

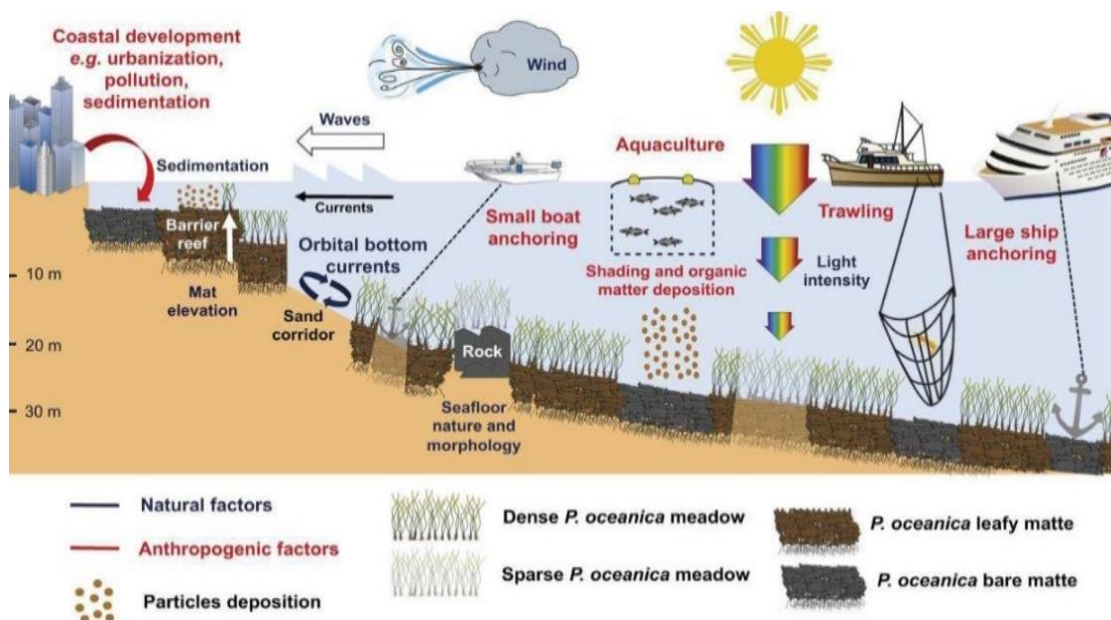


Figure 3 : Facteurs naturels et anthropiques qui impactent les habitats côtiers et marins. Source : Abadie et al. (2018).

L'attention qui est accordée aux herbiers marins en Afrique de l'Ouest est encore marginale. Les recherches se limitent presque exclusivement au parc national du Banc Arguin en Mauritanie (Touron-Gardic et al., 2022). Par conséquent, les pouvoirs publics n'ont que peu conscience du rôle des herbiers marins pour contribuer à l'atténuation du changement climatique. Il est probable que le manque de renseignements vis-à-vis des herbiers marins ait entraîné un manque de préoccupation pour leur protection. Cependant, pour contrer les menaces qui pèsent sur les herbiers marins et afin de garantir la pérennité des services écosystémiques qu'ils fournissent aux humains, des mesures de conservation doivent être prises. Or ces mesures nécessitent des connaissances de base complètes et fondées sur les données scientifiques les plus récentes, afin d'être pertinentes et adaptées au contexte ouest-africain.

Pour cette raison, la Fondation Mava – acteur prépondérant et au long cours de la conservation de l’environnement en Afrique de l’Ouest – a créé le projet Resiliensea. Programmé pour la période 2018 – 2022 et couvrant sept pays d’Afrique de l’Ouest (la Mauritanie, le Sénégal, le Cap-Vert, la Gambie, la Guinée-Bissau, la Guinée, et la Sierra Leone), ce projet a pour but « *d’accroître la connaissance des herbiers marins en Afrique de l’ouest et de mener des actions pilotes sur des sites sélectionnés, destinées à mettre en œuvre des outils de gestion afin d’améliorer le statut de leur protection et les services qu’ils fournissent* »¹. Dans le cadre de ce projet, une équipe pluridisciplinaire composée de scientifiques, d’acteurs locaux et de décideurs politiques a été mobilisée pour faire une évaluation de la valeur monétaire des services écosystémiques fournis par les herbiers marins dans trois pays de la zone d’étude du projet : Sénégal, Cabo Verde et Guinée-Bissau. Ce document présente donc la valeur monétaire des services écosystémiques fournis par les herbiers marins dans ces trois pays, puis discute de la conservation de ces herbiers en Afrique de l’Ouest au regard des enjeux spécifiques de cette région. Basé sur des travaux de terrain et des analyses cartographiques et bibliographiques approfondies, ce travail a pour but de contribuer à alimenter un socle d’information de base indispensable pour la conservation des milieux côtiers et marins dans la région. De plus, ce travail permettra aux décideurs publics de prendre conscience de l’importance que revêtent les herbiers marins dans la région.

Evaluation monétaire des services écosystémiques

L’évaluation monétaire des services écosystémiques confère une visibilité économique à certains aspects de la nature qui sont trop souvent sous-estimés, voire même complètement ignorés dans les décisions publiques. C’est un outil essentiel pour l’intégration de l’environnement dans les sphères économiques, politiques et sociales (Binet et al., 2012). En effet, l’attribution d’une valeur monétaire aux services écosystémiques favorise la prise en compte de la protection de l’environnement dans la comptabilité publique. De cette façon, en assignant une valeur monétaire aux écosystèmes, il est rendu possible pour les décideurs de comparer les valeurs des services écosystémiques aux biens du marché. Par conséquent, l’arbitrage « nature vs. développement économique » auquel la société doit souvent faire face est rendu plus explicite. En fin de compte, les acteurs de la conservation (consommateurs/usagers d’un site, administrations, ONG...) peuvent capitaliser sur ces évaluations monétaires pour sensibiliser les décideurs publics à l’importance de préserver les zones d’utilité écologique menacées par le développement humain.

Ce travail s’appuie sur le cadre méthodologique élaboré par Trégarot et al. (2018) pour évaluer les services écosystémiques fournis par le parc national du banc d’Arguin (Mauritanie). L’unité de mesure utilisée pour évaluer les services écosystémiques est la valeur économique totale (VET). Cette dernière est la plus adoptée dans l’évaluation économique des services écosystémiques, car elle n’évalue qu’un service à la fois. Elle prend en considération non seulement les valeurs d’usage, c’est-à-dire les valeurs des avantages concrets apportés par l’utilisation réelle – envisagée ou possible – d’un bien ou d’un service, mais aussi les valeurs de non-usage qui correspondent à la conscience de la viabilité des services fournis par les écosystèmes (Pearce 1991) (voir Figure 4). Par ailleurs, cette notion est utilisée depuis plusieurs décennies, ce qui facilite largement les comparaisons (comparaisons dans le temps ou comparaisons par rapport à d’autres types d’habitats ou d’autres lieux). Les différentes évaluations passées des biens et services rendus par les habitats d’herbiers (Casas et al., 2022 ; Touron-Gardic et al., 2021 ; Trégarot et al., 2018) et qui se basent sur le même procédé méthodologique démontrent bien l’intérêt d’adopter le cadre de travail de la VET. Cela ne signifie cependant pas que l’étude fournira des renseignements sur la valeur monétaire de tous les services possibles : cette étude s’attachera à un certain nombre d’entre eux, car ils représentent le mieux l’utilité des herbiers marins pour les humains

¹ Voir : <https://resiliensea.org/>

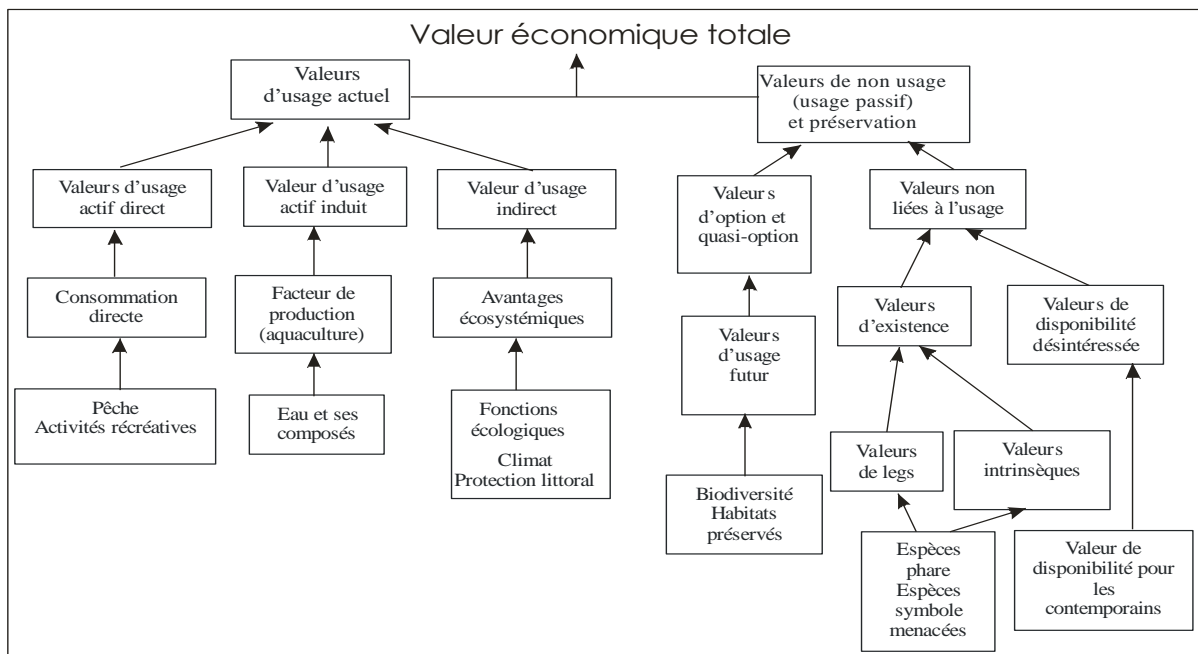


Figure 4 : Décomposition de la Valeur Économique Totale ; D'après Point (1998) et adapté par Failler & Pan (2007) in Trégarot et al. 2018b.

Les différents services écosystémiques qui font l'objet d'une estimation monétaire sont les suivants :

- **Service d'approvisionnement en biomasse halieutique**

Les herbiers marins hébergent beaucoup d'espèces animales qui fournissent beaucoup de services aux humains. Ils constituent un habitat privilégié pour la reproduction et la croissance de nombreuses espèces de poissons et pour de nombreux d'espèces d'invertébrés. Les herbiers marins constituent en outre une source de nourriture pour de nombreux organismes, qui attireront à leur tour des prédateurs, etc. Ce service cherche à quantifier la fonction de production de biomasse liée aux herbiers marins.

- **Service de séquestration de carbone**

Les plantes marines jouent un rôle important dans la lutte contre le changement climatique. Elles transforment le gaz carbonique présent dans l'eau pour produire de l'oxygène (photosynthèse). En outre, elles sont en mesure de séquestrer et de stocker de grandes quantités de carbone dans leur biomasse (tiges, feuilles, racines) et d'enfouir sur des temps longs du carbone organique dans les sédiments.

- **Service de traitement de l'eau**

Les herbiers marins sont capables de purifier l'eau de certains nutriments, augmentant en conséquence sa qualité. Ils jouent un rôle de tampon en fixant certaines matières organiques dans l'eau et en empêchant le développement de certaines espèces nuisibles.

- **Service d'atténuation de la houle (protection côtière)**

Les herbiers marins sont essentiels pour stabiliser le substrat meuble. Grâce à leur système racinaire, ils retiennent les masses sableuses du fond marin sur lesquels ils se développent et empêchent l'érosion de la côte. De plus, les ondes de houle qui se propagent dans l'eau peuvent être considérablement atténuées lorsqu'elles se diffusent au-dessus des parterres d'herbiers.

- **Aspects culturels**

Les herbiers marins représentent aussi une ressource culturelle considérable. Ils offrent une panoplie de services immatériels à caractère récréatif, spirituel, esthétique et éducatif, ce qui en fait des attractions touristiques.

Pour chacun de ces services, une fonction de production sera estimée. Cette fonction de production représente le niveau d'activité annuel de chaque service. Par exemple pour le service de séquestration de carbone, la fonction de production représente la quantité de carbone atmosphérique qui est séquestrée pendant une année. Le procédé pour estimer la fonction de production de chaque service écosystémique est décrit dans la section afférente. Néanmoins, ces estimations requièrent toutes que les étendues d'herbiers soient cartographiées de façon précise. C'est pourquoi cette étude s'attardera en premier lieu sur la cartographie des herbiers dans les trois pays investigués.

Dès lors que les fonctions de production des services écosystémiques sont connues, il est possible de les traduire en termes monétaires. Le procédé pour estimer la valeur monétaire de chaque service écosystémique est décrit dans la section afférente.

Structure du rapport

Ce rapport est divisé en 11 sections. La section 1 décrit le processus de cartographie des herbiers marins, ainsi que leur emplacement et leur surface. Ensuite, les services sont décortiqués et analysés chacun indépendamment dans les sections 2 à 6. Les résultats généraux sont ensuite récapitulés à la section 7. Les menaces pesant sur les herbiers marins sont dès lors évoquées à la section 8, tandis que la section 9 décrit les nombreuses espèces vivantes profitant de cet habitat naturel. Par la suite, les principaux résultats de cette étude sont mis en perspective face aux objectifs internationaux en termes de réduction des émissions de gaz à effet de serre à la section 10. Enfin, les potentiels impacts du développement des industries gazières et pétrolière offshore dans la région sur les milieux côtiers seront discutés à la section 11.

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SECTION 1 – MAPPING OF SEAGRASS USING REMOTE SENSING

Fieldwork was carried out in the three countries of the study area. However, due to significant differences in terms of seagrass densities, methodology couldn't be replicated in all three countries. Thus, the first part of this section presents the method used in Senegal and Cabo Verde: Analysis of satellite images, on-site Sonar signals (Senegal only) and scuba diving verification work. Then, the main results in terms of surface area. The second part of this section presents the method used in Guinea-Bissau (analysis of Sonar signals and on-site verifications), as well as the results in this country. Seagrass beds in Guinea-Bissau were very sparse, making it impossible satellite analysis to have conducive results. Therefore, to compensate, Sonar analysis were carried out more in-depth.

1. Mapping in Senegal and Cape Verde

Richard Teeuw¹, Nasos Argyriou¹, Nuria Bachiller-Jareno¹, Toby Meredith², Andrew Lundgren¹, Ocgéna Rusten Charles³, Emmanuel Dias⁴, Amadeu Mendes Almeida⁵, El Hadj Bara Dème¹ and Jamie Donald-McCann¹

¹ School of Geography University of Portsmouth (UK)

² Communication office, University of Portsmouth (UK)

³ Centre for Blue Governance, University of Portsmouth (UK)

⁴ Institute for Biodiversity and Protected Areas (IBAP), Guinea Bissau

⁵ Commission for Fisheries and Aquaculture (CIPA), Guinea-Bissau

1.1. Introduction

The use of satellite images can be a valuable procedure to detect and monitor these marine and coastal ecosystems (Hossain et al., 2015). The detection of seagrass distribution has also been successful with aerial photos and satellite images with pixel sizes of 10m or less, while more recently drone remote sensing has been used to map coastal ecosystems in cm-detail (Lyons et al., 2011; Kovacs et al., 2018). Satellites have many major advantages over both aircraft and drones, notably: better continuity of data collection, with some satellite data archives spanning many decades; satellites can also provide a better synoptic overview of habits, even whole ecosystems, relative to the limited views from aircraft or drones. Satellite Earth observations (EO) data provide repeat-coverage, thematically consistent and spatially continuous measurements of ecosystems, their patterns and processes, with global coverage.

1.2. Methodology

1.2.1. Data

Satellite Imagery

Two types of freely available satellite imagery were used: Sentinel-2 (spatial resolution 10m) and PlanetScope (spatial resolution 3m). Those images were selected to be as cloud-free as possible and from the lowest tidal period, in order to discriminate better the subtidal, intertidal and land coverage areas (Table 1). Thus, marine habitats could be more discrete in low tide shallow water, which minimises the absorption of spectral wavelengths by water, assisting feature identification (Pottier et al., 2018, 2021).

Table 1 : Satellite datasets used in this study

| Datasets | Data source | Description |
|--------------------|--|---|
| PlanetScope images | Planet.com | Multi-spectral satellite images (visible & Near Infra-Red with 3 m pixel size; daily images) |
| Sentinel-2 images | European Space Agency (ESA) Copernicus Open Access Hub | Multi-spectral satellite images (visible, NIR & SWIR) with 10 m pixel size; images every 5 days |

1.2.2. Drone photography

A Wingtra vertical-takeoff and landing (VTOL) fixed-wing drone was used for the Joal and Delta du Saloum seagrass surveys (Figures 5 and 6-8).



Figure 5 : Wingtra VTOL fixed-wing drone. Nose cone is not included in this image.

Technical details

Sensor: Sony RX1R II (optical); MicaSense Altum (multispectral)

Rationale: VTOL; faster data collection and greater area coverage compared to multi-rotor drones.

Restrictions: Needs a footprint of minimum 5m radius for take-off and landing; cannot take off from small boats. UoP policy and CAA operational authorisation does not allow for beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS); unable to completely fly the areas identified from suitable launch sites.



Figure 6 : Drone photos merged into a photo-mosaics for part of the Joal seagrass area – note, unfortunately because of the high-tide conditions, no seagrass is visible, apart from seaweed and seagrass debris along the shoreline.



Figure 7 : Drone photo of Joal beach, showing strand line and probable near-shore seagrass

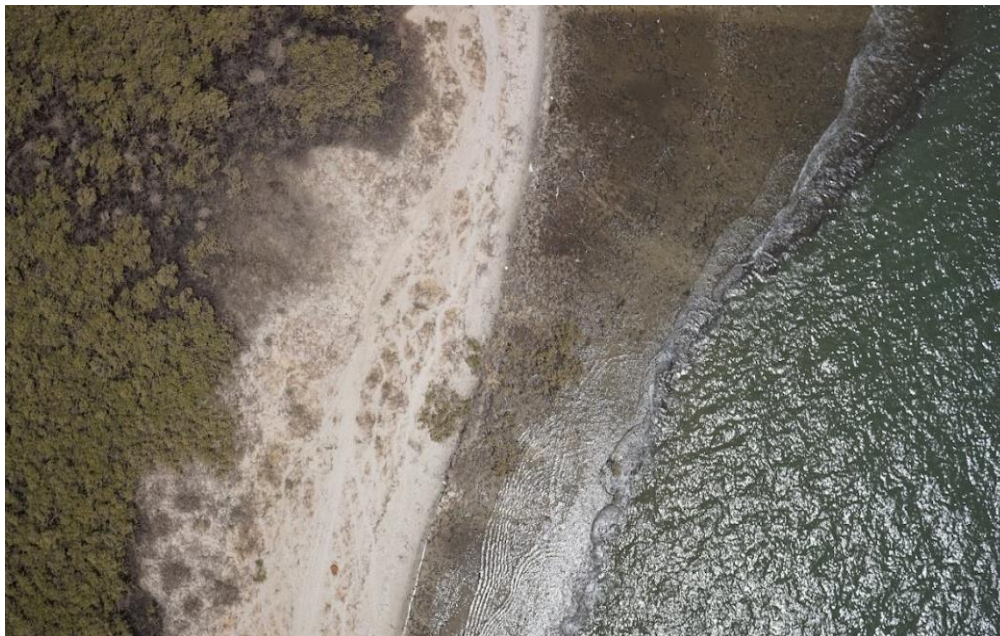


Figure 8 : Drone photo of the Fandiog area, Delta du Saloum. Probable seagrass is showing in the top right of the photo, but elsewhere the sun-glint on the water makes detection of seagrass very difficult.

Detecting & mapping seagrass using drone photography: recommendations

- Use trained drone operators that have Beyond Visible Line of Sight (BVLOS) authorization from host country authorities.
- Identify suitable launch sites prior to deployment.
- Identify low tide times and aim to carry out the drone survey at lowest tide.
- Sun-glint can be a major problem in seeing the seagrass, even in relatively clear water: experiments are needed with different flight times: e.g., early morning or late afternoon, where the sun is low in the sky.
- Investigate collaboration with any in-country drone organisations prior to deployment.
- Have available both fixed wing and multirotor drones.

1.2.3. Satellite image processing

The methodology and results of Pottier et al. (2021), developed under low-tide conditions for mapping the extensive seagrass meadows of the Banc d'Arguin (Mauritania), were adapted for the image processing used in this study, with Sentinel-2 imagery and 3m-pixel PlanetScope imagery (Figure 9)

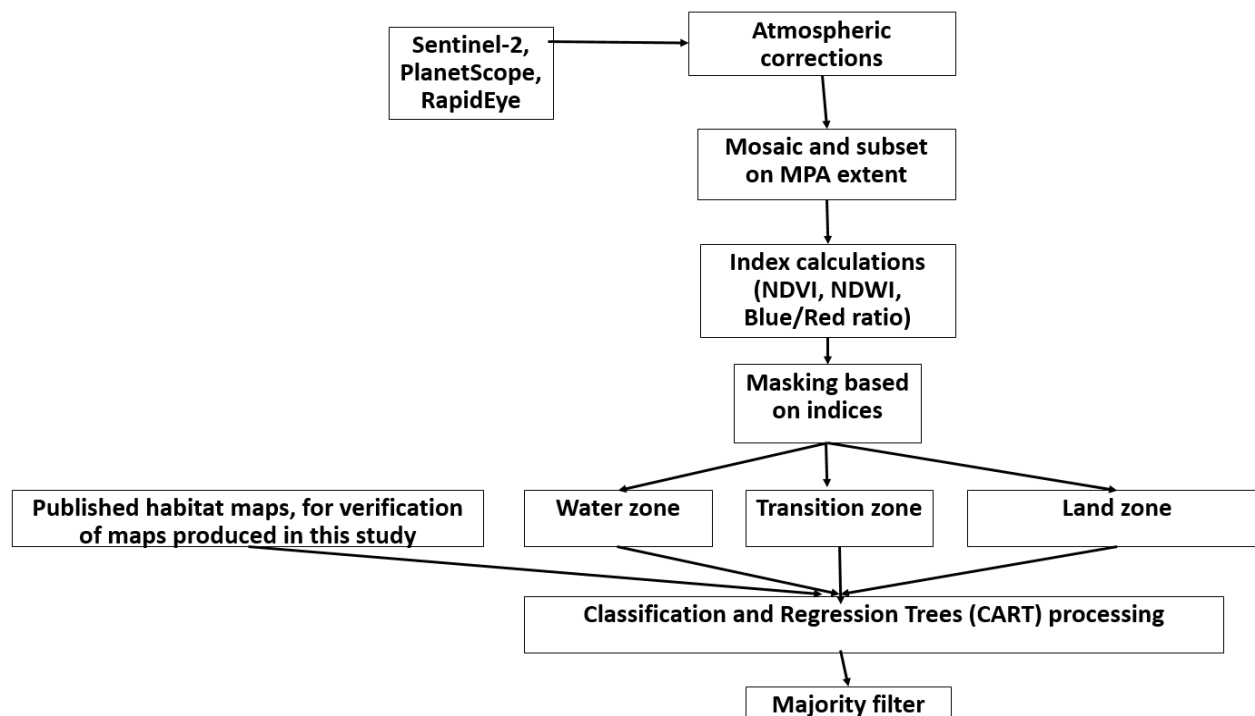


Figure 9 : Summary of the image processing and habitat classification methodology

The methodology used in this project is summarised in Figure 9. Our approach builds on the methodology used by Pottier et al. (2021). However, there are some notable differences between the methodology of Pottier et al. (2021) and this study because of the lack of 'ground-truth' validation data that was available. Only Joal (Senegal) had a large dataset of seagrass survey data (from 2013) with which to verify features detected by the satellite imagery. The Joal data are from a seafloor grab-sample survey carried out by boat, on a 500m x 500m grid for the ca. 8km x 18km of the Joal MPA (Mériaux & Sémelin, 2014).

The satellite images used in this analysis (Sentinel-2 and PlanetScope) were pre-processed for atmospheric and radiometric corrections. The pre-processed images were then processed by calculating the two indices of the Normalized Difference Water Index (NDWI) and the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI). Those two indices use specific spectral bands of the satellite sensors in order to mask and discriminate the water bodies (subtidal and intertidal), the land (terrestrial) and the transition zone between the marine and terrestrial coverage, consisting of mangroves, salt marshes, aquatic vegetation and mudflats (illustrated in Figure 10).

Next, a classification process of the satellite images took place by using the Classification and Regression Trees (CART) analysis, based on Decision Trees (Breiman et al, 1984). Decision Trees are important for classification and regression predictive modelling in Machine Learning. CART analysis is a procedure where decision trees models are built according to the provided training data. Decision Trees can be used for classification to predict what group each pixel of the satellite image belongs to and for regression to predict a continuous value across the image, while also providing insights about the relationships of the dependent and independent variables. With 'Classification Trees' the target variable is categorical and the tree is used to identify the class within which a target variable would

likely fall into. In the 'Regression Trees' the target variable is continuous and the tree is used to predict its value. The final outcome classification products were further processed with a majority filter in order to eliminate any noisy isolated pixels.

For sites with no published maps and no/minimal marine 'ground-truth' reference data, the ratio of blue and red bands (Blue/Red) was used to detect potential marine substrates and vegetation types. Visual image analysis was also used, with PlanetScope and Google Earth archive satellite imagery from the past 20 years, hand-digitising seafloor geomorphological features to identify terrain likely to shelter and sustain seagrass (e.g., with the seagrass of Ngor bay, Dakar).

1.2.4. Seagrass Verification Data

Banc d'Arguin Test Area

In the Banc d'Arguin test area, both marine and terrestrial habitats were discriminated through the use of Sentinel-2 multispectral images. The low tide effect was advantageous towards highlighting the distribution of seagrass. In Figure 10 the comparison of this study outcome with a previous study using Support Vector Machine (SVM) processing and being herein as a reference map is shown with the two habitat mappings overall coinciding with each other (Pottier et al., 2021).

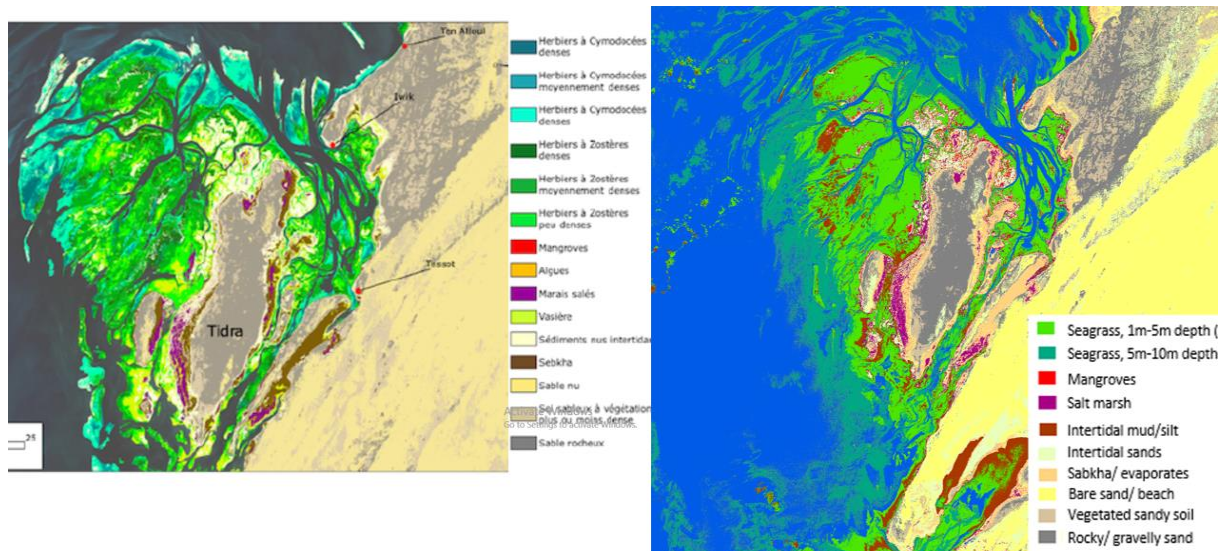


Figure 10 : Comparison between the Sentinel-2 based habitat mapping, Banc d'Arguin test area; green shades = seagrass. Left: using SVM processing (Pottier et al., 2021); Right: using CART processing (this study).

Joal MPA: verification of 2020 satellite-based mapping, relative to a 2013 boat-based seafloor survey

Illustrated in Figures 11 and 12 is the good fit of the seagrass and rocky substrate detected via the December 2020 PlanetScope image (pixels: 3m x 3m), relative to the map produced using data from the 2009 seafloor survey, sampled on a 500m x 500m grid (Mériaux & Sémelin, 2014).

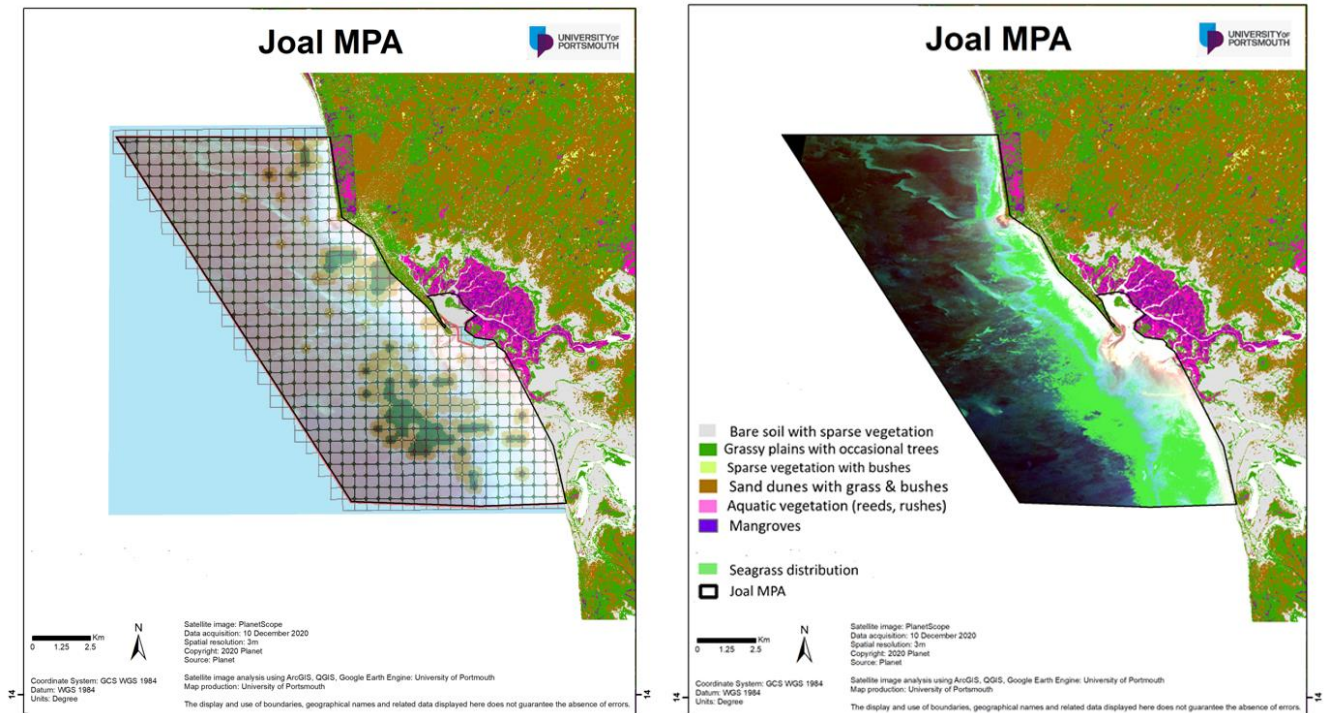


Figure 11 : Joal MPA: comparison of the 2013 boat grab-sample results (500m x 500m grid sampling) with the 2020 PlanetScope-derived habitat map (3m x 3m pixels), for the distribution of seagrass (grid map source: Mériaux & Sémelin, 2014).

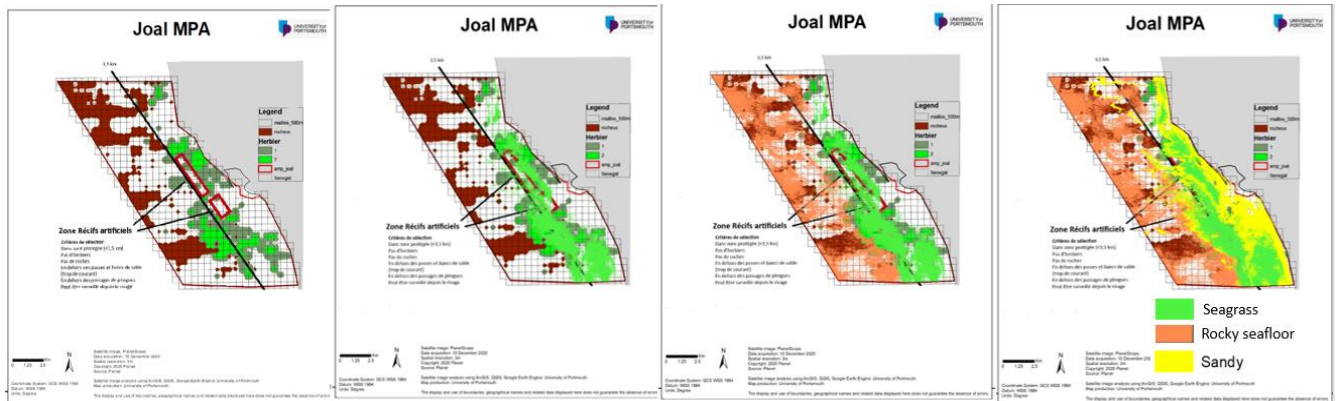


Figure 12 : Joal MPA: comparison of boat-based grab-sample results with the PlanetScope-derived map, for the distributions of seagrass, rocky and sandy substrate.

Based on the 2013 seafloor grab-sample results (500m sample intervals) a number of reference points of those results were used within a Multiple Regression Analysis model to determine the rock and seagrass distribution, shown in Figures 13. The regression analysis allows you to model, examine, and explore spatial relationships and can help explain the factors behind observed spatial patterns. It is used for prediction, forecasting and to understand the independent and dependent variables correlate with each other. With multiple regression, it is assumed that there is no multi-collinearity among the independent variables. Thus, the correlation between independent variables should not be significant and that one can be linearly predicted from the others with a non-trivial degree of accuracy.

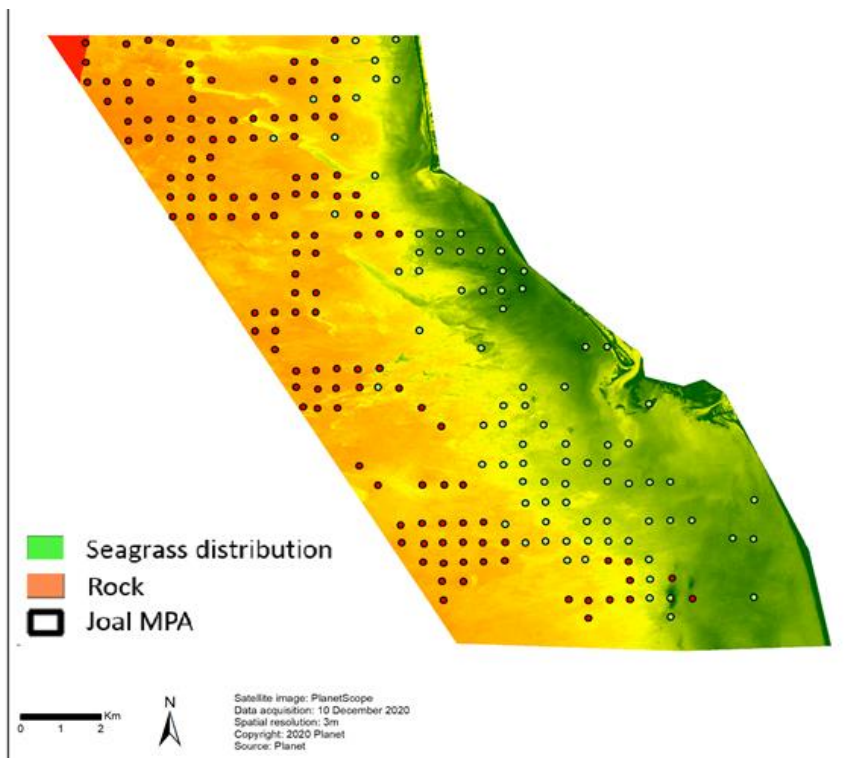


Figure 13 : Sample points from the 2013 seafloor survey (grid interval: 500m x 500m) that are in agreement with the features detected in the 2020 PlanetScope image analysis (pixel size: 3m x 3m), for rocky substrate and seagrass.

1.3. Google Earth Engine & Machine Learning

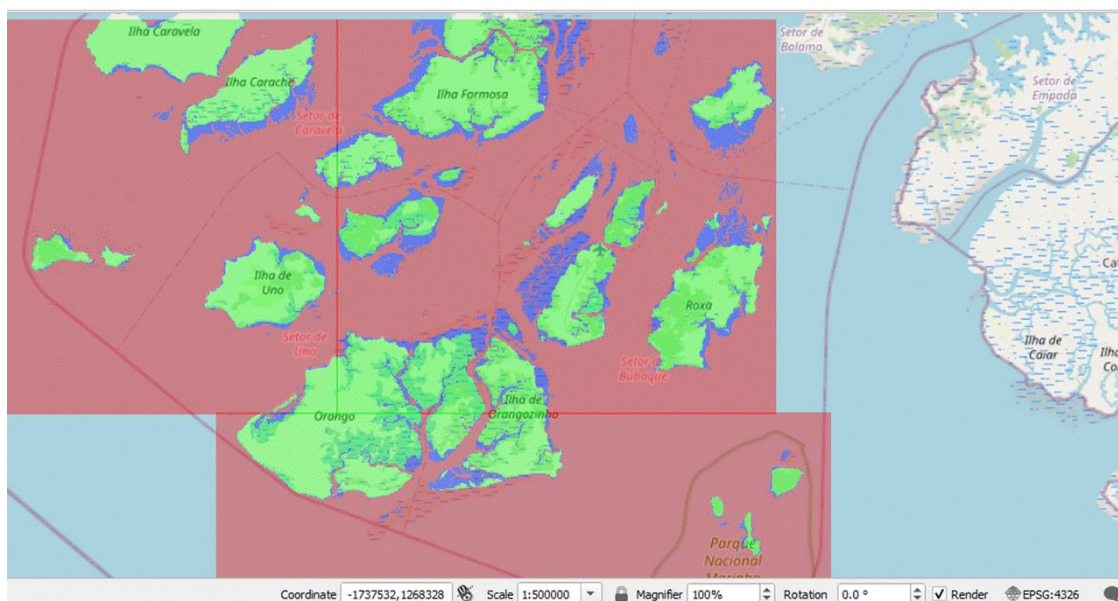


Figure 14 : Maximum extent of the intertidal zone (dark blue areas) for Guinea Bissau islands, based on processing 20 years of Landsat imagery via Google Earth Engine and machine learning

The use of Machine Learning (ML) in conjunction with the satellite imagery archives of Google Earth Engine (GEE), was examined and shows a lot of potential for large-area mapping of seagrass locations and changes over time. Particularly useful archives are those Sentinel-2 (10m pixels, with 10-day repeat images and an archive that dates back to 2014) and Landsat (30m pixels, with 16-day repeat images and an archive that dates back to 1980).

A GEE/ML methodology was developed using the well-mapped intertidal seagrass areas of the Banc d'Arguin (Mauritania), producing seagrass maps with an accuracy of 80% to 90% relative to the detailed fieldwork-verified mapping of (Pottier et al., 2021). Unfortunately the GEE/ML methodology developed on the Banc d'Arguin did not work well with the Joal (Senegal) test area, due to Joal's much more limited tidal range. Therefore, the methodology was instead tested on the Guinea Bissau delta, where there is an extensive intertidal zone. The preliminary results of the Guinea Bissau intertidal zone mapping are shown in Figure 14. The maximum extent of the intertidal zone (dark blue areas) for Guinea Bissau islands was mapped, based on processing 20 years of Landsat imagery via Google Earth Engine. The next step will be (subject to further funding) processing of the archive Landsat imagery, back to the 1980s, using machine learning to identify areas of seagrass in the intertidal zone, so that changes in the extent of seagrass can be measured for the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, 2010s and 2020s.

1.4. Results: PlanetScope and Sentinel-2 imagery

The satellite-derived classified images discriminated various classes of the marine and terrestrial habitats within each study area, as summarised below.

1.4.1. Joal

The PlanetScope satellite image was able to enhance the seabed quite clearly, as can be observed in Figures 15 and 16, with areas of seagrass and also some marine habitat features, notably areas of sandy or rocky substrate, being detected – with verification from the results of the 2013 boat-based grab-sample survey (Table 2).

Table 2 : Joal: areal extent of seagrass from December 2020 PlanetScope imagery (3m pixels) and 2013 boat-based grab-sample survey (500m x 500m grid)

| Joal: areal extent of seagrass | Area (km ²) |
|---|-------------------------|
| 2020 PlanetScope imagery, 3m x 3m pixels | ca. 25.5 |
| 2013 seafloor survey, 500m x 500m sample grid | ca. 27.5 |

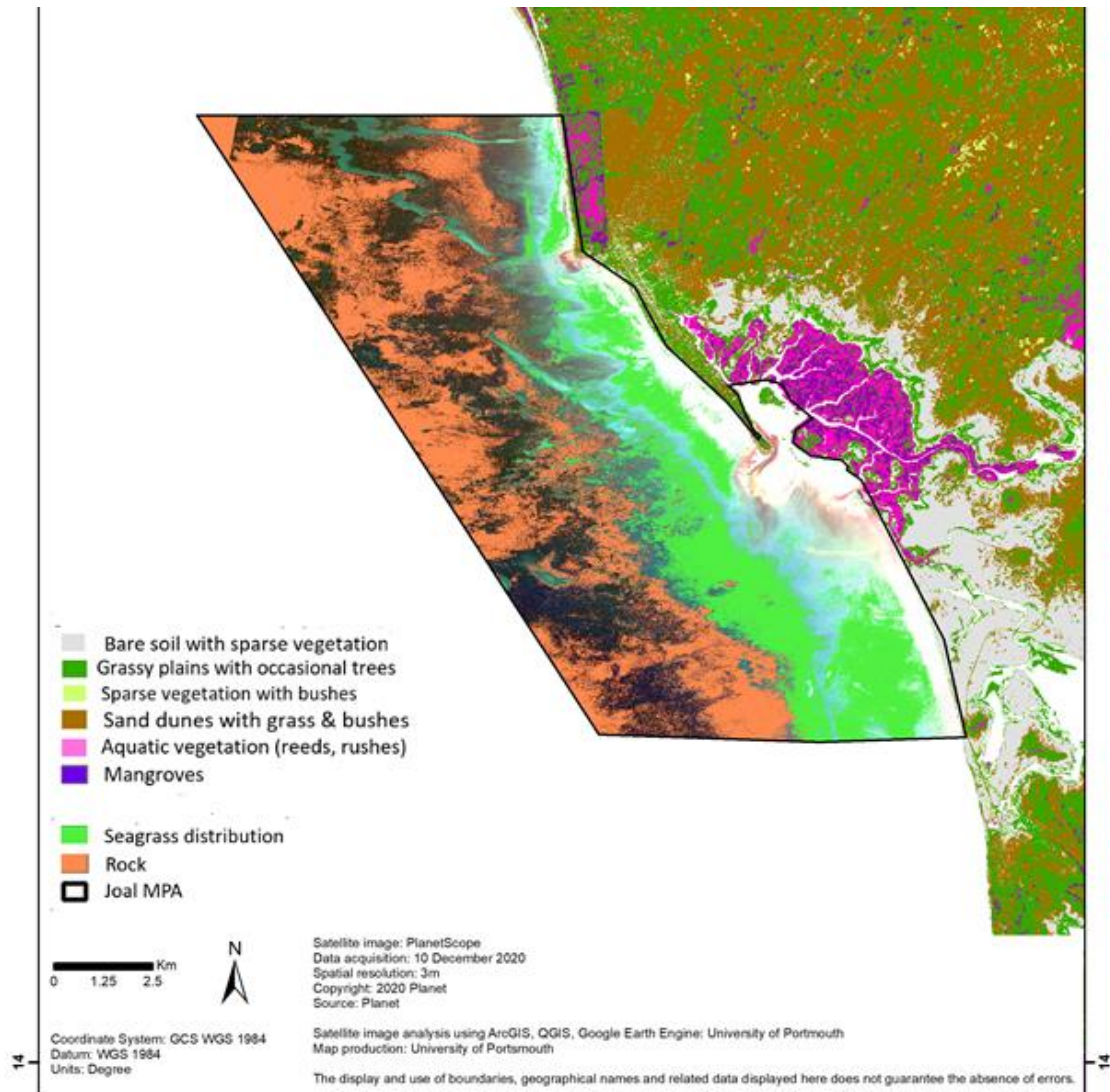


Figure 15 : December 2020 PlanetScope-derived habitat map of the Joal area, showing distributions of seagrass and rocky substrate showing tentative seagrass distribution

Based on comparison with the Joal ‘ground-truth’ reference maps from a 2013 boat-based seafloor grab-sample survey of seagrass and substrate (Mériaux & Sémelin, 2014), using the regression analysis outlined in Section 1.2. in this chapter, the CART classification of December 2020 PlanetScope imagery was able to detect the intertidal and terrestrial habitat types, as well as probable seagrass distribution and rocky sand coverage in the marine zone (Figure 16).

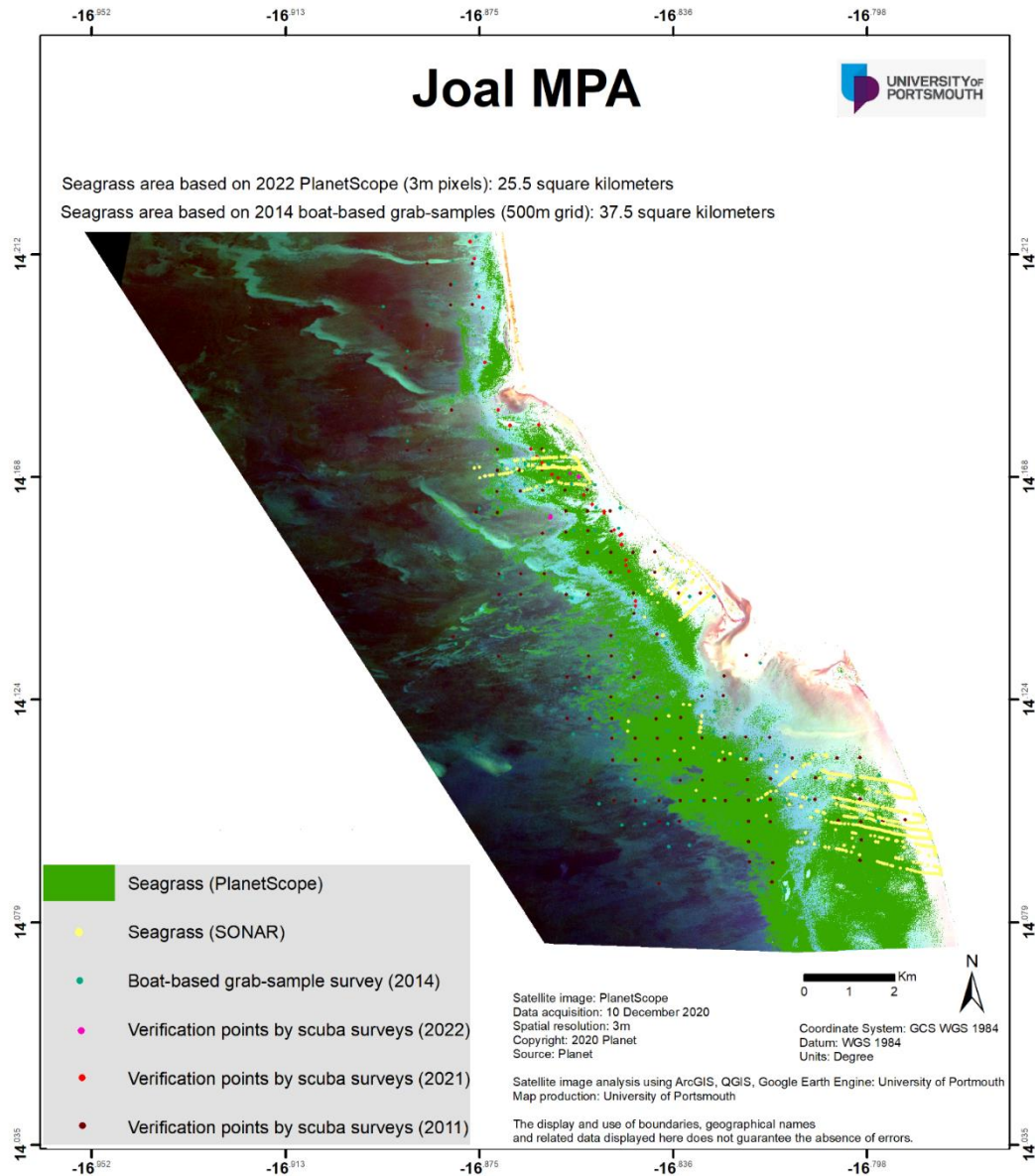


Figure 16 : Joal: December 2020 PlanetScope-based seagrass map

1.4.2. Delta du Saloum

The coastal, estuarine and lagoonal areas of the Delta du Saloum and the Sangomar MPA were difficult to map via satellite imagery because of frequent turbidity, particularly in the central and southern coastal waters, due to sediment from rivers in those areas. The large extent of mangrove coverage and the tentative seagrass distribution are shown in Figures 19, 20 and 21.



Figure 17 : The coastal Delta du Saloum (North is to the right), showing its Northern, Southern and Central areas, the latter forming the Sangomar MPA. Green map pins are seagrass locations from pre-2022 surveys.

Estimated seagrass areal extent in the Delta du Saloum

- 2011 sketch map of Delta du Saloum seagrass areas (Ngur et al., 2011)

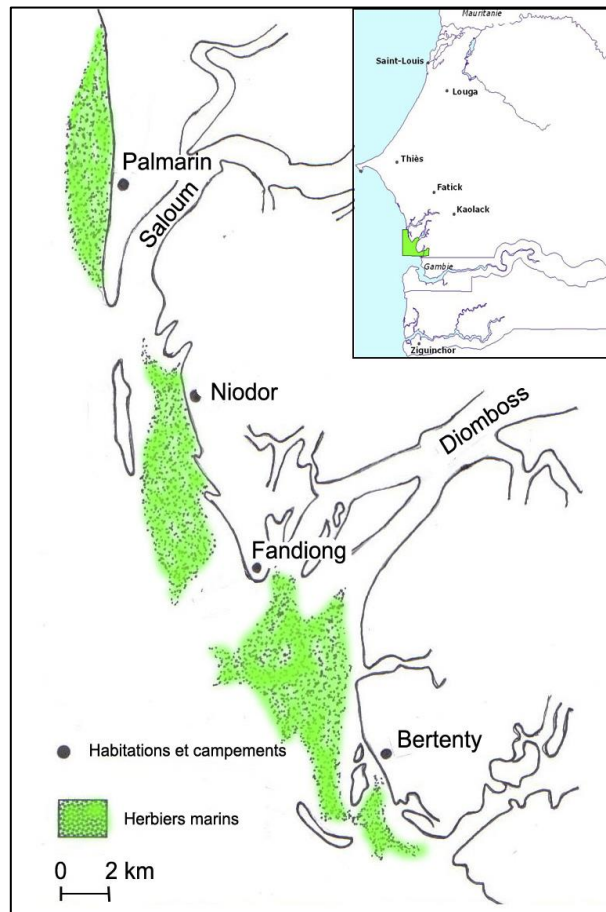


Figure 18 : Sketch map showing the estimated distribution of seagrass in the Delta du Saloum (from Ngur et al., 2011).

- PlanetScope imagery (February 2022)

The estimated area of seagrass in the marine zone of the Delta du Saloum is given in Table 3, based on the limited available verification data (10 confirmed locations with seagrass, mostly in the sheltered lagoon behind the sand spit in the southern half of the Sangomar MPA) and the interpretation of the processed 2022 PlanetScope image.

The seagrass locations in the Delta du Saloum are in 3 main areas (Figure 19):

- Northern (Palmarin)
 - Central (Sangomar)
 - Southern (Betenty)
- Northern coast (Palmarin)

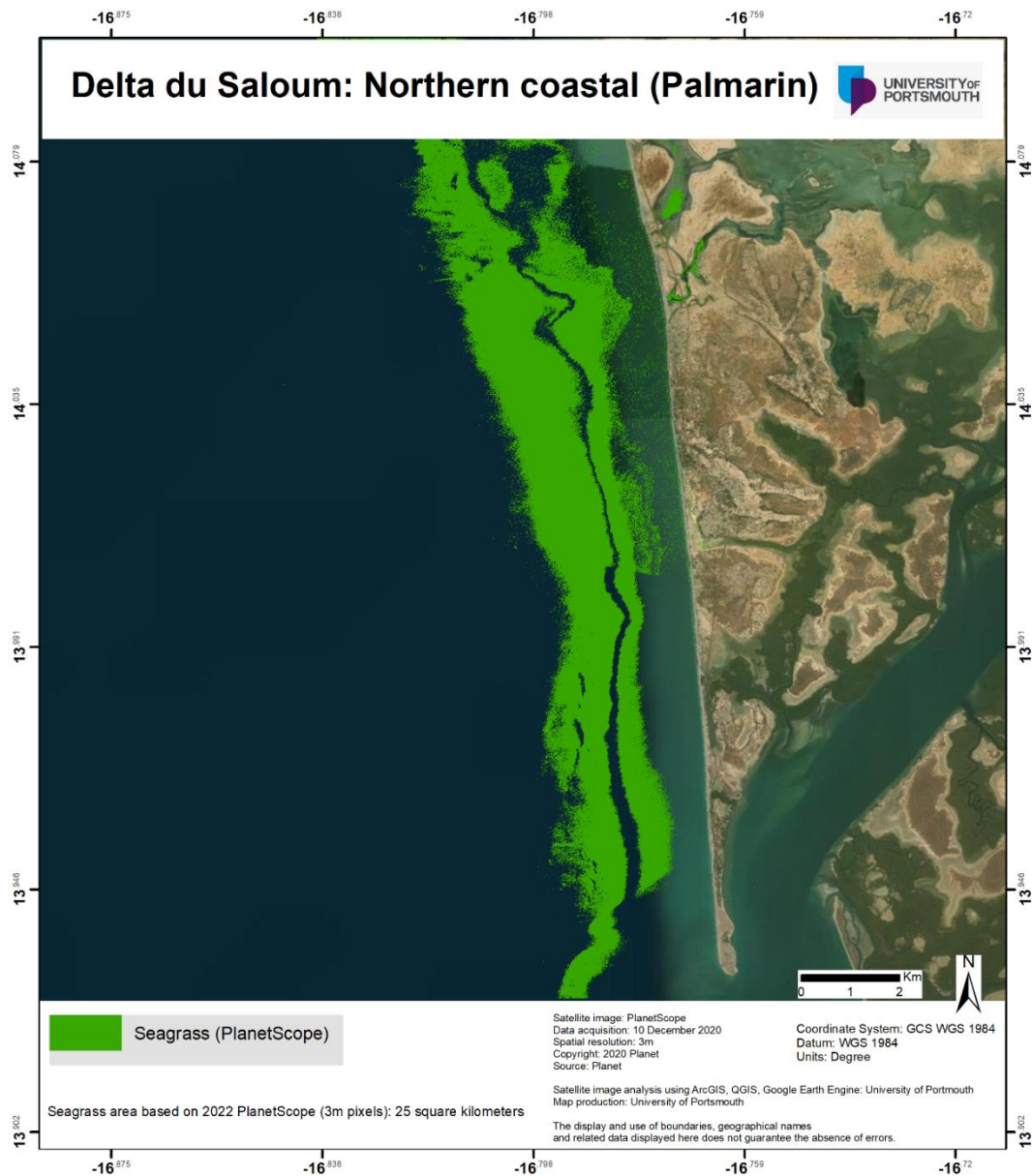


Figure 19 : Possible seagrass extent along the Palmarin coast (northern Delta du Saloum), from processing of 2022 PlanetScope imagery. The possible area of seagrass is 25 km²
 Nb. Verification limited to only 2 seagrass locations in this area.

- Central lagoon (Sangomar)

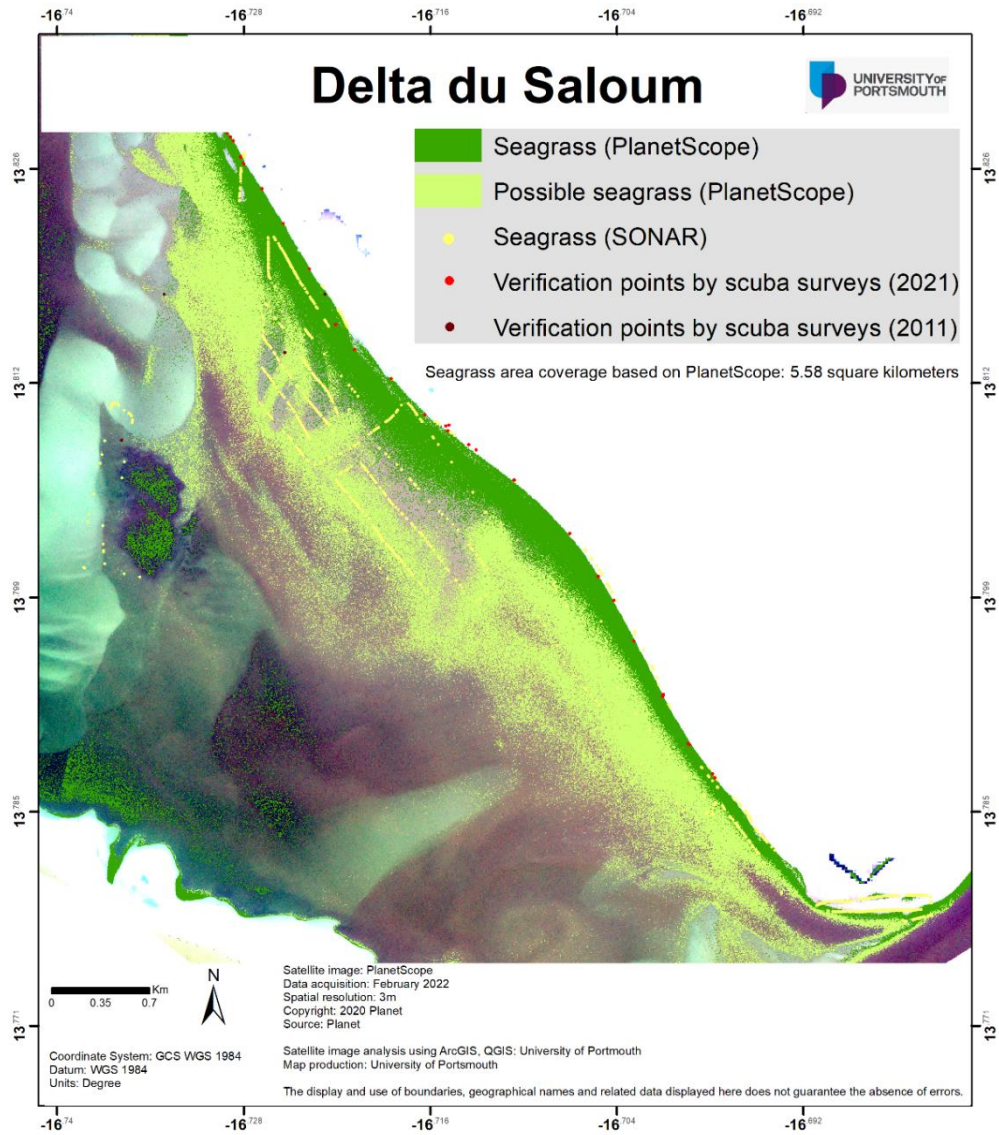


Figure 20 : Probable seagrass extent in the southern zone of the Sangomar lagoon (central Delta du Saloum), from processing of 2022 PlanetScope imagery. The seagrass here covers a probable 5.6 km². Verification based on sonar surveys and over 20 seagrass locations in this area.

- Southern coast (Betenty)

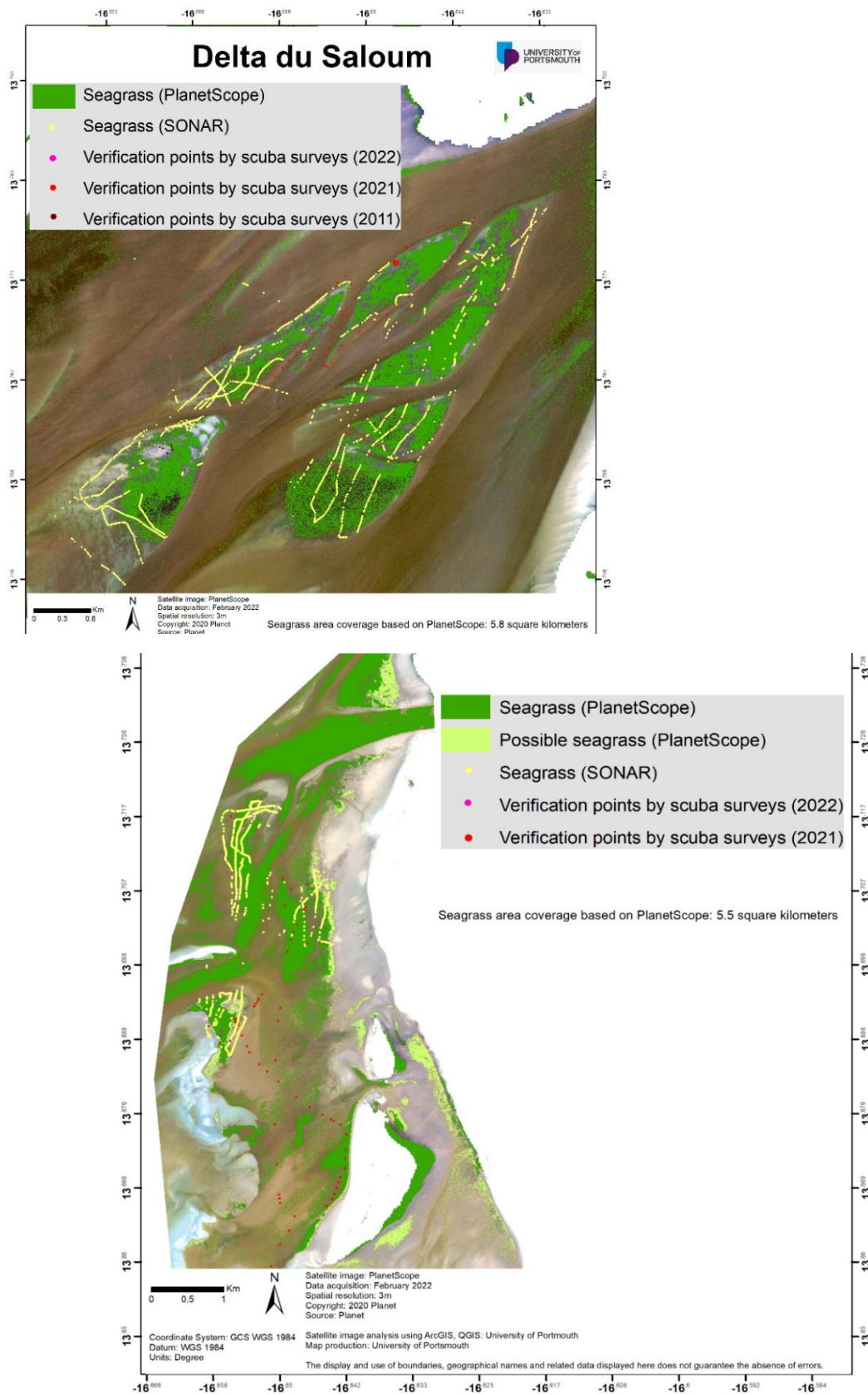


Figure 21: Probable seagrass extent in the southern Delta du Saloum (Betenty area), from processing of 2022 PlanetScope imagery. The seagrass in these 2 adjacent areas covers a probable 11.2 km² Nb. Verification based on sonar surveys and over 20 seagrass locations in this area

Table 3 : Delta du Saloum seagrass: 2011 sketch map vs. 2022 PlanetScope imagery

| | |
|--|--|
| (i) Delta du Saloum (N) - Palmarin | Area (km²) |
| 2022 PlanetScope imagery, 3m x 3m pixels | ca. 25.0 (full area) |
| 2011 sketch-map | ca. 25.9 |
| (ii) Delta du Saloum (central) - Sangomar | Area (km²) |
| 2020 PlanetScope imagery, 3m x 3m pixels | ca. 5.6 (partial area) |
| 2011 sketch-map | ca. 27.4 |
| (iii) Delta du Saloum (S) - Bettenty | Area (km²) |
| 2020 PlanetScope imagery, 3m x 3m pixels | ca. 11.2 (partial area) |
| 2011 sketch-map | ca. 49.8 |
| TOTAL - Delta du Saloum | Area (km²) |
| 2020 PlanetScope imagery, 3m x 3m pixels | At least 41.8 (sites only partially mapped) |
| 2011 sketch-map | ca. 103.1 |

1.4.3. Ngor bay, Dakar

Ngor bay, Dakar: method used to determine the probable seagrass extent



Figure 22 : Ngor bay, Dakar - imagery from top: 2021, 2012 and 2008 (Google Earth). Yellow map pins are seagrass; orange lines indicate the definite and probable areas of seagrass.

Visual interpretation of archive high-resolution satellite imagery, via Google Earth, to map the probable extent of the seagrass in Ngor bay, Dakar. We only have 3 verified locations from scuba

diving: measuring the area between those 3 locations gives us a definite area of 1.1 hectares (10,966 m²) for the seagrass.

However, by reviewing Google Earth's archive of historical satellite imagery, images with clear-water views of the bay were found from 2021, 2012 and 2008 – enabling manual visual analysis. The seafloor geomorphology around those 3 locations extends out some distance, one can predict that suitable settings for the seagrass cover 4.4 Hectares (44,026 m²) – see Figure 23.

The optimal location for the Ngor seagrass has abundant sand, mixed with occasional rocky substrate, which probably gives the seagrass shelter from major storm erosion, that erosion becomes more severe as one moves towards the margins of the bay.

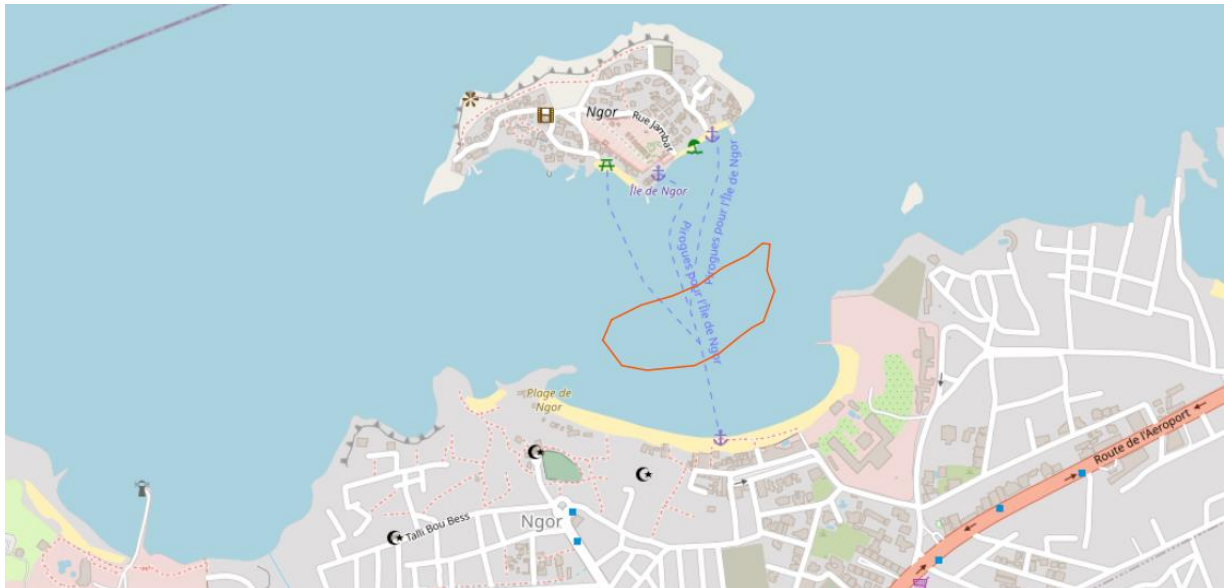


Figure 23 : The probable extent of seagrass in Ngor bay, Dakar: 0.044 km² (4.4 Ha)

1.4.4. Cape Verde

- Praia Gamboa

Seagrass beds are essentially situated in a sheltered area between the islet and the shoreline (Figure 24 below). Estimated area of seagrass is 0.14 km².

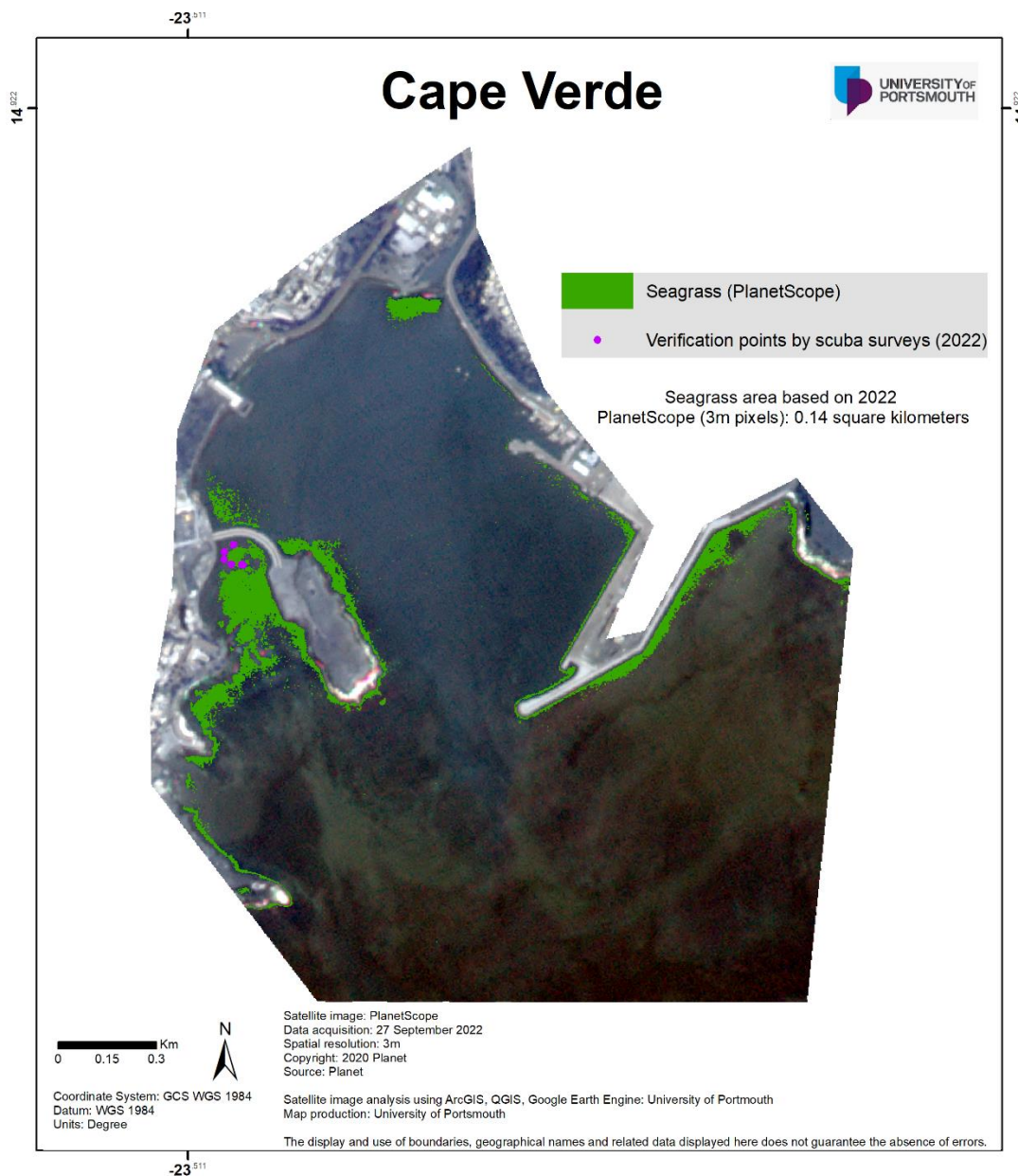


Figure 24 : The probable extent of the main area of seagrass in Cape Verde: Praia bay, based on PlanetScope imagery of September 2022. Area of probable seagrass: 0.14 km². Nb. verified by scuba sampling of seagrass.

- Pedra Badejo

Seagrass beds in Pedra Badejo are not abundant. These are situated in a specific place, making it possible to delimit thanks to on-site field surveys. The surface area at this location is 0.000816 km².



Figure 25 : The probable extent of seagrass in Pedra Badejo Laguna, based on Field surveys in June 2022. Area of probable seagrass: 0.000816 km².

1.4.5. Guinea Bissau

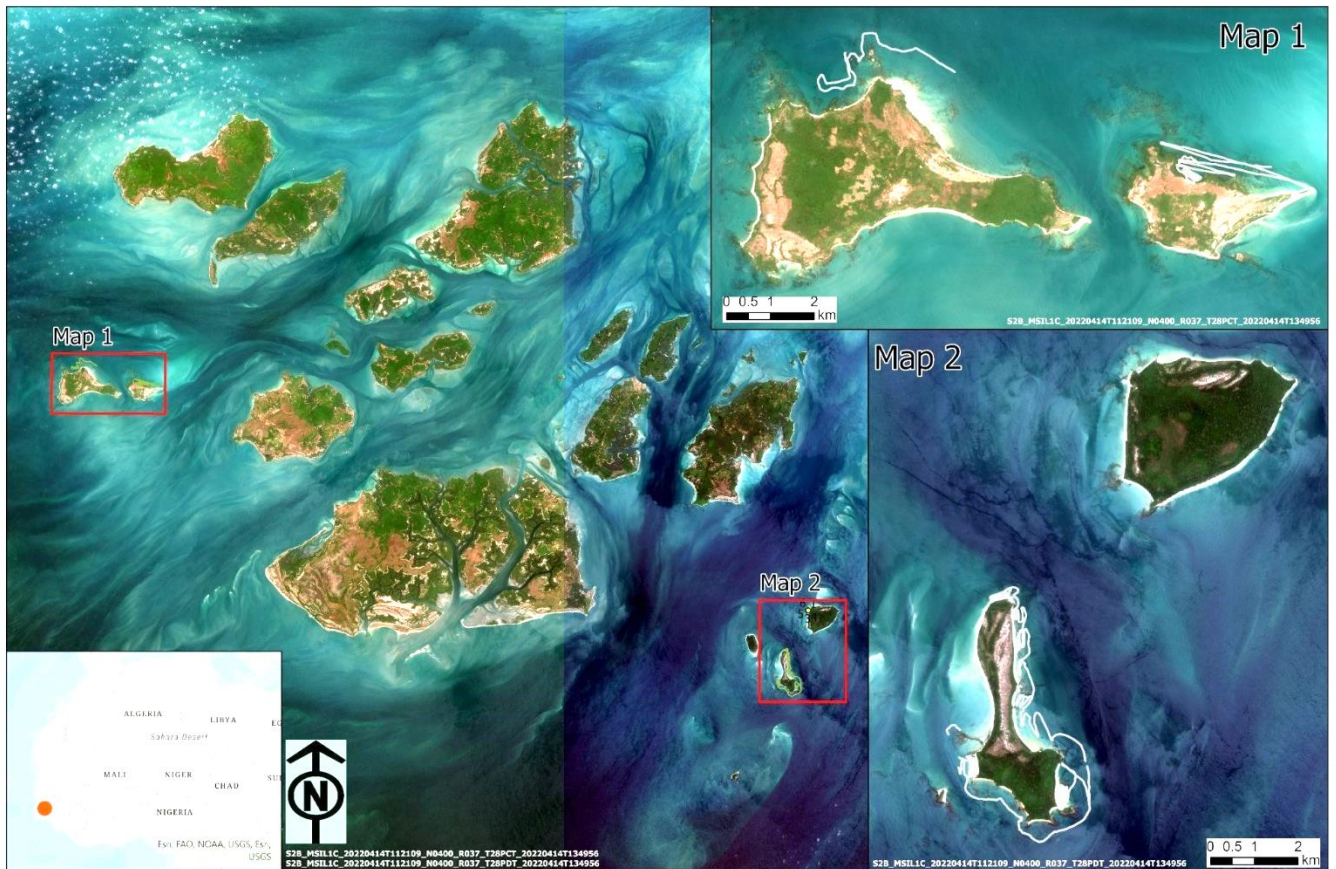


Figure 26 : Sentinel-2 imagery of the main Guinea Bissau seagrass areas, with inset boxes showing the locations of the sonar surveys (white lines)

An estimate of the seagrass areal extent in Guinea Bissau, based on satellite imagery is unfortunately not possible because of various difficulties, notably: (i) with the species of seagrass growing in this region does not tend to form relatively extensive 'meadows', instead, it tends to form occasional small clusters of seagrass, making it difficult to detect even with 3m-pixel PlanetScope imagery; and (ii) the relatively frequent high levels of turbidity in this delta setting. Instead, we have had to rely on sonar surveys, verified by scuba sampling, to map the extent of seagrass around the Guinea Bissau coast (See next Sub-section "Mapping in Guinea-Bissau").

1.4.6. Results Summary

The definite/probable areas of seagrass, mapped via satellite remote sensing, in each area are:

Senegal

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Dakar, Ngor bay: | 0.044 km ² |
| Joal (2021/2022): | 25.5 km ² |
| Delta du Saloum (N) Palmarin: | 25 km ² |
| Delta du Saloum (centre) Sangomar | 5.6 km ² |
| Delta du Saloum (S): Bertenty | 11.2 km ² |

Total Senegal (2022 survey areas): 67.344 km²

Comparison with earlier surveys

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Joal (2021/2022 survey): | 25.5 km ² |
| Joal (2014, 500m grid): | 37.5 km ² |
| Delta du Saloum (2022): | >41.8 km ² – Nb. the Centre and S areas were only partially mapped by PlanetScope imagery |
| Delta du Saloum (2011): | 103.1 km ² |

Cape Verde

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Praia bay: | 0.14 km ² |
| Pedra Badejo: | 0.000816 km ² |
| <u>Total Cape Verde</u> | <u>0.140816 km²</u> |

1.5. Discussion

1.5.1. Consideration of changes in the extent of seagrass over time

The results of the seagrass mapping using PlanetScope are in general agreement with the mapping results of earlier studies, ie. they do not indicate any major or catastrophic loss of seagrass habitats in the studied locations.

The difference between the Joal area of seagrass, between the ca. 37.5 km² of the 2013 boat-based survey and the 25.5 km² from the 2020 PlanetScope imagery is most likely due to the much coarser sampling grid in the 2013 survey (500m x 500m grid) *versus* the 3m x 3m pixels of the satellite imagery – the area of Joal seagrass appears to be relatively unchanged.

The 2011 sketch-map of seagrass extents was only based on the estimated seagrass extents reported by local fisher folk. There is thus a remarkably close agreement between the seagrass extent of the Palmarin area from the 2011 sketch-map (25.9 km²) and the 2022 PlanetScope imagery (25 km²). Although there are smaller areas of seagrass mapped by PlanetScope, relative to the areas mapped in the 2011 sketch-map, in the Central (Sangomar lagoon) and Southern (Betenty) areas of the Delta du Saloum, the PlanetScope-based mapping only partially covered those areas. Therefore, the extent of the Delta du Saloum seagrass between 2011 and 2022 appears to be relatively unchanged.

1.5.2. Recommendations

- As highlighted by Pottier et al. (2018, 2021), the use of satellite remote sensing to detect seagrass should be designed to use imagery that is as close possible to the lowest local tides. Detection of seagrass via their photosynthesizing leaves is then relatively straight-forward. Although that will limit the seagrass identified to areas of species that can survive in the intertidal zone, that approach will enable the monitoring of seagrass extents over time, potentially for many decades, via archive Landsat imagery.
- The processing of archive Landsat imagery using Google Earth Engine and machine learning, to map the maximum extent of the Guinea Bissau intertidal zone, indicates that can be a very effective approach for mapping large areas in tidal settings. Follow-on research should move on to use machine learning to identify areas of seagrass in the intertidal zone, so that changes in the extent of seagrass can be measured for the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, 2010s and 2020s.
- It is recommended that a series of boat-based sonar surveys, with occasional grab-samples to identify specific species of seagrass and substrate types, should be carried in areas that the PlanetScope imagery indicates have possible seagrass, for verification of the predicted seagrass areas and for further improvement of the image processing methodologies.

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2. Guinea Bissau

Nuria Bachiller-Jareno¹

¹ School of Geography University of Portsmouth (UK)

2.1. Methodology

2.1.1. Area of Study

The areas of study are part of the Bijagos archipelago, off the coast of Guinea-Bissau in the Atlantic Ocean (Figure 27). This extensive group of islands was formed from the ancient delta of the Geba and Grande de Buba rivers and spans an area of 12,958 km² (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bissagos_Islands, checked on 01/10/2022). Due to the high diversity of ecosystems, the archipelago was declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 1996.

2.1.2. Preparation

In preparation for the mission, preliminary PlanetScope satellite images of the Bijagos archipelago were visually analysed to identify target areas to deploy the sonar equipment. However, the areas interpreted as underwater vegetation based on similar studies along the African west coast corresponded to lateritic outcrops (Geological map of Guinea-Bissau, published on The Global Groundwater Information System portal <https://ggis.un-igrac.org/>, url: <https://ggis.un-igrac.org/maps/new?layer=httpssiglnegptserverservicescartaguinemapserverserverwmserver:3&view=True>, checked on 08/08/2022). Thus, suitable areas for sonar survey were suggested by the marine biologists and team leads in the expedition. Usually, the sonar team would go after the scuba team had confirmed the presence of seagrass in a coastal stretch.

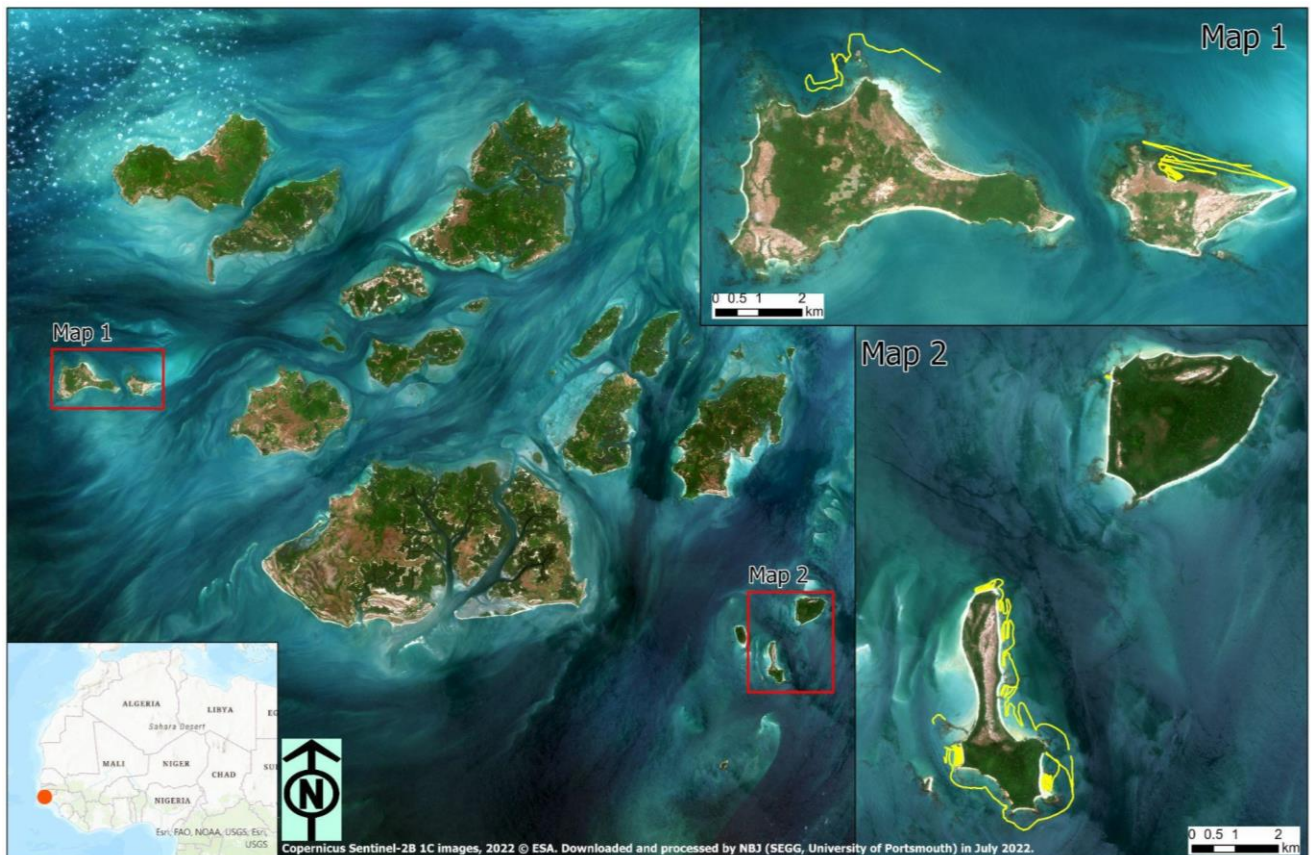


Figure 27: The Bijagos archipelago in Guinea-Bissau. The two insets identify the areas of study: (Map 1) Unhocomo and Unhocomozinho islands (Map 2) Joao Vieira and Meio islands (Parque Nacional Marinho de João

Vieira-Poilão). The sonar transects are outlined as yellow lines in Maps 1 and 2. The background mapping is made of RGB composite after atmospheric correction (The Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS) ACOLITE, version 20210802.0, <https://odnature.naturalsciences.be/remsem/software-and-data/acolite>) of Sentinel-2B 1C images captured on 14 April 2022.

2.1.3. Echo-sounder Sonar Data

Single-beam sounders use the time it takes a sound pulse to travel to the seabed and return back to the transducer to calculate underwater depth. Additionally, the backscatter or return signal of the sound pulse can also be analysed to provide information of the nature of the seafloor (e.g. variations in hardness or texture) (Penrose et al., 2005; Yamasaki et al., 2017; ReefMaster reference manual, ReefMaster Software Ltd). The return signal is made of two echoes. Each echo is generated by a different interaction with the seafloor therefore carries different information about the seafloor (Penrose et al., 2005). The first echo is the tail of the first return (Peak SV) as reflected off the seafloor; it is produced by scattering. The second echo is the full second return from the seafloor after reflecting back from the sea surface; it is produced by reflection. These echoes are used to extract E1 and E2 indices.

The E1 index is a measure of the roughness of the seafloor and the E2 index is a measure of the hardness of the seafloor (Lawrence & Bates, 2001; Yamasaki et al., 2017). According to Penrose et al. (2005), a plot of E1 versus E2 can be used to classify different types of seabed materials.

E1 and E2 values are relative values within each sonar echogram therefore they are not comparable across surveys (Yamasaki et al., 2017).

2.1.4. Equipment and Data Collection

Hydroacoustic sampling was completed with a Lowrance Gen 2 HDS-5 single-beam echosounder (transducer model HST-WSBL, with a built-in temp sensor), operating at sound frequency of 200 kHz with a beam angle of 22° (Lowrance®, <https://www.lowrance.com/>). The combination of beam angle and depth determines the size of the acoustic footprint of each pulse and thus the local sample area. The sonar control unit has an internal GPS antenna which records the position every second and averages the acoustic data (10 to 20 pulses s⁻¹) recorded between two consecutive location points (Navico Inc. BioBase-Automate Mapping. User Reference Guide 2014; Navico Inc.: Egersund, Norway, 2014). Table 4 lists the settings for all sonar transects.

Table 4 : Lowrance Gen 2 HDS-5 survey settings

| Option | Setting |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Fishing Mode | Shallow water |
| Ping Rate | Max |
| Range | 10 (8 in shallow water) |
| Frequency | 200 kHz |
| WAAS | Enable |
| Datum | WGS84 |
| Time | UTC date (global) |

To record the data, the transducer was mounted at the transom of the boat to approximately 15 cm below the sea surface, with the transducer face parallel to the ground (or sea surface). The boat was driven over a number of transects across pre-selected areas of interest, usually starting in the interior of the bay and slowly going out until the depths measured were well below 2 m (according to the experts seagrass in the areas wasn't found at depths beyond 2 m due to the high turbidity). The survey boat speed was around 6-7 km/h; however, variation in speeds from transect to transect was unavoidable due to different flow conditions and the presence of rock outcrop along the way (e.g. speeds around the eastern side of Meio island were around 4 km/h).

2.1.5. Sonar Data Capture and pre-processing

Nine hydrographic surveys were performed in the Bijagos archipelago (Guinea-Bissau) between 31 July and 03 August, 2022. A total of 61.76 km of acoustic data was gathered around the islands of Unhocomo, Unhocomozinho, Meio and Joao Vieira (Figure 27). A list of file name, time of collection as well as elapsed time and distance for each transect is summarised in the table in Annexe I.

The Lowrance device logs the acoustic information in binary files (i.e. not human readable files that required specific software/hardware to read them), with extension *.sl2. Lowrance log files gathered in other areas surveyed during the length of the project were uploaded to BioBase cloud-based system (<https://www.biobasemaps.com/>) to produce bathymetry and vegetation maps. However, BioBase is not authorised to process sonar data from Guinea-Bissau exclusive economic zone (EEZ) thus, the sonar tracks from Bijagos archipelago were imported to ReefMaster Pro version 2.0, a Windows desktop application with out of the box functionality to process and export sonar data (<https://reefmaster.com.au/>).

ReefMaster (RM) corrected each track for transducer depth, which was approximately 0.15 m for all tracks. RM can adjust the measured depths to the water level according to the state of tide; however, no tide adjustments were applied to the Bijagos's tracks due to the lack of tidal time series data for the area. Other corrections applied included the removal of points with 0 depth and duplicate points.

Once corrected, bathymetry major contours at 0.50 (1 m for track Sonar0000) and 0.125 m (minor) were generated for each sonar track and exported as shapefiles. As the measured depths were not adjusted for tidal heights fluctuation, the bathymetric contours are not comparable across sites. However, they provide valuable information on the morphology of the seafloor or the surveyed areas. RM's Bottom Composition module has algorithms to estimate the roughness and hardness indices, E1 and E2 respectively, from the acoustic signal. The values of E1 and E2 were exported into a "*.csv" file including also latitude, longitude, depth (m) and Peak SV (peak reflection strength in the first echo), for each track.

2.1.6. Visual analysis of echograms

The sonar echograms were visually analysed to identify areas with seagrass. Examples of echograms showing seagrass from the BioBase blog and specialist papers were used as reference to 'train the eye' as no ground truthing of the sonar data was made during the fieldwork campaign. The coordinates of segments with seagrass were captured into a point feature dataset.

2.1.7. Field Observations

Field data was collected by the associated team of marine biologists who carried out GPS-located scuba surveys of the seafloor during field campaigns in 2021 and 2022. The data gathered during these surveys recorded occurrences or absences of *Halodule wrightii* which are mapped as 'Seagrass' and 'No seagrass' respectively in Figures 28 and 29.

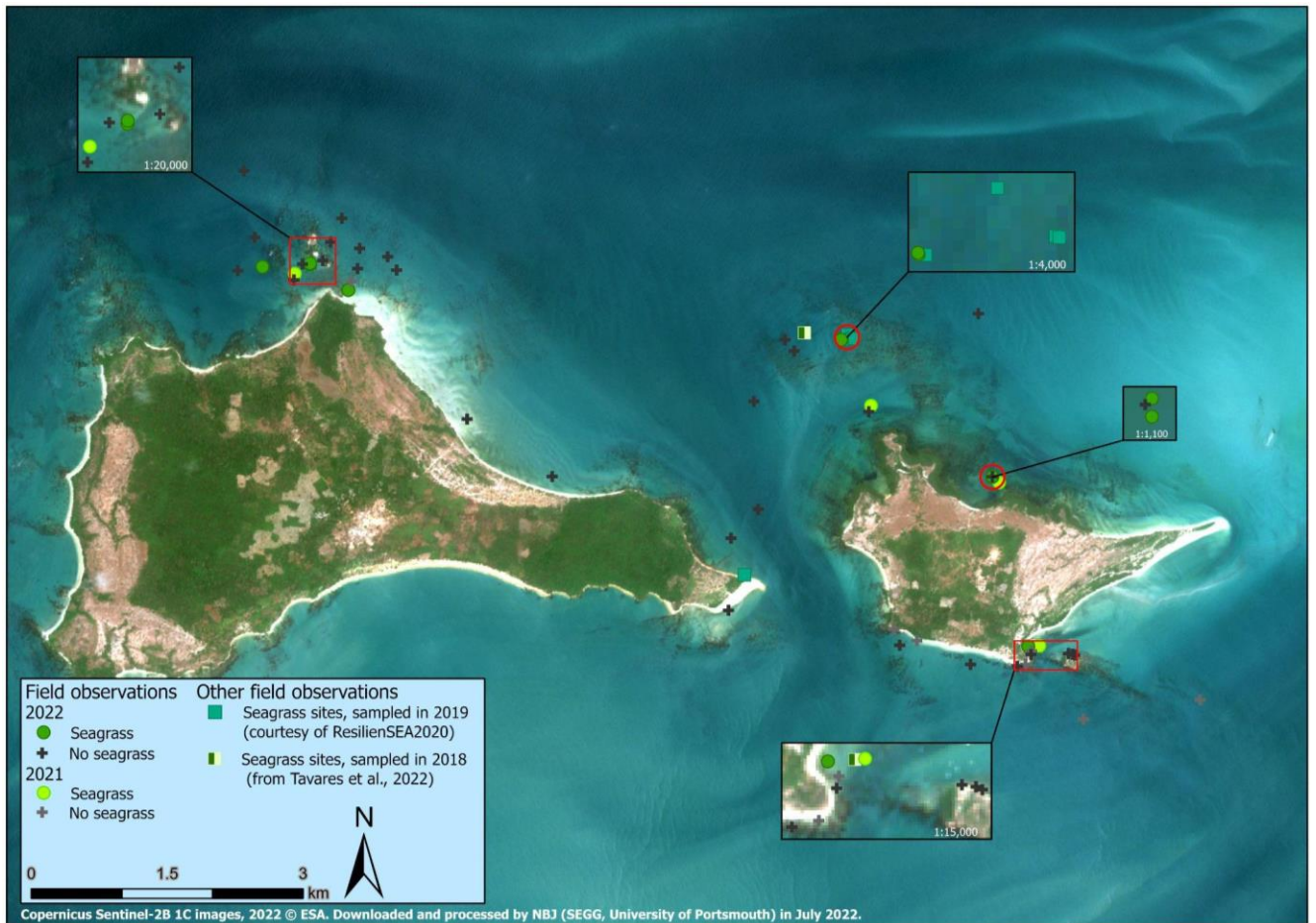


Figure 28 : Location of field observations around the Unhocomoe and Unhocomozinho islands, in the western part of the Bijagos archipelago. These observations were gathered by the marine biologists during this field campaigns in 2021 and 2022.

In addition to the locations visited during 2021 and 2022, other scuba sampling locations have been added to the field dataset to be used in this analysis. They total seven locations around the Unhocomoe and Unhocomozinho islands, five of them gathered by marine biologists working in the Resiliensea project in November 2019. The other two have been published recently by Tavares et al. (2022). These locations are mapped in Figure 28 as other field observations.

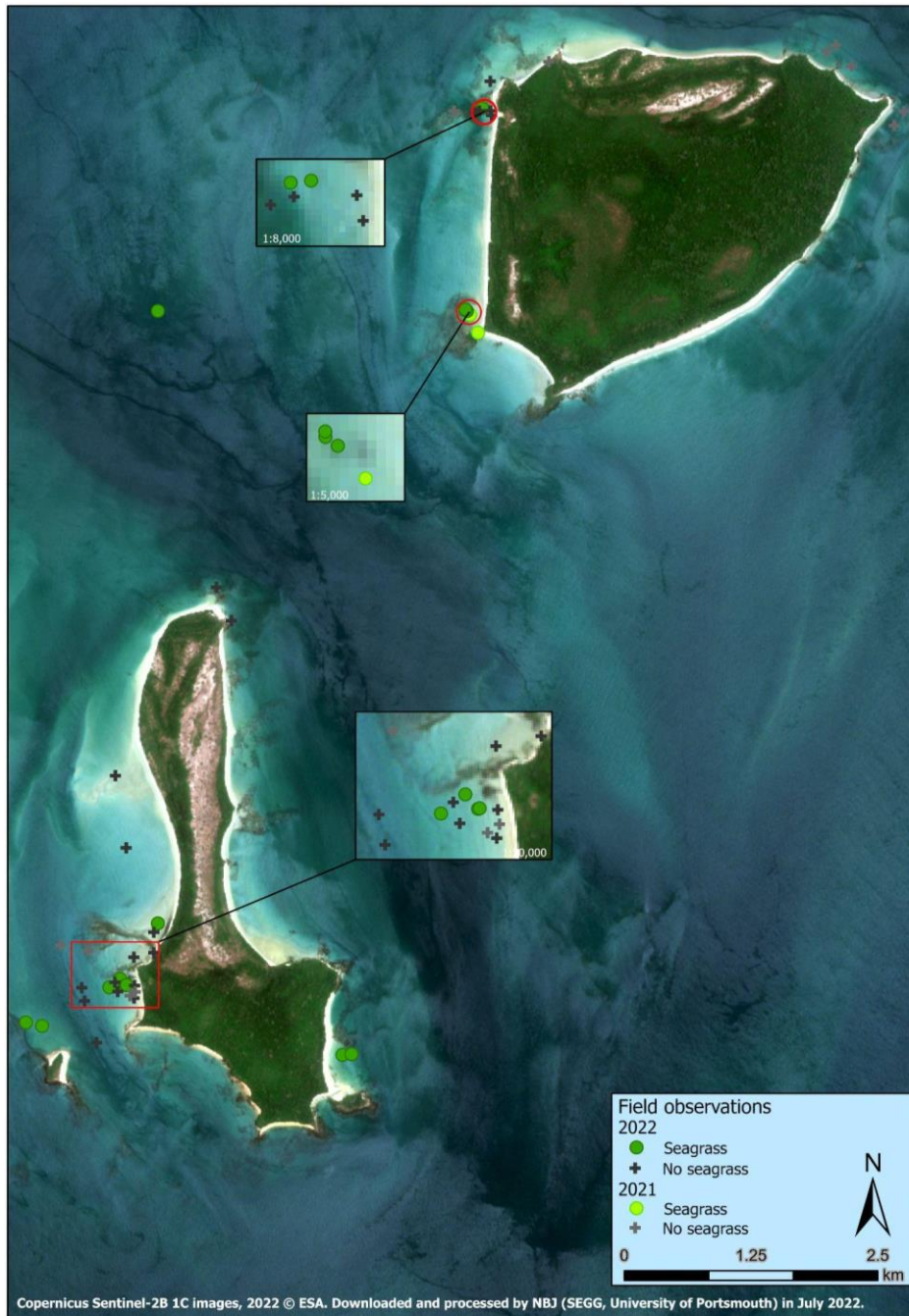


Figure 29 : Location of field observations around the Joao Vieira and Meio islands, in the southeastern part of the Bijagos archipelago. These observations were gathered by the marine biologists during this field campaigns in 2021 and 2022.

2.1.8. Data Processing

The sonar data and bathymetry contours exported from RM as well as the field observations were loaded in ArcGIS Pro 3.0 (ESRI 2022, <https://www.esri.com/>) for integration and visualisation purposes.

There are examples in the literature where comparative analysis of E1 and E2 indices have been used to classify the seabed types (Chivers et al., 1990; Kloser et al., 2001; Lawrence and Bates, 2001; Collier and Brown, 2005; Penrose et al., 2005; Yamasaki et al., 2017). Comparative analysis of E1 and E2 indices from the sonar data gathered in the Bijagos archipelago showed no separability of acoustic classes that could help differentiate seagrass from other seabed types. It shows, however, a strong correlation between both indices.

Generally speaking, seagrass grows in soft bottoms (<https://www.plslwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/The-Biobase-Report.pdf>) where the signal is absorbed and no second return is observed (Figure 30). Clear examples of this were found in sonar stretches visually identified as having seagrass. This makes sense since the characteristics of the seagrass habitats observed in Bijagos, rather small and sparsely distributed shots/plants that left small patches of the ground exposed. Thus, the hardness indice, E2, was used to map the sonar points with possible occurrences of seagrass that had been extracted through visual interpretation of the echograms. The mean E2 value of samples of at least 80 consecutive sonar points each sonar track was used as threshold to classify all locations of probable occurrence of seagrass; i.e. locations with E2 values below the threshold were classified as seagrass. The threshold values were different for each track.

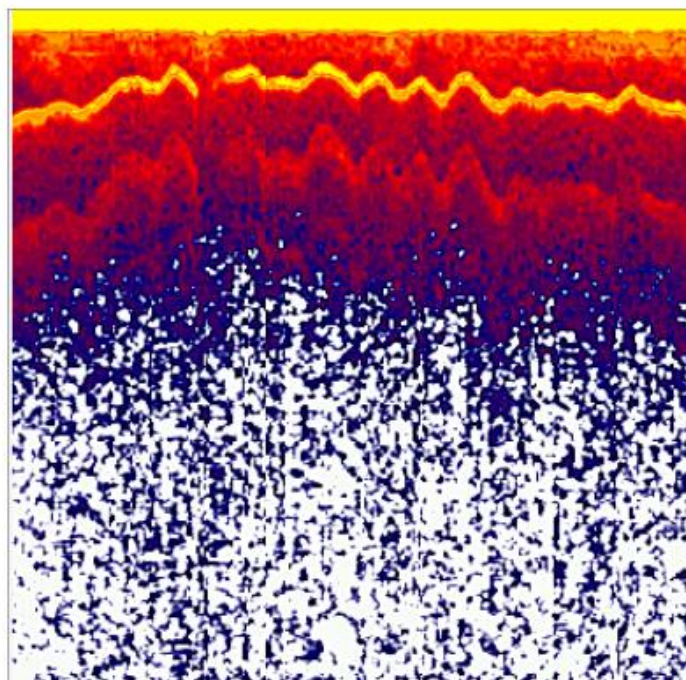


Figure 30 : Stretch of sonar track with very weak second return.

2.2. Results

The characteristics of seagrass habitats in the Bijagos region (small patches, submetric at times, of sparse shots of small size) (Figure 31) and the high ocean turbidity, made seagrass detection by satellite remote sensing highly challenging. Therefore, the sonar data combined with scuba sampling (i.e. field observations), were used to map seagrass occurrence and extent in Guinea-Bissau coast.



Figure 31 : *Halodule wrightii*, North western coast Joao Vieira (photo taken by the author on 3th of August @ 7:55 am, local time).

Because of the lack of ground-truthing of the sonar survey and the little overlap of the field observations with the sonar tracks, the outlined areas of seagrass are mapped as 'probable' occurrence. As shown in Figures 32-36 their boundaries were drawn (i.e. digitised in ArcGIS Pro 3.0) around areas with high density, close proximity, of sonar points classified as seagrass. The morphology of the seabed (from the captured bathymetry) and presence of rock outcrops guided the outlining of these areas.

The stretches of sonar tracks outside the polygons labelled as 'probable' occurrence (i.e. surveyed areas with low density of sonar points, usually in deeper waters) should also be considered as areas of 'probable' occurrence. These areas or corridors have been defined as a 2 m buffer zone around the track points.

Only the GPS-locations where seagrass occurrence was verified by scuba sampling are definite seagrass locations. However, further areas mapped as 'possible' seagrass occurrence were outlined around small clusters of scuba sampling locations where seagrass was found (Figures 28 and 29). These are shown in figures 32-36. The certainty in the outline of these areas is not as high as the certainty for areas defined by the sonar data due to the random distribution of those and their spread; especially taking into account that *Halodule wrightii* grows in small patches of sparse plant distribution. The distribution of field observations in Figures 28 and 29 show how locations with seagrass and locations with no seagrass are closely mixed up within small areas.

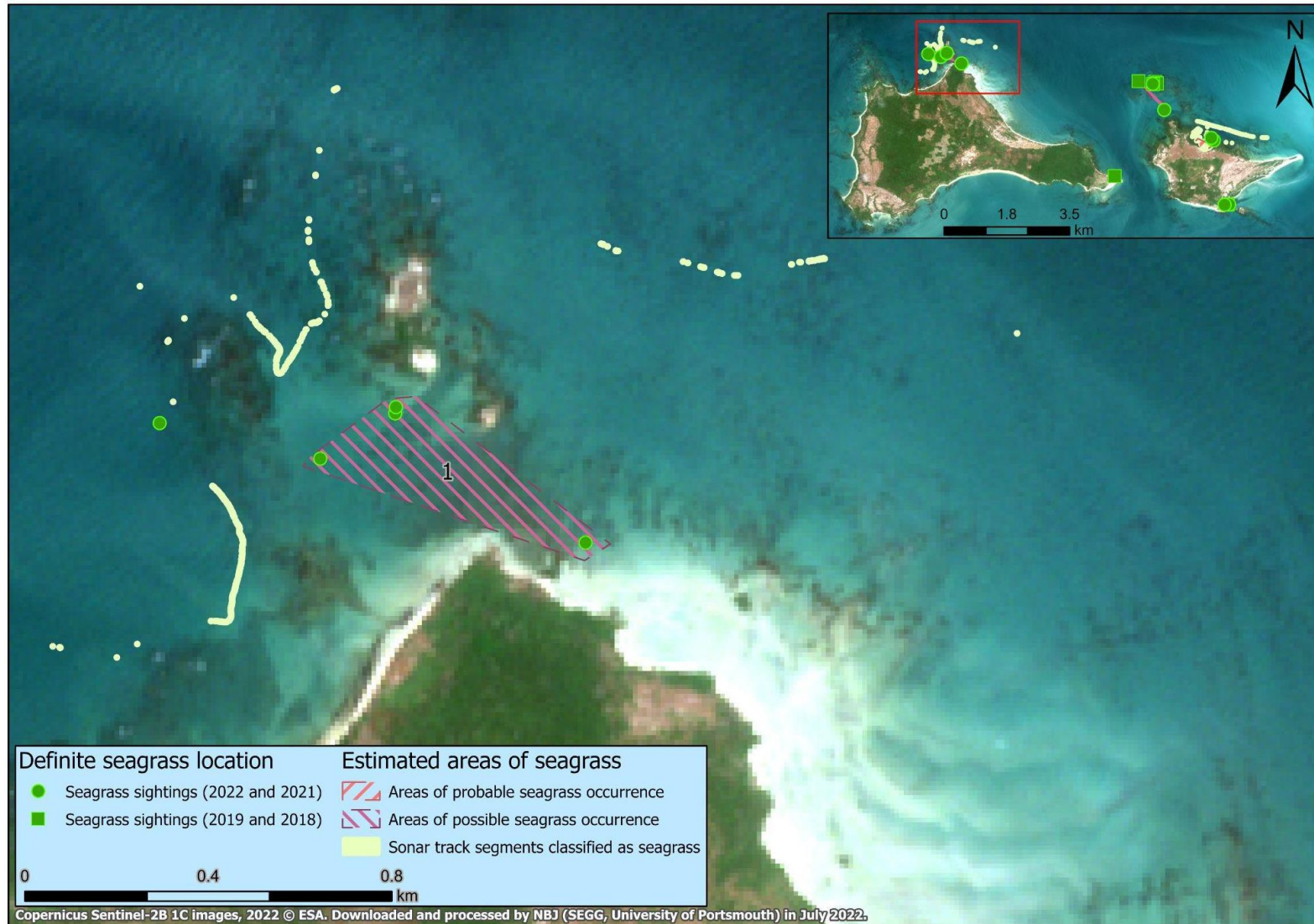


Figure 32 : Estimated areas of seagrass occurrences in the northern coast of Unhocomo island. The maps also include all field locations with seagrass as definite seagrass locations.

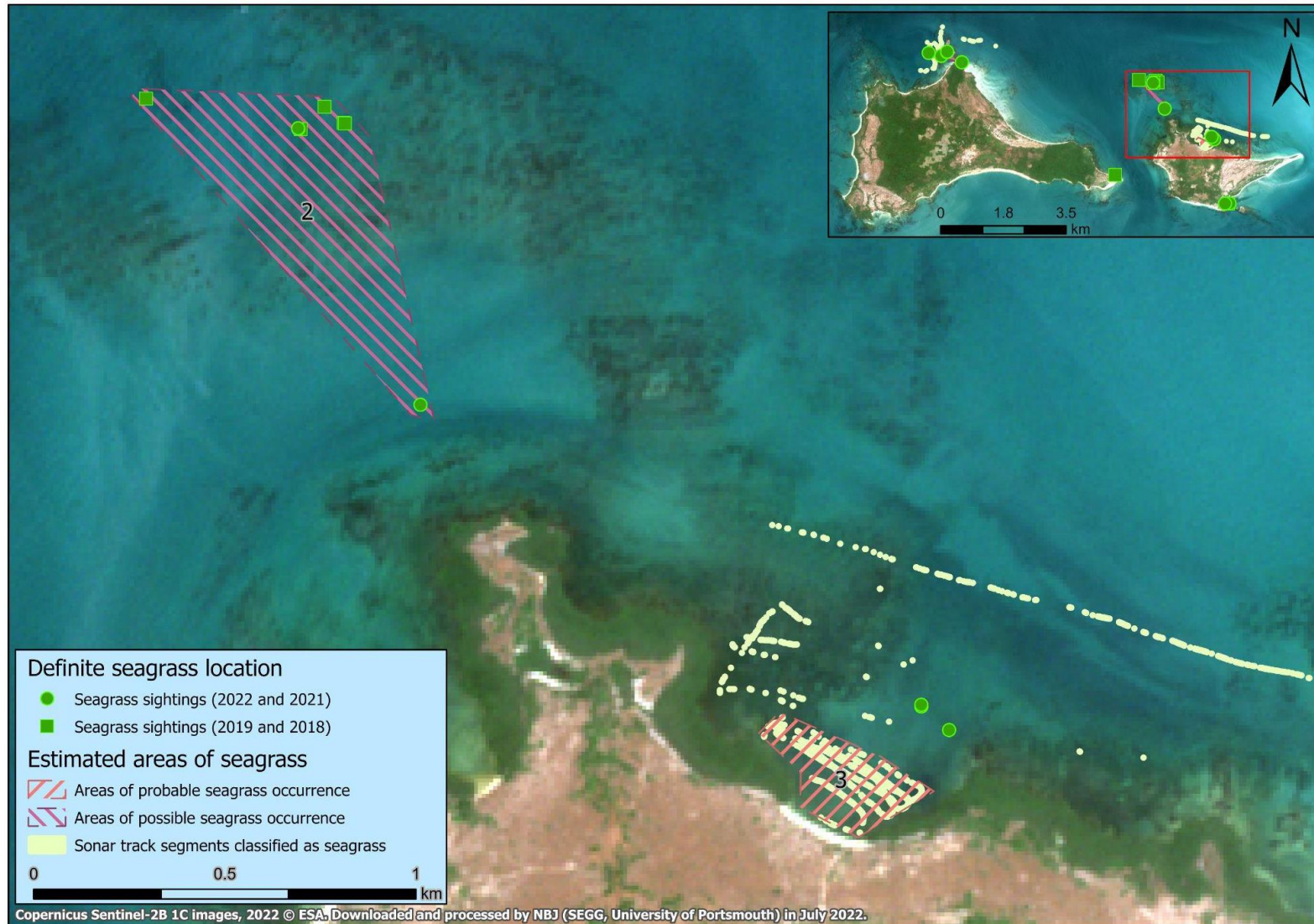


Figure 33 : Estimated areas of seagrass occurrences in the northern coast of Unhocomozinho island. The maps also include all field locations with seagrass as definite seagrass locations.



Figure 34 : Estimated areas of seagrass occurrences in the western coast of Joao Vieira island. The maps also include all field locations with seagrass as definite seagrass locations.



Figure 35 : Estimated areas of seagrass occurrences in the north eastern coast of Meio island. The maps also include all field locations with seagrass as definite seagrass locations.

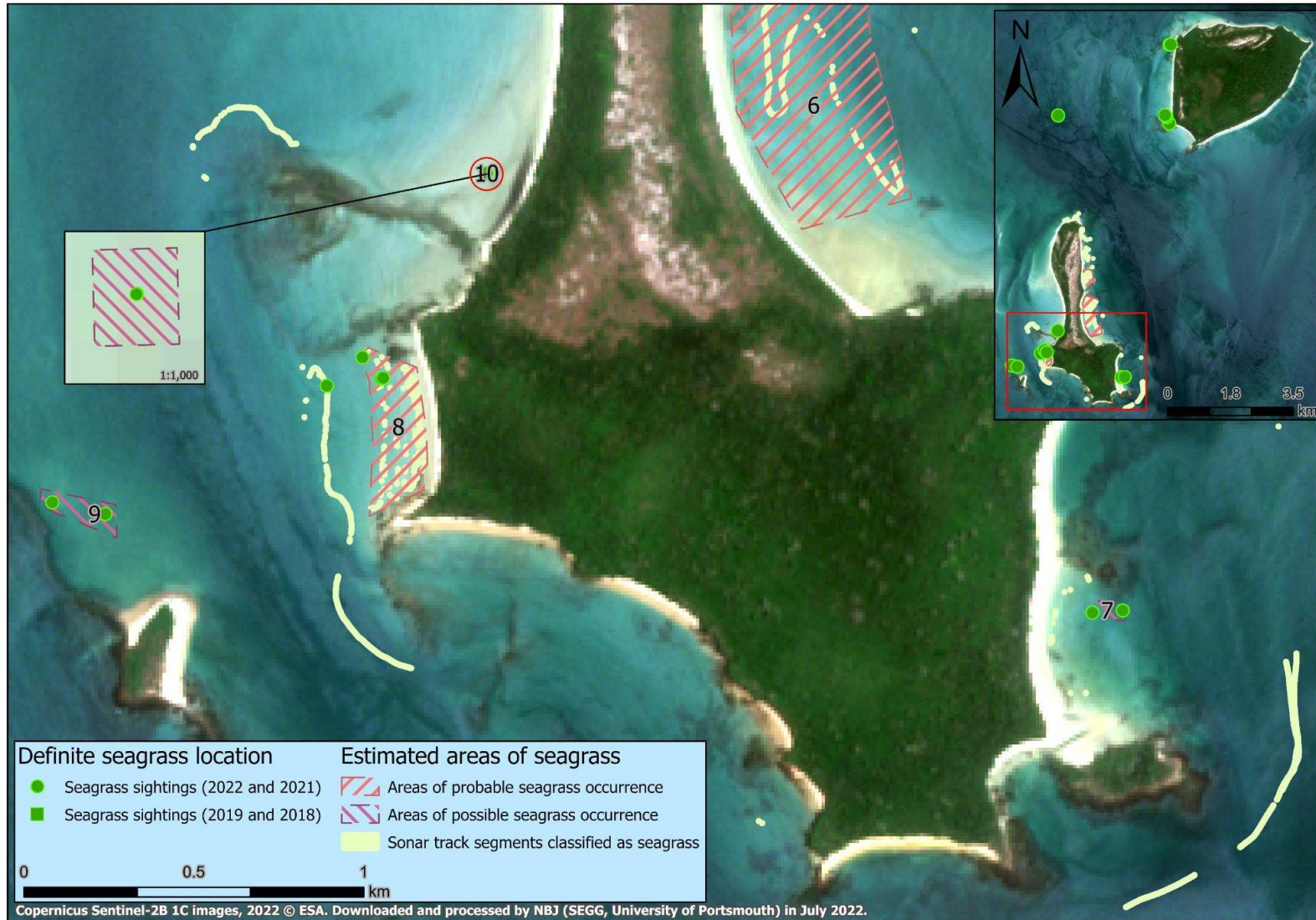


Figure 36 : Estimated areas of seagrass occurrences in the south eastern and south western coasts of Meio island. The maps also include all field locations with seagrass as definite seagrass locations.

The cumulated surface area of seagrass in Guinea Bissau is estimated to be 1.14 km². Table 5 summarises the total area of seagrass estimated for the Bijagos archipelago. Column *Area ID* holds the polygon labels shown in Figures 32-36. The table also includes the area of sonar transects, areas or corridors of 'possible' occurrence of seagrass.

Table 5 : Total estimated areas of seagrass in Bijagos archipelago, 2022 field campaign

| Location | Area (km ²) | Confidence | Source | Area ID |
|---------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Unhocomo | 0.09346738 | Possible | Arbitrary Interpolation | 1 |
| Unhocomozinho | 0.274458931 | Possible | Arbitrary Interpolation | 2 |
| Unhocomozinho | 0.068660265 | Probable | Arbitrary Interpolation | 3 |
| Unhocomozinho | 0.006818286 | Possible | Arbitrary Interpolation | 4 |
| Meio | 0.117923289 | Probable | Arbitrary Interpolation | 5 |
| Meio | 0.434271189 | Probable | Arbitrary Interpolation | 6 |
| Meio | 0.005254323 | Possible | Arbitrary Interpolation | 7 |
| Meio | 0.067702584 | Probable | Arbitrary Interpolation | 8 |
| Meio | 0.016536078 | Possible | Arbitrary Interpolation | 9 |
| Meio | 0.000387851 | Possible | Arbitrary Interpolation | 10 |
| Joao Vieira | 0.005702945 | Probable | Arbitrary Interpolation | 11 |
| Joao Vieira | 0.024335271 | Possible | Arbitrary Interpolation | 12 |
| Unhocomo | 0.003308537 | Probable | Sonar Data | n/a |
| Unhocomozinho | 0.005502004 | Probable | Sonar Data | n/a |
| Meio | 0.00983752 | Probable | Sonar Data | n/a |
| Meio | 0.00663418 | Probable | Sonar Data | n/a |
| Meio | 0.001201473 | Probable | Sonar Data | n/a |
| Meio | 0.001940995 | Probable | Sonar Data | n/a |
| Meio | 0.000497803 | Probable | Sonar Data | n/a |
| TOTAL: | | | | <u>1.14 km²</u> |

2.3. Recommendations

Because of the distribution of *Halodule wrighti* in areas around the surveyed areas in the Bijagos archipelago (as small patches of sparsely distributed shots), position accuracy and spatial resolution are of paramount importance. It is therefore recommended the use of sub-metric GPS trackers, both in field sampling and remote sensing methods (e.g. sonar), and drone mapping.

Acoustic methods are very efficient techniques for underwater mapping and monitoring. While the potential of sonar data to map seagrass has been realised during the 2022 field campaign, it has also become apparent that acoustic data is complex to process and interpret; as it is the case with other remote sensing techniques, requires ground-truth data for results verification. Thus, the need for further familiarisation with acoustic methods as well as with the data they generate to reduce dependency on out of the box tools that don't offer the flexibility of free manipulation.

All survey techniques have limitations therefore it is recommended to combine various survey techniques and integrate the data outputs. Therefore, a careful planning of the field campaign to coordinate survey activities is highly recommended. High position accuracy will ensure the spatial overlapping of the data gathered through different techniques.

Mapping of biophysical and environmental properties (e.g. oxygen bubbles, water temperature, salinity, turbidity, etc, and their change over time when possible) at the appropriate scale would help

identify areas of possible occurrence for further exploration. Medium to high resolution satellite products (such as Sentinel 2 or PlanetScope) are suitable options for this preliminary analysis. However, it is important to apply appropriate corrections (atmospheric, glare corrections) for underwater detection as well as suitable classification algorithms. In that regard it is recommended the development and implementation of image processing workflows that implement these requirements.

A final recommendation includes extending the scope of the study of seagrass to the mapping of seagrass rhizomes. Given seagrass root systems' pivotal role in the storage of atmosphere CO₂, mapping would enable the management and conservation of these ecosystem services they provide. Investigating the potential of acoustic data to map the extent of seagrass rhizomes seems a small effort compared to the enormous benefit of their outcome.

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SECTION 2 – FISH PROVISIONING ECOSYSTEM SERVICES DELIVERED BY SEAGRASS HABITATS IN SENEGAL, GUINEA-BISSAU, AND CABO VERDE

Karim Erzini¹, Abdou Aziz Ndiaye², Aissa Regalla de Barros³, Amadeu Mendes Almeida⁴, António Araujo¹, Elisabeth Mayé Diouf⁵, Emanuel Dias³, Filipe Tobana Nhanquê⁴, Iça Barri⁵, Rui Freitas⁶, Ester Serrão¹

¹Centro de Ciências do Mar (CCMAR), Universidade do Algarve, Campus de Gambelas, 8005-139 Faro, Portugal

²Direction des aires marines communautaires protégées/ Ministère de l'environnement du développement durable et de la transition écologique, Senegal

³Coord. Dept. Monitoria e Conservação da Biodiversidade, Instituto da Biodiversidade e das Áreas Protegidas (IBAP), República da Guiné-Bissau

⁴ Centro de Investigação Pesqueira Aplicada (CIPA), Av. Amílcar Cabral, C.P. 102 Bissau, República da Guiné-Bissau

⁵ Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, Senegal

⁶ ISECMAR-UTA, CP 163 Mindelo, São Vicente, Cabo Verde

1. Abstract

The monetary value of fish provisioning services of seagrass habitats of Senegal and Guiné-Bissau was estimated based on fish densities (n/m^2), life history parameters, biomass modelling, Senegal fish market prices, and the estimated total area of seagrass habitat in each country. The lifetime economic value of commercial fish species using the estimated 67.3 km² of coastal seagrass habitat in Senegal ranged from €2,600,000 in 2018 to €8,100,000 in 2019, with demersal species, namely *Pomadasys jubelini*, *Epinephelus aeneus*, *Diplodus cervinus* and *Diplodus bellottii*, and some pelagic species such as *Sardinella maderensis*, *Mugil curema* and *Sphyraena guachancho* accounting for most of the economic value. For the 1.14 km² of seagrass habitat in Guiné-Bissau, the lifetime economic value of 10 commercial species was estimated to be €94,000, with *Pomadasys jubelini* by far the most valuable species. In the very small seagrass habitat (0.14 km²), in Cabo Verde it was not possible to estimate densities of fish and therefore only the diversity associated with the seagrass was recorded. Taking into consideration the differences in market prices of fish in other studies in Portugal, Spain, Australia and the U.S.A. that used similar methodologies to evaluate fish provisioning services, the estimated values for Senegal and Guinea-Bissau are comparable and highlight the important contribution of seagrass habitats to fish provisioning through their role as nurseries and in terms of food production as habitat for exploitable life history stages.

2. Keywords

Seagrass, fish provisioning, ecosystem services, Senegal, Cabo Verde, Bijagós, Guiné-Bissau

3. Introduction

Seagrass habitats provide shelter from predators and rich feeding grounds (periphyton and invertebrates) for juveniles of many fish species, contributing to fish provisioning through their role as nurseries or in terms of food production as habitat for exploitable life history stages (Almeida et al., 2008; Saenger et al., 2012; Baker et al., 2015; Dewsbury et al., 2016; Costanza et al., 2017; Nordlund et al., 2018; Unsworth et al., 2019). The most important characteristics of fish nurseries in coastal areas are habitat complexity and structure, with seagrass ranked first in importance compared to mangrove forests, saltmarsh and reed beds in a global review of estuaries (Whitfield, 2017). Nursery value of different coastal habitats has been measured and compared using density, growth, condition factor, feeding, survival and production per unit area of juveniles as proxies of habitat quality, under the assumption that increased production and recruitment to adult populations is associated with greater density, survival, condition and growth in nurseries (Franco et al., 2010; Janes et al., 2020).

Nursery function and habitat for exploitable life history stages can be considered ecosystem services when they can be linked to human benefits such as enhanced fish yield (Liquete et al., 2016). In this context, the value of fisheries enhancement of seagrass habitat has been quantified using different approaches. Blandon and zu Ermgassen (2014a,b) estimated the value of seagrass and unvegetated habitats using data for 12 species from 11 studies on juvenile fishes from southern Australia. They used species-specific life history parameters and market prices to calculate the lifetime cohort biomass and the corresponding economic value in the absence of fishing. The estimated value of seagrass nurseries was AUD 31,650 per hectare and per year (approximately EUR 19,840/ha/y). Using the same approach, Jänes et al. (2020) compared seagrass, mangrove and tidal marsh habitats with unvegetated habitat in Australia and reported that seagrass habitats, mangroves and tidal marshes produced 55,000, 19,000 and 1,700 more fish per hectare, respectively. Erzini et al. (2022) modified the methodology of Blandon and zu Ermgassen (2014a,b) by estimating fish provisioning services for single cohorts of juveniles from the Ria Formosa lagoon (Portugal) in vegetated and unvegetated sub-tidal habitats. For single cohorts of the 12 most important commercial species and different natural mortality scenarios, the economic value of vegetated sub-tidal habitat ranged from EUR 22,028 per hectare (low natural mortality) to EUR 10,700 per hectare (high natural mortality).

Tuya et al. (2014) used fish abundance data to estimate the value of seagrass to Gran Canaria Island (NE Atlantic) inshore fisheries. They estimated that the value of approximately 700 ha of seagrass meadows to the inshore fisheries was EUR 606,239 per year, while the nursery value was EUR 95.75 per hectare and per year. Jackson et al. (2015) calculated the contribution of seagrass habitat provision service to the Mediterranean commercial fisheries landings value (CFV) and recreational fisheries value (RFV) using a seagrass residency index. They reported that seagrass contributed approximately EUR 77.7 million (CFV) and EUR 112.6 million (RFV), respectively 4% of CFV and 6% of RFV.

There have been few studies on seagrass fish provisioning services in West Africa. Trégarot et al. (2018) estimated the maximum potential yield of juveniles in the Banc d'Arguin (Mauritania) under the assumption that all juveniles became adults, as the sum of the product of species-specific abundance, maximum individual weight, and landing price. To minimize the overestimation of nursery services, they considered that survival from the juvenile to adult phase was 1% for all species. The minimum and maximum estimated seagrass (*Cymodocea nodosa* and *Zostera noltii*) fish nursery values were MRU 49,762,900 (approximately EUR 132,000) and MRU 57,925,120 (approximately EUR 154,000).

In this study, we estimated the fish provisioning services (potential lifetime biomass and economic value in the absence of fishing mortality) of seagrass habitats in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau (Bijágos

Islands) from purse seine (Senegal) and beach seine (Bijagos Islands) survey densities (n/m^2), size distributions, life history parameters, market prices and estimated seagrass area in the three countries. The methodology is based on Blandon and zu Ermgassen (2014a,b), Jänes et al. (2020), and Erzini et al. (2022). Underwater visual census surveys were used in Cabo Verde to study species diversity associated with seagrass habitat.

4. Materials and methods

In Senegal, a beam trawl 2.6 m wide and 0.45 m high at the mouth was used during a survey of potential seagrass habitats (May 2 to 12, 2022). However, sampling proved ineffective, given the patchy distribution of the seagrass meadows and catches were not sufficient for the purposes of the study. Therefore, data from purse seine surveys at 5 seagrass locations (Table 6) were used. The purse seine was 300 m long, with 50 mm mesh size wings and 14 mm cod-end. Sampling took place twice a year, in the cold and hot seasons, in 2017, 2018 and 2019. All fish were identified to the species level, measured (total length in cm) and weighed (g). To estimate densities (n/m^2), it was assumed that the purse seine was set in a circle with an estimated area of 7162 m^2 .

Table 6 : Purse seine sampling locations in Senegal.

| Location | Latitude | Longitude |
|----------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 | N14°09'31.1" | W16°51'40.0" |
| 2 | N14°10'20.7" | W16°52'24.5" |
| 3 | N14°07'56.9" | W16°50'56.5" |
| 4 | N14°06'50.9" | W16°47'56.9" |
| 5 | N14°07'50.8" | W16°48'05.3" |

In the Bijagos islands (Guinea-Bissau), an 18m, 14mm mesh size beach seine with a cod-end was used to sample in 6 locations on July 31, and August 1 and 3, 2022 (Figure 37). The beach seine was set at a 30 m distance, parallel to the shore, and hauled to the shore, gradually closing the wings so that both ends of the net reached the shore close together. Based on the Pythagorean Theorem, the swept area of the beach seine was 285 m^2 . As with the purse seine samples from Senegal, fish were identified to the species level, measured (total length, cm) and weighed (g).



Figure 37 : Beach seine samplings in Poilao, Guinea-Bissau (August 2022). Photo: N. Bachiller-Jareno

In Cabo Verde, it was not possible to use nets in the only site with seagrass (Praia da Gamboa, Santiago Island) because of rocks and coral on the bottom. Underwater visual census surveys (UVC) parallel to the shore were carried out from September 4 to 6, 2022. Species were identified and classified according to biogeographic distribution, trophic category, and commercial or non-commercial value.

The approach used to calculate the lifetime biomass and economic value of the commercial species was based on the methodologies of Blandon and zu Ermgassen (2014a,b), Jänes et al. (2020) and Erzini et al. (2022). Life history parameters were compiled for each commercial species: von Bertalanffy growth parameters (K , L_{∞} , t_0), maximum age (T_{max}), weight-length relationship parameters ($W = a L^b$), length at maturity (L_m), age at maturity (T_{mat}), and natural mortality (M). The von Bertalanffy equation ($L_t = L_{\infty}(1 - e^{-K(t-t_0)})$), was used to calculate the mean lengths at age from $t = 0$ to T_{max}

and to convert the mean total lengths of the sampled fishes to mean age: $t = t_0 - \left(\frac{1}{K} \ln \left(\frac{L_{\infty} - L_t}{L_{\infty}}\right)\right)$.

For ages less than L_m , the Lorenzen (2000) model was used to calculate the natural mortality rate: $M_t = M \times (L_m/L_t)$, while $M_t = M$ was used for all ages equal to or greater than L_m .

For each species, it was assumed that all the fish caught were of the calculated mean age and the evolution of the numbers over the lifespan was then calculated using $N_t = N_{t-1}S_{t-1}$, where $S_t = e^{-M_t}$. The numbers in each age class were multiplied by the corresponding mean weight-at-age from the species-specific weight-length relationship and summed to obtain the total lifetime biomass (TB) in the absence of fishing mortality: $TB = \sum_{t=r}^{t=tmatrix} N_t W_t$, where r is the youngest age class with a mean length closest to L_m . The total lifetime biomass of each species was divided by the area sampled to obtain the biomass per m^2 . This was then multiplied by the total estimated seagrass area to obtain the total biomass associated with the seagrass. For the three countries, these areas were 67,344,000 m^2 , 1,144,409 m^2 , and 140,816 m^2 respectively for Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde (See

Section 2 in this report: “Mapping of seagrass using remote sensing”). Finally, the monetary value was calculated by multiplying the total lifetime biomass (kg) by the Senegal market price in West African CFA franc and in Euros (1 € = 0.0015 CFA franc).

5. Results

The species caught in 2018 and 2019 with a purse seine in Senegal and with a beach seine in 2022 in Guinea-Bissau are given in Tables 7, 8 and 11 respectively, along with the life history parameters needed to calculate the lifetime biomass and the monetary value. In the case of Senegal, only commercial species are included in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7 : Parameters of commercial species used to estimate lifetime biomass and economic value of commercial species (Senegal, 2018). Except for mean size and mean age that were calculated from the samples, all parameters are from FishBase (www.fishbase.org). *: mean age could not be calculated (mean size > L_{∞}), **: weight-length parameters not available.

| Commercial fish species | Von Bertalanffy growth parameters | | | Mean size (cm) | Mean age (sample) | Length at maturity L_m (cm) | Age at maturity Tmat (y) | Maximum age Tmax (y) | Weight-length relationship | | Natural mortality M |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| | K | L_{∞} (cm) | t_0 | | | | | | a | b | |
| <i>Chelon dumerili</i> | 0.56 | 23.3 | -0.31 | 20.5 | 3.5 | 14.1 | 1.3 | 5 | 0.0156 | 3.034 | 1.10 |
| <i>Chloroscombrus chrysurus</i> | 0.20 | 29.6 | -0.84 | 17.5 | 3.6 | 18.0 | 1.1 | 5 | 0.0057 | 3.110 | 0.61 |
| <i>Coptodon guineensis</i> | 0.96 | 21.1 | -0.18 | 27.7 | * | 12.9 | 0.8 | 3 | 0.0160 | 2.899 | ** |
| <i>Cynoglossus senegalensis</i> | 0.10 | 82.1 | -1.32 | 31.0 | 3.4 | 43.8 | 6.3 | 29 | ** | ** | 0.19 |
| <i>Dicentrachus punctatus</i> | 0.16 | 40.0 | -0.98 | 15.7 | 2.1 | 22.9 | 4.3 | 18 | 0.0055 | 3.188 | 0.34 |
| <i>Diplodus bellottii</i> | 0.27 | 28.4 | -0.63 | 11.0 | 1.2 | 16.9 | 2.7 | 11 | 0.0093 | 3.193 | 0.59 |
| <i>Diplodus cervinus</i> | 0.16 | 59.4 | -0.88 | 15.6 | 1.0 | 32.7 | 4.1 | 18 | 0.0070 | 3.280 | 0.32 |
| <i>Diplodus sargus</i> | 0.10 | 57.6 | -1.45 | 15.1 | 1.6 | 31.8 | 6.6 | 29 | 0.0138 | 3.070 | 0.26 |
| <i>Elops senegalensis</i> | 0.26 | 92.7 | -0.47 | 36.0 | 1.4 | 48.8 | 2.4 | 11 | ** | ** | 0.46 |
| <i>Ephippion guttifer</i> | 0.22 | 82.6 | -0.58 | 43.2 | 2.8 | 44.0 | 2.9 | 13 | ** | ** | 0.35 |
| <i>Epinephelus aeneus</i> | 0.18 | 120.8 | -0.64 | 18.0 | 0.3 | 61.9 | 3.4 | 16 | 0.0098 | 3.043 | 0.29 |
| <i>Ethmalosa fimbriata</i> | 0.97 | 27.7 | -0.17 | 22.9 | 1.6 | 16.5 | 0.8 | 3 | 0.0123 | 3.110 | 1.34 |
| <i>Eucinostomus melanopterus</i> | 0.49 | 31.5 | -0.33 | 14.3 | 0.9 | 18.5 | 1.5 | 6 | 0.0109 | 3.030 | 0.80 |
| <i>Galeoides decadactylus</i> | 0.41 | 54.5 | -0.34 | 13.7 | 0.4 | 30.3 | 1.6 | 7 | 0.0086 | 3.080 | 0.77 |
| <i>Gerres nigri</i> | 0.60 | 30.0 | 0.00 | 16.4 | 1.3 | 12.9 | 1.1 | 4 | 0.0074 | 3.170 | 1.21 |
| <i>Mugil bananensis</i> | 0.79 | 20.5 | -0.23 | 22.7 | * | 12.6 | 1.0 | 4 | 0.0175 | 3.104 | ** |
| <i>Mugil curema</i> | 0.24 | 93.7 | -0.44 | 22.0 | 0.7 | 49.3 | 2.7 | 12 | 0.0199 | 2.900 | 0.42 |
| <i>Neochelon falcipinnis</i> | 0.41 | 24.8 | -0.42 | 22.0 | 4.9 | 14.9 | 1.8 | 7 | 0.0096 | 2.955 | 0.88 |
| <i>Pagrus caeruleostictus</i> | 0.21 | 55.2 | -0.68 | 14.0 | 0.7 | 30.6 | 3.2 | 14 | 0.0252 | 2.946 | 0.46 |
| <i>Parachelon grandisquamis</i> | 0.18 | 55.2 | -0.80 | 23.1 | 2.2 | 30.6 | 3.7 | 16 | 0.0114 | 2.947 | 0.41 |
| <i>Pomadasys incisus</i> | 0.22 | 31.5 | -0.76 | 14.3 | 2.0 | 18.5 | 3.3 | 13 | 0.0199 | 2.834 | 0.50 |
| <i>Pomadasys jubelini</i> | 0.30 | 45.0 | -0.50 | 16.0 | 1.0 | 25.5 | 2.3 | 10 | 0.0328 | 2.966 | 0.64 |
| <i>Pomadasys peroteti</i> | 0.29 | 37.6 | -0.54 | 19.0 | 1.9 | 21.7 | 2.4 | 10 | ** | ** | 0.62 |
| <i>Pseudotolithus senegalensis</i> | 0.26 | 60.3 | -0.53 | 24.5 | 1.5 | 33.2 | 2.5 | 11 | ** | ** | 0.53 |
| <i>Pseudupeneus prayensis</i> | 0.53 | 31.7 | -0.30 | 20.0 | 1.6 | 18.6 | 1.4 | 6 | 0.0181 | 3.000 | 0.95 |
| <i>Sardinella maderensis</i> | 0.33 | 37.5 | -0.47 | 19.8 | 1.8 | 21.6 | 2.1 | 9 | 0.0065 | 3.030 | 0.71 |
| <i>Umbrina canariensis</i> | 0.26 | 57.2 | -0.54 | 17.2 | 0.8 | 31.6 | 2.6 | 11 | 0.0038 | 3.420 | 0.53 |

Table 8: Parameters of commercial species used to estimate lifetime biomass and economic value of commercial species (Senegal, 2019). Except for mean size and mean age that were calculated from the samples, all parameters are from FishBase (www.fishbase.org). *: mean age could not be calculated (mean size > L_{∞}), **: weight-length parameters not available.

| Commercial fish species | Von Bertalanffy growth parameters | | | Mean size (cm) | Mean age (sample) | Length at maturity L_m (cm) | Age at maturity Tmat (y) | Maximum age Tmax (y) | Weight-length relationship | | Natural mortality M |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| | K | L_{∞} (cm) | t_0 | | | | | | a | b | |
| <i>Brachydeuterus auritus</i> | 0.40 | 25.3 | -0.43 | 9.5 | 0.7 | 15.2 | 1.9 | 7 | 0.0132 | 3.115 | 0.91 |
| <i>Chelon dumerili</i> | 0.56 | 23.3 | -0.31 | 20.6 | 3.5 | 14.1 | 1.3 | 5 | 0.0156 | 3.034 | 1.10 |
| <i>Chloroscombrus chrysurus</i> | 0.20 | 29.6 | -0.84 | 9.2 | 1.0 | 18.0 | 1.1 | 5 | 0.0057 | 3.110 | 0.61 |
| <i>Coptodon guineensis</i> | 0.96 | 21.1 | -0.18 | 31.7 | * | 12.9 | 0.8 | 3 | 0.0160 | 2.899 | ** |
| <i>Cynoglossus senegalensis</i> | 0.10 | 82.1 | -1.32 | 28.7 | 3.0 | 43.8 | 6.3 | 29 | ** | ** | 0.19 |
| <i>Dicentrachus punctatus</i> | 0.16 | 40.0 | -0.98 | 21.3 | 3.8 | 22.9 | 4.3 | 18 | 0.0055 | 3.188 | 0.34 |
| <i>Diplodus cervinus</i> | 0.16 | 59.4 | -0.88 | 26.0 | 2.7 | 32.7 | 4.1 | 18 | 0.0070 | 3.280 | 0.32 |
| <i>Diplodus bellottii</i> | 0.27 | 28.4 | -0.63 | 10.9 | 1.2 | 16.9 | 2.7 | 11 | 0.0093 | 3.193 | 0.59 |
| <i>Ephippion guttifer</i> | 0.22 | 82.6 | -0.58 | 28.0 | 1.3 | 44.0 | 2.9 | 13 | ** | ** | 0.35 |
| <i>Epinephelus aeneus</i> | 0.18 | 120.8 | -0.64 | 27.0 | 0.8 | 61.9 | 3.4 | 16 | 0.0098 | 3.043 | 0.29 |
| <i>Ethmalosa fimbriata</i> | 0.97 | 27.7 | -0.17 | 22.4 | 1.5 | 16.5 | 0.8 | 3 | 0.0123 | 3.110 | 1.34 |
| <i>Eucinostomus melanopterus</i> | 0.49 | 31.5 | -0.33 | 14.3 | 0.9 | 18.5 | 1.5 | 6 | 0.0109 | 3.030 | 0.80 |
| <i>Galeoides decadactylus</i> | 0.41 | 54.5 | -0.34 | 13.0 | 0.3 | 30.3 | 1.6 | 7 | 0.0086 | 3.080 | 0.77 |
| <i>Gerres nigri</i> | 0.60 | 30.0 | 0.00 | 14.6 | 1.1 | 12.9 | 1.1 | 4 | 0.0074 | 3.170 | 1.21 |
| <i>Lagocephalus laevigatus</i> | 0.18 | 102.8 | -0.67 | 23.9 | 0.8 | 53.5 | 3.4 | 16 | 0.0253 | 2.818 | 0.28 |
| <i>Mugil bananensis</i> | 0.79 | 20.5 | -0.23 | 21.1 | * | 12.6 | 1.0 | 4 | 0.0175 | 3.104 | ** |
| <i>Mugil capurrii</i> | 0.22 | 46.9 | -0.68 | 24.0 | 2.6 | 26.5 | 3.1 | 13 | ** | ** | 0.55 |
| <i>Mugil cephalus</i> | 0.30 | 59.3 | -0.46 | 27.6 | 1.6 | 32.7 | 2.2 | 10 | 0.0132 | 2.929 | 0.54 |
| <i>Mugil curema</i> | 0.24 | 93.7 | -0.44 | 20.2 | 0.6 | 49.3 | 2.7 | 12 | 0.0199 | 2.900 | 0.42 |
| <i>Pagrus caeruleostictus</i> | 0.21 | 55.2 | -0.68 | 16.5 | 1.0 | 30.6 | 3.2 | 14 | 0.0252 | 2.946 | 0.46 |
| <i>Pomadasys incisus</i> | 0.22 | 31.5 | -0.76 | 12.0 | 1.4 | 18.5 | 3.3 | 13 | 0.0199 | 2.834 | 0.50 |
| <i>Pomadasys jubelini</i> | 0.30 | 45.0 | -0.50 | 12.7 | 0.6 | 25.5 | 2.3 | 10 | 0.0328 | 2.966 | 0.64 |
| <i>Pomadasys peroteti</i> | 0.29 | 37.6 | -0.54 | 18.5 | 1.8 | 21.7 | 2.4 | 10 | ** | ** | 0.62 |
| <i>Pseudotolithus senegalensis</i> | 0.26 | 60.3 | -0.53 | 25.7 | 1.6 | 33.2 | 2.5 | 11 | ** | ** | 0.53 |
| <i>Pseudupeneus prayensis</i> | 0.53 | 31.7 | -0.30 | 16.1 | 1.0 | 18.6 | 1.4 | 6 | 0.0181 | 3.000 | 0.95 |
| <i>Sardinella maderensis</i> | 0.33 | 37.5 | -0.47 | 19.2 | 1.7 | 21.6 | 2.1 | 9 | 0.0065 | 3.030 | 0.71 |
| <i>Solea solea</i> | 0.41 | 35.8 | -0.38 | 30.0 | 4.1 | 20.8 | 1.7 | 7 | 0.0076 | 3.068 | 0.67 |
| <i>Sphyraena guachancho</i> | 0.09 | 203.4 | -1.14 | 23.7 | 0.2 | 98.8 | 6.2 | 32 | 0.0085 | 3.120 | 0.14 |

For Guinea-Bissau, all 18 fish species that were caught are included in Table 9, even though some may not be commercial species. As can be seen, it was not possible to find all the required life history parameters of all the species and for these species, the lifetime biomass and monetary value could not be calculated.

Table 9 : Species caught in beach seine samples in Guiné-Bissau. Except for mean size and mean age that were calculated from the samples, all parameters are from FishBase (www.fishbase.org). *: parameters not available.

| Commercial fish species | Von Bertalanffy growth parameters | | | Mean size (cm) | Mean age (sample) | Length at maturity L_m (cm) | Age at maturity Tmat (y) | Maximum age Tmax (y) | Weight-length relationship | | Natural mortality M |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| | K | L_{∞} (cm) | t_0 | | | | | | a | b | |
| <i>Caranx crysos</i> | 0.38 | 40.4 | -0.4 | 4.7 | -0.1 | 23.1 | 1.8 | 8 | 0.0318 | 2.949 | 0.75 |
| <i>Caranx hippos</i> | 0.35 | 108.0 | -0.33 | 7.0 | -0.1 | 56 | 1.8 | 8 | 0.0329 | 2.855 | 0.58 |
| <i>Citharichthys stampflii</i> | 1.27 | 16.9 | -0.15 | 10.5 | 0.6 | 10.6 | 0.6 | 2 | * | * | 2.28 |
| <i>Drepane africana</i> | 0.14 | 54.3 | -1.04 | 4.0 | -0.5 | 30.2 | 4.8 | 20 | 0.0128 | 3.280 | 0.30 |
| <i>Elops lacerta</i> | 0.75 | 38.3 | -0.20 | 12.9 | 0.3 | 22.1 | 0.9 | 4 | 0.01 | 2.94 | 1.26 |
| <i>Ephippion guttifer</i> | 0.22 | 82.6 | -0.58 | 17.0 | 0.5 | 44.0 | 2.9 | 13 | * | * | 0.35 |
| <i>Ethmalosa fimbriata</i> | 0.97 | 27.7 | -0.17 | 13.0 | 0.5 | 16.5 | 0.8 | 3 | 0.0123 | 3.110 | 1.34 |
| <i>Eucinostomus melanopterus</i> | 0.49 | 31.5 | -0.33 | 10.4 | 0.5 | 18.5 | 1.5 | 6 | 0.0109 | 3.030 | 0.80 |
| <i>Fontitrygon margaritella</i> | * | * | * | 14.9 | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| <i>Galeoides decadactylus</i> | 0.41 | 54.5 | -0.34 | 7.0 | 0.0 | 30.3 | 1.6 | 7 | 0.0086 | 3.080 | 0.77 |
| <i>Gimmura altavela</i> | * | 402.4 | * | 23.0 | * | * | * | * | 0.0268 | 2.960 | * |
| <i>Mugil bananensis</i> | 0.79 | 20.5 | -0.23 | 4.7 | * | 12.6 | 1.0 | 4 | 0.0175 | 3.104 | * |
| <i>Mugil cephalus</i> | 0.24 | 93.7 | -0.44 | 11.0 | 0.1 | 49.3 | 2.7 | 12 | 0.0199 | 2.900 | 0.42 |
| <i>Neochelon falcipinnis</i> | 0.41 | 24.8 | -0.42 | 12.2 | 1.2 | 14.9 | 1.8 | 7 | 0.0096 | 2.955 | 0.88 |
| <i>Pomadasys jubelini</i> | 0.30 | 45.0 | -0.50 | 9.9 | 0.3 | 25.5 | 2.3 | 10 | 0.0328 | 2.966 | 0.64 |
| <i>Sardinella maderensis</i> | 0.33 | 37.5 | -0.47 | 8.6 | 0.3 | 21.6 | 2.1 | 9 | 0.0065 | 3.030 | 0.71 |
| <i>Scomberomorus tritor</i> | 0.31 | 100 | -0.38 | 20.3 | 0.4 | 52.5 | 2.0 | 9.3 | 0.018 | 2.93 | 0.55 |
| <i>Tylosurus rafale</i> | 0.26 | 57.2 | -0.54 | 37.2 | 3.5 | 31.6 | 2.6 | 11 | 0.0038 | 3.420 | 0.53 |

The results of the lifetime biomass and monetary values for all commercial species for the data from Senegal are given in Tables 9 and 10. For 2018, the total lifetime values of the biomass of commercial species were €2,599,511 (1.71 billion Fcfa) and €3,833,251 (2.51 billion Fcfa) for the minimum and maximum market prices (€/kg). These values correspond to €38,600 per km² (25.320 million Fcfa/km²) and €56,920 per km² (37.337 million Fcfa/km²) of seagrass area for the minimum and maximum prices per kilo. Higher values were obtained for 2019; €6,105,628 (4.005 billion Fcfa) and €8,112,724 (5.322 billion Fcfa) respectively, corresponding to €90,663 (59.471 million Fcfa) per km² and €120,467 (79.021 million Fcfa) per km² of seagrass habitat.

Table 10 : Density (n/m^2), total number (Total n), lifetime biomass (TB in kg), and corresponding total monetary values in FCFA and € of commercial species for 67.344 km² of seagrass habitat in Senegal (2018). *: parameters necessary for calculations are not available.

| Commercial fish species | n | Density | Total n | TB | Min. | Total | Max. | Total | Min. | Max. | Total (€) | Total (€) |
|----------------------------------|-----|-------------|------------------------|----------------|---------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|--------|------------------|-----------|------------------|
| | | (n/m^2) | 67.344 km ² | (kg) | FCFA/Kg | FCFA | FCFA/Kg | FCFA | €/Kg | €/Kg | | |
| <i>Chelon dumerilii</i> | 16 | 0.00045 | 30090 | 6443 | 1000 | 6443102 | 1500 | 9664653 | 1.50 | 9665 | 2.25 | 14497 |
| <i>Chloroscombrus chrysurus</i> | 170 | 0.00475 | 319704 | 27562 | 350 | 9646679 | 500 | 13780971 | 0.53 | 14470 | 0.75 | 20671 |
| <i>Coptodon guineensis</i> | 3 | 0.00008 | 5642 | * | 1000 | * | 1500 | * | 1.50 | * | 2.25 | * |
| <i>Cynoglossus senegalensis</i> | 1 | 0.00003 | 1881 | * | 2000 | * | 3500 | * | 3.00 | * | 5.25 | * |
| <i>Dicentrarchus punctatus</i> | 8 | 0.00022 | 15045 | 4370 | 500 | 2184765 | 1000 | 4369529 | 0.75 | 3277 | 1.50 | 6554 |
| <i>Diplodus cervinus</i> | 9 | 0.00025 | 16925 | 261410 | 2500 | 653525976 | 3500 | 914936366 | 3.75 | 980289 | 5.25 | 1372405 |
| <i>Diplodus bellottii</i> | 258 | 0.00720 | 485198 | 29244 | 2500 | 73108961 | 3500 | 102352545 | 3.75 | 109663 | 5.25 | 153529 |
| <i>Diplodus sargus</i> | 9 | 0.00025 | 16925 | 884 | 2500 | 2209024 | 3500 | 3092633 | 3.75 | 3314 | 5.25 | 4639 |
| <i>Elops senegalensis</i> | 1 | 0.00003 | 1881 | * | 500 | * | 750 | * | 0.75 | * | 1.13 | * |
| <i>Ephippion guttifer</i> | 5 | 0.00014 | 9403 | * | 500 | * | 1000 | * | 0.75 | * | 1.50 | * |
| <i>Epinephelus aeneus</i> | 3 | 0.00008 | 5642 | 40516 | 4000 | 162065403 | 6500 | 263356280 | 6.00 | 243098 | 9.75 | 395034 |
| <i>Ethmalosa fimbriata</i> | 148 | 0.00413 | 278330 | 100498 | 250 | 25124596 | 500 | 50249192 | 0.38 | 37687 | 0.75 | 75374 |
| <i>Eucinostomus melanopterus</i> | 45 | 0.00126 | 84627 | 15008 | 500 | 7504247 | 1000 | 15008494 | 0.75 | 11256 | 1.50 | 22513 |
| <i>Galeoides decadactylus</i> | 6 | 0.00017 | 11284 | 252 | 1500 | 378015 | 2000 | 504020 | 2.25 | 567 | 3.00 | 756 |
| <i>Gerres nigri</i> | 87 | 0.00243 | 163613 | 14713 | 500 | 7356699 | 1000 | 14713398 | 0.75 | 11035 | 1.50 | 22070 |
| <i>Mugil bananensis</i> | 79 | 0.00221 | 148568 | * | 1500 | * | 2000 | * | 2.25 * | * | 3.00 * | * |
| <i>Mugil curema</i> | 378 | 0.01056 | 710871 | 2535 | 1500 | 3802275 | 2000 | 5069700 | 2.25 | 5703 | 3.00 | 7605 |
| <i>Pagrus caeruleostictus</i> | 2 | 0.00006 | 3761 | 4243 | 2500 | 10607233 | 3000 | 12728679 | 3.75 | 15911 | 4.50 | 19093 |
| <i>Pomadasys incisus</i> | 8 | 0.00022 | 15045 | 2345 | 2000 | 4689495 | 3000 | 7034242 | 3.00 | 7034 | 4.50 | 10551 |
| <i>Pomadasys jubelini</i> | 347 | 0.00969 | 652572 | 366041 | 2000 | 732081214 | 3000 | 1098121821 | 3.00 | 1098122 | 4.50 | 1647183 |
| <i>Pomadasys peroteti</i> | 1 | 0.00003 | 1881 | * | 2000 | * | 3000 | * | 3.00 | * | 4.50 | * |
| <i>Pseudolithus senegalensis</i> | 1 | 0.00003 | 1881 | * | 1500 | * | 2500 | * | 2.25 | * | 3.75 | * |
| <i>Pseudupeneus prayensis</i> | 1 | 0.00003 | 1881 | 449 | 2500 | 1122991 | 3500 | 1572188 | 3.75 | 1684 | 5.25 | 2358 |
| <i>Sardinella maderensis</i> | 185 | 0.00517 | 347913 | 77892 | 400 | 31156975 | 500 | 38946218 | 0.60 | 46735 | 0.75 | 58419 |
| <i>Umbrina canariensis</i> | 1 | 0.00003 | 1881 | 695 | 2500 | 1737039 | 3500 | 2431855 | 3.75 | 2606 | 5.25 | 3648 |
| Total | | | 3,330,561 | 954,406 | | 1,733,007,648 | | 2,555,500,928 | | 2,599,511 | | 3,833,251 |

Table 11 : Density (n/m^2), total number (Total n), lifetime biomass (TB in kg), and corresponding total monetary values in FCFA and € of commercial species for 67.344 km² of seagrass habitat in Senegal (2019). *: parameters necessary for calculations are not available.

| Commercial fish species | n | Density | Total n | TB | Min. | Total | Max. | Total | Min. | Max. | Total (€) | Total (€) |
|------------------------------------|------|-------------|------------------------|------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|------|------------------|-----------|------------------|
| | | (n/m^2) | 67.344 km ² | (kg) | FCFA/Kg | FCFA | FCFA/Kg | FCFA | €/Kg | €/Kg | | |
| <i>Brachydeuterus auritus</i> | 100 | 0.00279 | 188061 | 13651 | 300 | 4095286 | 400 | 5460382 | 0.45 | 6143 | 0.60 | 8191 |
| <i>Chelon dumerilii</i> | 48 | 0.00134 | 90269 | 19329 | 1000 | 19329307 | 1500 | 28993960 | 1.50 | 28994 | 2.25 | 43491 |
| <i>Chloroscombrus chrysurus</i> | 1590 | 0.04440 | 2990171 | 63553 | 350 | 22243635 | 500 | 31776622 | 0.53 | 33365 | 0.75 | 47665 |
| <i>Coptodon guineensis</i> | 3 | 0.00008 | 5642 | * | 1000 | * | 1500 | * | 1.50 | * | 2.25 | * |
| <i>Cynoglossus senegalensis</i> | 12 | 0.00034 | 22567 | * | 2000 | * | 3500 | * | 3.00 | * | 5.25 | * |
| <i>Dicentrachus punctatus</i> | 7 | 0.00020 | 13164 | 9722 | 500 | 4861024 | 1000 | 9722047 | 0.75 | 7292 | 1.50 | 14583 |
| <i>Diplodus cervinus</i> | 1 | 0.00003 | 1881 | 29046 | 2500 | 72613997 | 3500 | 101659596 | 3.75 | 108921 | 5.25 | 152489 |
| <i>Diplodus bellottii</i> | 206 | 0.00575 | 387406 | 35943 | 2500 | 89856923 | 3500 | 125799693 | 3.75 | 134785 | 5.25 | 188700 |
| <i>Ephippion guttifer</i> | 1 | 0.00003 | 1881 | * | 500 | * | 1000 | * | 0.75 | * | 1.50 | * |
| <i>Epinephelus aeneus</i> | 2 | 0.00006 | 3761 | 39673 | 4000 | 158691829 | 6500 | 257874222 | 6.00 | 238038 | 9.75 | 386811 |
| <i>Ethmalosa fimbriata</i> | 68 | 0.00190 | 127882 | 46175 | 250 | 11543733 | 500 | 23087467 | 0.38 | 17316 | 0.75 | 34631 |
| <i>Eucinostomus melanopterus</i> | 67 | 0.00187 | 126001 | 38353 | 500 | 19176582 | 1000 | 38353165 | 0.75 | 28765 | 1.50 | 57530 |
| <i>Galeoides decadactylus</i> | 96 | 0.00268 | 180539 | 4680 | 1500 | 7019730 | 2000 | 9359640 | 2.25 | 10530 | 3.00 | 14039 |
| <i>Gerres nigri</i> | 143 | 0.00399 | 268927 | 24184 | 500 | 12092045 | 1000 | 24184091 | 0.75 | 18138 | 1.50 | 36276 |
| <i>Lagocephalus laevigatus</i> | 10 | 0.00028 | 18806 | 121851 | 1000 | 121850919 | 1500 | 182776379 | 1.50 | 182776 | 2.25 | 274165 |
| <i>Mugil bananensis</i> | 14 | 0.00039 | 26329 | * | 1500 | * | 2000 | * | 2.25 | * | 3.00 | * |
| <i>Mugil capurri</i> | 1 | 0.00003 | 1881 | * | 1500 | * | 2000 | * | 2.25 | * | 3.00 | * |
| <i>Mugil cephalus</i> | 5 | 0.00014 | 9403 | 14435 | 2500 | 36087186 | 3500 | 50522061 | 3.75 | 54131 | 5.25 | 75783 |
| <i>Mugil curema</i> | 211 | 0.00589 | 396809 | 1531360 | 1500 | 2297040006 | 2000 | 3062720008 | 2.25 | 3445560 | 3.00 | 4594080 |
| <i>Pagrus caeruleostictus</i> | 11 | 0.00031 | 20687 | 29035 | 2500 | 72588636 | 3000 | 87106363 | 3.75 | 108883 | 4.50 | 130660 |
| <i>Pomadasys incisus</i> | 32 | 0.00089 | 60180 | 17880 | 2000 | 35759910 | 3000 | 53639864 | 3.00 | 53640 | 4.50 | 80460 |
| <i>Pomadasys jubelini</i> | 5 | 0.00014 | 9403 | 3894 | 2000 | 7788725 | 3000 | 11683087 | 3.00 | 11683 | 4.50 | 17525 |
| <i>Pomadasys peroteti</i> | 8 | 0.00022 | 15045 | * | 2000 | * | 3000 | * | 3.00 | * | 4.50 | * |
| <i>Pseudotolithus senegalensis</i> | 6 | 0.00017 | 11284 | * | 1500 | * | 2500 | * | 2.25 | * | 3.75 | * |
| <i>Pseudupeneus prayensis</i> | 31 | 0.00087 | 58299 | 13925 | 2500 | 34812725 | 3500 | 48737815 | 3.75 | 52219 | 5.25 | 73107 |
| <i>Sardinella maderensis</i> | 85 | 0.00237 | 159852 | 35788 | 400 | 14315367 | 500 | 17894208 | 0.60 | 21473 | 0.75 | 26841 |
| <i>Solea solea</i> | 5 | 0.00014 | 9403 | 5500 | 2500 | 13750260 | 3500 | 19250364 | 3.75 | 20625 | 5.25 | 28876 |
| <i>Sphyræna guachancho</i> | 10 | 0.00028 | 18806 | 405960 | 2500 | 1014901143 | 3000 | 1217881372 | 3.75 | 1522352 | 4.50 | 1826822 |
| Total | | | 5,224,336 | 2,503,939 | | 4,070,418,970 | | 5,408,482,407 | | 6,105,628 | | 8,112,724 |

In 2018, 4 demersal species accounted for 93% of the total lifetime monetary value in Senegal: *Pomadasys jubelini* (42.9%), *Diplodus cervinus* (35.8%), *Epinephelus aeneus* (10.3%) and *Diplodus bellottii* (4.0%). The fifth most important species was *Sardinella maderensis* (1.5%), a small pelagic. In 2019, 6 species accounted for 92% of the total lifetime monetary value: *Mugil curema* (56.6%), *Sphyræna guachancho* (22.5%), *Epinephelus aeneus* (4.8%), *Lagocephalus laevigatus* (3.4%), *Diplodus bellottii* (2.3%), and *Diplodus cervinus* (1.9%).

The results for Guinea-Bissau are given in Table 12. For comparative purposes, the market prices from Senegal were applied, given that the species are common to both countries, which use the same currency (CFA). Of the 18 species caught, parameters allowing the calculation of lifetime biomass and economic value were only available for 10 species. The estimated total value was €94,061 (61.7 million Fc), corresponding to €82,192 per km² (53.914 million Fcfa) of seagrass habitat. The most valuable species was *Pomadasys jubelini*, accounting for 88.6% of the total, followed by *Caranx hippos* (6.2%) and *Mugil cephalus* (2.1%).

Table 12 : Density (n/m^2), total number (Total n), lifetime biomass (TB in kg), and corresponding total monetary values in FCFA and € of commercial species for 1.144 km² of seagrass habitat in Guinea Bissau. *: parameters or values necessary for calculations are not available. Prices per kg are based on values from Senegal.

| Species | Density | | Total n 1.1444 km ² | TB (kg) | Min. FCFA/Kg | Total FCFA | Max. FCFA/Kg | Total FCFA | Min. | | Max. | |
|----------------------------------|---------|-------------|-----------------------------------|------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|------|-----------|-------|-----------|
| | n | (n/m^2) | | | | | | | €/Kg | Total (€) | €/Kg | Total (€) |
| <i>Caranx crysos</i> | 9 | 0.0053 | 6023 | 154 | 1000 | 154463 | 1500 | 231694 | 1.50 | 232 | 2.25 | 348 |
| <i>Caranx hippos</i> | 1 | 0.0006 | 669 | 2610 | 1000 | 2609522 | 1500 | 3914282 | 1.50 | 3914 | 2.25 | 5871 |
| <i>Citharichthys stamplii</i> | 4 | 0.0023 | 2677 | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| <i>Drepane africana</i> | 1 | 0.0006 | 669 | 205 | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| <i>Elops lacerta</i> | 7 | 0.0041 | 4685 | 7 | 500 | 3673 | 750 | 5510 | 0.75 | 6 | 1.125 | 8 |
| <i>Ephippion guttifer</i> | 2 | 0.0012 | 1338 | * | 500 | * | 1000 | * | 0.75 | * | 1.5 | * |
| <i>Ethamalosia fimbriata</i> | 1 | 0.0006 | 669 | 3 | 250 | 669 | 500 | 1338 | 0.38 | 1 | 0.75 | 2 |
| <i>Eucinostomus melanopterus</i> | 86 | 0.0503 | 57555 | 439 | 500 | 219385 | 1000 | 438770 | 0.75 | 329 | 1.5 | 658 |
| <i>Fontitrygon margaritella</i> | 22 | 0.0129 | 14723 | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| <i>Galeoides decadactylus</i> | 9 | 0.0053 | 6023 | 163 | 1500 | 244727 | 2000 | 326303 | 2.25 | 367 | 3 | 489 |
| <i>Gimmura altavela</i> | 1 | 0.0006 | 669 | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| <i>Mugil bananensis</i> | 3 | 0.0018 | 2008 | * | 1500 | * | 2000 | * | 2.25 | * | 3 | * |
| <i>Mugil cephalus</i> | 1 | 0.0006 | 669 | 382 | 2500 | 955037 | 3500 | 1337052 | 3.75 | 1433 | 5.25 | 2006 |
| <i>Neochelon falcippinnis</i> | 13 | 0.0076 | 8700 | 307 | 1000 | 306588 | 1500 | 459882 | 1.50 | 460 | 2.25 | 690 |
| <i>Pomadasys jubelini</i> | 532 | 0.3111 | 356038 | 18512 | 2000 | 37024864 | 3000 | 55537295 | 3.00 | 55537 | 4.5 | 83306 |
| <i>Sardinella maderensis</i> | 78 | 0.0456 | 52201 | 910 | 400 | 363920 | 500 | 454901 | 0.60 | 546 | 0.75 | 682 |
| <i>Scomberomorus tritor</i> | 3 | 0.0018 | 2008 | 910 | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| <i>Telesurus rafale</i> | 6 | 0.0035 | 4015 | 879 | * | * | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| Total | 779 | | 521,342 | 25480 | | 41,882,848 | | 62,707,027 | | 62,824 | | 94,061 |

Numbers of fish and sizes could not be estimated by the underwater visual census method in Cabo Verde and therefore densities, lifetime biomasses and monetary values could not be calculated. However, data on fish diversity were obtained (Table 13). In total, 28 species belonging to 19 families were recorded, of which half are of commercial value (Table 13). Most of the species are more strongly associated with reefs than seagrass habitat. Four species with an affinity for sea grass were recorded: juveniles of *Eucinostomus melanopterus*, the flagfin mojarra, *Diplodus prayensis*, the two-banded seabream, juveniles of *Lethrinus atlanticus*, the Atlantic emperor that were observed feeding directly on the seagrass, and flathead grey mullet (*Mugil cephalus*). Snake eel (Ophichthidae) holes were also found among the seagrass, but individual fish were not observed and therefore the species was not identified.

Table 13 : Fish diversity in Gamboa beach (Praia, Santiago Island, Cabo Verde).

| Family | Species | Authority | Trophic category | Biogeography | Commercial value |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Acanthuridae | <i>Acanthurus monroviae</i> | Steindachner, 1876 | Roving herbivores | Eastern Atlantic | Commercial |
| Aulostomidae | <i>Aulostomus strigosus</i> | Wheeler, 1955 | Piscivores | Amphi-Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Blenniidae | <i>Ophioblennius atlanticus</i> | (Cuvier & Valenciennes, 1836) | Territorial herbivores | Eastern Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Blenniidae | <i>Parablennius salensis</i> | Bath, 1990 | Omnivores | Cabo Verde Endemic | Non-Commercial |
| Centracanthidae | <i>Spicara melanurus</i> | (Valenciennes, 1830) | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Tropical West Africa | Commercial |
| Chaetodontidae | <i>Chaetodon robustus</i> | Günther, 1860 | Sessile invertebrate feeders | Tropical West Africa | Non-Commercial |
| Clupeidae | <i>Sardinella maderensis</i> | (Lowe, 1838) | Planktivores | Eastern Atlantic | Commercial |
| Diodontidae | <i>Diodon hystrix</i> | Linnaeus, 1758 | Sessile invertebrate feeders | Amphi-Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Gerreidae | <i>Eucinostomus melanopterus</i> | (Bleeker, 1863) | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Amphi-Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Gobiidae | <i>Gnatholepis thompsoni</i> | (Bleeker, 1853) | Omnivores | Amphi-Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Labridae | <i>Coris atlantica</i> | Günther, 1862 | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Tropical West Africa | Non-Commercial |
| Labridae | <i>Scarus hoefleri</i> | (Steindachner, 1881) | Roving herbivores | Tropical West Africa | Commercial |
| Labridae | <i>Sparisoma choati</i> | Rocha, 2012 | Roving herbivores | Tropical West Africa | Commercial |
| Labridae | <i>Thalassoma pavo</i> | (Linnaeus, 1758) | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Eastern Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Labrisomidae | <i>Labrisomus nuchipinnis</i> | (Quoy & Gaimard, 1824) | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Amphi-Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Lethrinidae | <i>Lethrinus atlanticus</i> | Cuvier & Valenciennes, 1830 | Carnivores | Tropical West Africa | Commercial |
| Lutjanidae | <i>Lutjanus agennes</i> | (Bleeker, 1863) | Carnivores | Tropical West Africa | Commercial |
| Mugilidae | <i>Mugil cephalus</i> | Linnaeus, 1758 | Omnivores | Tropical West Africa | Commercial |
| Mullidae | <i>Mulloidichthys martinicus</i> | (Cuvier, 1829) | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Amphi-Atlantic | Commercial |
| Mullidae | <i>Pseudupeneus prayensis</i> | (Cuvier, 1829) | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Eastern Atlantic | Commercial |
| Muraenidae | <i>Muraena melanotis</i> | (Kaup, 1860) | Carnivores | Tropical West Africa | Commercial |
| Pomacentridae | <i>Abudefduf hoefleri</i> | (Steindachner, 1881) | Omnivores | Tropical West Africa | Non-Commercial |
| Pomacentridae | <i>Abudefduf saxatilis</i> | (Linnaeus, 1758) | Omnivores | Amphi-Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Pomacentridae | <i>Chromis multilineata</i> | (Guichenot, 1853) | Planktivores | Amphi-Atlantic | Low Commercial |
| Pomacentridae | <i>Stegastes imbricatus</i> | Jenyns, 1840 | Territorial herbivores | Tropical West Africa | Non-Commercial |
| Sparidae | <i>Diplodus lineatus</i> | (Valenciennes, 1830) | Omnivores | Cabo Verde Endemic | Low Commercial |
| Sparidae | <i>Diplodus prayensis</i> | (Smith, 1844) | Omnivores | Cabo Verde Endemic | Low Commercial |
| Tetraodontidae | <i>Sphoeroides marmoratus</i> | (Lowe, 1838) | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Eastern Atlantic | Non-Commercial |

6. Discussion

Ideally, estimates of fish provisioning services should be based on the maximum densities of individual cohorts of juveniles in nurseries (Erzini et al., 2022). This requires intensive sampling with a non-selective gear, preferably on a monthly basis, allowing identification of recruitment period and quantification of the density of juveniles of single cohorts over time. The evolution in cohort numbers and biomass over the lifespan of the species can then be modelled based on the maximum density of juveniles (age class 0 or young-of-the-year), lifespan (maximum age), life history parameters (growth and mortality), and weight-length relationships, and used to calculate the monetary value using market or landings prices per kg of fish.

In this study, it was not possible to carry out the periodic sampling over the course of a year that would provide information on maximum cohort density in seagrass habitat. In the case of Senegal, sampling with a beam trawl proved inadequate, with very low catch rates compounded by large quantities of algae in the codend. Data from purse seine surveys carried out in coastal seagrass areas were therefore used. Purse seines are ideal sampling gear as they sample a large area, fish the whole water column if the water is relatively shallow, and if mesh sizes are small, have low species and size selectivity, thereby providing reliable data on species composition and abundance of both juveniles and adults (Diankha et al., 2019; Badiane and Sambou, 2020). In this case, while the codend was of 14 mm mesh size, 50 mm mesh was used in the wings, which may account for the relatively small number of juveniles caught for most species, based on the observed catch size distributions.

Given that the catches of most species did not consist mostly or even of any juveniles, the methodologies of Blandon and zu Ermgassen (2014a,b), zu Ermgassen et al. (2016), Jänes et al. (2020), and Erzini et al. (2022) were modified by assuming that the mean size of each species corresponded to the most abundant age class. The total catch was then assigned to the age class, determined by converting size to age using the von Bertalanffy growth model, and then used to model the evolution in numbers and biomass until the maximum age, based on species-specific life history parameters obtained from FishBase (Froese and Pauly, 2000). For small, fast-growing species with relatively few age classes such as small pelagics, this is probably a reasonable approximation as catches usually

consist of individuals of only one or few age classes. For longer-lived species, this may not be the case. However, given the small average mean sizes and low associated standard deviations of even the long-lived species that have large L_{∞} values, it is likely that the approach still gives realistic estimates of the evolution of numbers and biomass, although it is acknowledged that this is potentially a source of overestimation of lifetime biomass and economic value for long-lived, large-sized species such as *Epinephelus aeneus*.

It should be noted that in Guinea-Bissau, where a fine mesh beach seine was used in shallow water, juveniles of some species were caught in abundance as determined from the catch size distributions and the estimated mean sizes (less than 10 cm TL) and associated standard deviations. Thus, the estimates obtained for these species are not subject to the limitations discussed above. However, there is still the limitation that the study is based on a single sampling period which may not correspond to the time of maximum juvenile abundance. If this is the case, then the estimated biomass and economic value will be underestimated as the methodology is based on maximum juvenile or age class 0 density.

Modelling of the evolution in numbers and biomass should be based on life history parameters from the study area. Unfortunately, few of the commercial species had the complete set of life history parameters needed for the modelling and evaluation of fish provisioning services. Therefore, it was decided to use parameters from FishBase (Froese and Pauly, 2000) that often were from other areas where the species may be subjected to different exploitation patterns and environmental conditions, resulting in life history parameters that are not truly representative. Nevertheless, given that life history parameters for the same population can vary considerably over time, the use of mean values from FishBase is considered justified for a first approach. With more fisheries biology and ecology studies from the region, the estimation of fish provisioning services can be refined by using local or regional parameters.

The results show that coastal seagrass habitat in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau is important in terms of fish provisioning services, and as a nursery, at least in Guinea-Bissau where sampling took place inshore. In Senegal, the purse seine sampling locations were in deeper waters, not close to the beaches which is a more likely nursery area for most species. As noted above, the relatively small numbers of juveniles caught by purse seines could be due, in part, to the size selectivity of the gear. Nevertheless, the coastal area sampled by purse seines in Senegal clearly contributes to fish provisioning in terms of food production as habitat for exploitable life history stages.

Adjusting for different fish prices per kg in other countries where seagrass fish provisioning studies were carried out, the estimated values of commercial lifetime biomass for seagrass in Senegal and in Guinea-Bissau based on minimum and maximum market prices are comparable (Blandon and zu Ermgassen, 2014a, b; zu Ermgassen et al., 2016; Jänes et al., 2020; Erzini et al., 2022). For example, Erzini et al. (2022) estimated that the total lifetime economic values of single cohorts of the most important commercial species found in the Ria Formosa, a lagoon in southern Portugal with a total intertidal area of 84 km², ranged from €30 million to €60 million euros, for low and high natural mortality scenarios. Average first sale prices per kg in Portugal are at least 3 to 5 times more than those of Senegal for similar species such as sea breams (Sparidae). These findings highlight the importance of seagrass habitat in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau for local fisheries, serving as important nurseries for juveniles and feeding grounds for all life history stages of commercial and non-commercial species.

As a final consideration, it should be noted that the calculations of fish provisioning services in terms of monetary value in this and other similar studies (Blandon and zu Ermgassen, 2014a, b; zu Ermgassen

et al., 2016; Jänes et al., 2020; Erzini et al., 2022) do not take into account fishing mortality. As such, the estimated values, based only on natural mortality are high, providing overly optimistic or unrealistic views of ecosystem services provided by seagrass habitats. There is therefore an urgent need to carry out assessment of fish provisioning services under different fisheries and natural mortality scenarios.

7. References

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SECTION 3 – IDENTIFICATION OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES PROVIDED BY SEAGRASS MEADOWS OF WESTERN AFRICA: SEQUESTRATION OF ORGANIC CARBON

Núria Marbà¹, Ester Serrao², Antonio Araujo³, Iris E. Hendriks⁴, Elisabeth Diouf⁵, Marina Miralles⁶, Rizky Eko Muliawan⁷, Marta Ximenis⁸, Tamara Smith⁹, Coral Aranda¹ and Carlos Morell¹

¹ Institut Mediterrani d'Estudis Avançats, IMEDEA, CSIC-UIB, Spain

² Centre des Sciences de la Mer - CCMAR, Université d'Algarve, Portugal

³ Azul e Verde, Cape Verde

⁴ Institut Mediterrani d'Estudis Avançats, IMEDEA, CSIC-UIB, Spain

⁵ University Institute of Fisheries and Aquaculture at Cheikh Anta Diop University, Senegal

⁶ Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain

⁷ Universidad del País Vasco, Spain

⁸ Universitat de les Illes Balears, Spain

⁹ Universidade do Algarve, Portugal

1. Introduction

Vegetated coastal ecosystems, namely mangrove forests, saltmarshes and seagrass meadows, are recognised as globally significant carbon sinks, due to their high carbon sequestration rates (Duarte et al., 2005) and their capacity to develop large carbon stores in the sediments colonised that persist over centuries to millennia (Duarte et al., 2013). Yet, these ecosystems are under threat in many coastal areas and their conservation as well as restoration and afforestation, where degraded, contribute to mitigate climate change, while providing other co-benefits relevant to people and nature, and to face climate change impacts (Gattuso et al., 2018) and achieve sustainable development goals (Unsworth et al., 2022).

Seagrasses colonise the coasts of all continents except Antarctica from the intertidal zone down to 60 m depth (Duarte, 1991). Despite the exponential growth in knowledge on seagrass carbon sinks worldwide (e.g. Ruiz-Frau et al., 2017), there is no information about the magnitude of organic carbon stocks and long-term sequestration rates in seagrass meadows in Western Africa. This lack of information prevents to assess the ecological value of the seagrasses in this region as well as to consider the potential of region for implementing seagrass blue carbon projects.

The aim of this project task (= this section) is to estimate the magnitude of organic carbon stores (in seagrass biomass and sediment) and burial rates in seagrass meadows along Senegal, Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau coastal areas.

2. Methods

In May 2022, June 2022 and late July/beginning August 2022 we conducted 3 field missions to Senegal, Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau, respectively, of 4 to 10 days to sample seagrass meadows to assess the organic carbon stocks and sequestration rates.

We sampled 4 seagrass sites in Senegal, 2 in Cabo Verde and 5 in Guinea-Bissau colonising the intertidal zone or growing submerged down to 2 m depth (Table in Annexe 2). At each seagrass meadow, we collected 2-5 seagrass biomass samples with a 9.2 cm diameter stainless steel cylinder.

In the laboratory, after removing the sediments, we counted the number of shoots per sample and separated the aboveground and belowground material, except for Pedra Badejo, Cabo Verde. This allowed estimation of shoot density and, after drying at 60 °C for at least 24h, aboveground and belowground biomass. For Pedra Badejo we estimated total seagrass biomass.

At each meadow, we also collected between 2 and 5 sediment cores in PVC pipes 4 cm - 4.5 cm diameter and 60 cm or 120 cm long (See Figure 38). Once the pipe was hammered into the sediment, we measured the distance from the sediment surface outside and inside of the pipe to the top of the pipe to later estimate the sediment compression factor (C_f) for each core as,

$$C_f = (L_t - L_o)/(L_t - L_i)$$

where L_t is the total length of the pipe, and L_o and L_i are the distance between the top of the pipe and the sediment surface outside and inside the pipe, respectively. The compression factor was used to correct the thickness of sediment to estimate sediment bulk density (g sediment per cm^3) as well as the thickness of sediment layers to calculate the carbon stocks ($\text{Mg } C_{\text{org}}$ per hectare) assuming a linear sediment compression along the core depth during sampling. In total, we collected 39 sediment cores (Table in Annex 2).



Figure 38 : PVC pipes used to collect the sediments in Unhocomozinho, Guinea-Bissau, August 2022. Photo: G. Touron-Gardic

After collection, the upper empty part of the pipes was cut close to the sediment surface and sealed with a stopper to prevent mixing of the sediment core during transportation. The cores were stored in a freezing room until they were longitudinally opened and sliced at 1 cm interval from the sediment surface down to 50 cm sediment depth and after this depth every 4 cm and 1 cm until the base of the core. We measured the wet volume of each sediment slice and weighed it, after drying at 60 °C for 48h, to estimate its sediment bulk density. We grinded part of the sample to later proceed to analyse radioisotopes for sediment dating, content of organic matter (OM, %), organic carbon (C_{org} , % dry weight - DW) and nitrogen (N, % DW) and natural abundance of $^{13}C_{org}$ (‰).

Sediment OM is being analysed in the samples of 2-3 cores per site using the loss of ignition method. This method measures the fractional weight loss of dry sediment after combustion for 5 h at 550 °C.

The profiles of ^{210}Pb concentrations of one sediment core per site are being determined at the University Autonomous of Barcelona (Spain) through the analysis of its decay product ^{210}Po , in equilibrium with ^{210}Pb (Sanchez-Cabeza et al., 1998). Sediment samples are spiked with known amounts of ^{209}Po and acid digested using a microwave oven. The Po isotopes are plated onto silver discs and their emissions are measured by alpha spectrometry using Passivated Implanted Planar Silicon (PIPS) detectors (CANBERRA, Mod. PD-450.18 A.M). The concentrations of ^{210}Pb at sampling time are calculated applying appropriate decay–ingrowth corrections (i.e. ^{210}Po decay during counting, ^{210}Po decay between plating and counting and ^{210}Pb decay between sampling and analyses) and accounting for blank (for each batch of 10 samples) and detector background, which are both almost negligible ($1-2 \cdot 10^{-5}$ c/s). Analyses of replicates and reference materials are carried out in parallel to the analyses of the samples to ensure reproducibility of the results. Concentrations of ^{226}Ra are determined by gamma spectrometry using a high-purity Ge well-type detector (CANBERRA, mod. GCW3523). Samples are stored in sealed containers for 3 weeks prior to counting to attain equilibrium between ^{226}Ra and its short-lived decay products. ^{226}Ra is determined through the 295 and 351 keV emission lines of ^{214}Pb . The concentrations of ^{226}Ra are in agreement with those of ^{210}Pb in the deepest sections of the cores, where no excess ^{210}Pb ($^{210}\text{Pbex}$) is present. We use the model of constant rate of supply (CRS; Appleby & Oldfield, 1978), which assumes a constant flux of $^{210}\text{Pbex}$ to the sediment surface, to date the sediment based on $^{210}\text{Pbex}$ inventories and estimate sediment accretion rates in the cores. The CRS model will be adapted for those sites with missing inventories of $^{210}\text{Pbex}$ following Appleby (2001).

Sediment C_{org} (% DW), N (% DW) and $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{org}}$ (‰) are being analysed in alternate samples along the same cores that are being dated. The concentration of C_{org} and $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{org}}$ are analysed on acidified samples in order to remove carbonates. These analyses are conducted on an Elemental Analyser - Isotope Ratio Mass Spectrometry (EA-IRMS) at the University of La Coruña (Spain). The values of % C_{org} will be used to define a function to estimate C_{org} from OM in all samples. Because at present these samples are still being analysed and we have no data yet, in this report we use the following relationship (Fourqurean et al., 2012),

$$\text{C}_{\text{org}} (\%) = -0.21 + 0.40 \cdot \text{OM} (\%)$$

Sediment $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{org}}$ along the chronosequence ($\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{sediment}}$) will allow estimation of the fraction of seagrass (X) and sestonic (1–X) deposition as,

$$\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{sediment}} = [X \cdot \delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{seagrass}}] + [(1-X) \cdot \delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{seston}}]$$

$\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{seagrass}}$ being measured on seagrass leaves from each site and $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{seston}}$ values obtained from the literature. Seagrass C (%) is also being analysed.

We multiplied the seagrass above and belowground biomass by the carbon content in seagrass tissues to estimate the carbon stock in seagrass biomass at the studied sites. Because the carbon content is still being analysed, in this report we use the average carbon content reported for seagrasses globally (33.6 %; Duarte, 1990).

We estimate sediment C_{org} density (mg C_{org} per cm^3) as sediment bulk density (decompressed) multiplied by sediment C_{org} content (in %) divided by 100. The C_{org} stock (Mg C_{org} per hectare) is estimated as the sum of the C_{org} density (g C_{org} per cm^3) multiplied by the thickness (decompressed) of the sediment slice divided by 10 along the sediment profile for the top 50 cm and 100 cm. The C_{org} stocks at meadow scale are estimated by multiplying the areal C_{org} stocks and the areal extend of seagrass meadows at each site reported in the section “Mapping of seagrass using remote sensing” of this report.

Average C_{org} burial rates (CAR, Mg C_{org} per hectare and per year) at each station are estimated by multiplying the sediment accretion rate (SAR, cm per year) and the average C_{org} stock per sediment layer 1 cm thick within the sediment horizon where ^{210}Pb abundance is in excess.

In this report, we provide the few preliminary estimates of SAR and CAR available at the moment of submission.

All estimates provided in this report are preliminary and they will be revised (and updated) when all samples from all sediment cores and seagrass material will be analysed.

3. Results and discussion

Along the Senegalese coast, seagrass species with a temperate (*Zostera nolteii* and *Cymodocea nodosa*) and tropical (*Halodule wrightii*) distributions coexist, forming mixed (Delta Saloum 1, Joal) and monospecific meadows (Delta Saloum 2 and 3) at the intertidal and the subtidal zones (Table 14). The Senegalese populations of *Z. nolteii* are growing at the most southern limit of the known distribution of this species, and for *C. nodosa* some meadows were recently found in The Gambia, some 60 km South of the Saloum Delta. Conversely, at Cabo Verde seagrasses formed submerged monospecific meadows of *H. wrightii* (Gamboa) and *Ruppia maritima* (Pedra Badejo) and at Guinea-Bissau monospecific meadows of *H. wrightii* (Table 14). The *H. wrightii* populations at Cabo Verde and Senegal are located at the most northern distribution of this species along the east Atlantic Ocean.

The total seagrass biomass along the west African sites visited ranged between 3.88 gDW m^{-2} and 387.61 ± 57.66 gDW m^{-2} , the Senegalese populations supporting larger biomass than those in Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau (Table 14, Figure 39). The total seagrass biomass in Guinea-Bissau populations was the lowest, being on average only 3.6 % of that in Senegal populations (Table 14, Figure 39). The total seagrass biomass found in the *C. nodosa* monospecific meadow Delta Saloum 3 was higher than the average biomass reported globally for this species (Duarte & Chiscano, 1999). Conversely, the total biomass at the studied monospecific *H. wrightii* meadows along the West African coast was lower than the global average of this species (Duarte & Chiscano, 1999).

Seagrass biomass at the studied meadows contained a carbon stock, estimated using the %C content in seagrasses from Duarte 1990, ranging from 0.01 MgC per hectare to 1.30 ± 0.19 MgC per hectare (Table 14). Where we could measure separately above and belowground seagrass biomass, carbon stock in leaf biomass accounted for less than 10 % up to 46% of total that in total seagrass biomass.

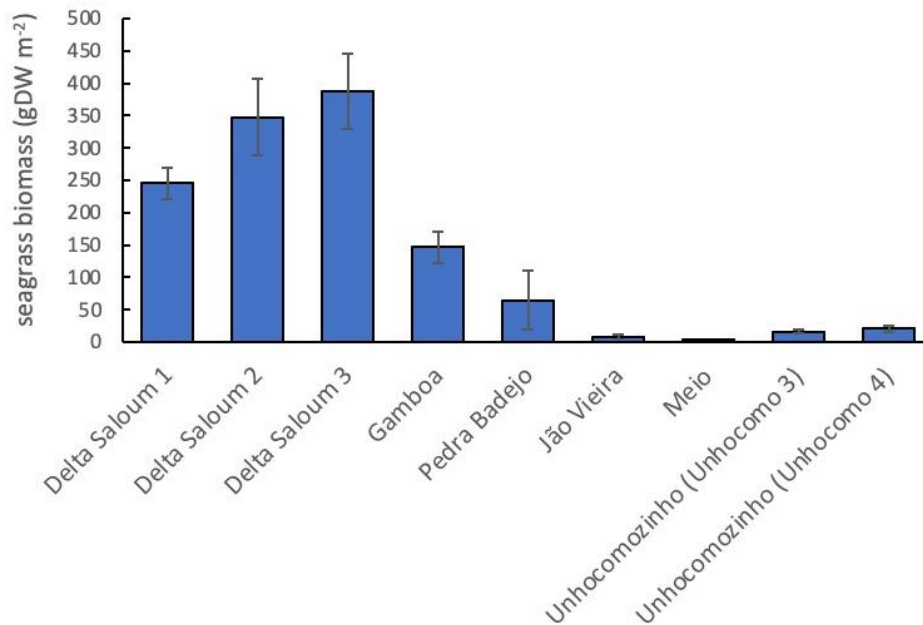


Figure 39 : Total biomass in Senegal (Delta Saloum 1, 2 and 3), Cabo Verde (Gamboa, Pedra Badejo) and Guinea-Bissau (João Vieira, Meio, Unhocomo 3 and 4) seagrass meadows. There is no biomass data available from Joal (Senegal).

Table 14 : Shoot density, biomass and carbon stocks in living tissues of seagrass species at the study sites from Senegal, Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau. Biomass of macroalgae is also reported when present. Standard errors of the mean values are reported within brackets. Carbon stocks estimated using carbon content reported in Duarte 1990.

| Variable | Senegal | | | Cabo Verde | | Guinea-Bissau | | | | |
|--------------------|---|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| | Delta Saloum 1 | Delta Saloum 2 | Delta Saloum 3 | Gamboa | Pedra Badejo | Jão Vieira | Meio | Unhoco mozinho (Unhoco mo 3) | Unhoco mozinho (Unhoco mo 4) | |
| Species | number of replicates | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 5 |
| <i>H. wrightii</i> | shoot density (shoots m ⁻²) | 2180.45 (1635.23) | 17255.64 (2162.12) | | 7007.52 (1296.73) | | 1541.35 (390.08) | 300.75 | 1353.38 (125.81) | 872.18 (110.50) |
| <i>H. wrightii</i> | aboveground biomass (g DW m ⁻²) | 21.42 (21.17) | 156.83 (40.48) | | 12.49 (1.92) | | | | | |
| <i>H. wrightii</i> | belowground biomass (g DW m ⁻²) | 52.53 (40.68) | 190.59 (41.51) | | 133.94 (23.96) | | | | | |
| <i>H. wrightii</i> | total biomass (g DW m ⁻²) | | | | | 8.06 (3.79) | 3.88 | 15.92 (3.03) | 20.35 (4.27) | |
| <i>Z. noltei</i> | shoot density (shoots m ⁻²) | 1766.92 (1240.60) | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Z. noltei</i> | aboveground biomass (g DW m ⁻²) | 34.97 (27.15) | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Z. noltei</i> | belowground biomass (g DW m ⁻²) | 22.03 (17.69) | | | | | | | | |
| <i>C. nodosa</i> | shoot density (shoots m ⁻²) | 1729.32 (869.28) | | 2105.26 (613.91) | | | | | | |
| <i>C. nodosa</i> | aboveground biomass (g DW m ⁻²) | 25.66 (13.74) | | 177.50 (32.31) | | | | | | |
| <i>C. nodosa</i> | belowground biomass (g DW m ⁻²) | 88.52 (42.22) | | 210.11 (32.64) | | | | | | |
| <i>R. maritima</i> | shoot density (shoots m ⁻²) | | | | | nd | | | | |
| <i>R. maritima</i> | total biomass (g DW m ⁻²) | | | | | 64.47 (45.60) | | | | |
| macroalgae | biomass (g DW m ⁻²) | 1.97 (1.97) | 23.09 (21.21) | 2.37 (1.88) | | | | | | |
| all seagrass | total aboveground biomass (g DW m ⁻²) | 82.05 (14.04) | 156.83 (40.48) | 177.50 (32.31) | 12.49 (1.92) | nd | nd | nd | nd | nd |
| all seagrass | total belowground biomass (g DW m ⁻²) | 163.08 (18.06) | 190.59 (41.51) | 210.11 (32.64) | 133.94 (23.96) | nd | nd | nd | nd | nd |
| all seagrass | total biomass (gDW m ⁻²) | 245.13 (23.84) | 347.42 (59.07) | 387.61 (57.66) | 146.43 (24.99) | 64.47 (45.60) | 8.06 (3.79) | 3.88 | 15.92 (3.03) | 20.35 (4.27) |
| all seagrass | C mass in leaf biomass (MgC ha ⁻¹) | 0.28 (0.05) | 0.53 (0.14) | 0.60 (0.11) | 0.04 (0.01) | nd | nd | nd | nd | nd |
| all seagrass | C mass in belowground biomass (MgC ha ⁻¹) | 0.55 (0.06) | 0.64 (0.14) | 0.71 (0.11) | 0.45 (0.08) | nd | nd | nd | nd | nd |
| all seagrass | total C mass in biomass (MgC ha ⁻¹) | 0.82 (0.08) | 1.167 (0.20) | 1.30 (0.19) | 0.49 (0.08) | 0.22 (0.15) | 0.03 (0.01) | 0.01 | 0.05 (0.01) | 0.07 (0.01) |

Three sediment cores per site from all seagrass meadows visited at Senegal and Cabo Verde have been opened and subsampled all sediment slices for determination of organic matter and organic carbon content. From Guinea-Bissau, there are still 5 sediment cores pending to be opened and subsampled. At present, a total of 26 sediment cores have been opened, subsampled, and the sediment bulk density of subsamples has been measured, after drying them at 60 °C for at least 48h. The subsamples are stored dry and organic matter analysis on them are being conducted.

So far, organic matter content along sediment profiles has been measured in 5 sediment cores, corresponding to 1 core per site in all seagrass meadows from Senegal and 1 core from one site in Cabo Verde (Pedra Badejo). The content of organic matter in seagrass sediments examined range from 0.85 % to 13.6%, the lowest concentration being found in Delta Saloum 1 sediments whereas the most organic rich sediments occurred at Pedra Badejo (Figure 40).

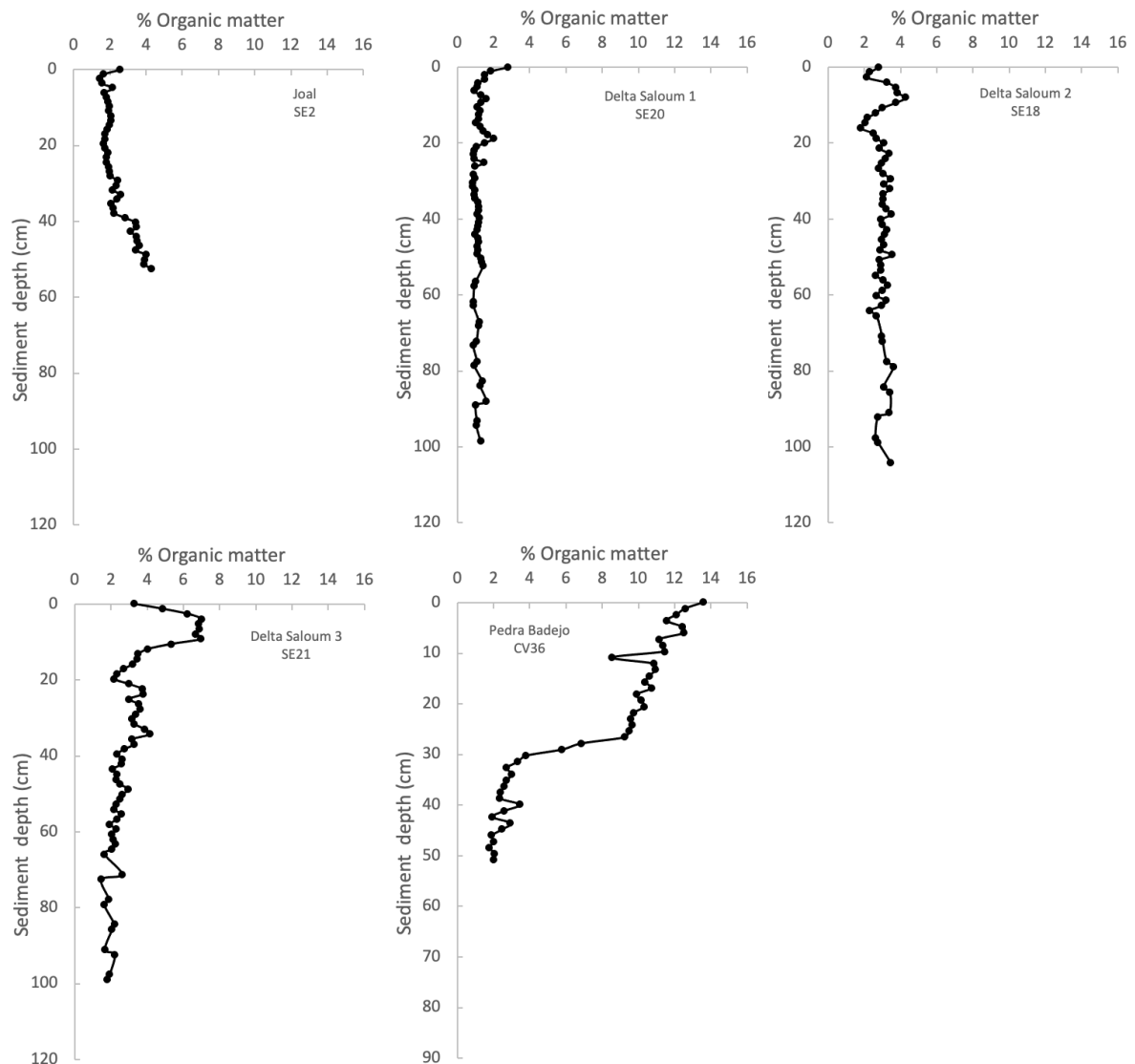


Figure 40 : Organic matter content (%) along sediment profiles at seagrass meadows from Senegal (Joal, Delta Saloum 1, 2 and 3) and Cape Verd (Pedra Badejo). The code of the sediment core analysed is indicated below the name of the study site.

On average (\pm standard error) the content of organic matter in Joal, Delta Saloum 1, Delta Saloum 2, Delta Saloum 3 and Pedra Badejo, respectively was 2.43 ± 0.12 %, 1.20 ± 0.04 %, 3.01 ± 0.06 %, 3.14 ± 0.18 % and 7.16 ± 0.64 %. The organic matter content was quite uniform along the sediment depth in the Delta Saloum 1 meadow, whereas it increased in the top 10 cm sediment layer at Delta Saloum 2 and 3 and in the top 30 cm sediment layer in Pedra Badejo (Figure 40). Conversely, organic matter content increased at sediment layers below 40 cm at Joal seagrass meadow (Figure 40). The organic matter content indicates that sediment C_{org} concentration, derived from Fourqurean et al. (2012) equation between organic matter and C_{org} concentrations, in the sediments analysed range between 0.08 %, in Delta Saloum 1 and 5.23 % in Pedra Badejo. The estimated sediment C_{org} concentration at the cores analysed from Joal, Delta Saloum 1, Delta Saloum 2, Delta Saloum 3 and Pedra Badejo, respectively was 0.76 ± 0.05 %, 0.27 ± 0.02 %, 0.99 ± 0.02 %, 1.05 ± 0.07 % and 2.65 ± 0.25 %. The sediment C_{org} concentrations in the cores analysed, except the one at Pedra Badejo, are lower than the median value (1.4 %) observed in seagrass sediments worldwide (Fourqurean et al., 2012).

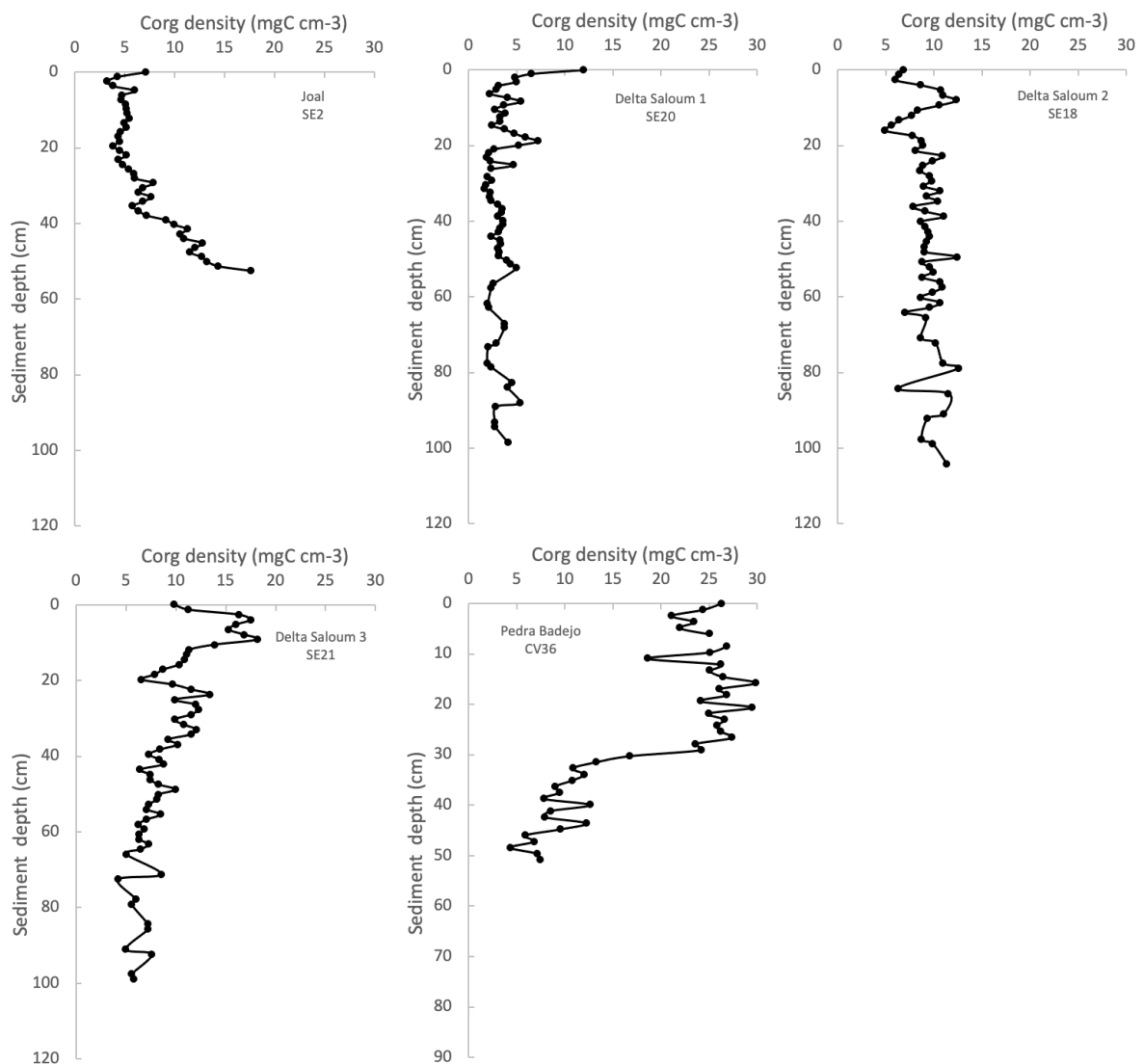


Figure 41 : Organic carbon density (mg C per cm^3) along sediment profiles at seagrass meadows from Senegal (Joal, Delta Saloum 1, 2 and 3) and Cabo Verde (Pedra Badejo). The code of the sediment core analysed is indicated below the name of the study site.

Organic carbon density in the sediments of the cores analysed ranged from 1.17 mg C per cm³ to 29.88 mg C per cm³ (Figure 41). The C_{org} density averaged along the sediment profile in Pedra Badejo (18.53 ± 1.28 mg C per cm³) was 6-fold larger than that in the sediment core from Delta Saloum 1 (3.47 ± 0.19 mg C per cm³).

Preliminary (derived from data of a single core per site) estimation of C_{org} stocks in the top 50 cm sediment layer underneath seagrass meadows from Senegal and Cabo Verde reveal carbon stores in the sediment compartment ranging between 17.67 Mg C per hectare (Delta Saloum 1) and 95.72 Mg C per hectare (Pedra Badejo, Table 15). Extrapolation of these estimates to the top 1 m sediment layer, for comparison with global estimates of seagrass sediment C_{org} stocks, results into seagrass sediment carbon stores between 32.89 Mg C per hectare and about 180 Mg C per hectare (Table 15). Although we have no data to estimate C_{org} stocks at Guinea-Bissau seagrass meadows studied yet, unpublished estimates, assessed by Márcio Martins and others from CCMAR (Portugal) at Joao Vieira and Unhocomozinho seagrass meadows, exist. Martins et al. estimate C_{org} stocks at Guinea-Bissau extrapolated to the top 1 m seagrass sediments at 10.4 Mg C per hectare – 29.96 Mg C per hectare (Table 15). The preliminary results obtained at present amended with unpublished estimates from Martins et al. reveal that, except for Pedra Badejo, the sediment C_{org} stocks in seagrass meadows from Senegal and Guinea-Bissau are lower than the median value reported for seagrasses globally (139.7 Mg C per hectare, Fourqurean et al., 2012), and may be very low at Guinea-Bissau. As demonstrated in Fourqurean et al. (2012), it is also worth to note that the living seagrass biomass contributes to less than 2.5 % (and mostly less than 1.5 %) to the total C_{org} stock in seagrass meadows, most of the stock, thus, being found in the sediment as seagrass detritus and allochthonous particles.

The high organic seagrass sediments at Pedra Badejo and low organic ones at the other meadows studied most probably reflect the differences in site geomorphology and external organic matter inputs. The meadow at Pedra Badejo was located at the mouth of a small river/channel closed by a sand bar and crossing a village few hundred meters upstream. Joal coast is exposed to western winds and the meadows at Delta Saloum are located at the external part of a large delta probably receiving inputs of sediment mixed with dragged organic material from upstream, for instance, mangrove forests. Further analysis of the ¹³C footprint in sediment organic material will provide insight about the possible origin of the C_{org} present in these seagrass sediments.

Sediment accretion rates (SAR) over the last century, so far, have been analysed for two sites, both from Senegal (Joal and Delta Saloum 2, cores SE1 and SE18, Table 15). The concentrations of total ²¹⁰Pb along the core from Joal, which is 44 cm long, are constant, averaging 11 ± 2 Bq per kg, without any decreasing trend with depth. Although no measurements of ²²⁶Ra are available, it is likely that the low and constant concentrations of ²¹⁰Pb correspond to supported ²¹⁰Pb, suggesting that there is no net accumulation of sediments.

In Delta Saloum 2, considering the average of the samples between 20 and 30 cm as representative of the concentration of supported ²¹⁰Pb along the core, an average sedimentation rate of 0.19 ± 0.03 g/cm²/year (0.16 ± 0.03 cm/year compressed, 0.21 ± 0.04 cm/year decompressed) could be calculated based on the concentration profile of Excess ²¹⁰Pb in the upper 15 cm compressed (20.06 cm decompressed). Note, however, that this estimate is subject to a large uncertainty and needs to be taken with caution: the concentrations of ²¹⁰Pb are very low (mostly <20 Bq/kg) and with marked fluctuations respect to the decreasing trend, which could be indicative of the presence of mixing. Most likely, the estimate of the sedimentation rate should be considered an upper limit. The preliminary SAR estimate for Delta Saloum 2 is similar to the average SAR observed in seagrass meadows globally (Duarte et al., 2013).

Table 15 : Preliminary sediment C_{org} stocks measured for the top 50 cm and 100 cm, sediment accretion rates (SAR) and organic carbon accretion rates (CAR). For sites where the sediment layer was thinner than 100 cm, the total C_{org} is provided for the total length of core obtained. The length of sediment cores is provided. Data provided for the sites and cores analysed so far. Estimates of C stocks for Guinea-Bissau included in the table are unpublished and from a previous study conducted by Márcio Martins, Rui Santos, Carmen de los Santos, Ester Serrao (indicated with *). We will have estimates of carbon stocks for all sediment cores from Table 15, and SAR and CAR estimates for each study site visited with the project (at Senegal, Cape Verd and Guinea-Bissau). All estimates are provided after correction of sediment compression during sampling (decomp). Standard error of SAR is provided within brackets.

| Country | location | core # | stock C _{org} top 50 cm (decomp) Mg C ha ⁻¹ | stock C _{org} top 100 cm (decomp) Mg C ha ⁻¹ | total stock C _{org} if shorter than 1 m (decomp) Mg C ha ⁻¹ | max length of the core (cm) (decomp) | SAR (cm yr ⁻¹) (decomp) | CAR (Mg C ha ⁻¹ yr ⁻¹) (decomp) |
|---------------|-----------------------|--------|---|--|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Senegal | Joal | SE1 | 33.31 | - | 38.98 | 53.77 | 0 | 0 |
| Senegal | Delta Saloum 1 | SE20 | 17.67 | 32.89 | | 99.57 | | |
| Senegal | Delta Saloum 2 | SE18 | 44.36 | 94.60 | | 105.67 | 0.21(0.04) | 0.17 |
| Senegal | Delta Saloum 3 | SE21 | 55.12 | 87.09 | | 101.59 | | |
| Cabo Verde | Pedra Badejo | CV36 | 95.72 | - | measurements on going | 78.68 | | |
| Guinea-Bissau | <i>Jao Vieira*</i> | | | 10.4 | | | | |
| Guinea-Bissau | <i>Unhocomozinho*</i> | | | 29.96 | | | | |

Considering the carbon stocks and sediment accretion rates at the sites Joal and Delta Saloum 2, C_{org} accretion rates (CAR) over the last century ranged between 0 Mg C_{org} per hectare and per year, or at least it could not be determined with ^{210}Pb approach, and 0.17 Mg C_{org} per hectare and per year (Table 15). The few CAR preliminary estimates obtained for the region are slightly lower than the median value of CAR reported for seagrass meadows in the literature (0.23 Mg C_{org} per hectare and per year), suggesting that carbon sequestration rates per unit of area at the West African seagrass meadows would be towards the low range observed globally.

Considering the preliminary estimates of C_{org} stocks in the top 20 cm seagrass sediments at Delta Saloum 1 and 3 and assuming that SAR at these sites equals the average value reported for seagrasses globally, CAR at Delta Saloum 1 and 3 over the last century are estimated to be 0.09 Mg C_{org} per hectare and per year and 0.27 Mg C_{org} per hectare and per year, respectively. No estimates of carbon stocks in Gamboa (Praia, Cabo Verde) meadow are available yet, preventing to give a preliminary CAR estimate for this site.

The 3 seagrass meadows sampled for carbon stocks and sequestration rates at Delta Saloum are located in the Southern Saloum area (Bettenty), with a seagrass extent of 11.2 km² (see chapter "Mapping of seagrass using remote sensing"). Upscaling the preliminary carbon sequestration rate estimated at Delta Saloum 2 to the areal extent of the meadow indicates that this meadow is sequestering 194.6 Mg C per year (or 713.62 Mg CO₂ per year). If the CAR estimated at Delta Saloum 2 also occurs at the other seagrass areas mapped at Delta Saloum (i.e. Delta Saloum center (Sangomar) and north (Palmarin)), the seagrasses at Delta Saloum (extending across 41.8 km²) are sequestering 726.37 Mg C per year (or 2663.36 Mg CO₂ per year). The preliminary results indicate that there is no net accretion of carbon at Joal seagrass meadow, or at least ^{210}Pb dating technique is not able to detect sediment accretion at this meadow. Considering the CAR estimated per ha at Senegal sites (0-0.17 Mg C per hectare and per year, Table 15) and the median CAR value for seagrasses globally (0.23 Mg C per hectare and per year), the seagrass area at Praia (Cabo Verde), extending across 0.14 km², might be sequestering, at most, 3.22 Mg C per hectare and per year (or 11.81 Mg CO₂ per year). The results of the project also indicate that the top 50 cm seagrass sediments at Delta Saloum and Joal store 163.2 Gg C (or 598.5 Gg CO₂) and 84.9 Gg C (or 331.4 Gg CO₂), respectively, part of which could be released to the atmosphere if seagrass meadows are degraded.

To note that CAR is for "carbon accretion rate, i.e. the amount of organic carbon that is buried annually in seagrass sediments, and thus the carbon sequestered *in situ* for at least some decades. The photosynthesis is not taken into account here, because a large fraction of the (net) carbon captured by seagrass photosynthesis is exported (in the form of dissolved organic carbon, particulate organic matter, consumption) or decomposed. Therefore, an estimation of the amount of carbon captured as net production is not informative of the amount of carbon that the meadow is actually sequestering/burying/storing. In addition, the meadow is not only sequestering carbon fixed by the seagrass themselves, it also traps organic carbon from particles suspended in the water column from land or other coastal ecosystems origin. CAR estimates include the cumulative amount of seagrass biomass production that remains *in situ* plus the allochthonous particulate organic material.

To translate the sequestered amount of CO₂ into monetary terms, it is possible to refer to the national documents relating to the Paris Agreement on climate change. As part of this agreement, the signatory countries had to provide their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)². These documents are stating the national objectives and measures to be implemented in terms of mitigation and attenuation of climate change, as well as related budgets. Mitigation objectives refer to the amount

² See <https://unfccc.int/fr/a-propos-des-ndcs/contributions-determinees-au-niveau-national-ndcs>

of greenhouse gases that countries commit to avoid, as part of their contribution to the Paris Agreement. This "mitigation" aspect is accompanied by a related budget. In the case of Senegal, Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau, this budget is expected to be funded by international cooperation, in order the national measures to be implemented.

In this way, NDCs make it possible to extract a price per ton of "CO₂ equivalent"³, by dividing the national "mitigation" budget by the expected amount of avoided greenhouse gases emissions. Thus, Senegal is requesting USD 8.7 billion for the cumulative avoidance of 78.707 Megatons of CO₂ equivalent between 2020 and 2030. This represents a price per ton of USD 110.54 (or Fcfa 73534.56) (République du Sénégal, 2020). Cabo Verde is requesting 1 billion USD to avoid cumulated 1.425 Megatons of CO₂ eq. between 2020 and 2030 (Governo de Cabo Verde, 2020), which is equivalent to 701.75 USD per ton (Fcfa 466825.36). Finally, Guinea-Bissau is requesting 1.185 billion USD to avoid cumulated 22 Megatons of CO₂ eq. between 2020 and 2030 (republic of Guinea Bissau, 2021), or 53.86 USD per ton (Fcfa 35829.3).

By multiplying the amount of CO₂ sequestered by seagrass beds with the price per ton, it is possible to calculate the economic value of carbon sequestration provided by seagrass beds. In Senegal, with 2663.36 Mg CO₂ sequestered each year at the price of 73534.56 FCFA per ton, the economic value is 197.394 million FCFA each year. In Cabo Verde, with a sequestration rate of 11.81 Mg CO₂ per year and a price of 466825.36 FCFA per ton, this corresponds to 5.557 million FCFA each year. In Guinea-Bissau, since the Carbon Accretion Rate analysis could not be estimated, the related economic value could not be calculated (by the way, the economic value would be very low due to small seagrass surface area and low density).

All estimates provided in this report are preliminary and, therefore, have to be considered with caution. All estimates will be updated when all sediment and seagrass samples collected in the project are analysed.

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³ Greenhouse Gas are accounted as "CO₂ equivalent" in the NDCs

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SECTION 4 – ASSESSING THE MONETARY VALUE OF SWELL ATTENUATION ECOSYSTEM SERVICES PROVIDED BY SEAGRASS BEDS IN SENEGAL, CABO VERDE AND GUINEA-BISSAU

Kieran Deane¹, Grégoire Tournon-Gardic¹ and Ewan Trégarot¹

¹ Centre for Blue Governance, University of Portsmouth, UK. Richmond Building, University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth P01 3DE, United Kingdom

1. Introduction

Marine resources are increasingly being overexploited and damaged by direct anthropogenic action such as resource extraction, pollution, environmental modification and indirectly by climate change (CBD, 2018). Additionally, the fish stocks of many fish species are currently in a state of overexploitation (FAO, 2019). The condition of these ecosystems has therefore deteriorated and along with it, their functionality (Trégarot et al., 2020). This functionality is key in supporting surrounding populations and biodiversity. The coast of West Africa, several thousand kilometres long, is rich in fishery resources and natural habitats whose services are essential in maintaining an adequate living environment for the people who live there (Greenpeace, 2019).

An important aspect of these natural coastal ecosystems is Seagrass. Seagrasses are one of the most important and productive ecosystems on earth (Duarte & Chiscano, 1999; Grech et al., 2012) and are known for their great marine ecosystem services. They dissipate wave energy, reduce current flows and turbulence and increase sea bottom shear stress (Mendez & Losada, 2004; Bouma et al., 2005). They contribute to halieutic biomass production and are involved in the treatment of organic materials and bacteria found in water. Their carbon sequestration ability is comparable to that of tropical forests (UNEP-WCMC, 2016). They also provide important nursery and feeding grounds for many types of aquatic species (Terrados & Borum, 2004).

Despite the growing understanding that seagrass is such an important, biologically productive ecosystem, public environmental policies do not mirror this understanding (Alaniz et al., 2019). For example, seagrass beds are not currently taken into account in the documents of the Paris Agreement for many West African countries with the exception of Cabo Verde and Sierra Leone. Whilst forests, particularly Mangroves, are increasing in surface area and density due to sustainable management and reforestation schemes, no movement of this type has been made in the direction of other coastal ecosystems whose functionalities are still significant in the well-being of human populations and biodiversity. This shows that awareness of the existence and importance of seagrasses remains limited, thus constituting a factor in their degradation. Threats such as bottom trawling, domestic and industrial sewage runoff, fishing boat anchors, oil and gas pollution, infrastructure development, and other threats from human activities could cause seagrass declines (Halpern et al., 2007).

In light of this, integrating seagrass into the economic, political and social sphere is a necessary step towards its protection and conservation. A monetary evaluation is a relevant tool for this integration (Trégarot et al., 2020). By assessing the monetary value of ecosystem services, it becomes possible to compare habitats with income-generating activities (Bonnin et al., 2015). Healthy ecosystems also display greater resilience in the face of pressures, and so it becomes possible to estimate costs of policy inaction (Trégarot et al., 2017). These monetary estimates enable new choices on investment for protection/conservation and involve the ecosystems in the evaluation of use of space and economic activities. For example, the destruction of natural habitats vs maintenance of natural habitats because of their high economic value.

It is in this context that the ResilienSEA project, which aims to strengthen knowledge of seagrass beds in West Africa, has carried out an assessment of the economic value of ecosystem services provided by seagrass beds in three countries: Senegal, Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau. In particular, their contribution to the renewal of fish stocks, carbon sequestration, coastal protection and socio-economic development. This work serves as an advocacy tool with decision-makers for the conservation of seagrass beds. It serves both as an informative base and as a decision-making tool. In this way seagrass beds can gain a spotlight in and benefit from the planning of public policies.

In West Africa, with an expected sea-level rise of 3mm per year (Thompson et al., 2017), erosion and increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events have been problematic to the socio-economic development of the coastline (Ndour et al., 2018) and the rate of coastal retreat and permanent inundation increases year by year. This has caused the destruction of infrastructures, ecosystems and losses of human life (WAMU, 2010). The structure and maintenance of the coastline is closely linked to coastal ecosystems such as seagrass meadows, mangroves, salt marshes and coral reefs as they reduce the physical impact of erosion, extreme weather and flooding (Pottier et al., 2021). This is through the provision of three important processes, namely: wave attenuation, seabed elevation and storm surge reduction (Trégarot et al., 2021).

Wave/swell attenuation refers to the reduction of impact on the shoreline from intertidal waves. In the context of seagrass beds, swell attenuation is a function of the amount of plant material obstructing the water column and the bathymetry of the area (Koch et al., 2009). The leaves, stems and roots are all a source of friction to moving water, resulting in reduced current velocity and attenuation of waves/swells (Koch et al., 2006). Below ground, the root systems secure sand fixation and allow for high sediment accretion rates and shore stability (Koch et al., 2009). However, presence of seagrass beds does not necessarily result in full provision of this service. For example, low density beds of *Ruppia maritima* have been shown to contribute little to swell attenuation. The density needs to reach a certain level for the function to be observed (Chen et al., 2007). It is therefore essential to obtain accurate figures about location, size and density of seagrass meadows when carrying out an evaluation.

This section is based on rigorous bibliographic work, field visits and analyzes of satellite images. Swell attenuation provided by seagrass along the coast in Cape Verde, Senegal and Guinea Bissau is described and its function assessed. This function is then translated into monetary terms. The economic value is then compared with previous studies on ecosystem services and put into perspective. The discussion then evokes the advantages of conserving and extending the surface area of seagrass beds, in relation to mitigating the increasing erosion in the region. In this way, the economic implications of further integrating coastal ecosystems into sea-level rise adaptation and mitigation, as complementary to more costly protection infrastructure measures, are discussed.

2. Method and data

The framework for the economic evaluation of swell attenuation comes from the methodological note produced by Trégarot et al. (2018) for the assessment of the ecosystem services provided by the Banc d'Arguin National Park (Mauritania).

The monetary evaluation of swell attenuation is estimated on the basis of seagrass areas, as recorded by the extensive mapping carried out in this work (see Section 2 "Mapping of seagrass"), to which transfer values are applied.

According to Trégarot et al. (2018), seagrass beds absorb the swell in a variable way depending on the extent of the habitat (Figure 42 below)

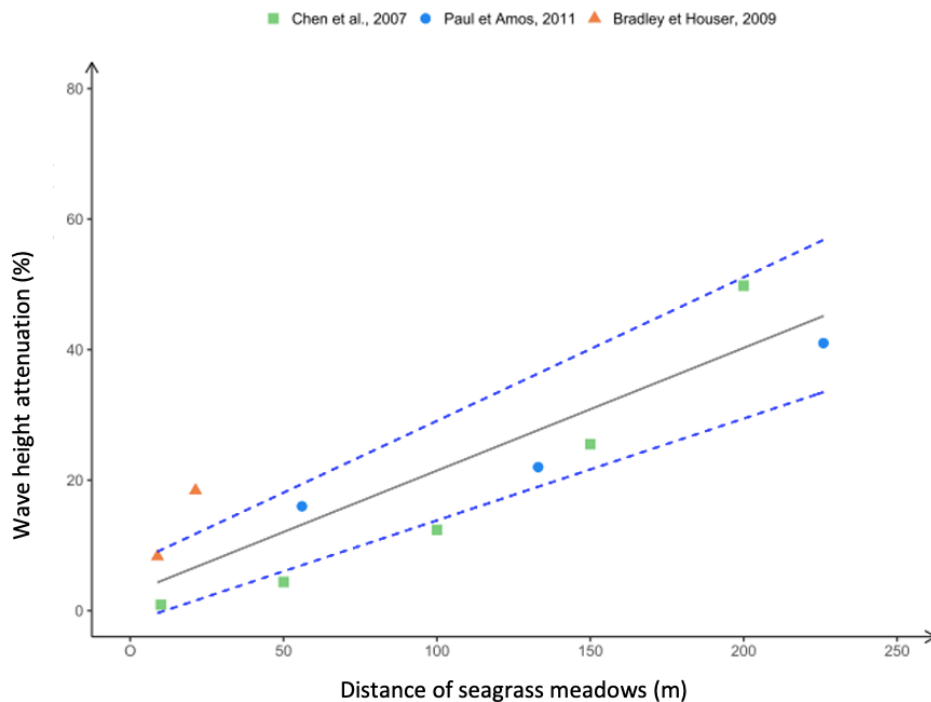


Figure 42: Wave height attenuation rate (%) as a function of the width of the seagrass meadows (in meters).
Source: Trégarot et al. (2018)

The average width and total length of the vulnerable coastal strip at each site of the observed habitats determines the rate of swell absorption by seagrass beds (oscillating between 10 and 45%). It is assumed that wave attenuation cannot exceed the maximum rate indicated in Figure 42 (i.e., 45%), even when mapped seagrass meadows exceed the referenced maximum distance shown in Figure 42.

It should be noted that the rare seagrass beds situated in Guinea-Bissau were considered to be too sparse to significantly mitigate the swell. As a result, only seagrass beds situated in Senegal and Cabo Verde were analyzed in this works.

In order to translate the swell attenuation rate into monetary terms, a transfer value corresponding to the price necessary to replace the ecosystems was then applied. In other words, these are the costs corresponding to the installation of protection works over a similar length. Information on the costs of building such infrastructures like these ones come from press articles describing erosion control projects recently implemented in Senegal⁴. Considering a duration of 15 to 20 years and taking into account inflation⁵, the average cost of these two recent infrastructures 183 440.4 CFA francs per meter per year in Senegal. In Cabo Verde, when taking into account Gross Domestic Product – GDP – per capita, the costs amount to 393 463.4 FCFA/meter/year⁶.

In this way, the economic value of the protection service is estimated by multiplying the vulnerable coastline by the cost of protection, then by the rate of attenuation of the height of the waves. The

⁴ See https://www.ndarinfo.com/%E2%80%8BProtection-cotiere-de-Saint-Louis-Vers-la-construction-d-ouvrage-en-enrochement-d-une-longueur-de-2-150-metres-video_a25620.html and [In Senegal, the "African Venice" fights against the inexorable advance of the Ocean \(lemonde.fr\)](https://www.lemonde.fr)

⁵ Estimation were based on the evolution of the consumer index from the dates of the articles to the first of January 2022. Source: https://www.ansd.sn/ressources/publications/133-FLASH%20IHPC_MAI_2022.pdf

⁶ See <https://donnees.banquemondiale.org/indicateur/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=SN-CV>

result should represent only a fraction of the price of a protective structure, since the seagrass only attenuates 10 to 45% of the height of the waves.

3. Results

The monetary value of the swell attenuation ecosystem service provided by seagrass beds is 21.71 billion CFA francs per year in the study area. The seagrass beds situated in Senegal contribute to 97.3% of the total value, while those of Cabo Verde contribute to 2.7%. Seagrass beds in Guinea-Bissau were not taken into account because of their low density (observations from field work).

3.1. Senegal

Thanks to large extents of seagrass beds in Senegal, and along the Petite Côte region in particular, the seagrass beds situated in Senegal provided an economic value of 21.12 billion CFA francs each year (almost 3.22 million euros) related to the service of swell attenuation.

The Dakar and Saloum Delta areas contribute only marginally to the total economic value of this ecosystem service (details of the values on each sites are presented in Annexe 3). In Dakar, seagrass beds are located in a bay that is already sheltered by the Ngor Island. In the case of Saloum Region, places with human infrastructures are very rare, which does not justify the construction of protective infrastructures such as dikes and groins. On the other hand, the area along the Petit Côte (Palmarin and Joal surroundings) is relatively urbanized, while being highly eroded. Consequently, the large seagrass beds extents that are found there are of major importance.

An example of the calculation of the swell attenuation in Joal area is shown in Figure 43 below:

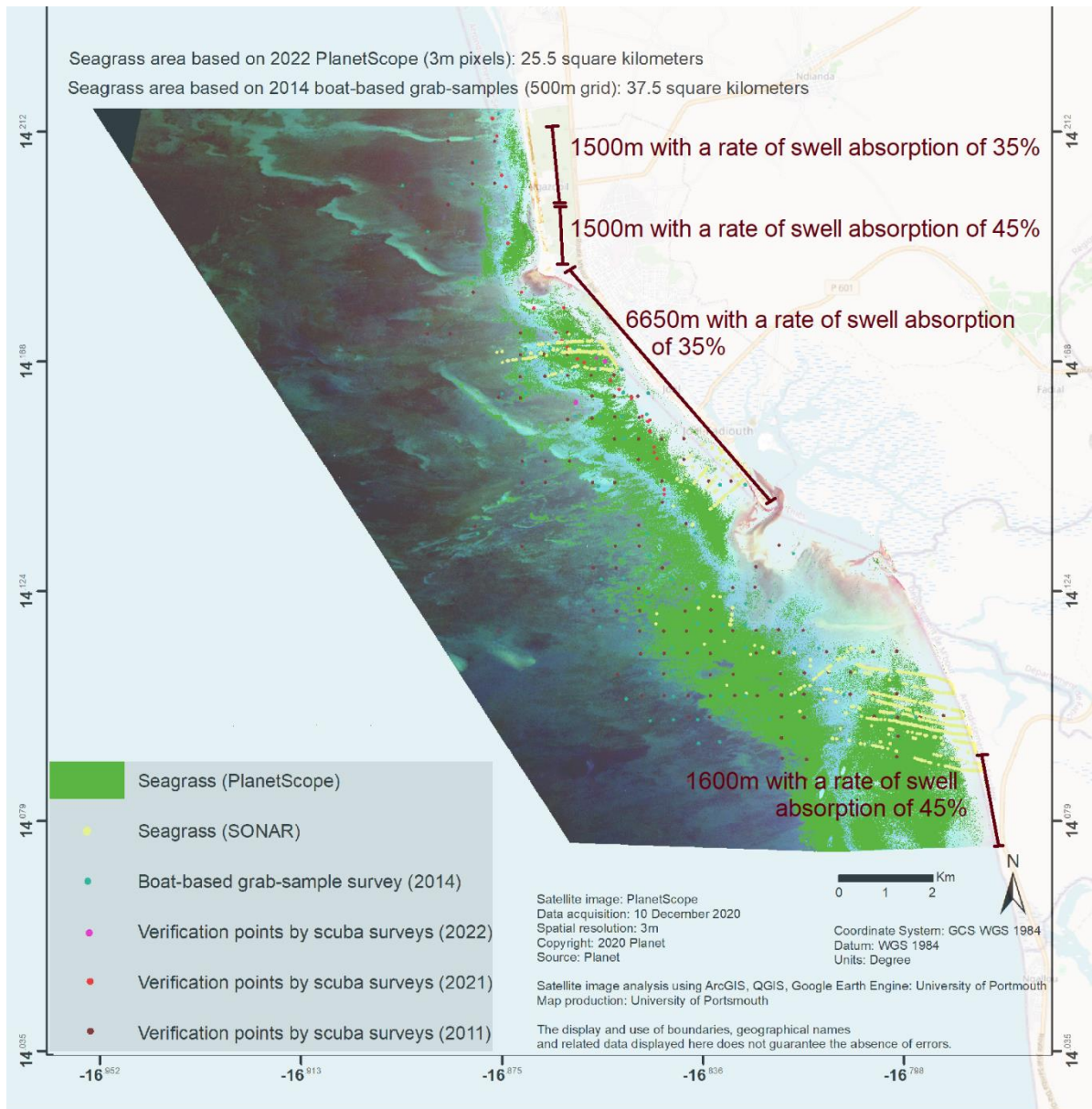


Figure 43: Example of the accounting of swell attenuation by seagrass beds on an area with high human density: Joal. Note: some places are protected by seagrass beds but have not been taken into account in the calculation of swell attenuation ecosystem service, because of the absence of vulnerable human infrastructure at these places.

3.2. Cape Verde

The value of the swell attenuation ecosystem service, which is 59.363 million CFA francs (90 000 euros), is related to the sole surroundings of Praia Gamboa (Santiago Island). Indeed, no human infrastructures are found in the surroundings of other places where seagrass beds presence is attested.

4. Discussion

Measuring the ability of seagrass to attenuate the swell is challenging at spatial scales of up to kilometers, because of the multiplicity of factors influencing the swell attenuation. At first, the level of water is decisive: the more the proportion of the water column is occupied by vegetation, the better the wave attenuation (Trégarot et al., 2018). As a result, seagrass beds don't have the same influence

during a tidal cycle (seagrass have a higher influence at low tide when the water column is the lowest, as the proportion of vegetation is higher). In addition, seagrass biological characteristics such as density, leaf length and morphology also have an influence. In addition, many abiotic variables must be included, such as water depth, wave and wind orientation, water currents, bathymetry, etc. Finally, alongside with swell attenuation, it could have been relevant to take into consideration the ability of the roots to stabilize the sediments. Further studies should fill these gaps. Consequently, research perspectives are numerous: *in-situ* analyses of swell attenuation and sediment stabilization, modelling of wave propagation in seagrass beds compared to areas without seagrass beds, etc. The characterization of abiotic factors (currents, wind, swell, etc.) can also be used subsequently in transversal topics such as tourism, water sports and spatial planning.

Moreover, it should be noted that only areas of important human presence were taken into account in this study. As risk is defined by the convergence of hazard and human vulnerability, there should be no "risk" worth of coastal protection in the absence of important human infrastructures (except of the protection of emblematic natural environments for humans, for example). However, large wild regions are also subject to erosion.

In any case, the estimated economic value of the coastal protection service through swell attenuation is impressive: 21.71 billion FCFA / year. This is value equivalent to the cost incurred by the building of several kilometers of concrete dikes each year. Moreover, the protection provided by seagrass beds is compatible with such infrastructures, as both can be combined successfully. Given the benefits derived from these habitats, it is no surprise that governments are increasingly interested in the concept called "Nature-based solutions"⁷, which includes swell mitigation by seagrass beds. In order to combat erosion, it is increasingly understood that coastal and marine ecosystems must first and foremost be preserved, or where appropriate, restored. In this way, ecological engineering projects are developing swell attenuation devices inspired by the action of aquatic plants, such as PEGASE technology by Seaboost⁸.

The price per meter is 80 445 CFA francs/m/year. This value remains relatively modest compared to that of coastal protection infrastructure in Europe (ranging from several thousand euros per meter to several tens of thousands of euros, which implies an annual value up to ten times higher than the results in this work) (Réseau Atlantique pour la Prévention et la Gestion des Risques Littoraux 2012). Conversely, the study carried out by Trégarot et al., (2018) in Mauritania mentioned a value of 2628 MRU/m/year (or 47 000 FCFA) few years ago by using the same methodology. Tregarot et al. (2018) results, although lower, remain in the same order of magnitude.

Erosion in West Africa is heavily impacting coastal communities at increasing rates. In the strategic region of Petite Côte (Senegal), where urban areas concentrate significant economic activity, the shoreline retreat is now reaching more than 3m per year in some places (Enriquez de Salamanca, 2020). In addition to social and environmental impacts, this in turn implies high economic damages: World Bank's WACA project (*West African Coastal Areas Management Program*) estimated that in 2017 alone, erosion costed about \$1 billion in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Togo, or 1.4% of the four countries' GDP (Croitoru et al., 2019). When considering Senegal alone, annual economic damages were estimated about USD 537 million (FCFA 357 billion) overall, or USD 1 million (FCFA 665

⁷ According to IUCN, the "Nature-based solutions leverage nature and the power of healthy ecosystems to protect people, optimise infrastructure and safeguard a stable and biodiverse future". See <https://www.iucn.org/our-work/nature-based-solutions>

⁸ <https://www.neozone.org/innovation/agde-une-digue-innovante-inspiree-de-la-mangrove-pour-lutter-contre-lerosion-et-la-montee-des-eaux/>

million) per kilometer. In that case, protection, restoration and extension of seagrass areas are largely relevant, while associated costs for carrying out such actions look like wise investments.

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SECTION 5 – EVALUATION DU SERVICE DE BIOREMEDIATION PAR LES HERBIERS MARINS AU CABO VERDE, SENEGAL ET GUINEE-BISSAU

Ocgéna Rusten Charles¹, Grégoire Tournon-Gardic¹, Ewan Trégarot¹ and Pierre Failler¹

¹ Centre for Blue Governance, University of Portsmouth (UK). Richmond Building, University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth P01 3DE, United Kingdom

1. Introduction

L'introduction excessive de matières organiques et d'éléments nutritifs (azote, phosphore, etc.) dans le milieu marin constitue une source importante de pollution pour les écosystèmes. Ces polluants proviennent des rejets directs ou indirects d'effluents (domestiques, industriels et agricoles) et du ruissellement des eaux contaminées des zones agricoles et non agricoles vers la mer. En particulier, les polluants affectent de manière significative les fonctions écosystémiques et la stabilité des écosystèmes côtiers (Lewis et al., 2011) et causent des dommages considérables à la flore et la faune marine (Olguin et al., 2007). Par exemple, un excès d'azote dans le milieu marin engendre des phénomènes d'eutrophisation, qui conduisent à un développement important de micro-organismes et d'algues qui détournent les autres organismes de leur accès à la lumière et aux nutriments. Plus généralement, un apport trop important en nutriments organiques signifie que l'équilibre écologique naturel est perturbé, ce qui peut mener à une réorganisation complète du milieu marin.

Les systèmes végétaux dans les eaux marines, et notamment les herbiers marins, les roseaux/joncs et les mangroves, sont capables de filtrer ces matières organiques dans l'eau, fournissant de la sorte un service de bioremédiation. Ce service de bioremédiation est défini comme un processus selon lequel les organismes vivants sont utilisés pour éliminer ou neutraliser un polluant environnemental au moyen d'un processus métabolique (Sharma, 2020). L'activité des herbiers marins permet de réduire les concentrations en polluants organiques dans l'eau (Soumya et al., 2015), en métaux lourds (Lee et al. 2019), en microplastiques (Masia et al., 2020) ou encore en bactéries pathogènes (Lamb et al., 2017). De la sorte, les herbiers marins constituent un moyen naturel de filtration des eaux côtières (Duarte, 2000).

Ils contribuent notamment au cycle biogéochimique de l'azote dans les écosystèmes marins et côtiers (Figure 44), en immobilisant ou en éliminant les matières azotées (nitrates notamment) dans un environnement pollué (Olguin et al., 2007). Ugarelli et al. (2017) ont mis en avant le fait que les taux de nitrification, de dénitrification et d'ammonification dans les zones d'herbiers étaient significativement plus élevés que dans les habitats côtiers alentours. En conséquence, les concentrations d'éléments nutritifs dans l'eau sont stabilisées, ce qui réduit l'eutrophisation côtière et favorise le développement d'autres organismes vivants (Harborne et al., 2006).

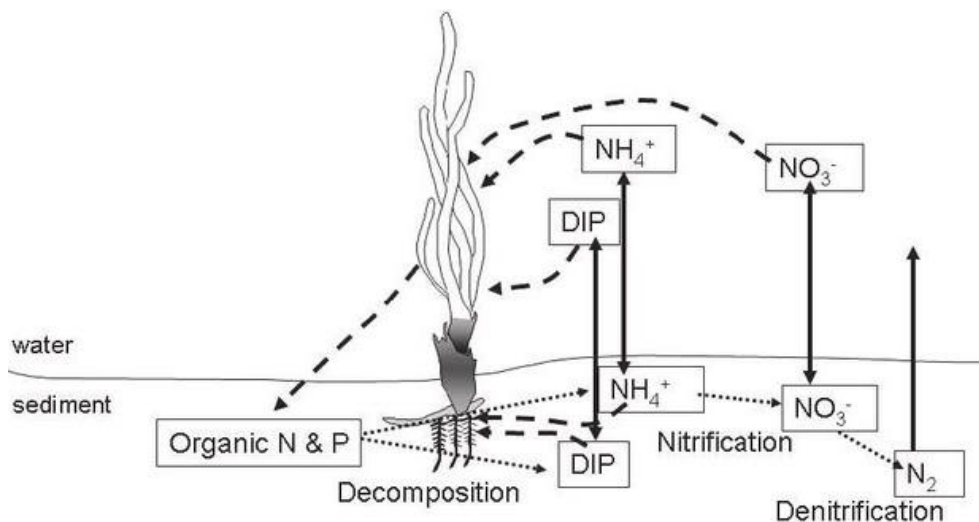


Figure 44 : Schéma conceptuel du cycle de l'azote pour les herbiers marins. Les lignes pleines représentent la diffusion entre les sédiments et la colonne d'eau. Les lignes en « traits » représentent l'absorption/libération de matière par les herbiers. Enfin, les lignes en pointillés représentent les flux dus aux processus microbiens. Source : Hester et al. (2016).

Dans la région d'étude (et notamment au Sénégal et au Cabo Verde), les zones d'herbiers sont fréquemment situées à proximité de zones urbaines desquelles s'écoulent des effluents pollués. De la sorte, grâce à sa fonction de « filtre », cet habitat naturel offre un précieux service écosystémique aux humains.

Pourtant, en dépit de leur importance, les herbiers marins souffrent d'un manque de connaissance dans la région d'étude. En conséquence, trop peu de mesures de protection ont été mises en place pour les protéger. C'est pourquoi il est essentiel de combler au maximum les lacunes en termes d'informations de base sur les herbiers, et notamment sur leurs fonctions de production de services écosystémiques. De la sorte, ces informations pourraient mettre en lumière le rôle important des herbiers dans les écosystèmes côtiers, afin qu'ils soient davantage ciblés dans les politiques publiques de conservation.

Comme évoqué précédemment (voir Section « Introduction »), le projet Resiliensea initie une étude pour quantifier en termes monétaires les services écosystémiques fournis par les herbiers marins sur la côte ouest-africaine, notamment au Sénégal, au Cap-Vert et en Guinée Bissau. Dans cette section, la fonction de production du service de remédiation est estimée, puis traduite en valeur monétaire. La première partie de cette section traite du protocole méthodologique pour estimer la fonction de production et la valeur monétaire. Les résultats sont ensuite exposés à la partie suivante. Enfin, ces résultats sont replacés dans le contexte plus vaste de la protection des milieux marins et côtiers en Afrique de l'Ouest dans la partie « Discussion ».

2. Méthode

Dans le cadre de cette étude, la méthode du coût de remplacement est utilisée. Celle-ci consiste à estimer le coût équivalent de ce service de bioremédiation, s'il avait été réalisé au moyen d'un système artificiel. Cette méthode a été utilisée par Trégarot et al. (2018) pour estimer le coût de traitement de l'azote lors de l'évaluation monétaire du service bioremédiation dans le parc national du banc d'Arguin (Mauritanie), puis reprise par Touron-Gardic et al. (2021) dans six aires marines protégées (AMP) d'Afrique de l'Ouest. D'après ces études, la valeur du traitement de l'eau dépend de la capacité de dénitrification de l'écosystème et du coût d'élimination d'une quantité équivalente d'azote par des artefacts technologiques (ici les stations d'épuration).

La formule suivante sert à estimer la valeur du traitement de l'eau :

$$\text{Valeur économique} = \sum_i \text{Surface}_i \times \text{Taux surfacique de dénitrification}_i \times \text{Etat écologique}_i \times \text{Coût de traitement}_i \text{équivalent}$$

Où « i » correspond à l'écosystème fournissant un service d'épuration d'eau

2.1. Présentation des sites

Des zones d'herbiers marins sont présentes dans les trois pays de la zone d'étude (Sénégal, Cabo Verde et Guinée-Bissau). Ces zones ont été cartographiées, et leurs surfaces estimées (voir Section 2 « Mapping of seagrass using remote sensing »). De la sorte, ces données surfaciques ont été exploitées pour estimer la fonction de bioremédiation des herbiers.

2.2. Taux surfacique de dénitrification

La dénitrification est le principal processus qui permet d'éliminer l'excès d'azote dans les milieux humides (Mitsch & Gosselink, 2015), et c'est aussi l'un des processus les plus importants pour l'élimination de l'azote dans les eaux côtières (Setzinger et al., 2006 in Trégarot et al., 2018)

Le taux de dénitrification mesuré varie beaucoup selon le lieu et la saison (Ugarelli et al., 2017). À la suite d'une large revue bibliographique, Trégarot et al. (2018) ont déterminé que la valeur médiane de dénitrification des herbiers marins est de 1,1 tonne/km²/an.

2.3. Indice de pondération

La fonction de traitement de l'eau dépend de l'état de santé des herbiers marins (Trégarot et al., 2020). En effet, une zone dense et en bonne santé écologique possédera un taux de dénitrification supérieur à une zone d'herbiers marins peu dense et en mauvaise santé. Par conséquent, il est nécessaire d'ajouter un coefficient de pondération à la valeur théorique de dénitrification, afin de prendre en compte la densité et l'état de santé des herbiers marins.

Cet indice de pondération est tiré de l'Atlas « *Meadows of Knowledge* » (GRID-Arendal 2022), réalisé dans le cadre du projet Resiliensea dans les pays de la zone d'étude. La densité d'herbiers, décrite en pourcentage du recouvrement de la surface totale du sol, y est renseignée dans chacune des principales zones d'herbiers connues en Afrique de l'Ouest.

Dans cette section, le coefficient de pondération pour le Cabo Verde représente le pourcentage de recouvrement d'herbiers dans la zone nommée « Cabo Verde » dans l'Atlas « *Meadows of Knowledge* ». Le coefficient de pondération au Sénégal est une combinaison des taux de recouvrement dans les zones « Joal-Fadiouth », « Sangomar » et « Delta du Saloum ». Enfin le coefficient de pondération pour la Guinée-Bissau représente le pourcentage de recouvrement dans la zone « Unhocomo & Unhocomozinho ».

2.4. Transcription en termes monétaires

Le coût de traitement d'un kilogramme d'azote est calculé sur la base du coût de dénitrification dans les stations d'épuration classiques dans la région d'étude. Au Sénégal, le coût de traitement d'un kilogramme d'azote dans une station d'épuration est en moyenne de 548 300 Fcfa (Direction de l'exploitation et du contrôle de l'assainissement des eaux 2020). En intégrant l'inflation récente, ce coût est de 554 876 en 2022⁹. Le seul autre pays de la région où une estimation du coût de

⁹ L'indice de consommation a été considéré. L'augmentation de cet indice est de 1% pour le Sénégal par rapport à 2020 (https://www.ansd.sn/index.php?option=com_ansd&view=titrepublication&id=16), tandis qu'il est de

dénitrification est disponible est la Mauritanie (Trégarot et al., 2018). Le traitement d'un kilogramme d'azote y coûtait 63 300 Ouguyias en 2018, soit 1 208 509 Fcfa en 2022, en prenant compte de l'inflation⁹. Les coûts de traitement en Guinée-Bissau et au Cabo Verde ont été extrapolés au prorata du PIB par habitant¹⁰, sur la base des données pour le Sénégal et la Mauritanie. Le coût de traitement d'un kg d'azote est ainsi de 1 803 069 Fcfa au Cabo Verde et de 425 415 Fcfa en Guinée-Bissau.

3. Résultats

3.1. Surface des herbiers marins

Comme énoncé à la Section 2 (« Mapping of seagrass using remote sensing »), la surface en herbiers est de 67,344 km² au Sénégal, de 0,141 km² au Cabo Verde et de 1,144 km² en Guinée-Bissau.

3.2. Indice de pondération

Le coefficient de pondération est de 0,6 au Cabo Verde, puisque le taux de recouvrement dans la zone « Cabo Verde » de l'Atlas « *Meadows of Knowledge* » est de 60% (GRID-Arendal 2022). En Guinée-Bissau, ce coefficient est de 0,25, en raison de la faible couverture (25%) d'herbiers dans la zone « Unhocomo & Unhocomozinho ». Enfin au Sénégal, ce coefficient est de 0,556, car il est la pondération de trois zones d'herbiers : « Joal-Fadiouth » (45% de recouvrement pour une surface de 25,5 km²), « Sangomar » (40% de recouvrement pour une surface de 25 km²) et « Delta du Saloum » (95% de recouvrement pour une surface de 16,8 km²).

3.3. Quantité d'azote éliminée

Au Cabo Verde, les herbiers permettent de traiter 0,09 tonne d'azote par an. Les herbiers marins du Sénégal, bien plus nombreux, traitent 41,19 tonnes d'azote dans l'eau. Enfin les herbiers épars de Guinée-Bissau permettent d'éliminer 0,31 tonne d'azote chaque année.

3.4. Valeur Monétaire

La valeur économique du service de bioremédiation fourni par les herbiers marins est de 167 575 Fcfa/an au Cabo verde, de 22,87 millions de Fcfa/an au Sénégal et de 133 883 Fcfa/an en Guinée-Bissau.

Les herbiers présents au Sénégal représentent 98,7% de la valeur économique totale du service de bioremédiation. Les herbiers du Cabo Verde représentent un peu plus de 0.7% et ceux de Guinée-Bissau 0.5%.

4. Discussion

Les sources de pollution sont nombreuses dans la région ouest-africaine, et elles impactent directement les parterres d'herbiers dans de nombreuses zones. Au Cabo verde, la principale zone d'herbiers est située le long de la plage de Gamboa. Or cette plage est située au cœur même de la capitale, avec les pressions que cela induit. Au Sénégal, les grandes zones d'herbiers de la petite côte sont aussi situées à proximité directe d'agglomérations (Joal notamment, mais aussi Palmarin et Djiffer). Bien que la ville de Joal possède une station d'épuration (Direction de l'exploitation et du contrôle de l'assainissement des eaux 2020), celle-ci ne parvient pas à enrayer complètement le rejet d'effluents pollués. En outre, des usines de transformation de poisson sont actives dans la localité, ce qui entraîne le rejet de grandes quantités d'eaux usées ayant une forte demande biologique en oxygène (Trégarot et al., 2018). Les grandes étendues d'herbiers présents dans le delta du Saloum

plus de 7% pour la Mauritanie par rapport à 2018 (<https://fr.tradingeconomics.com/mauritania/consumer-price-index-cpi>)

¹⁰ Données de la banque mondiale. Voir <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>

bénéficient de conditions plus clémentes vis-à-vis des pollutions d'origine humaine, de même que les zones d'herbiers composées d'halodules dans les îles Bijagos (Guinée-Bissau).

En outre, le rejet de polluants concentrés en métaux lourds, en produits pharmacologiques ou en colorants industriels sont autant d'éléments perturbateurs qui s'ajoutent aux nitrates. À ce titre, les herbiers représentent une solution de traitement efficace, bon marché et facile à mettre en place (Deniz, 2019). Or le développement rapide de la région (et notamment de l'agglomération de Dakar) pose de sérieux problèmes en termes de qualité des eaux. Les autorités peinent à mettre en place des contrôles stricts, tandis que les normes d'antipollution ne sont que peu respectées (Faye, 2017). A titre d'exemple, l'AFD (l'agence française de développement) finance un projet d'épuration de la baie de Hann (région de Dakar) à hauteur de 83 millions d'EUR pour enrayer la dégradation rapide de cette baie, qui fut autrefois considérée comme l'« une des plus belles du monde » (AFD, 2020).

Malgré les fortes pressions pesant sur les écosystèmes côtiers, les herbiers ont un rythme de filtration des eaux intéressant, puisqu'ils permettent de traiter annuellement plus de 41 tonnes de nitrates, dont plus de 40 pour le Sénégal. Par comparaison, la station d'épuration de Joal traite annuellement 1,784 milliard de litres d'eau, ce qui équivaldrait à des ordres de grandeurs plus ou moins similaires¹¹. De la sorte, les herbiers au Sénégal traiteraient des quantités de nitrates à un rythme qui n'a rien à envier aux stations d'épuration de taille importante.

Il faut néanmoins remarquer que le taux de dénitrification dans ce travail employé – celui défini par Trégarot et al. (2018) – reste arbitraire. En réalité, le taux de dénitrification des herbiers marins varie grandement en fonction des espèces, des conditions environnementales (substrat, faune benthique, luminosité/clarté de l'eau), de la température, ou encore de la saison (Ugarelli et al., 2017). Dès lors, le fait d'extrapoler des résultats localisés à des échelles géographiques plus vastes introduit *de facto* un biais dans les résultats (Eyre et al., 2016).

En sus de la variabilité inhérente aux caractéristiques biologiques des herbiers et aux paramètres environnementaux, il subsiste aussi une variabilité dans les résultats induite par les multiples protocoles qui ont été développés pour estimer le taux de dénitrification (Trégarot et al., 2018). En fonction de ces protocoles, le taux de dénitrification peut varier d'un facteur 1 à 17.

En conséquence, la valeur économique du service de traitement pourrait en réalité être bien supérieure aux résultats exposés ici (23 millions de Fcfa/an, quasi exclusivement concentré au Sénégal). De la sorte, la valeur par hectare de ce service (3333 Fcfa/hectare) est bien en deçà de ce que certaines études avaient estimées : cette valeur est moins grande que celle de Trégarot et al. (2018) en Mauritanie (19 USD par hectare, soit plus de 12 000 Fcfa), que Piehler et Smyth (2011) *in* Trégarot et al. 2018 (1 200 USD/ha/an – plus de 800 000 Fcfa) ou surtout que les 19 002 USD/ha/an avancée par Costanza et al. (1997) (soit plus de 12 millions de Fcfa !). Si la valeur économique déterminée par Costanza et al. (1997) avait été utilisée dans ce travail, la valeur économique totale du service de bioremédiation par les herbiers du Sénégal, du Cabo Verde et de la Guinée-Bissau aurait été de plus de 80 milliards de Fcfa.

Enfin, le modèle employé dans ce travail est volontairement simple, dans un souci de lisibilité, tandis que le cycle de l'azote dans les écosystèmes côtiers est en réalité bien plus complexe. Par exemple, certains processus comme l'enfouissement de l'azote dans le sédiment, la libération de protoxyde

¹¹ En considérant un abaissement de la moitié des quantités de nitrates (passant de 100mg/l à une valeur autorisée de 50 mg/l), la station d'épuration de Joal traiterait environ 80 tonnes de nitrates par an. Dans le même temps, l'unité de traitement de la localité de Saly est dimensionnée façon moindre (Direction de l'exploitation et du contrôle de l'assainissement des eaux 2020).

d'azote dans l'atmosphère suite au processus de nitrification/dénitrification, le broutage des plantes par les herbivores et l'exportation de la litière en décomposition (sur les plages par exemple) devraient aussi être intégrés (Trégarot et al., 2018).

Toutes les nuances apportées aux résultats de cette étude démontrent qu'il existe encore un manque criant d'informations de bases sur les services écosystémiques fournis par les herbiers en Afrique de l'Ouest, et notamment sur leur capacité de traitement de l'eau. Dans la région, la population – essentiellement concentrée le long des côtes – croît à un rythme très élevé (croissance moyenne annuelle de presque 3%, soit un doublement de la population en moins de 30 ans) (Tabutin & Schoumaker, 2020). Cette croissance, couplée à une industrialisation et à un développement économique importants, risquent d'amener toujours plus de pressions sur les eaux côtières. D'où l'importance de poursuivre la recherche, en multipliant les études *in-situ* et en perfectionnant les méthodes d'extrapolations spatiales. De cette façon, la contribution des herbiers dans le maintien des bonnes conditions écologiques des eaux côtières pourra être mieux connue, et les mesures de gestion et de planification qui en découleront seront optimisées.

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SECTION 6 – LA VALEUR DES SERVICES « CULTURELS » FOURNIS PAR LES HERBIERS MARINS AU SENEGAL, EN GUINEE-BISSAU ET AU CABO VERDE

Grégoire Touron-Gardic¹, Ocgéna Rusten Charles¹ & El Hadj Bara Dème¹

¹ Centre for Blue Governance, University of Portsmouth (UK). Richmond Building, University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth P01 3DE, United Kingdom

1. Introduction

Les herbiers marins constituent un élément vital des écosystèmes côtiers (PNUE & GRID-Arendal, 2020). Ils fournissent des services écosystémiques précieux : séquestration de carbone, production de biomasse halieutique, traitement de l'eau, etc. (Nordlund et al., 2017 ; Wallner-Hahn et al., 2022). De plus, ils permettent d'accroître la résilience des populations côtières face changements climatiques, dont ils en atténuent aussi les effets (De Los Santos et al., 2022).

Des parterres d'herbiers marins sont présents dans les trois pays de la zone de cette étude (Sénégal, Cabo Verde, Guinée-Bissau). Cependant, ils sont sujets à de nombreuses pressions qui entravent leur fonctionnement : rejets d'effluents organiques, urbanisation côtière, arrachage mécanique à cause de pratiques de pêche destructives, etc... (Vegh et al., 2022). Or le fonctionnement de ces herbiers est mal connu dans la région (De Los Santos et al., 2022). Par ailleurs, la présence de cet habitat naturel était ignorée jusqu'à très récemment dans la région : ce n'est qu'en 2009 que Cunha & Araújo publient pour la première fois des travaux sur les herbiers dans la région d'étude (Cunha & Araújo, 2009), puis il faudra attendre cinq ans de plus pour que le premier projet de recherche sur les herbiers soit mis en place au Sénégal (Mériaux & Sémelin, 2014). Ces premières activités n'ont entraîné de prise de conscience au niveau institutionnel qu'en 2018 avec le lancement du projet Resiliensea. Encore aujourd'hui, la connaissance des herbiers marins reste l'apanage de quelques décideurs, scientifiques et usagers locaux (pêcheurs), bien qu'une prise de conscience globalisée commence à émerger.

Les raisons de cette méconnaissance sont multiples : tout d'abord, la plupart des herbiers marins au Sénégal, en Guinée-Bissau et au Cabo verde sont situés dans des zones immergées. Ils sont donc peu visibles et souvent situés dans des zones difficiles d'accès. Les quelques parterres d'herbiers marins situés dans des zones intertidales (donc émergés et visibles lors des marées basses) sont en outre essentiellement constitués de l'espèce *Halodula wrightii*, dont les tiges et feuilles, petites et fines, sont éparpillées de façon très peu denses. Enfin, le grand public confond souvent les herbiers marins avec les macro-algues. En réalité, la plupart des gens ne font pas la distinction entre les herbiers et les algues. Or les algues ne sont pas non plus un sujet d'intérêt pour le grand public et les décideurs en Afrique de l'Ouest.

Si les services écosystémiques d'approvisionnement (correspondant à tout ce qui peut être exploité de façon matérielle au sein de cet habitat) et les services de régulation & support (permettant d'agir sur des variables environnementales telles que la qualité de l'eau ou la concentration en gaz à effet de serre) font l'objet de nombreuses estimations quantitatives, les services dits « culturels » sont en revanche plus difficiles à cerner, tant par les spécialistes (Van Keymeulen, 2022) que par les communautés locales (Dieng et al., 2016). En effet, les définitions diffèrent entre organes internationaux de référence (TEEB – The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, MEA – Millenium Ecosystem Assessment, FAO – Food and Agriculture organization, CICES - The Common International Classification of Ecosystem Services, IPBES – The Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services...), tandis que les déclinaisons de ces services culturels en sous-groupes « tangibles » ne font pas consensus (Van Keymeulen, 2022).

Dans ce chapitre, nous garderons la définition du MEA, à savoir que les services écosystémiques culturels sont « *les avantages non matériels que les gens tirent des écosystèmes à travers l'enrichissement spirituel, le développement cognitif, la réflexion, les loisirs et les expériences esthétiques* » (MEA, 2005 in Van Keymeulen, 2022).

D'une part, les services culturels sont difficilement appréhendables. D'autre part, les herbiers marins sont très peu connus en Afrique de l'Ouest. Dès lors, la convergence de ces deux aspects – à savoir la valeur des services culturels des herbiers marins en Afrique de l'Ouest – semble difficile à conceptualiser. Une condition rédhitoire permet toutefois de simplifier cette réflexion : une entité doit être connue et appréhendée par ses usagers, afin qu'elle puisse posséder une valeur culturelle. Par conséquent, un habitat naturel qui n'est pas connu (ici les herbiers marins) ne peut pas avoir de valeur culturelle, étant donné qu'il n'est pas valorisé *in fine*.

L'objet de ce chapitre est donc de poser les premières bases pour l'évaluation des services culturels fournis par les herbiers marins en Afrique de l'Ouest. Bien qu'essentiellement symbolique, une valeur monétaire sera attribuée à ce type de service ici. Surtout, ce chapitre souhaite attirer l'attention sur les aspects « culturels » des herbiers marins, encore occultés dans les travaux de recherche dans la région, afin de accélérer le processus de réflexion et de catalyser les recherches ultérieures. Cette démarche s'inscrit de façon pertinente dans le projet Resiliensea, car le but de ce projet est autant d'accroître les connaissances sur les herbiers marins dans la région que de questionner les interactions entre ce milieu et les humains. Entre autres, le projet Resiliensea a pour but de déterminer comment les populations côtières appréhendent cet habitat dans leurs pratiques culturelles et dans leur imaginaire.

2. La place des herbiers dans la culture au Sénégal, au Cabo Verde et en Guinée-Bissau

Les premiers habitants du littoral ouest-africain à avoir saisi l'importance des herbiers marins ont été les pêcheurs. Par ailleurs, les pêcheurs ont été interrogés dès le début du projet Resiliensea, car ils possèdent une bonne connaissance des milieux dans lesquels ils pratiquent leur métier. Les pêcheurs savent où se trouvent de nombreux parterres d'herbiers, et ils ont conscience de leur rôle de générateur de biomasse halieutique. Pourtant, ils ne sont pas sensibilisés outre mesure à la grande valeur de ces herbiers, et ils n'y vouent généralement pas d'attentions particulières.

Les pêcheurs sont un maillon essentiel pour la poursuite des recherches sur les herbiers marins dans la zone d'étude. Leurs témoignages, intégrés dans un exemple parfait de « science citoyenne », ont permis d'identifier des zones d'herbiers et permettront assurément d'en découvrir de nouvelles¹². Cette « science citoyenne » devra se poursuivre à l'avenir, en sollicitant les pêcheurs. A ce titre, il est recommandé d'utiliser des supports didactiques tels que des images ou des échantillons d'herbiers, afin de faciliter les entretiens.

Par ailleurs, certains exemples de bonnes pratiques vis-à-vis de la protection des herbiers sont éloquentes. Les pêcheurs de l'AMP de Joal-Fadiouth, par exemple, possèdent un excellent fil narratif au sujet de la conservation des tortues : jusqu'au milieu des années 2010, les pêcheurs de la région chassaient les tortues marines. À la suite de visites de sensibilisation par la fondation Mava auprès des pêcheurs, ces derniers ont compris que les tortues trouvaient à Joal des herbiers marins indispensables à leur régime alimentaire. Par ailleurs, les pêcheurs ont compris que ces herbiers marins étaient une cause principale de l'abondance en poisson le long de la côte de Joal. Ils ont réalisé

¹² A ce titre, des zones d'herbiers sont pressenties au niveau de la côte Nord du Sénégal, suite aux témoignages de pêcheurs originaires de cette région (*Communications personnelles*).

que, à l'image des tortues, ils possédaient une relation de dépendance vis-à-vis des herbiers marins. Dès lors, les pêcheurs se sont organisés – notamment au sein de l'association AGIRE (voir Figure 45 ci-dessous) – pour protéger les tortues et les herbiers. Ces derniers organisent aussi des activités touristiques en lien avec les tortues, ce qui permet de générer un revenu qui compense largement l'arrêt de la pêche sur cet animal. D'après Abdou Karim Sall, le président de l'association AGIRE mais aussi pêcheur professionnel et président du comité de gestion de l'AMP de Joal-Fadiouth, « de mangeurs de tortues, les pêcheurs de Joal-Fadiouth sont devenus leurs plus grands protecteurs ! »¹³. Des activités touristiques en lien avec les tortues marines sont aussi effectuées dans l'AMP de Sangomar (Sénégal) (*Communication personnelle*). Ces deux AMP seraient les seuls endroits où de telles activités se pratiqueraient le long de la petite côte du Sénégal.



Figure 45 : La fresque à l'entrée des locaux de l'association AGIRE, active dans la protection de l'environnement côtier à Joal-Fadiouth (Sénégal). A noter la présence des herbiers marins dans ce tableau. Photo : Abdou Karim Sall

En outre, les pêcheurs de Joal-Fadiouth avaient déjà appréhendé le rôle des herbiers dans l'abondance de poissons, lorsqu'ils remplissaient leurs casiers et nasses avec les brins d'herbes échoués. Ils espéraient recréer de cette façon les conditions d'abondance en poissons qu'ils avaient décelées dans les herbiers (*communication personnelle*).

Plus généralement, les herbiers marins participent à la bonne santé des écosystèmes dans lesquels vivent les poissons et coquillages qui sont pêchés par les pêcheurs sénégalais. De la sorte, les herbiers sont un support essentiel à des pratiques et à un mode de vie ancestral, vecteur d'identité et d'attachement culturel fort.

Au Cap-Vert, les herbiers marins, bien que peu répandus selon les estimations (perfectibles) les plus récentes, sont d'ores et déjà intégrés aux politiques publiques nationales, comme en témoigne leur mention dans le document national relatif à l'Accord de Paris sur le climat¹⁴. Les responsables gouvernementaux considèrent désormais les herbiers de la zone de Praia Gamboa comme un vecteur

¹³ <https://www.20min.ch/fr/story/ils-sauvent-les-tortues-au-lieu-de-les-manger-582057709328>

¹⁴ Voir : <https://unfccc.int/documents/497420>

de promotion du tourisme. Ces herbiers contribueraient ainsi à l'émergence d'un sentiment d'appartenance local (GRID-Arendal, 2022).

Néanmoins, en dehors de ces quelques exemples – parfois diffus – de l'importance des herbiers dans les aspects socio-culturels, le niveau collectif de conscience vis-à-vis de cet habitat est relativement faible dans les trois pays étudiés. Ce niveau de conscience est bien loin, en tout cas, de celui qui est présent en Mauritanie, par exemple, où les herbiers sont intégrés à la culture locale des Imraguens (les habitants du Parc national du Banc d'Arguin) depuis fort longtemps.

3. Evaluation du service culturel

Les herbiers marins sont donc une ressource culturelle précieuse pour les populations côtières et sont intrinsèquement liés aux habitudes socio-économiques. En fournissant des habitats essentiels pour les poissons et crustacés en Afrique de l'Ouest, par exemple, les herbiers soutiennent indirectement de nombreuses personnes dans leurs moyens de subsistance, ce qui induit *de facto* des influences sur le plan culturel dans la région. Cependant, les services reliés aux pratiques traditionnelles comme la pêche (services de production de biomasse et de traitement de l'eau, par exemple) ont déjà été évalués dans ce rapport. Par conséquent et afin d'éviter un double-comptage, ils ne seront pas pris en compte ici dans le calcul de la valeur économique des aspects culturels.

En outre, les aspects esthétiques et patrimoniaux liés aux herbiers marins sont peu présents dans les consciences des habitants du Sénégal, du Cabo Verde et de la Guinée-Bissau. Par conséquent, le seul service culturel qui soit quantifiable d'un point de vue économique à l'heure actuelle est le tourisme. Bien qu'il n'existe pas de tourisme dédié aux herbiers, il existe des activités touristiques dédiées à la faune marine (et particulièrement les tortues marines), elle-même inféodée aux herbiers marins. De la sorte, le seul lien prégnant entre les herbiers marins et les activités économiques « culturelles » est le tourisme lié aux tortues marines. Dans ce travail, la valeur économique des services « culturels » fournis par les herbiers consiste donc en la somme des chiffres d'affaires des activités touristiques liées aux tortues marines.

3.1. Sénégal

Au Sénégal, des activités touristiques dédiées aux tortues marines sont pratiquées dans les AMP de Joal-Fadiouth et de Sangomar. Des étendues importantes d'herbiers marins sont aussi présentes dans ces AMP.

L'AMP de Joal abrite plusieurs nids de tortue et le comité de gestion en assure la surveillance afin de les préserver du braconnage et en faire une activité touristique. Le chiffre d'affaires des activités touristiques liées aux tortues marines à Joal-Fadiouth a été estimé récemment par Touron-Gardic et al. (2021) : la visite se fait moyennant la somme de 45 000 Fcfa. Moins de 50 personnes effectuent la visite chaque année, ce qui revient à un chiffre d'affaires annuel de 2,250 millions de Fcfa (3435 euros).

L'étude réalisée par Touron-Gardic et al. (2021) recensait aussi les activités touristiques réalisées dans l'AMP de Sangomar. En particulier, des balades piroguières y sont organisées. Ces balades consistent à faire le tour de l'AMP et observer la diversité écologique de la zone (avifaune, faune marine, mangrove, embouchure du delta du fleuve Saloum, bolongs et îles). Selon la saison, la balade par pirogue varie sur une fourchette comprise entre 20'000 et 60'000 Fcfa par personne, avec plus de 700 balades répertoriées par année. Le calcul s'est fait sur la moyenne de 35 000 Fcfa par balade. De la sorte, le chiffre d'affaires généré par les balades piroguières s'élève à 24,5 millions de Fcfa par an. Or l'attractivité de cette activité est induite pour partie à la présence des tortues, elles-mêmes concentrées dans la zone en raison de l'abondance en herbiers. Il a été retenu ici que, de façon

indirecte, les herbiers contribuaient à un quart du chiffre d'affaires généré par ces visites piroguières, soit 6,125 millions de Fcfa (9350 euros).

Le cumul de ces deux activités touristiques représente une valeur de 8,375 millions de Fcfa par an (12 786 euros).

3.2. Cabo verde

Bien qu'il y ait un potentiel indiscutable pour générer un chiffre d'affaires touristique en lien avec les herbiers marins, celui-ci n'est pas exploité pour le moment. Les tortues marines ne sont pas présentes dans le site de Praia Gamboa. Ce site est par ailleurs situé dans un environnement extrêmement urbain (la crique est située dans la capitale du pays). Il n'y a pas non plus de tortues dans la lagune de Pedra Badejo, qui est difficile d'accès pour la faune marine.

Par conséquent, il n'a pas été possible d'identifier une valeur économique aux activités de tourisme reposant sur les herbiers marins au Cabo Verde.

3.3. Guinée-Bissau

Il existe un tourisme dédié aux espèces marines en Guinée-Bissau, et notamment aux tortues marines. Les tortues marines sont d'ailleurs présentes en abondance dans les îles Bijagos. Néanmoins, les herbiers marins présents en Guinée-Bissau (*Halodula wrightii*) sont si peu denses et si éparés qu'il n'est pas possible de déterminer le rôle dans la présence de tortues marines dans le pays.

Par conséquent, il n'a pas non plus été possible d'identifier une valeur économique aux activités de tourisme reposant sur les herbiers marins en Guinée-Bissau.

4. Une valeur qui n'est que faiblement restituée

L'approche employée dans ce chapitre ne restitue certainement pas la totalité de la valeur socio-culturelle des herbiers dans la région. En effet, les aspects de « santé mentale et physique », de « conscience et inspiration esthétique pour la culture, l'art et le design » ou encore d'« expérience spirituelle et sentiment d'appartenance » tels que définis par Van Keymeulen (2022) ne sont pas restitués dans ce chapitre. Cependant, étant donné que les herbiers sont très peu connus dans la région, ces derniers n'ont pour le moment pas de grande valeur socio-culturelle. Enfin, si la contribution des herbiers pour la pérennité des pratiques traditionnelles avait été prise en compte, le risque de double-comptage avec les autres services écosystémiques (d'approvisionnement, de régulation et de support) auraient été trop grands.

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SECTION 7 – SYNTHÈSE DES RESULTATS : EVALUATION DE LA VALEUR ECONOMIQUE TOTALE DES SERVICES ECOSYSTEMIQUES FOURNIS PAR LES HERBIERS MARINS

Grégoire Touron-Gardic¹

¹ Centre for Blue Governance, University of Portsmouth (UK). Richmond Building, University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth P01 3DE

L'ensemble des services écosystémiques investigués totalisent une valeur de 5,84 milliards de Fcfa (8,92 millions d'euros) par an (voir Figure 46 ci-dessous). En termes de valeur par unité de surface, cela représente plus de 85 millions de Fcfa (130 000 euros) par km² et par an. Cette valeur représente une manne financière importante dans les pays étudiés, d'autant plus qu'elle ne représente que la « partie visible de l'iceberg », c'est-à-dire les aspects quantifiables des services fournis par les herbiers marins. La bonne condition écologique des habitats naturels marins et côtiers représente aussi et surtout une condition *sine qua non* pour le développement de toute activité économique.

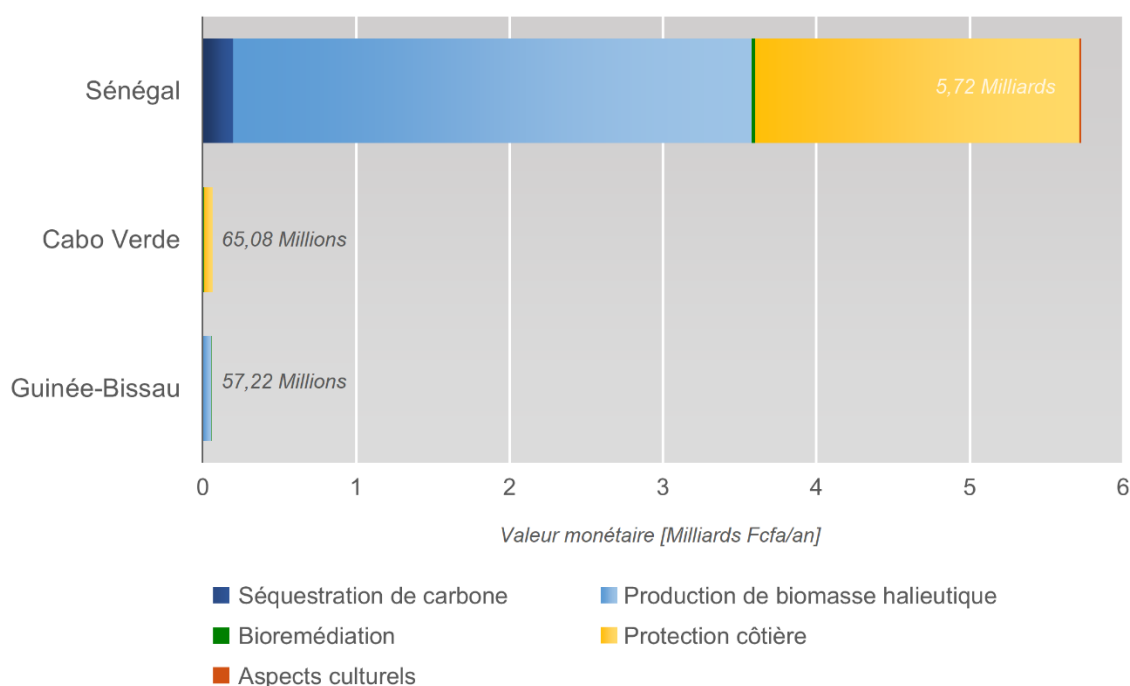


Figure 46 : Estimation de la valeur économique des services fournis par les herbiers marins au Sénégal, Cabo Verde et en Guinée-Bissau

Par ailleurs, certains aspects n'ont pas pu être renseignés, faute de données suffisantes (la séquestration de carbone par les herbiers marins en Guinée-Bissau – bien que relativement modeste, de même que la production de biomasse halieutique au Cabo Verde). Enfin, certains services écosystémiques sont voués à prendre de l'ampleur dans le futur. Les aspects culturels liés aux herbiers, par exemple, sont en train de gagner en importance, à mesure que cet habitat gagne en considération auprès des populations ouest-africaines. A ce titre, il faut rappeler que cet habitat était encore inconnu de la population il y a quelques années. De même, le service de protection côtière devrait devenir de plus en plus important à mesure que les infrastructures humaines s'étendent et entraînent de concert une augmentation de la vulnérabilité humaines face aux aléas. A l'heure actuelle, de nombreuses étendues d'herbiers marins protégeant les côtes ouest-africaines n'ont pas

été intégrées dans le calcul de la valeur monétaire, car ces herbiers ne protégeaient pas d'infrastructures humaines.

La valeur monétaire des services fournis par les herbiers est quasi-entièrement captée par le Sénégal (Figure 47). Cette répartition de la valeur monétaire est proportionnelle à l'abondance des herbiers dans les trois pays (le Sénégal abritant des zones d'herbiers largement plus étendues qu'au Cabo Verde et qu'en Guinée-Bissau).



Figure 47 : Répartition de la valeur monétaire des services fournis par les herbiers marins au Sénégal, au Cabo verde et en Guinée-Bissau.

Le service écosystémique qui génère le plus de valeur monétaire est la production de biomasse halieutique, avec 3,44 milliards de Fcfa (5,24 millions d'euros) par an, ce qui correspond à plus de la moitié de la valeur totale (58,82%) (voir Figure 48 ci-dessous). Au regard de la surface d'herbiers, ce rendement est impressionnant. Le service de protection côtière vient ensuite (2,71 milliards de Fcfa – 3,31 millions d'euros – par an), ce qui démontre l'efficacité des habitats marins pour atténuer la houle. Le montant annuel de ce service est équivalent à la construction de plusieurs kilomètres d'ouvrages lourds de protection côtière (digues, murs, jetées) chaque année. Le troisième service par ordre de valeur monétaire est la séquestration de carbone, qui avec 203 millions de Fcfa (310 000 euros) par an, représente 3,47% de la valeur totale. Cette valeur relativement basse est expliquée par les taux d'accrétion de carbone (CAR) plus faibles que ceux habituellement trouvés dans d'autres pays du monde. Néanmoins, cette manne reste importante si elle était déclinée en projets de conservation. Par ailleurs, il s'agit ici uniquement de la séquestration de carbone par les herbiers marins, tandis que la notion de carbone bleu est bien plus vaste (mangroves, marais, végétation aquatique, algues, etc.). Enfin, la valeur monétaire du service de bioremédiation est en partie freinée par la faible densité relative des herbiers dans la région, tandis que la valeur des aspects culturels est compromise par le manque de connaissance vis-à-vis de cet habitat. En effet, le grand public ne prend connaissance de l'existence des herbiers que depuis ces quelques dernières années.

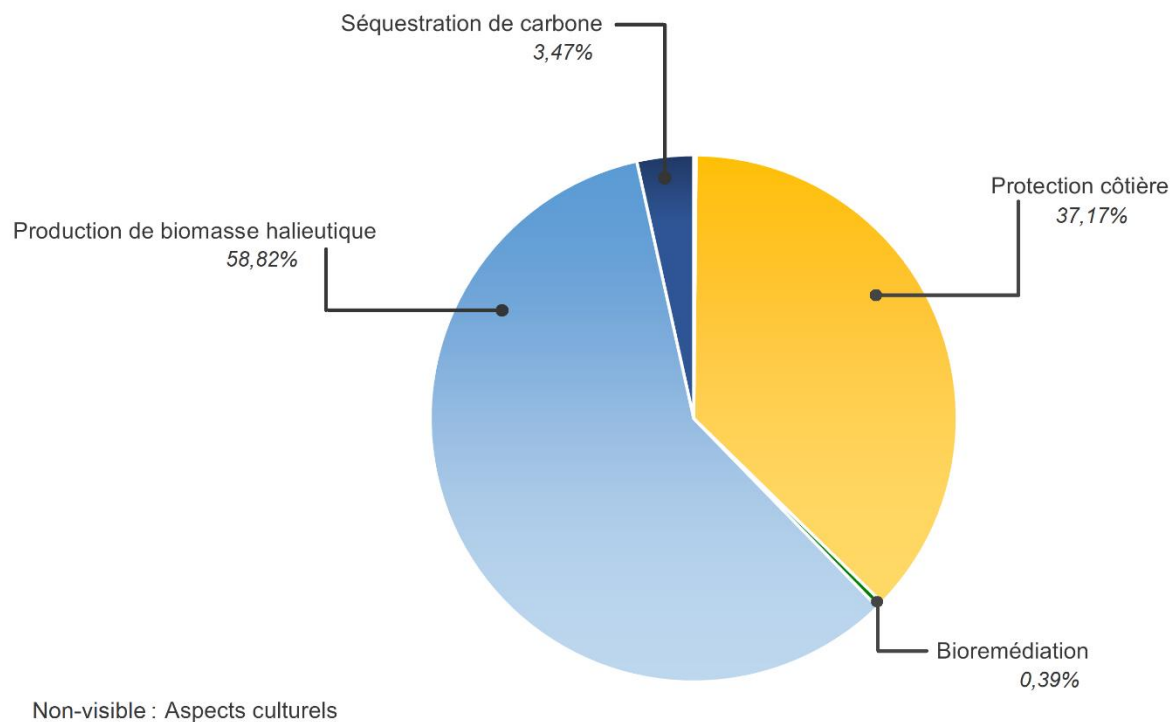


Figure 48 : Répartition de la valeur monétaire des services écosystémiques fournis par les herbiers marins au Sénégal, au Cabo Verde et en Guinée-Bissau, en fonction du type de service

SECTION 8 – LES MENACES PESANT SUR LES HERBIERS

Antonio Araujo¹, Grégoire Touron-Gardic² et Pierre Failler²

¹ ONG Azul et Verde

² Centre for Blue Governance, University of Portsmouth (UK). Richmond Building, University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth PO1 3DE

1. Menaces au niveau global

Les herbiers marins constituent un habitat côtier-marin, résilient mais fragile et d'importance capitale pour la biodiversité, l'économie des pêches et du tourisme, la mitigation des impacts des changements climatiques et le stockage du carbone (McDevitt-Irwin et al., 2016; Mtwana Nordlund et al., 2016 ; Whitfield, 2017; Lamb et al., 2017; Orth et al., 2020). Néanmoins, c'est sans doute l'un des écosystèmes côtiers les plus menacés au monde (Lotze, 2006) par le développement anarchique, mal planifié et insoutenable, et par la croissance démographique concentrée surtout le long des côtes (Halpern et al., 2019) résultant d'un exode rural galopant catalysé par des politiques inappropriées et avec des impacts environnementaux et socio-économique très négatifs.

Le déclin rapide des herbiers marins à l'échelle mondiale est le résultat d'activités humaines plus au moins néfastes pour ces habitats. L'implantation d'industries diverses sur la côte, de ports et d'autres infrastructures d'appui au développement économique, le développement du tourisme de masses et de loisirs, la pollution, le ruissellement des bassins versants consécutif à des pratiques agricoles intensives qui accélèrent l'eutrophisation, des opérations de dragage et de remplissage, et des pratiques de pêche non durables incluant le mouillage d'embarcations sur des prairies d'herbiers marins, sont autant d'exemples de menaces qui mettent en péril les herbiers marins au niveau global (Orth et al., 2006; Griffiths et al., 2020).

Même en sachant que la perte de cet habitat a des conséquences pour les populations humaines (e.g., productivité des pêches, qualité de l'eau, stabilité des sédiments), il est constaté depuis un siècle que la destruction des herbiers est devenue catastrophique partout dans le monde (Dunic et al., 2021). Cela a été vérifié en premier lieu dans les pays les plus développés comme les Etats Unis, mais plus récemment aussi le long de la Méditerranée, en Asie et même dans plusieurs pays en développement (Waycott et al., 2009).

Plus récemment dans certaines zones (Etats-Unis et Europe du Nord notamment), grâce à des efforts notables de gestion, la restauration de certaines zones dégradées a permis l'augmentation de la densité des peuplements et de la surface couverte par les herbiers (Lefcheck et al., 2018 ; de los Santos et al., 2018 ; Orth et al., 2020). Malheureusement ce n'est pas le cas pour la plupart des herbiers au monde où, au contraire, le déclin persiste (Waycott et al., 2009). De la sorte, les exemples de restaurations réussies sont exceptionnels au niveau global (Cunha et al., 2013 ; Griffiths et al., 2020).

La réduction de la surface des herbiers se poursuit dans toutes les biorégions du monde par rapport aux zones d'herbiers les plus anciennement enregistrées, même si le déclin attesté n'a pas été linéaire dans le temps (le moment d'initiation de ces déclins ainsi que les taux de perte n'ont pas été uniformes entre les biorégions) (Dunic et al., 2021). Enfin, au niveau global, malgré les possibilités de restauration, les déclins se poursuivent et la tendance de perte progressive, due aux activités humaines est préoccupante (Dunic et al., 2021).

2. Situation en Afrique de l'Ouest

Cette sous-section est directement inspirée du document de référence pour le projet Resiliensea : le *Manuel de formation pour le suivi et la gestion des herbiers marins dans les pays membres du RAMP AO* de los Santos C.B., Queiroga H., Sidi Cheikh M.A., Araújo, A., Serrão, E.A. (éditeurs) (2022)

La connaissance sur les herbiers marins dans les pays membres du réseau « RAMP AO »¹⁵, est encore très limitée, surtout en raison d'une identification tardive de cet habitat au Sud de la Mauritanie. La première publication qui confirme l'existence d'herbiers de *Cymodocea nodosa* au Sénégal, date de 2009 (Cunha & Araújo, 2009). Jusque-là, la limite Sud connue, pour cette espèce dans l'Atlantique Orientale était le Parc National du Banc d'Arguin (Filipe et al., 2008).

Malgré leur importance mondiale, les herbiers marins ont été négligés, maltraités et inexorablement dégradés par les activités humaines en Afrique de l'Ouest comme dans le reste du monde. Leur surface diminue progressivement et ils risquent de disparaître dans la région, si les politiques du développement côtier et de la gestion de la zone côtière ne changent pas. La seule exception étant peut-être le Parc National du Banc d'Arguin en Mauritanie.

Selon une enquête récente menée auprès des gestionnaires des Aires Protégées et autres acteurs côtiers dans les pays membres du RAMP AO visant à comprendre les principales menaces régionales et locales qui pèsent sur les herbiers (Vegh et al., 2022), celles qui ont été identifiées de façon récurrente ont été la destruction de l'habitat par le développement côtier, la pollution par le ruissellement industriel et du sol causé par la déforestation, l'enlèvement ou la destruction physique par la pêche ou la navigation ainsi que l'élévation du niveau de la mer et l'acidification des océans (Figure 49). La senne de plage a par ailleurs été désignée comme l'engin de pêche le plus destructeur, suivie par le chalutage.

¹⁵ Le RAMP AO est le réseau régional d'aires marines protégées en Afrique de l'Ouest, à savoir la Mauritanie, le Sénégal, le Cabo Verde, la Gambie, la Guinée-Bissau, la Guinée et la Sierra Leone. Voir : <https://www.rampao.org/?lang=fr>

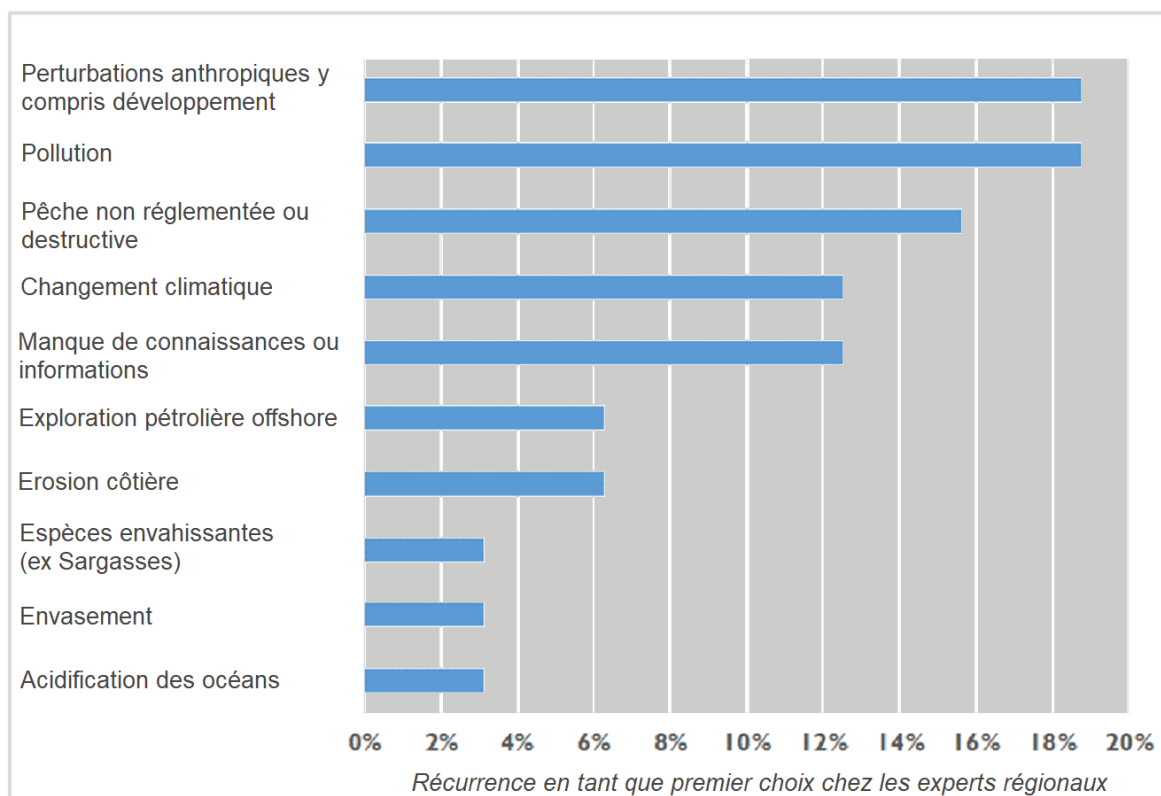


Figure 49 : Perception des principales menaces pesant sur les herbiers d'après les acteurs de la conservation marine dans la région. Source : Projet Resiliensea (Vegh et al., 2022).

En réalité, les herbiers dans les pays membres du RAMP AO sont menacés par le dragage qui peut avoir lieu dans les zones estuariennes, la poldérisation due au développement côtier et à la construction de nouvelles infrastructures (ports, marinas, jetées, urbanisation), ainsi que par la navigation de plaisance et l'ancrage. Dans les baies autour de Dakar (Sénégal) et à Joal Fadiouth, il a été observé que les herbiers de *Cymodocea nodosa* étaient sérieusement endommagés par l'ancrage des bateaux (Cunha & Araújo, 2009). Les herbiers sont également affectés physiquement par les activités de pêche et la récolte de coquillages (e.g., Delta du Saloum au Sénégal et Bijagos en Guinée Bissau). Le long de la côte sud de Dakar, de grandes accumulations de feuilles et de rhizomes d'herbiers marins sont fréquemment observées sur les plages, principalement en raison des activités de pêche côtière avec, par exemple, des sennes de plage, largement utilisées dans certaines régions (Cunha & Araújo, 2009). Les dommages causés par les activités de pêche semblent être considérables, notamment au Sénégal, où une grande flotte de bateaux de pêche artisanale est ancrée près du rivage. Ceux-ci sont poussés par la brise de mer, les longs cordages et chaînes attachés aux ancres raclent en permanence les fonds marins, détruisant les herbiers, les coraux et les algues. Leur impact est si important qu'il peut parfois être observé sur des photographies aériennes.

L'appauvrissement de la qualité de l'eau en résultat de la pollution (e.g., effluents industriels et domestiques, aquaculture) n'est pas étudié dans la région, mais il est sûr que son impact sur les herbiers est important. En outre, l'augmentation de la matière organique dissoute provenant des eaux usées non traitées à proximité des grandes villes comme Dakar (Sénégal) (e.g., baie de Ngor, Hann et Bargny), où l'on trouve des herbiers, est une autre source d'impact significative. Les activités liées à l'aquaculture, comme les usines de farine de poisson à Nouadhibou (Mauritanie), par exemple, pourraient également constituer une menace potentielle pour les herbiers, en raison des fortes charges en matières organiques associées à la production. Celles-ci peuvent provoquer l'anoxie et

finalement la disparition des herbiers. La qualité de l'eau peut également se détériorer en raison de fortes pluies augmentant la turbidité de l'eau, ainsi que l'agitation maritime croissante en Afrique de l'Ouest et la poussière à proximité du Sahara et dans la région du Sahel, réduisant la lumière disponible pour les herbiers et nuisant ainsi à leur activité photosynthétique et à leur croissance

En Afrique de l'Ouest, y compris dans les pays membres du RAMPAAO, les herbiers marins constituent une part importante du régime alimentaire des tortues vertes *Chelonia mydas* (Diaz-Abad, 2022), et des lamantins africains *Trichechus senegalensis* (Powell, 1990 ; Diagne, 2014). Il a été démontré dans différentes parties du monde que la surpêche des prédateurs supérieurs, tels que les requins, a un impact négatif sur les herbiers marins en augmentant les populations de tortues dans des proportions très importantes (Burpee, 1972). Malgré le fait qu'aucune étude ne rapporte cette menace en Afrique de l'Ouest, il est connu que les populations de requins ne sont aujourd'hui qu'un petit pourcentage de ce qu'elles étaient il y a peu d'années, tandis que les populations de tortues vertes semblent être en augmentation (Catry P. communication personnelle, August 2022).

Par ailleurs, les macroalgues vertes du genre *Caulerpa*, apparemment en expansion en Afrique de l'Ouest, peuvent occuper l'espace des herbiers et provoquer des altérations de l'habitat qui réduisent ou empêchent leur recrutement (Molenaar et al., 2009). Aussi, les épiphytes – des petites algues qui poussent attachées aux feuilles des herbiers ou des petits animaux (e.g., colonies de ascidies et de bryozoaires) – peuvent être une menace importante pour les herbiers dans la région. Les herbiers sont en outre affectés par des endophytes, qui vivent à l'intérieur des cellules des feuilles (e.g., Oomycetes et Labyrinthulomycetes) et peuvent être des causes majeures de mortalité.

La déposition de poussières en provenance du Sahara, augmente aussi la turbidité de l'eau, avec des conséquences néfastes au niveau de la photosynthèse. Les tempêtes océaniques, assez fréquentes en Afrique de l'Ouest, génèrent par ailleurs des grosses vagues qui frappent le littoral et ont un impact très négatif sur les herbiers, arrachant les rhizomes et provoquant leur disparition.

L'augmentation du niveau de la mer consécutive aux changements climatiques, et l'érosion du littoral qui l'accompagne sont aussi des facteurs de stress pour les prairies sous-marines. Selon des projections réalisées en 2021, les herbiers marins de la région seront sévèrement affectés par l'érosion côtière et la compression de l'habitat causée par l'élévation du niveau de la mer. Les projections pour la Gambie (Chefaoui et al., 2021), indiquent que toutes les espèces d'herbiers pourraient disparaître d'ici 2050.

Enfin, le maintien de la connectivité entre différents herbiers de la région (par dispersion ou migration) est essentiel pour empêcher les populations de devenir trop petites et isolées, et afin de leur permettre d'être viables et de persister dans le temps. Les herbiers ne peuvent migrer que s'ils sont transportés, par exemple, par des herbivores comme les tortues vertes ou par les courants océaniques, pouvant se recoller au substrat ou libérer des graines après avoir atteint un habitat approprié. Si la dispersion entre populations est bloquée, alors leur résilience aux perturbations ou aux événements stochastiques défavorables occasionnels est réduite. Ces menaces peuvent être la destruction de populations d'appoint le long des corridors de dispersion, ou la perte de vecteurs de transport tels que les animaux brouteurs d'herbiers. Pourtant, ces animaux brouteurs tels que les tortues jouent un rôle important dans la dispersion des herbiers dans la région. Il est par conséquent d'autant plus pertinent d'assurer la conservation de ces animaux.

3. Perspectives à long terme

Malgré tous les efforts et les engagements et l'existence d'un plan d'action global adopté par la Conférence des Nations Unies sur l'environnement et le développement en 1992, préconisant que les

États doivent identifier les écosystèmes marins présentant des niveaux élevés de biodiversité et de productivité et d'autres zones d'habitat critiques et prévoir les limitations nécessaires à l'utilisation de ces zones et reconnaissant que la priorité devrait être accordée aux herbiers marins, sa dégradation se poursuit.

Il paraît évident que le développement côtier et marin doit être durable. Celui-ci doit garantir l'équilibre écologique, sans quoi l'avenir de l'humanité est en péril et le spectre de la pauvreté et de l'iniquité sociale et éthique planera sur la planète. Ainsi, toutes les activités pouvant porter préjudice aux herbiers marins devraient être interdites et les décideurs devraient orienter les politiques de développement, d'appui au développement et de coopération, pour mitiger leurs impacts négatifs, surtout au niveau socio-économique et environnemental. Cela ne sera pas possible sans l'adoption de codes de conduite stricts et la mise en œuvre de plans d'action pour le développement durable, prenant en compte l'existence de prairies d'herbiers marins dans leurs pays respectifs.

Dans l'ensemble, les déclin ont ralenti surtout dans les biorégions les plus impactées par le passé et celles qui ont fait l'objet d'efforts de restauration substantiels. Néanmoins, les taux de déclin persistants actuels de 1%-2% par an sont très préoccupants, car ils représentent au niveau global des pertes substantielles qui peuvent augmenter au fur et à mesure que la taille des prairies diminue. Ces surfaces pourraient devenir si petites qu'elles passeraient en dessous du seuil de restauration par les facteurs naturels ou par le biais de mesures de gestion de terrain (Moksnes et al., 2018 ; Olesen et Sand-Jensen, 1994 ; Orth et al., 2012). Même si les pourcentages de perte ne sont pas connus en Afrique de l'Ouest, il n'y a aucune raison de penser que la situation soit différente, surtout en raison de l'augmentation de la pression démographique en zone côtière, la prolifération d'infrastructures d'appui au développement économique (e.g., ports au Sud de la Mauritanie et de Dakar) et des changements climatiques (e.g., érosion côtière très accentuée et augmentation des cyclones) (Murakami et al., 2020).

Comme au niveau mondial, les déclin se poursuivront sûrement en Afrique de l'Ouest si les actuelles politiques de gestion de la zone côtière ne changent pas. Cependant, les possibilités de restauration existent, en fonction de l'engagement des autorités et des communautés riveraines. Il faudra assurer la connectivité entre les différents herbiers, car la connectivité joue un rôle fondamental dans leur écologie et leur évolution, en garantissant la dynamique des populations et le flux de gènes et en augmentant par conséquent la résilience des populations aux changements environnementaux (Cowen et al., 2006 ; Cowen et al., 2007 ; Olds et al., 2016). Une faible connectivité entraîne une réduction de la taille des populations, ce qui augmente ensuite la probabilité d'extinctions locales et la différenciation génétique/spéciation (Tavares et al., 2022). Surtout, dans le contexte actuel, la protection de tous les herbiers, même ceux de surface réduite, est cruciale pour garantir la diversité génétique actuelle, et afin que les herbiers de l'Afrique de l'Ouest soient résilients et en capacité de s'adapter aux changements climatiques.

4. Un levier d'action pour faire face aux menaces : la stratégie régionale ouest-africaine de conservation des herbiers marins

Face à ces menaces aux origines multiples et parfois diffuses, il est essentiel d'agir en ayant une vision intégrée. En effet, la préservation de l'environnement côtier et marin au sens large est un thème qui doit faire intervenir tous les acteurs, et ceci à tous les niveaux spatiaux (local, régional, national, international) et de gouvernance. La notion de transversalité est essentielle pour organiser et structurer les actions de conservation.

Dans ce but, le RAMPAO (réseau régional pour les AMP en Afrique de l'Ouest) a réalisé au sein du projet Resiliensea un document stratégique visant à organiser la conservation des herbiers marins en Afrique de l'Ouest. Ce document vise à identifier un certain nombre de parties prenantes ayant une influence sur les herbiers marins, à définir certains axes de travail prioritaires et à organiser les mesures en vue de la conservation des herbiers (Touron-Gardic et al., 2022). Les principaux axes de travail sont définis comme suit :

4.1. Structuration

L'objet de ce premier axe de travail est de constituer la base de la pyramide en termes de soutien institutionnel. Le but est d'intégrer la notion de protection des écosystèmes côtiers et marins à l'ensemble des politiques publiques transversales (tourisme, pêche, traitement des eaux, industrie, aménagement du territoire, changements climatiques, etc.). Pour ce faire, le document stratégique propose qu'une cellule de coordination soit créée en capitalisant sur l'expertise du projet Resiliensea. De la sorte, cette cellule de coordination pourrait être formée par les points focaux « Resiliensea » dans chacun des pays du projet (de la Mauritanie au Nord jusqu'à la Sierra Leone au Sud). Le cahier des charges de cette cellule de coordination est vaste. En premier lieu, la cellule de coordination devra militer auprès des services publics pour l'intégration des herbiers dans les cadres légaux : lois, plans stratégiques nationaux (plans de développement, stratégie des pêche, stratégie sur les aires marines protégées, etc.) et conventions internationales (convention d'Abidjan pour la protection de l'environnement côtier en Afrique de l'ouest, documents nationaux relatifs à la convention sur la biodiversité, documents nationaux relatifs à l'accord de Paris sur le climat, etc.). La seconde tâche serait de faire du lobby auprès de tous les secteurs d'activité concernés, afin de les sensibiliser sur la grande valeur des herbiers ainsi que sur leur vulnérabilité. Ce travail de plaidoyer devrait aussi s'adresser au grand public. Enfin, le travail de l'unité de coordination sera aussi d'organiser des projets de conservation et de structurer les actions des uns et des autres

4.2. Protection et restauration

Les actions de protection et de restauration ont pour but de mutualiser les efforts des parties prenantes autour de cinq points centraux. Ces actions s'inscrivent dans la continuité des mesures entreprises par les acteurs à tous les niveaux (terrain, parties prenantes locales, nationales, internationales) dans les domaines transversaux que sont : la conservation de l'environnement côtier et marin, le maintien des stocks halieutiques, la préservation de la biodiversité et de la lutte face aux changements climatiques. En effet, ces thèmes ont tous comme dénominateur commun les herbiers marins (entre autres dénominateurs). Les cinq points centraux précédemment évoqués sont :

- Sensibilisation adaptée à tous les niveaux
- Agir sur les menaces
- Qualité de l'eau
- Aires marines protégées
- Restauration des herbiers

4.3. Suivi, recherche et renforcement de capacités

Certains aspects prioritaires pour la recherche ont émergé, dont les niveaux de connaissances diffèrent en fonction du niveau d'avancement de la recherche. Ainsi, la caractérisation des apports continentaux (eaux de ruissellement, turbidité, nutriments...) et son impact sur les herbiers marins n'est que peu étudiée. La distribution des parterres d'herbiers marins, ensuite, est encore mal connue. La cartographie de ces herbiers en est encore à ses balbutiements, et la connaissance de leur aire de répartition est encore et toujours perfectible. A ce titre, ce présent rapport a essayé d'apporter sa pierre à l'édifice. La biologie des espèces *in situ* nécessite des travaux plus approfondis : effets de

saisonnalité, dynamique spatio-temporelle, etc. Enfin, l'identification et l'estimation des services écosystémiques fournis par les herbiers doit aussi être étudiée *in situ* de façon régulière. Pour l'accomplissement de ces recherches, ce troisième axe stratégique est constitué de cinq piliers complémentaires et interdépendants. Il s'agit de :

- Mise en place de suivis scientifiques pour chaque mesure de gestion
- Favoriser la gestion participative
- Recherche & formation conjointe
- Développement des échanges intra-régionaux
- Continuité des projets à grande échelle

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SECTION 9 – BIODIVERSITY OF SEAGRASS IN WEST AFRICA

Ester A. Serrão¹, Henrique Queiroga², Elisabeth Mayé Diouf³, Amadeu Mendes Almeida⁴, Emanuel Dias⁵, Rui Freitas⁶, António Araújo¹, Filipe Tobana Nhanquê⁴, Abdou Aziz Ndiaye⁷, Salomão Bandeira⁷, Iça Barri⁴, Aissa Regalla de Barros⁵, Grégoire Touron-Gardic⁸, Pierre Failler⁸, Karim Erzini¹

¹Centro de Ciências do Mar (CCMAR), Universidade do Algarve, Faro, Portugal

²CESAM, University of Aveiro, Aveiro, Portugal

³Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar, Senegal

⁴Centro de Investigação Pesqueira Aplicada (CIPA), Direção de Serviço de Recursos Haliêuticos e Oceanografia (DSRH), Ministério das Pescas, Guiné-Bissau

⁵Instituto da Biodiversidade e das Áreas Protegidas (IBAP), Guiné-Bissau

⁶ISECMAR-UTA, CP 163 Mindelo, São Vicente, Cabo Verde

⁷Direction des aires marines communautaires protégées/ Ministère de l'environnement du développement durable et de la transition écologique, Senegal

⁸University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth, United Kingdom

1. Introduction

A major ecosystem service of seagrass habitats is their role in supporting biodiversity. This includes providing shelter from predation and water motion, substrate for reproductive structures and for attachment of large numbers of epiphytes, increasing and protecting the settlement of larval stages, and food provisioning for a wide diversity of animals, mainly by harboring larger numbers of their prey organisms.

Although the general benefits of seagrasses for biodiversity are consensual, there is much variability in the biodiversity supported by seagrass habitats among regions, sites and species (Orth et al., 1984). In the Western African region in particular, the interesting biogeographic transition between temperate and tropical influences originates seagrass habitats with very distinct characteristics, the implications of which are insufficiently understood in what concerns their biodiversity supporting services. This study therefore aims to review the information available about the biodiversity of seagrass habitats in general, but with a specific focus on the biogeographic transition zone of western Africa, comprising Mauritania, Senegal, Guiné-Bissau and Cabo Verde.

2. Methods

A literature review was conducted to summarize the role of seagrass habitats on all levels of biodiversity in general.

Local biodiversity inventories in the target western African countries were conducted using purse seine (Senegal) and beach seines (Mauritania and Guinea-Bissau) all with 14 mm cod end. In addition to the fishing, underwater visual census surveys were conducted by snorkeling and SCUBA-diving. In Cabo Verde, reef fish assemblages were assessed using underwater visual censuses along consecutive strip transects running parallel to the shore at low tide with 4 m visibility. The beach purse seine could not be used there due to the presence of rocky conglomerate in the volcanic insular shores.

3. Nursery effect of seagrasses

Many original and review studies assessing the biodiversity of seagrass ecosystems relative to other types of coastal ecosystems have shown that seagrasses support higher non-seagrass species richness and biomass (eg Boström & Bonsdorff, 1997; Edgar & Barrett 2002; Berkenbusch et al., 2007; Homziak et al., 1982; Edgar, 1990; Lee et al., 2001; Siebert & Branch, 2005; Eklöf et al., 2005) and that high densities of larvae and juvenile stages of many marine species are common in these habitats (Bell & Pollard, 1989; Orth et al., 1984; Orth & van Montfrans, 1990; Rooker & Holt, 1997; Hannan & Williams, 1998). Taken as a whole, these observations are at the base of the notion of seagrasses as important nursery habitats for many marine species (Heck et al., 1997; Heck & Thomas, 1984; Bell & Pollard, 1989; Heck et al., 2003; McDevitt-Irwin et al., 2016), which would colonize these environments as larvae or juveniles benefitting from abundant food (mostly small crustaceans, epiphytes growing on seagrass blades and different kinds of detritus) and shelter from predators (provided by the seagrass blades) during a critical phase of their life cycle.

Besides contributing to high levels of local diversity, many of these species are commercially important. For instance, in the Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania (Trégarot et al., 2020), artisanal fisheries targeting meagres, mullets, soles and smooth-hounds contributed to an added value of 1 million euros per year over the period 2006–2017. The same authors used a bio-economic model, based on Ecopath, to estimate the gross added value generated by fleet categories fishing species in proportion to the contribution of the seagrass habitat to the biomass of each species. The estimates for the Mauritanian Exclusive Economic Zone are that the nursery function of the Banc d'Arguin contributes to 15% of the fisheries, representing an added value creation of 71 million euros per year. The biomass enhancement of commercial fish species by seagrasses was also estimated in South Australia (temperate region), modelling growth and mortality based on density estimates at age class 0 in seagrass and control habitats (Blanton & zu Ermgassen, 2014). The study could calculate the economical enhancement for fisheries provided by seagrasses, which was estimated at ~150.000 € ha⁻¹ yr⁻¹ at current prices.

According to Beck et al. (2001) 'a habitat is a nursery for juveniles of a particular species if its contribution per unit area to the production of individuals that recruit to adult populations is greater, on average, than production from other habitats in which juveniles occur.' Therefore, demonstrating the nursery effect objectively for species with an indirect life cycle that occur in seagrasses during some phase of their life entails demonstrating that, when compared to other habitats, seagrasses support 'greater contributions to adult recruitment from any combination of 4 factors: (1) density, (2) growth, (3) survival of juveniles and (4) movement to adult habitats.'

These processes have been reviewed by several studies (Heck et al., 1997; Heck et al., 2003; Gillanders et al., 2003; McDevitt-Irwin et al., 2016) that have shown mixed, and in some cases illusive, enhancing effects of seagrasses as a nursery habitat compared to other types of coastal habitats. The magnitude and direction of the effect depended on geographical region, type of habitat to which seagrasses are compared to, ecological guild and assumptions of the studies. One commonality among these review studies, however, is a clear geographical bias of the observations, with a preponderance of North American, European and Australian studies and an absence of African observations. The conclusions of these review studies are summarized in the following sections, adding information for African seagrasses when subsequently available.

3.1. Density effect

In the review study of Heck et al. (2003), of 193 comparisons including fish and invertebrate species, 46% cases concluded that seagrasses support significantly higher abundance of larvae and juveniles than other habitats, but 26% showed higher abundances in other complex habitats (mangroves, saltmarshes, boulders and macroalgae) and 28% showed no difference between seagrasses and other habitats. It should be considered, however, that larvae and early juveniles are very small and can easily be overlooked by most sampling techniques, especially as structural complexity increases, which could decrease the detection of significant effects of the complex habitats. The review of McDevitt-Irwin et al. (2016) concluded that density of invertebrate (37 cases) and fish (279 cases) juveniles is higher in seagrass meadows than in non-structured habitats, especially in subtropical and temperate habitats compared to tropical habitats. Juvenile densities in seagrasses are higher than in bare, algal and marsh habitats, but similar to those in mangrove, coral reefs and rock/rubble/shell habitats

A comparison of the meiofauna of several habitat types along the East Africa, including sandy beaches, mangroves and seagrasses from South Africa to Tanzania (Barnes et al., 2011), concluded that seagrasses had higher species richness relative to mangroves. But, compared to sandy beaches, seagrasses had similar values of species richness, and a lower diversity as measured by the Shannon-Wiener index. The highest meiofaunal abundances were recorded at a sandy beach. About 65% of the abundance in seagrasses was accounted by nematodes, followed by copepods and foraminifera.

Studies in estuaries and bays in South Africa have revealed a difference in macrofaunal richness and abundance between seagrasses and unvegetated sandflats that deviates from the paradigm of higher species richness and abundance in seagrass habitats (Siebert & Branch, 2011; Barnes & Barnes, 2014). The observed pattern in these studies was related to the presence of burrowing axiid crustaceans (mud shrimps), which have a strong bioturbation effect. Seagrass plots were equally or slightly more diverse than unvegetated plots, but the macrofauna abundance in unvegetated plots was consistently higher. These unexpected trends may be a function of local biotic and abiotic interactions. Mud shrimps are common in sand and mud unvegetated flats, because the sedimentary space is free from the stem and root systems of seagrasses, and have a strong effect in loosening sediment particles, aerating the sediment, increasing water exchange and boosting bacterial growth (Siebert & Branch, 2011; Barnes & Barnes, 2014). Although the sediment instability caused by mud shrimps may inhibit some species, others may be favoured by the bioturbation effect, especially polychaetes, which benefit from the free sediment space, and microgastropods, which use the higher biomass of bacterial films (Barnes & Barnes, 2014)

A comparison across many studies showed that biodiversity of epifauna and infauna is positively correlated with two traits that differ among seagrass species, the root-rhizome mat, and the plant canopy (Orth et al., 1984). This is particularly relevant for Western Africa, where the traits of the seagrasses have contrasting properties among species (Chefaoui et al., 2021). The temperate seagrasses *Zostera noltei* (highest densities) and *Cymodocea nodosa* (tallest canopies) have traits that are much more beneficial for biodiversity as shelter from predation and water motion, than the shortest and thinnest species, *Halodule wrightii* (Chefaoui et al., 2021).

3.2. Growth effect

The increased growth rates of juvenile forms expected from seagrass habitats are postulated to result from high biomass of food items, mainly in the form of detritus, epiphytic organisms growing on seagrass blades, small crustaceans and meiobenthic animals (Heck et al., 1997). The earlier evidence of high growth rates in early life forms in seagrasses came from studies on crab species from temperate regions. A cohort study of the crab *Portunus pelagicus*, from Australia, feeding on

seagrasses, gastropods, bivalves, crustaceans and polychaetes, indicated that it grew from ~60 mm to ~116 mm carapace width in 1 year (Edgar, 1990). Similarly, an experimental study on *Callinectes sapidus*, USA, concluded that crabs grew faster in vegetated enclosures compared to non-vegetated ones, with body volume increasing to about 550 mm³ in vegetated enclosures in 6 weeks, but only to 300 mm³ in non-vegetated treatments (Orth & van Montfrans, 1987).

Studies on growth rates of suspension feeders *Mercenaria mercenaria* and *Aequipecten irrorationatus* showed variable results, finding enhanced, equal, or reduced growth in seagrasses compared to non-vegetated substrates. The herbivore gastropod *Strombus gigas* grew faster in seagrasses than on sand, but smaller individuals grew slower. The shrimp *Penaeus aztecus* showed no significant difference in growth rate among living or artificial seagrass or unvegetated substrates. Results for fishes are also variable. *Gobiosoma bosc* and *Sciaenops ocellatus* showed mixed results, but *Toutoga onitis* grew faster in seagrasses (Heck et al., 1997).

A review including more recent observations on 91 cases of invertebrates and fishes (Heck et al., 2003), concluded that the effect size of seagrasses on enhanced growth rates of was very large in comparisons with unstructured and structured-unvegetated habitats. However, there was no significant difference in juvenile growth rate in seagrass meadows compared to vegetated habitats. Another review including 87 fish and 9 invertebrate cases (McDevitt-Irwin et al., 2016) concluded that growth rates are higher in subtropical seagrasses than in either temperate and tropical seagrasses and were higher in invertebrates than in fishes.

3.3. Survival effect

Increased survival in seagrass habitats results from the refugia from predation provided by the blades of the seagrasses. This direct effect was assessed by experimental studies of the cannibalistic relationships of the protunid crab *Carcinus maenas* from Portugal (Almeida et al. 2008, 2011). Here, a significant effect of predator size, prey size and seagrass density on mortality rate was found, with mortality increasing with decreasing relative prey size and with reduced seagrass density. A striking effect of the effect of locomotory activity and phase of day was detected, which may explain some of the mechanisms of predation-prey interactions in seagrass habitats. Movement intensity of large juveniles was an order of magnitude higher than that of small juveniles and much higher in sparse than in dense vegetation cover, during the night and during the day. Conversely, activity of small juveniles was mostly crepuscular, regardless of vegetation cover. These results suggest that small crab juveniles are relatively protected under dense vegetation cover due to lower mobility of larger crabs and provide evidence of temporal segregation of activity windows between crabs of different sizes, which may be a key mechanism to reduce cannibalistic predation and therefore increase the carrying capacity of nursery habitats.

Another study using experimental manipulation with predation-exclusion cages (Freestone et al., 2019) showed higher invertebrate mortality in tropical seagrasses caused by predator fishes, compared to temperate seagrasses. Predation strongly reduced diversity in tropical, but not in temperate, seagrasses. Higher diversity in tropical seagrass ecosystems was interpreted as resulting from habitat heterogeneity provided by the structurally complex seascape, together with non-random community assembly resulting from strong predator-prey interactions.

A review of studies using small crustaceans (amphipods, isopods, hermit crabs, crabs) and sea urchins consistently show that seagrass protection decreases mortality from predator fishes. Studies using fishes as prey also show decreased mortality in seagrasses (Heck et al., 1997). Aggregating survival estimates from 71 invertebrate and fish cases (Heck et al., 2003) showed a significant higher effect of seagrasses on survival compared to other habitats. Disaggregating by habitat type, survival in

seagrasses was higher than in bare habitats, but lower than in other structures but non-vegetated habitats (boulders) and similar to other vegetated habitats (macroalgal beds, mangroves, saltmarshes). Concerning latitudinal differences, a review study of 43 fish and 15 invertebrate cases (McDevitt-Irwin et al., 2016) showed that survival in temperate seagrasses is higher compared to unstructured habitats but significantly lower compared to other structured habitats. In the tropics, there were no significant differences in survival between seagrass and unstructured or structured habitats. Fishes and invertebrates had higher survival in seagrass compared to unstructured habitats but tended to have lower survival in seagrass compared to structured habitats.

3.4. Recruitment and migration

Seagrass habitats change water flow and the hydrodynamics guiding migration and recruitment of larval stages (Grizzle et al., 1996). The engineering of hydrodynamic conditions due to seagrass canopies is a key factor in larval recruitment, increasing the magnitude of larval settlement under current attenuation. This effect is crucial in mediating connectivity between juvenile and adult habitats, by strongly influencing the spatial and temporal scales and numbers of animals that are able to move from juvenile to adult (Gillanders et al., 2003). Such movements have been insufficiently studied to understand the numbers and paths of transport and survival of organisms to adults in seagrass nursery habitats.

4. Field sampling in Western Africa:

Warm-temperate seagrass assemblages in Western Africa are found in Mauritania and Senegal, and contain a mixture of the temperate species *Cymodocea nodosa* and *Zostera noltei*, with the tropical species *Halodule wrightii*. The presence of the temperate species, that reach higher densities and taller canopies (Chefaoui et al., 2021) in these two countries creates ideal conditions to host rich fish biodiversity. This is the case in Mauritania and Senegal but the abundance of these two temperate species at their lower limit in Senegal is highly threatened itself (Chefaoui et al., 2021).

4.1. Description of samplings

In Mauritania, our sampling revealed that underwater vegetation created conditions for more species and more individuals per species than in unvegetated areas (Figure 50 below).

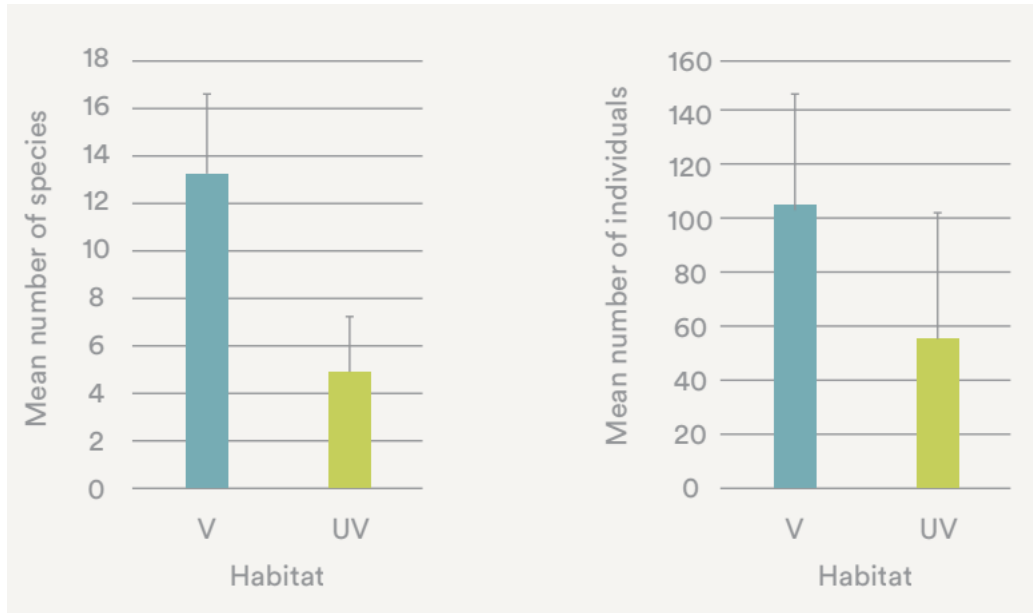


Figure 50 : Number of species sampled per fishing event with beach seine in seagrass meadows at the PNBA (Parc National du Banc d'Arguin). A) Mean number of fish species and B) mean number of fish individuals in vegetated (V, seagrass) and unvegetated (UV, bare sediment). From Compain (2021).

In Senegal, within habitats dominated by the large and dense temperate seagrasses, our samplings found juveniles of 28 commercial fish species inside the seagrass habitats, and a total number of 106 species caught, including invertebrates and turtles (Figure 51 below).

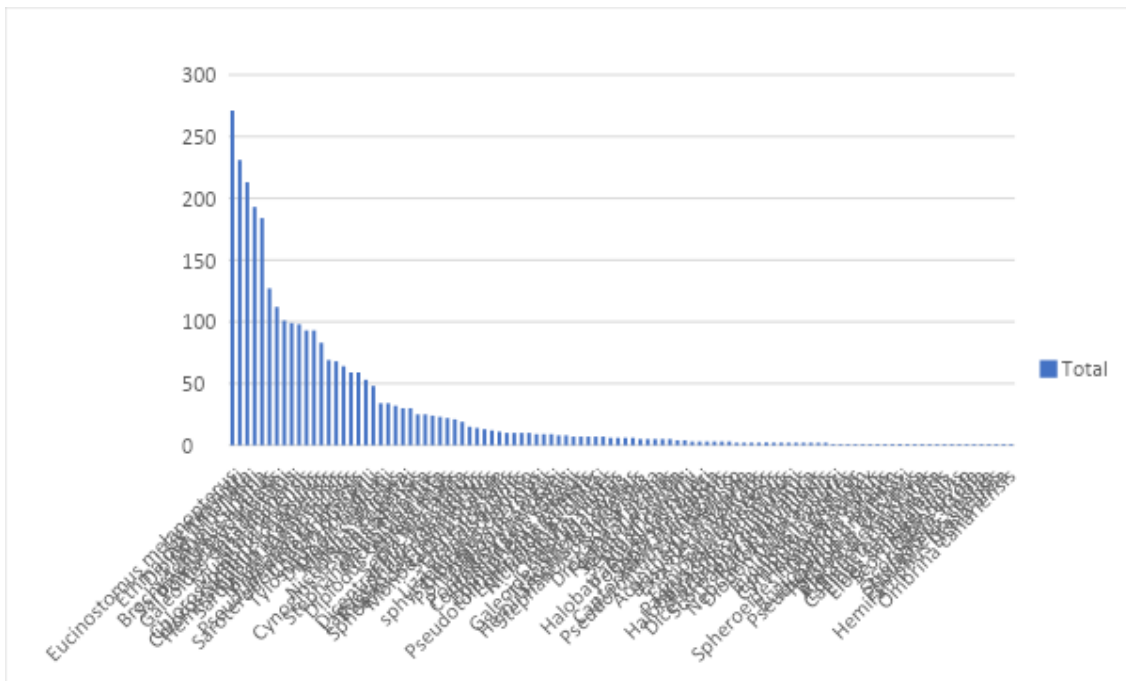


Figure 51 : Total number of individuals per species caught by purse seine nets inside seagrass habitats in Senegal. Most of these are juvenile fish but it also includes invertebrates and even turtles.

Tropical seagrass assemblages in Western Africa comprise mostly *H. wrightii*, a species with traits like lower canopy size and very thin leaves, that are less suitable for promoting high fish biodiversity in comparison with the previous temperate species. Even within the same species, the species

biodiversity varies widely across sites and across life-stages, but it is always high in comparison with what is observed in bare sand.

In Bijagós (Guinea-Bissau), in the seagrass habitats of *H. wrightii*, the sampling by beach seine in Unhocomo, Unhocomozinho and Meio resulted in catches of 20 juvenile fish species (Figure 52 below). Of these, 18 were commercial species.

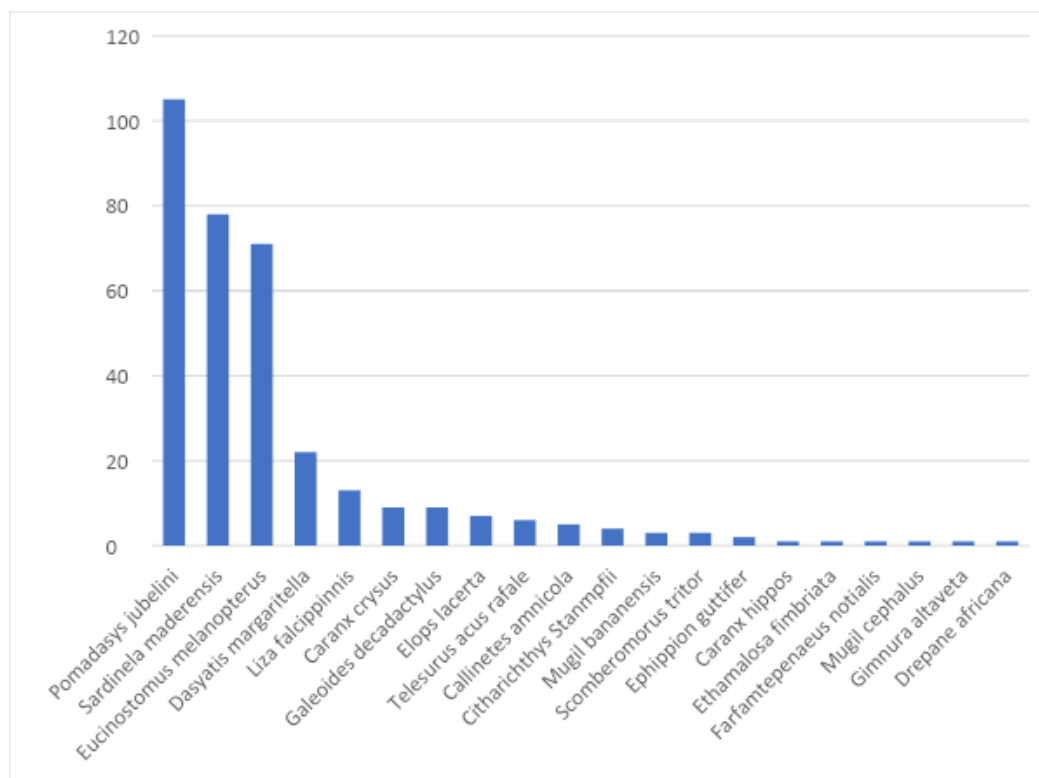


Figure 52 : Total number of individuals per species caught by beach seine nets inside seagrass habitats in Bijagós (Unhocomo, Unhocomozinho and Meio) in Guinea-Bissau.

In Cabo Verde, at Santiago Island, 28 adult species were observed in underwater visual surveys inside the *H. wrightii* seagrass bed (Table 16 below). The overall fish assemblage was composed of 11 species (39%) with origin from tropical West Africa (from Cap Blanc in Mauritania to Angola), 8 Amphi-Atlantic species (29%), and 6 from the eastern Atlantic (e.g. Guinean species were well represented). Three species (11%) are endemic to the Cabo Verde Archipelago. In terms of species richness, mobile invertebrate feeders accounted for 29% (8 species), followed by omnivores at 25% (7 species), carnivores and roving herbivores with 3 species each (11%). The other trophic groups comprise 2 or 1 species each. Half of the total richness of the seagrass fish community is non-commercial species with around 40% commercial species.

Five fish plus an unidentified ophichthid snake eel were clearly associated to the seagrass *H. wrightii* in Santiago Cabo Verde, because they live most of the time on the seagrass feeding, chasing, hiding or simply being associated with the seagrass carpet. *Eucinostomus melanopterus*, Flagfin mojarra is a spread coastal species entering estuaries, lower courses of coastal rivers, and lagoons and juveniles were encountered in the midwater body along the seagrass carpet of Gamboa. The *Diplodus prayensis*, Two-banded seabream is a endemic seabream species that juveniles and adults occur in deeper waters and also in muddy bottoms and were presented in the Gamboa study area. The *Lethrinus atlanticus*, Atlantic emperor was represented by a school of juveniles feeding directly into the seagrass. Some semi-adult individuals of *Mugil cephalus*, Flathead grey mullet were observed crossing several times in the seagrass at Gamboa. The snake eel holes were clearly evident along the seagrass bed.

Table 16 : Adult fish species observed in Underwater Video Counts in Cabo Verde, Santiago, praia Gamboa.

| Family | Species | Authority | Trophic category | Biogeography | Commercial value |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Acanthuridae | <i>Acanthurus monroviae</i> | Steindachner, 1876 | Roving herbivores | Eastern Atlantic | Commercial |
| Aulostomidae | <i>Aulostomus strigosus</i> | Wheeler, 1955 | Piscivores | Amphi-Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Blenniidae | <i>Ophioblennius atlanticus</i> | (Cuvier & Valenciennes, 1836) | Territorial herbivores | Eastern Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Blenniidae | <i>Parablennius salensis</i> | Bath, 1990 | Omnivores | Cabo Verde Endemic | Non-Commercial |
| Centracanthidae | <i>Spicara melanurus</i> | (Valenciennes, 1830) | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Tropical West Africa | Commercial |
| Chaetodontidae | <i>Chaetodon robustus</i> | Günther, 1860 | Sessile invertebrate feeders | Tropical West Africa | Non-Commercial |
| Clupeidae | <i>Sardinella maderensis</i> | (Lowe, 1838) | Planktivores | Eastern Atlantic | Commercial |
| Diodontidae | <i>Diodon hystrix</i> | Linnaeus, 1758 | Sessile invertebrate feeders | Amphi-Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Gerreidae | <i>Eucinostomus melanopterus</i> | (Bleeker, 1863) | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Amphi-Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Gobiidae | <i>Gnatholepis thompsoni</i> | (Bleeker, 1853) | Omnivores | Amphi-Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Labridae | <i>Coris atlantica</i> | Günther, 1862 | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Tropical West Africa | Non-Commercial |
| Labridae | <i>Scarus hoefleri</i> | (Steindachner, 1881) | Roving herbivores | Tropical West Africa | Commercial |
| Labridae | <i>Parisoma choati</i> | Rocha, 2012 | Roving herbivores | Tropical West Africa | Commercial |
| Labridae | <i>Thalassoma pavo</i> | (Linnaeus, 1758) | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Eastern Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Labrisomidae | <i>Labrisomus nuchipinnis</i> | (Quoy & Gaimard, 1824) | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Amphi-Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Lethrinidae | <i>Lethrinus atlanticus</i> | Cuvier & Valenciennes, 1830 | Carnivores | Tropical West Africa | Commercial |
| Lutjanidae | <i>Lutjanus agennes</i> | (Bleeker, 1863) | Carnivores | Tropical West Africa | Commercial |
| Mugilidae | <i>Mugil cephalus</i> | Linnaeus, 1758 | Omnivores | Tropical West Africa | Commercial |
| Mullidae | <i>Mulloidichthys martinicus</i> | (Cuvier, 1829) | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Amphi-Atlantic | Commercial |
| Mullidae | <i>Pseudupeneus prayensis</i> | (Cuvier, 1829) | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Eastern Atlantic | Commercial |
| Muraenidae | <i>Muraena melanotis</i> | (Kaup, 1860) | Carnivores | Tropical West Africa | Commercial |
| Pomacentridae | <i>Abudefduf hoefleri</i> | (Steindachner, 1881) | Omnivores | Tropical West Africa | Non-Commercial |
| Pomacentridae | <i>Abudefduf saxatilis</i> | (Linnaeus, 1758) | Omnivores | Amphi-Atlantic | Non-Commercial |
| Pomacentridae | <i>Chromis multilineata</i> | (Guichenot, 1853) | Planktivores | Amphi-Atlantic | Low Commercial |
| Pomacentridae | <i>Stegastes imbricatus</i> | Jenyns, 1840 | Territorial herbivores | Tropical West Africa | Non-Commercial |
| Sparidae | <i>Diplodus lineatus</i> | (Valenciennes, 1830) | Omnivores | Cabo Verde Endemic | Low Commercial |
| Sparidae | <i>Diplodus prayensis</i> | (Smith, 1844) | Omnivores | Cabo Verde Endemic | Low Commercial |
| Tetraodontidae | <i>Sphoeroides marmoratus</i> | (Lowe, 1838) | Mobile invertebrate feeders | Eastern Atlantic | Non-Commercial |

In Cabo Verde also, the tropical region *Ruppia maritima* occurs in several islands, in coastal lagoons and salt ponds. Fish biodiversity associated with this habitat in this region has not been studied. However, seagrasses of the genus *Ruppia* have been shown to be highly related to the presence of wading birds that may eat their seeds, thereby promoting their dispersal across habitats. Indeed, they are mainly found in very sheltered coastal lagoons and salt pans that are essential bird habitats.

4.2. Charismatic species

The seagrasses of the Western African region support species of high ecological or conservation importance that depend on seagrass for at least their reproductive stages and some for feeding grounds. This includes threatened and/or charismatic species, such as some waders and seabirds, seahorses, sea turtles, and elasmobranchs.

Seagrasses in Western Africa are particularly important for sea turtles, namely loggerhead turtles (*Caretta caretta*) in Cabo Verde and green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) in the Bijagós archipelago in Guinea-Bissau, in Joal and other sites in Senegal and the Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania. Seagrasses are themselves an important food source for green turtles in this region, associated with macroalgae (Díaz-Abad et al., 2021) and their microbiomes, which themselves influence the microbiomes of the digestive tract of green turtles (Díaz-Abad, 2022). In parallel, green turtles also seem to play a role in dispersing seagrass seeds along West African countries, counteracting oceanographic barriers (Tavares et al., 2022).

Among the species of conservation interest supported by seagrass meadows this region contains also the nesting grounds for migratory birds of the East Atlantic Flyway. The seagrass habitats of the temperate intertidal countries in the north of this region are and support the prey of wintering shorebirds, including bivalves, crustaceans, insects, gastropods, polychaetes (Lourenço et al., 2016). Many animals that can be eaten by shorebirds benefit from the seagrass (Honkoop et al., 2008), such as as the bivalve *Dosinia* sp. preferred by the Red Knot Arguin (Honkoop et al., 2008; Onrust et al., 2013; El-Hacen et al., 2020).

Other subtidal marine fauna besides the sea turtles are also dependent on seagrass habitats because these are nursery grounds for many fish and invertebrate species, including dozens of elasmobranch species with IUCN status of vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered (Chefaoui et al., 2021).



Figure 53 : Selected bird species using seagrass habitats in the Banc d'Arguin (Mauritania), where seagrasses are the keystone species of the ecosystem. Bird species that use seagrass leaves to build their nests: A) *Thalasseus maximus* (Zira), B) *Platalea leucorodia balsacii* (Arel), C) *Croicocephalus cirrocephalus* (Nair), D) *Onychoprion*

anaethetus (Arel). Bird species that use seagrass beds as feeding areas: E) *Calidris alpina* (Nair), F) *Larus genei* (Zira), G) *Arenaria interpres* (Kiaone), H) *Phoenicopterus roseus* (top) and *Pelicanus onocrotalus* (bottom) (Bellaat), I) *Calidris alba* (Cap Tagarit). Photos by: E.A. Serrão (A-F); A. Araújo (L); M. Broquere, BACOMAB (H); C. de la Hoz Schilling (I). From de los Santos et al. 2022

4.3. Competing species

The biodiversity that lives associated with macroalgae include also species that compete for light or other resources, such as the species of the genus *Caulerpa* (Figure 54 below). They occupy the same habitat as the seagrasses but create distinct conditions in the sediments that change the microbial biodiversity associated to this habitat.



Figure 54 Four distinct species of macroalgae of the genus *Caulerpa* found in mixed meadows with seagrasses in Western Africa. A) Arguin island (Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania), B) Unhocomo (Bijagós, Guinea-Bissau). C) M'Bour, Senegal. Photos by: E.A. Serrão.

Competition for resource can be especially when filamentous algae grow over the seagrass (Figure 55). This is the case of small filamentous algae that can be abundant on the seagrass leaves restricting their access to light and nutrients.

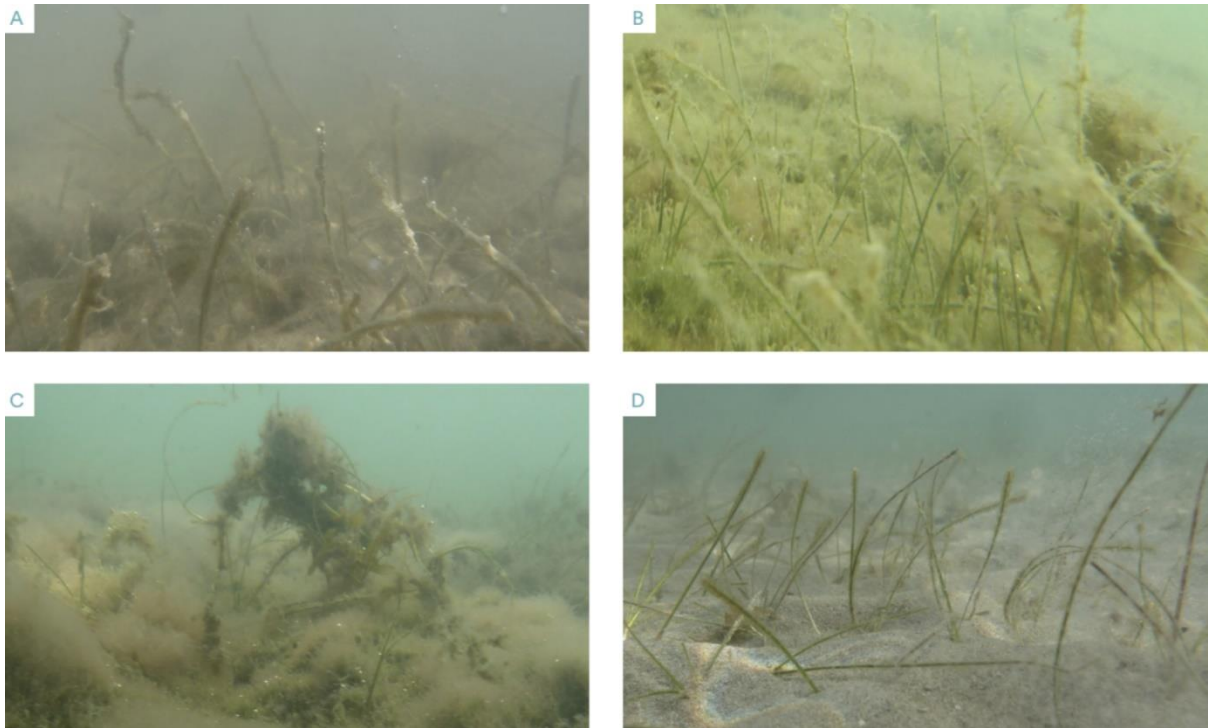


Figure 55 : Filamentous algae epiphytic on *Halodule wrightii* in the Bijagós (Guinea-Bissau), in João Vieira (A), and Unhocomo (B,C), compared to less epiphytised seagrass on the outer open coast at Unhocomo (D). Photos by: E.A. Serrão.

Epiphytic colonial animals, such as colonies of encrusting ascidians and bryozoans, are especially common on leaves of *C. nodosa*, given its larger support area to harbour colonies. These can be locally and temporally abundant, causing leaf loss either by lowering the leaf capacity to acquire resources or by the mechanical impact of the weight and drag consequences of being covered by a colonial animal (Figure 56)



Figure 56 : Frequent colonial animals epiphytic on *Cymodocea nodosa* in the Banc d'Arguin (Mauritania): A) bryozoans, and B) ascidians. Photos by: E.A. Serrão.

5. Conclusion

Our results support the concept that seagrass habitats are structural species, whose presence changes the biodiversity of the ecosystems. Our results also provided support to the expectation that seagrasses play important roles in supporting a wide diversity of animals and other groups. Our results also indicate that the biodiversity associated to these habitats can show some variability depending on sites and species. The northern countries with more temperate species tend to benefit more from biodiversity provisioning services of seagrass habitat, due to the denser and taller seagrass ecosystem structure in those areas.

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SECTION 10 – LA CONTRIBUTION DES HERBIERS DANS L'ATTENUATION DES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES

Grégoire Tournon-Gardic¹, El Hadj Bara Dème¹, Ewan Trégarot¹ & Pierre Failler¹

¹ Centre for Blue Governance, University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth PO1 3DE, United Kingdom

1. La contribution des herbiers dans l'atténuation des changements climatiques

Les 197 pays signataires de l'accord de Paris sur le climat s'étaient engagés à mettre en œuvre leur contribution prévue déterminée au niveau national (CPDN) pour la période 2015-2020 et leur contribution déterminée au niveau national (CDN) pour la période 2020-2030 avec une possibilité de révision en 2025. De nature volontaire, la contribution définit, pour chaque pays et pour cinq ans, les mesures à prendre pour atténuer les effets du changement climatique et pour s'y adapter (Hellio 2017). Les sept pays côtiers de la région « PRCM »¹⁶ (Mauritanie, Sénégal, Cabo Verde, Gambie, Guinée, Guinée Bissau et Sierra Leone) ont récemment transmis leur CDN à la Convention-Cadre des Nations-Unies sur les changements climatiques (CCNUCC).

Parmi les mesures d'atténuation proposées par les pays dans les CPDN et CDN, la principale est la limitation des émissions de Gaz à effet de serre (GES). Pour les 7 pays côtiers d'Afrique de l'Ouest, la reforestation constitue la solution fondée sur la nature pour l'atténuation de ces émissions la plus prisée, en raison de mesures déjà existantes pour l'exploitation et la conservation des forêts et de la capacité avérée des forêts à séquestrer du dioxyde de carbone (CO₂) et à le stocker dans le sol.

Si les forêts, notamment de mangroves, devaient ainsi, par le biais des actions de reforestation des CDN, voir leur surface augmenter et leur densité s'accroître, peu de mesures de ce type ne semblent avoir été prévues pour les autres écosystèmes littoraux qui disposent pourtant de capacités d'absorption et de stockage similaires. Ainsi, par exemple, les herbiers ne sont pas pour le moment pris en compte dans cinq pays sur sept¹⁷. Pourtant, le potentiel de stockage de carbone des herbiers marins, estimé à plus de 6 tonnes d'équivalent CO₂/an/ha (Duarte, 2013), est comparable à celui des forêts tropicales (Boulier & Simon, 2010; UNEP, 2016). En outre, ils couvrent une surface importante dans la région : au moins 748 km² d'après les premières analyses cartographiques réalisées à l'échelle régionale (Karasik et al., 2020).

Le lien entre les habitats marins et le potentiel de séquestration de carbone a été abordé très tôt (Beran, 1995). Par la suite, la notion de « carbone bleu » a permis de légitimer définitivement le rôle des habitats marins et côtiers pour la séquestration de carbone, comme en témoigne l'Initiative sur le carbone bleu, conduite par Conservation International et l'UICN (Herr et al., 2015). C'est donc tout naturellement que le lien entre les CPDN/CDN et le carbone bleu a été pris en compte dans les rapports consultatifs des Nations-Unies (Herr & Landis, 2016; Thomas et al., 2020) et dans la littérature scientifique (Gallo et al., 2017; Jernnäs & Linnér, 2019; Kelleway et al., 2020; McKenzie et al., 2020) à

¹⁶ Le PRCM (Partenariat régional pour la conservation de la zone côtière et marine) est une « coalition d'acteurs travaillant sur les problématiques du littoral ouest africain et couvrant sept pays : Mauritanie, Sénégal, Cabo Verde, La Gambie, Guinée-Bissau, Guinée et Sierra Leone. ». La zone d'influence du PRCM, tout comme celle du RAMP AO (le Réseau régional d'AMP en Afrique de l'Ouest), est considérée ici comme une délimitation géographique. Voir : <https://prcmarine.org/thematique/>

¹⁷ Seul le Cabo Verde et la Sierra Leone mentionne les herbiers dans sa CDN (See <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NDCStaging/Pages/All.aspx>).

la suite de la rédaction des CPDN pour la conférence des parties « COP21 » tenue à Paris en novembre-décembre 2015. Dès lors, il est apparu que les habitats marins et côtiers, de par les services de régulation du climat qu'ils fournissent, pouvaient jouer un rôle prépondérant dans l'atténuation des effets des changements climatiques (Tittensor et al. 2019; Wilson et al. 2020), et donc à l'atteinte des objectifs de la Convention-cadre des Nations unies sur les changements climatiques (CCNUCC) (Goldstein et al. 2020; Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2019; Howard et al. 2017; Roberts et al. 2017). Cependant, le fossé existant entre la prise de décision politique et les connaissances scientifiques semble faire obstacle à la mise en place de politiques efficaces pour lutter contre les changements climatiques (Gallo et al. 2017) : en témoigne l'absence de mentions des herbiers marins dans les CDN des pays ouest-africains, à l'exception de la Sierra Leone et du Cabo Verde, alors qu'ils sont étroitement associés à la notion de carbone bleu par la communauté scientifique (Bryan et al. 2020; Miteva et al. 2015; Theuerkauf et al. 2015; Wylie et al. 2016)¹⁸. Plus généralement, c'est justement cette notion de carbone bleu qui est négligée dans les CDN de nombreux pays du monde (Wedding et al. 2021), au même titre que le potentiel des océans pour lutter contre les changements climatiques (Hoegh-Guldberg et al. 2019; Pörtner et al. 2021).

Dans le cas des pays de la zone de ce travail, le Sénégal est le pays dont les herbiers sont les plus abondants. Concrètement, lorsque le taux de séquestration de carbone des herbiers au Sénégal est comparé aux objectifs de réduction contenus dans la CDN du pays, la contribution des herbiers reste toutefois modeste. De la sorte, avec 2663 tonnes séquestrées annuellement (voir la Section 3 « Sequestration of organic carbon » de ce rapport), les herbiers marins situés au Sénégal ne contribuent qu'à moins de 1% aux objectifs de réduction de la CDN¹⁹. Néanmoins, ces résultats sont en attente d'investigations ultérieures. En effet, dans le cas où les surfaces d'herbiers seraient plus importantes que ce qui est actuellement convenu, alors la contribution des herbiers pour l'atteinte des objectifs contenus dans les CDN serait plus importante. Il en va de même si le taux de séquestration était estimé de façon plus importante dans le futur. Par ailleurs, la contribution des herbiers est bien plus importante dans certains autres pays : la séquestration de carbone par les écosystèmes marins et côtiers de Mauritanie, par exemple, essentiellement réalisée par les herbiers, serait équivalente à 22% de l'objectif de la CDN mauritanienne (Trégarot et al., 2018).

En outre, une partie importante de la séquestration de carbone bleu par les pays côtiers d'Afrique de l'Ouest provient des abondantes forêts de mangroves (Bryan et al., 2020). Or les mangroves bénéficient des services fournis par les herbiers (filtration de l'eau, atténuation de la houle, cycles bio-chimiques) pour leur épanouissement (Bouillon et al., 2008).

Les pays disposent donc d'un fort potentiel sis au sein de leurs eaux et le long de leurs côtes, à même de contribuer significativement aux objectifs d'atténuation contenus dans les CDN. En sachant que le potentiel additionnel de séquestration de carbone par la restauration des mangroves, des herbiers et des marais salés s'élèverait à 841 Mt eqCO_{2e} par an d'ici 2030 pour l'ensemble de la planète

¹⁸ En sus des documents de la Sierra Leone et du Cabo Verde, la CDN du Sénégal faisait mention des AMP et des habitats côtiers, mais ces mentions concernaient l'adaptation du secteur de la pêche face aux effets des changements climatiques (<https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NDCStaging/Pages/All.aspx>). De la même façon, la CDN de la Guinée a mentionné l'économie bleue mais uniquement pour le volet « adaptation aux changements climatiques », et non pour le volet « atténuation ». La CDN de la Guinée-Bissau a aussi mentionné les écosystèmes marins mais, là aussi, uniquement pour le volet adaptation. À l'inverse, la CDN de la Mauritanie a mentionné l'économie verte, mais pas l'économie bleue.

¹⁹ La CDN du Sénégal stipule que le pays s'engage à réduire ses émissions annuelles de gaz à effet de serre de 11.15 millions de tonnes « équivalent CO₂ » annuellement en 2030, soit 4000 fois plus que la séquestration réalisée par les herbiers marins dans le pays.

(Macreadie et al., 2021), il est probable que les politiques publiques de la conservation s'intéressent toujours plus aux habitats marins et côtiers.

Enfin, les pays ouest-africains auraient tout intérêt à intégrer davantage les AMP dans leur stratégie de mitigation des émissions de GES, en soulignant le lien entre ces AMP et le carbone bleu, et en utilisant les CDN comme levier financier et logistique durable. En effet, les travaux de Binet et al. (2012) et Bonnin et al. (2015) ont montré que les écosystèmes des AMP de l'Afrique de l'Ouest avaient une capacité à fournir des services de nature climatique (séquestration du carbone et protection côtière) supérieure à ceux de même nature mais situés en zone non protégée.

Les prochaines années représentent une période charnière, tant pour la mise en œuvre des CDN qu'en raison de la fin des cibles d'Aichi pour la préservation de la biodiversité et l'implémentation du nouveau programme-cadre global pour biodiversité en lieu et place des cibles Aichi (Phang et al., 2020). Dans ce sens, la mise en place des CDN pourrait permettre à ces documents stratégiques de s'imposer comme un nouvel outil légitime et global pour la conservation des milieux naturels. Et par extension, les herbiers pourraient enfin occuper la place qu'ils méritent au sein des politiques publiques environnementales.

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SECTION 11 – THE EMERGENCE OF OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS EXPLOITATION ALONG WEST AFRICAN COASTS, AND ITS IMPACTS ON COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS

Kieran Deane¹ and Grégoire Touron-Gardic¹

¹ Centre for Blue Governance, University of Portsmouth (UK). Richmond Building, University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth P01 3DE, United Kingdom

1. Context

Oil and gas comprise over 50% of the world primary energy resources (IEA 2020), making them highly valuable and sought after globally. Africa contains the third largest oil reserves in the world and contains five of the top thirty oil-producing nations (after the middle east and central and south America combined) (Graham 2019; Adeola et al., 2021). In 2021, Africa exported nearly 5.6 million barrels of oil per day²⁰ and contain approximately 184×10^8 tons and 17×10^{12} tons of identified prospective oil and gas reserves (Longxin 2019). Due to the quality of crude oil, geopolitical and geographical locations (Easy shipping access, less prone to piracy and spared to terrestrial political instability), countries along the Gulf of Guinea are now of international interest (Sakyi 2012).

The West African offshore oil and gas industry is set for continued development on the back of major gas discoveries between 2014 and 2017 in the “MSGBC” region (Mauritania, Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Guinea-Conakry) (AEC 2022). MSGBC oil, gas and power summits serve as events dedicated to the development of energy in the aforementioned regions, including cross-border cooperation and integration in relation to the exploitation of sizable oil and gas reserves²¹. Alongside this region, many marine zones have been subdivided into blocks open for oil and gas exploration (see Figures 57a and 57b for examples in Senegalese and Mauritanian Marine Economic Exclusive Zones). Falling into these blocks are biodiversity hotspots, important fishing areas and popular tourist destinations (Kloff et al., 2009; Dème et al., 2019).

²⁰ Statista. 2022. *Topic: Oil and natural gas industry in Africa*. [online] Available at: https://www.statista.com/topics/7493/oil-and-natural-gas-industry-in-africa/#topicHeader_wrapper [Accessed 9 October 2022].

²¹ MSGBC Oil, Gas & Power. 2022. *About Us | MSGBC Oil, Gas & Power*. [online] Available at: <https://msgbcoilgasandpower.com/about-us/> [Accessed 7 October 2022].

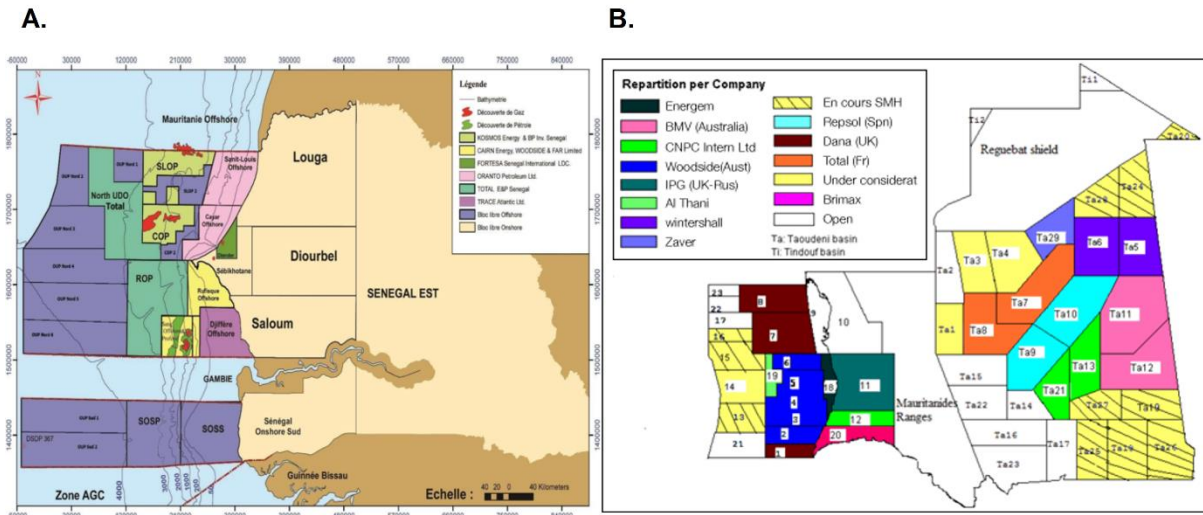


Figure 57: Offshore concessions of oil and gas in (a) Senegal and (b) Mauritania. Sources: Senegal: Initiative pour la transparence des industries extractives au Sénégal (<https://itie.sn/apercu-du-secteur-2/>); Mauritania: <https://www.acp-france.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Local-Content-Mauritanie.pdf>

In 2019, The Gambia signed agreements with British Petroleum (BP) to exploit oil and gas reserves in their coastal territory²². Sierra Leone drilled for oil and gas in the 1980’s and, with the continued discovery of offshore oil reserves (Latest being Savannah-1X in 2013), this is expected to continue²³. Leading the emerging oil and gas industry in the “PRCM” region (the region composed of Mauritania, Senegal, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea and Sierra Leone) is Senegal and Mauritania. By the way, both countries are among the main West African prospects in terms of potential of resources (both marine and terrestrial – see Figure 58).

²² AfricaNews (n.d.). *Africanews*. [online] www.africanews.com. Available at: <https://www.africanews.com/search/gambia%20oil> [Accessed 4 Oct. 2022].

²³ (PDSL) Petroleum directorate of Sierra Leone [online] Available at: <https://pd.gov.sl/operations> [Accessed 4 Oct. 2022]; Pd.gov.sl. 2022. *PDSL*. [online] Available at: <https://pd.gov.sl/operations> [Accessed 7 October 2022].

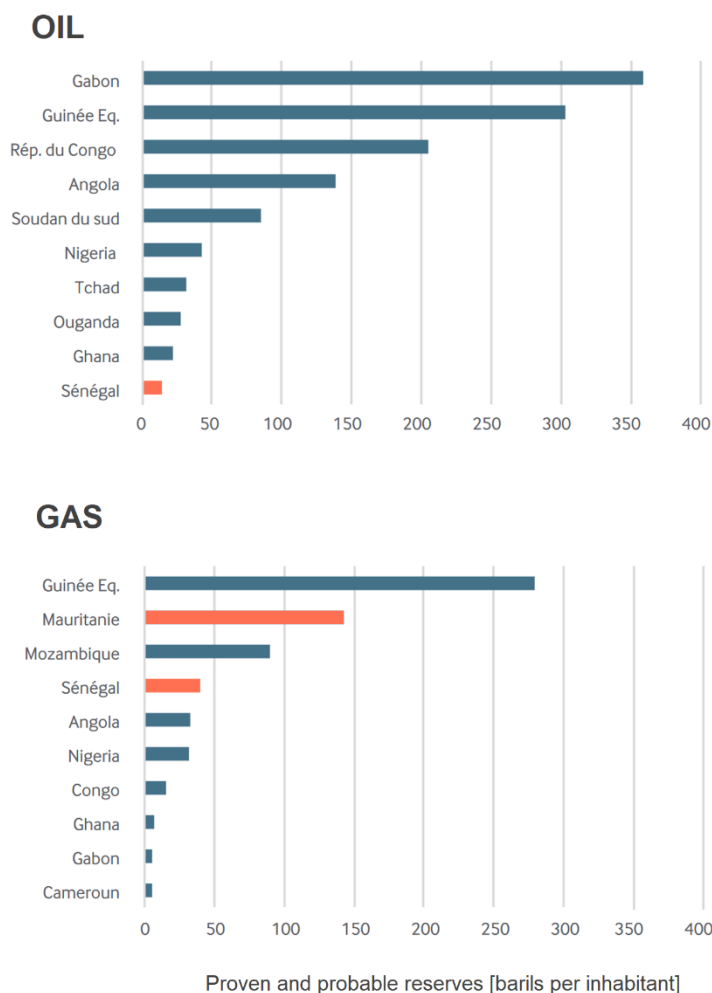


Figure 58: Proven and probable oil and gas reserves in African countries. Source: Rystad (2020) in Davis & Mihalyi (2021)

BP and Kosmos oil have partnered to exploit two regions from 2023: the Grand Tortue/Ahmeyim (GTA) field, straddling the border of Mauritania and Senegal and set to generate 4.8 Billion USD²⁴ and the Yakaar and Teranga fields (jointly named Cayar Profond), in Senegal, which will produce gas primarily for internal consumption (see Figure 59)²⁵. In the Ahmeyim exploitation, a 2.7 kilometer deep borehole is already active in the southern part of the permit. As for the “Cayar Profond” zone, more than 1400 billion cubic meters of natural gas would be buried. In the Saloum Delta (Senegal), home to at least seven Marine Protected Areas (Failler et al., 2020a) and known for highly productive fisheries (Dème et al., 2019), oil and gas exploitation is targeted for 2023/2024 at the Sangomar field²⁶. Exploitable

²⁴ International Trade Administration (ITA) | Trade.gov. 2022. *Mauritania - Oil and Gas*. [online] Available at: <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/mauritania-oil-and-gas> [Accessed 4 October 2022].

²⁵ Ecofin (2019). ‘Sénégal : la production de la nouvelle découverte de gaz sera essentiellement consacrée à la demande domestique’, 27 September. <https://www.agenceecofin.com/gaz-nature/2709-69617-senegal-la-production-de-la-nouvelledecouverte-de-gaz-sera-essentiellement-consacree-a-la-demande-domestique> ; Kosmosenergy.com. 2022. *Greater Tortue – Kosmos Energy | Deepwater Exploration and Production*. [online] Available at: <https://www.kosmosenergy.com/greater-tortue/> [Accessed 7 October 2022].

²⁶ Woodside. 2022. *Sangomar - Woodside Energy*. [online] Available at: <https://www.woodside.com/what-we-do/growth-projects/sangomar> [Accessed 7 October 2022].

stocks are estimated to be about 630 million barrels of oil. The reservoir also contains associated and non-associated natural gas whose reserves are around 113 billion Nm³. Oil production will begin in early 2023 with a maximum daily production capacity of 100,000 barrels²⁷.

In 2020, Senegal has around thirty onshore and offshore blocks. A total of 9 oil companies are present in Senegal for the exploration and production of hydrocarbons (only one of is in actual operation at the moment). In Mauritania, exploitation already began in the mid-2000s²⁸.



Figure 59: Location map of GTA and Cayar oil and gas fields (Greater Tortue – Kosmos Energy | Deepwater Exploration and Production, 2022)

In this context, there is high probability for impact on marine coastal ecosystems in the study area. This section explores the potential impact of the offshore oil and gas industry on the marine environment. A synthesis literature about oil and gas operations and its effect on the marine environment in West Africa is carried out, in order to discuss the potential impact of the emerging oil and gas industry in the study region.

2. Global impacts on the marine environment

Stages of oil and gas development are depicted in Figure 60 below. During the initial stages of exploration, the marine environment is affected by habitat alteration and noise pollution from drilling exploratory wells and performing surveys (Richardson & Wursig, 1997). Seismic surveys, used to expose subsurface geology and locate potential reservoirs, can lead to stress, evasive and stranding behaviour in marine mammals, turtles, fish, and cephalopods (Fewtrell & McCauley, 2012). Exploration drilling is also a risky part of operation, accidents such as the BP Deepwater Horizon incident occurred at this stage (Kark, 2015).

²⁷ Initiative pour la transparence des industries extractives au Sénégal. <https://itie.sn/apercu-du-secteur-2/>

²⁸ <https://ejatlas.org/conflict/mauritania-offshore-oil-production/?translate=fr>

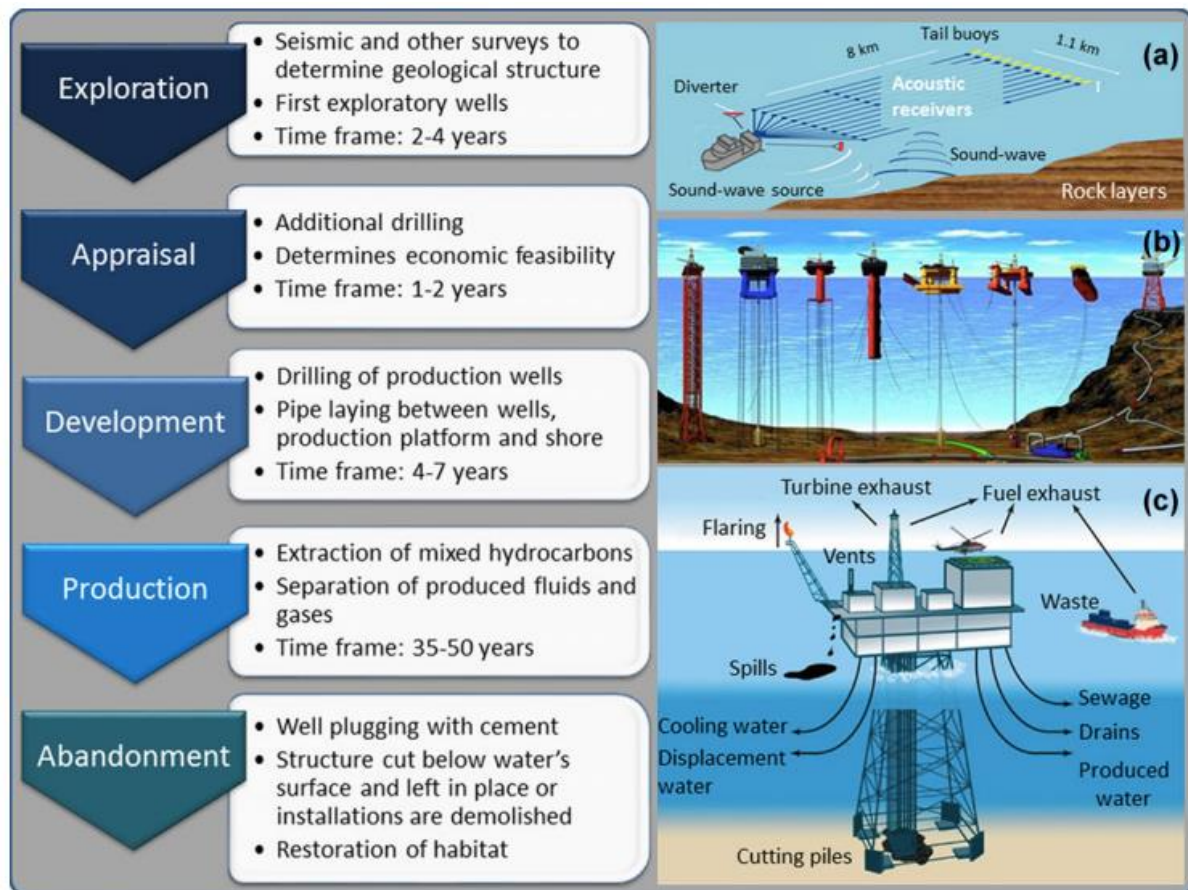


Figure 60: Review of the phases of offshore oil and gas development. Source: Kark (2015)

During the exploitation phase, the seabed undergoes significant changes. These include the modification of deep-sea habitats and landscape and the destruction of deep sea biodiversity from drilling and laying of underwater infrastructure such as pipelines and anchor attachments (Miller 2018). The discharge of solid, liquid and gaseous waste is hazardous to the surrounding marine environment which includes drilling fluids, oily drill cuttings, gas flares, atmospheric emissions, well treatment fluids and wastewater (Vargas et al., 2020).

Included in crude oil exploitation is the introduction of toxic chemicals into surface waters from deep aquifers such as arsenic, mercury, zinc, lead, etc (Ore & Adeola, 2021). All of which may move into coastal regions through wind and tide movement. Oil spills and natural gas leaks can occur at various stages of operation including excretion of produced water (Holdway, 2002). Produced water is water associated with oil in the reservoir and is considered the second largest pollutant of marine ecosystems after oil spills. Oil spills are a major threat to biodiversity and can have long-term consequences for coastal habitats (Peterson et al., 2003). The BP Deepwater Horizon disaster discharged nearly a billion litres of oil into the Gulf of Mexico and is considered to be the largest environmental disaster in world history (Beyer et al., 2016).

Noise and vibration created from operational processes (such as drilling) and increased maritime traffic can impact the behaviour of species such as presence, migration patterns and breeding locations (Gordon et al., 2004). Exposure to anthropogenic underwater noise could result in hearing loss or a masking effect of sounds, disrupting communication between marine species (Pine et al., 2016). Dredging also increases turbidity of the water column, as it releases sediments into the water

column. In addition, non-indigenous, invasive species may be introduced to the marine environment when dispelling ballast water (Kloff et al., 2009).

The stress generated from offshore oil and gas activity can then cause different responses in biodiversity. These responses are represented in Figure 61 below.

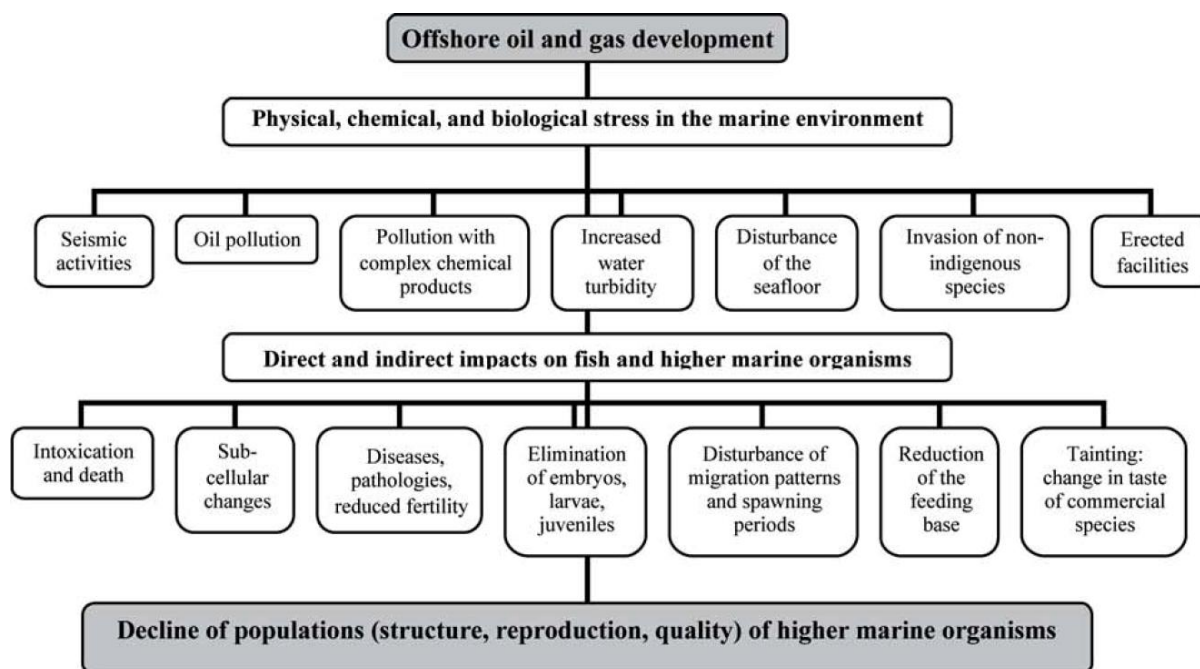


Figure 61: Flow chart displaying the response of the marine environment to offshore oil and gas operations (Patin 1999)

Offshore drilling for oil and gas at increasing depths, involves increasing risks by virtue of limited mobility and accessibility. For example, it took 87 days to fix the problem of the Deepwater Horizon incident in the Gulf of Mexico at a depth of over 1500m (Rochette, 2014). The GTA project in Senegal and Mauritania drills from a depth of 4,884m at its deepest (ITA, 2022), while the Jubilee (a field situated off the coast of Ghana) and fields situated in the Saloum Delta region are located 1,100m below sea surface²⁹.

3. Recorded impacts in West Africa

Nigeria is Africa's primary oil producer, with oil and gas reserves among the most important in Africa. In the 1980s, oil production made up 85% of the government's revenue at 2.44 million barrels of oil a day (Odeyemi & Ogunseitan, 1985; Kadafa, 2012). In 2022, Nigeria has averaged 1.17 million barrels of oil per day (bbl/d). The Niger Delta is a key conservation zone of the West African coastline due to the extraordinary biodiversity present there (Nenibarini, 2004). An estimated 1.5 million tons of oil has been spilled into this environment over the last 50 years (UNDP, 2006). Significant pollutants have been released into the environment which have significantly altered the marine and terrestrial landscape of coastal regions. These include drilling muds, cuttings, oil and greases, salts, sulphides, suspended solids, temperature and pH changes, heavy metals and increased biological oxygen

²⁹ Tullow Oil plc (LSE: TLW). 2022. *Jubilee field*. [online] Available at: <https://www.tulloil.com/our-operations/africa/ghana/jubilee-field/> [Accessed 7 October 2022].

demand and chemical oxygen demand (Ukoli, 2005). This has caused the destruction of large areas of mangrove forest (seagrass is not mentioned but likely included) and fishing grounds and a decline of fish, crabs, molluscs, periwinkles and birds (Kadafa, 2012; Adelana et al., 2011).

The Ivory Coast has discovered over 50 oil fields with four currently in production³⁰. Outputs of 30,000 barrels per day were estimated for 2021. In 2006, following an accident of a Canadian Natural Resources drilling vessel, an oil spill occurred depositing approximately 5000 tonnes of hydrocarbons into the ocean about 100 km from Abidjan³¹. This has majorly degraded the aquatic environment and caused extreme loss of biodiversity in coastal regions (Koffie, 2014). Prior to the oil spill, signs of pollution from oil production were already present.

To the West of Nigeria, Ghana first commenced commercial oil and gas exploitation in 1896. The Jubilee oil and gas field was discovered in 2007 off the coast of Ghana, bordering Ivory Coast (see Figure 62) and in 2010, exploitation commenced. Production of oil in 2022 is estimated at 30,000 to 32,000 barrels per day³². The environmental and social impact assessment was updated in October 2019 and includes a thorough impact identification assessment and appropriate mitigation strategies (Greater Jubilee Environmental impact assessment - EIA, 2019).

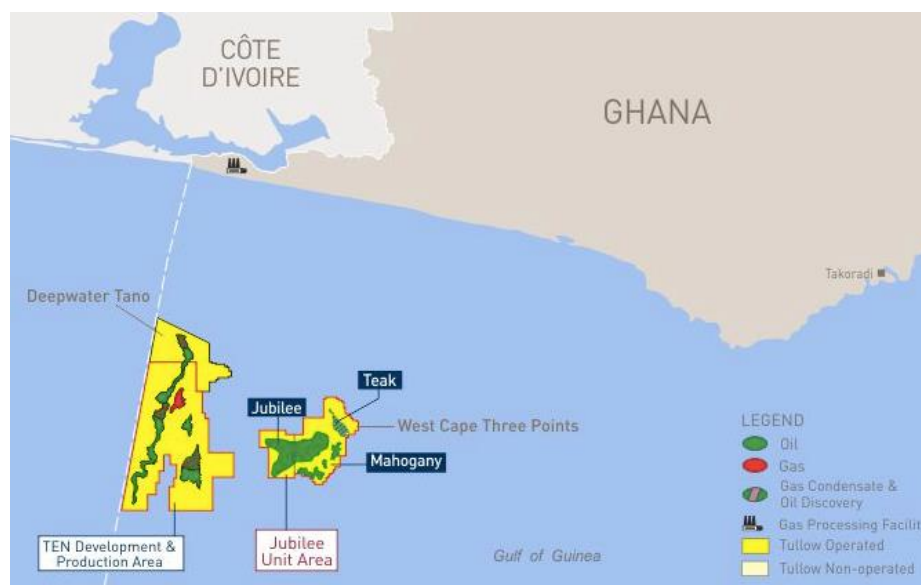


Figure 62: Locations of Jubilee oil and gas fields (Image from the Tullow oil: Greater Jubilee field website)

Despite appropriate EIAs and related mitigation measures, detrimental effects to the environment are still experienced. A comprehensive study of coastal communities living nearby the oil and gas fields revealed that primary environmental impacts were the adverse effects of waste effluents which are

³⁰ France 24. (2021). *Ivory Coast reports 'major' offshore oil discovery*. [online] Available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20210902-ivory-coast-reports-major-offshore-oil-discovery> [Accessed 8 Oct. 2022]

³¹ BBC News Pidgin. 2022. *Trafigura: Ivory Coast oil spill victims dey court - BBC News Pidgin*. [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/tori-41410944> [Accessed 8 October 2022].

³² The greater Jubilee EIA. [online] Available at: https://www.tulloil.com/application/files/7716/1901/4140/Jubilee_Updated_EIA_Volume_I_Main_Report.pdf [Accessed 8 Oct. 2022].

responsible for polluting the sea water and undermining aquatic life along the coast (Jones & Chantel, 2020). This study identifies that in the absence of a major oil spill, the oil and gas industry is still environmentally degrading.

4. Potential impacts on coastal ecosystems of the study region

The study region contains many ecologically sensitive sites with highly productive ecosystems that support rich fisheries (Failler et al., 2020b; World Bank 1993; Selkani 2022). The “PRCM” area hosts nearly a hundred marine protected areas, of which 50 are organised into a regional network, the RAMPAO (see Figure 63). Large extents of national marine waters – including offshore areas – have conservation labels such as KBAs (Key Biodiversity Areas), EBSAs (Ecologically or biologically significant areas), LMMAs (Large Marine Mammals Areas), IBAs (Important Birds Areas), etc (see Figure 63). Many of these areas are overlapping with blocks dedicated to offshore exploitation. In the result of an offshore oil spill, onshore winds and subsurface currents will move oil towards coastal regions. Intertidal biodiversity such as mangroves, seagrasses, algae and wildlife are therefore particularly vulnerable (Jackson et al., 1989) and the result of an oil spill could be disastrous.

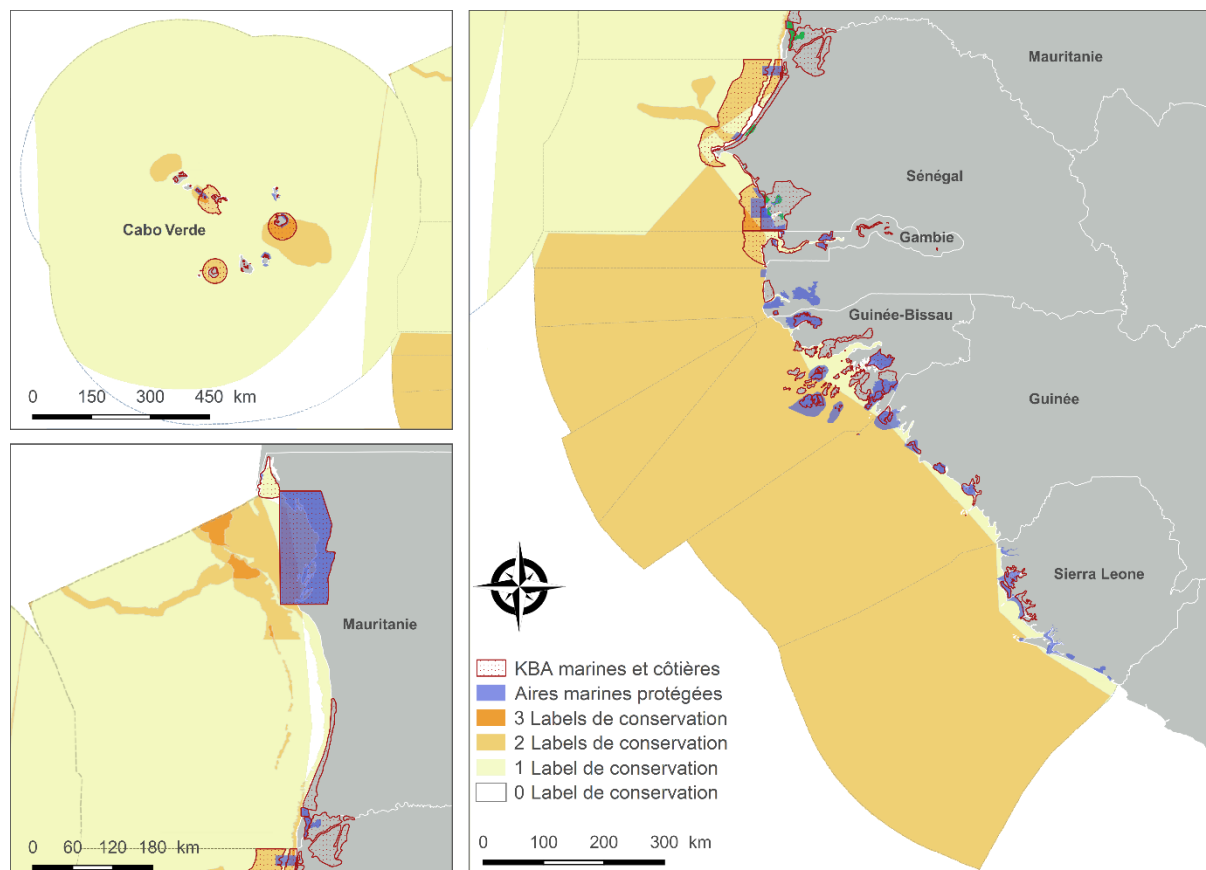


Figure 63: Distribution of Marine Protected Areas and conservation labels in the “PRCM” region. Sources: MPAs: Failler et al. (2020a); Conservation labels: Gownaris et al. (2019). Own élaboration.

As shown in the case of Ghana, Nigeria and Ivory Coast, aside from major oil spills, there are many secondary effects from oil and gas operations that pollute and degrade surrounding biodiversity. These include the creation of seabed pipelines and other infrastructure, increased maritime traffic, routine chemicals, sewage water, leaks, produced water, exhaust fumes, etc. (Kark, 2015; Ogolo, 2021; Cordes, 2016) (see Figure 64).

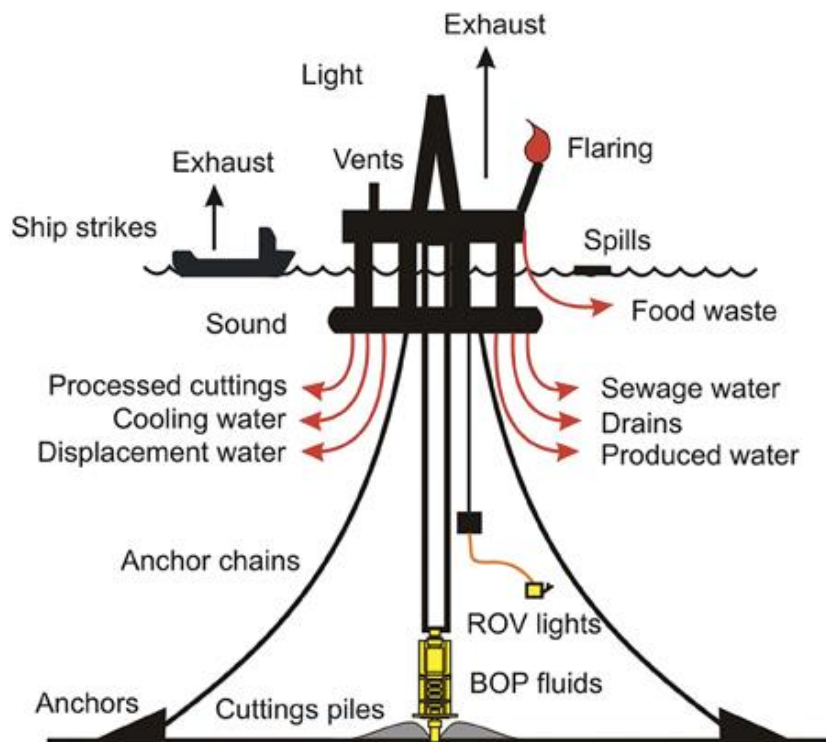


Figure 64: Depiction of routine offshore oil and gas operations. Source: Cordes (2016)

In Mauritania and Senegal, a large proportion of the oil and gas produced will be sold and shipped to European markets. Waste discharges from maritime transport could therefore increase dramatically in line with the oil and gas industry. Wastes include marine diesel oil, marine fuel oil, heavy fuel oil, solid and liquid waste discharge and fossil fuel emissions (Walker et al., 2019). Petroleum oil is toxic to the aquatic environment and can cause deformities, heart related defects, behavioural changes and mortality in most marine species such as fish, mammals and sea turtles (Dupuis & Ucan-Marín, 2015). To support increased maritime activity, harbour facilities and infrastructure will have to be developed further, resulting in added alterations of the coastal environment³³. As such, huge infrastructures are in process in Senegal (Ndayane Port) and in Mauritania (Nouakchott). These secondary or daily activities of the offshore oil and gas industry will therefore certainly add pressure to the surrounding environment and coastal ecosystems.

It should be noted that ways of minimizing the impacts of development and expansion of oil and gas industry on the environment are under investigations. To this end, PRCM (Partenariat régional pour la conservation de la zone côtière et marine – a pluri-national network of stakeholders acting on coastal conservation) started a project (the COBIA project), in order to strengthen risk management on the environment related to offshore exploitation³⁴. In addition, BP already started to fund conservation projects in the area³⁵.

³³ La Tribune. (n.d.). *Pétrole et gaz offshore sénégalais : failles et innovations d'un plan inédit de gestion environnementale*. [online] Available at: <https://afrique.latribune.fr/afrique-de-l-ouest/senegal/2018-10-24/petrole-et-gaz-offshore-senegalais-failles-et-innovations-d-un-plan-inedit-de-gestion-environnemental-794985.html> [Accessed 8 Oct. 2022].

³⁴ https://prcmarine.org/initiative_cobia/

³⁵ <https://prcmarine.org/premac-lancement-du-premier-appel-a-projets/>

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ANNEXE 1 : COORDONNEES ET CARTES DES TRANSECTS REALISES AVEC UN SONAR POUR LA CARTOGRAPHIE DES HERBIERS MARINS EN GUINEE-BISSAU

Table 17 : Sonar transects location, file name, time of collection, duration and area cover

| File name | Location | Survey date | Start of survey (hh:mm) | End of survey (hh:mm) | Length of survey (hh:mm:ss) | Transect length (m) |
|---------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Sonar0000.sl2 | Unhocomo | 31/07/2022 | 17:29 | 18:34 | 01:05 | 7720 |
| Sonar0001.sl2 | Unhocomozinho | 01/08/2022 | 10:08 | 12:00 | 01:52 | 18046 |
| Sonar0005.sl2 | Meio | 02/08/2022 | 14:48 | 16:45 | 01:57 | 16795 |
| Sonar0006.sl2 | Meio | 02/08/2022 | 16:47 | 17:29 | 00:43 | 6935 |
| Sonar0007.sl2 | Meio | 02/08/2022 | 17:36 | 17:41 | 00:05 | 591 |
| Sonar0009.sl2 | Meio | 03/08/2022 | 10:36 | 11:12 | 00:36 | 5130 |
| Sonar0010.sl2 | Meio | 03/08/2022 | 11:39 | 11:43 | 00:04 | 532 |
| Sonar0011.sl2 | Meio | 03/08/2022 | 11:54 | 12:32 | 00:38 | 5272 |
| Sonar0012.sl2 | Joao Vieira | 03/08/2022 | 12:52 | 12:59 | 00:07 | 741 |

NOTE: End, length and start of survey are given in local time. Guinea-Bissau time zone: UTC +0 (Guinea-Bissau observes Greenwich Mean Time all year. There are no Daylight Saving Time clock changes).



Figure 65 : Bathymetric contours and seagrass presence derived from sonar data gathered in Meio's coastline (Sonar0005 transect). Seagrass presence colour ramp represent the relative density of points classified as seagrass (i.e. the relative density is based on point count).



Figure 66 : Bathymetric contours and seagrass presence derived from sonar data gathered in Meio's coastline (onar0005, Sonar0006 and Sonar0009 transects). Seagrass presence colour ramp represent the relative density of points classified as seagrass (i.e. the relative density is based on point count).



Figure 67 : Bathymetric contours and seagrass presence derived from sonar data gathered in Meio's coastline (Sonar0006, Sonar0007, Sonar0010 and Sonar0011 transects). Seagrass presence colour ramp represent the relative density of points classified as seagrass (i.e. the relative density is based on point count).

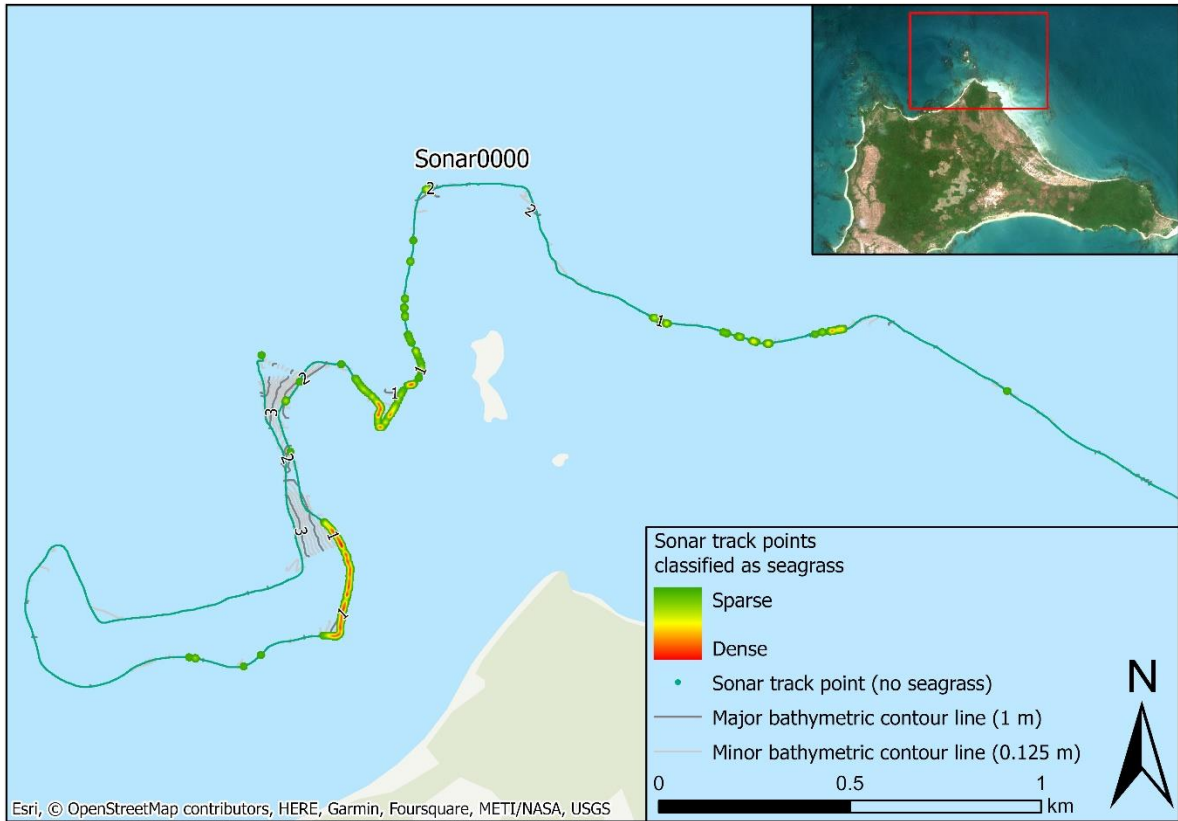


Figure 68 : Bathymetric contours and seagrass presence derived from sonar data gathered in Unhocomo's coastline (Sonar 0000 transect). Seagrass presence colour ramp represent the relative density of points classified as seagrass (i.e. the relative density is based on point count).

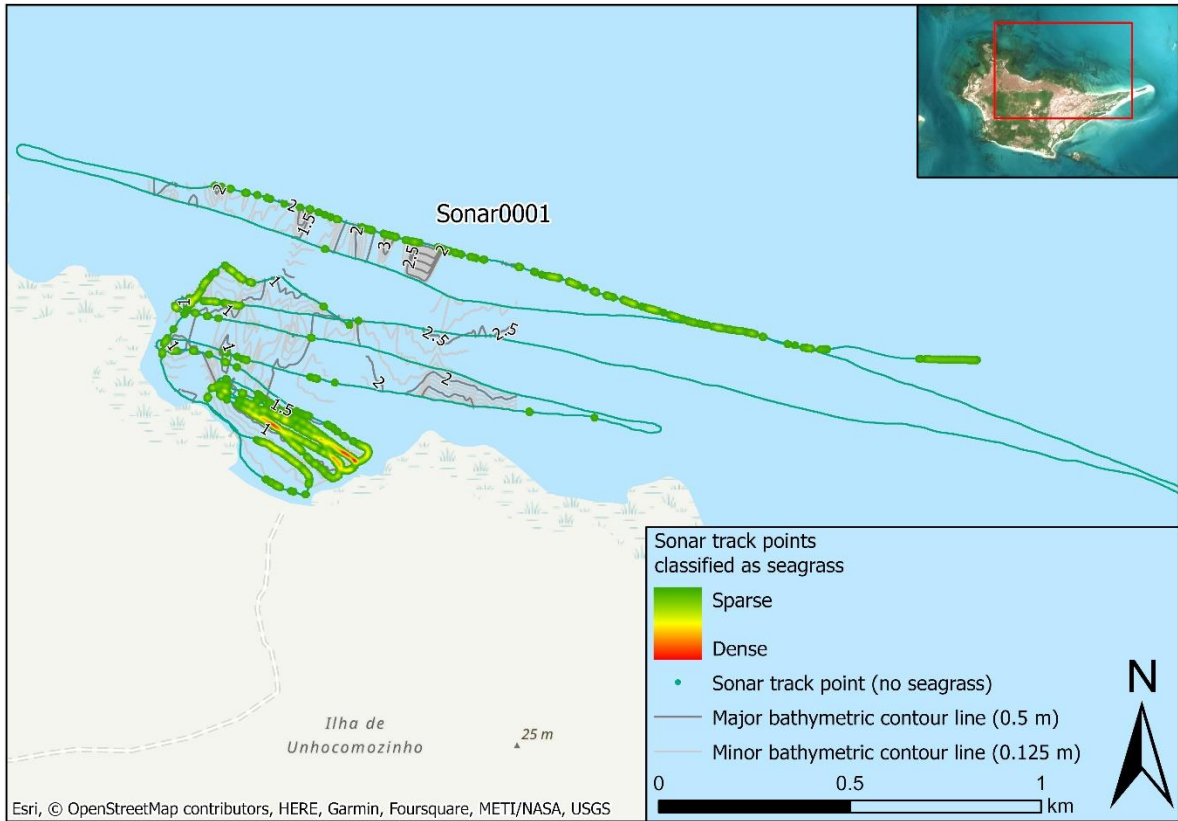


Figure 69 : Bathymetric contours and seagrass presence derived from sonar data gathered in Unhocomozinho's coastline (Sonar 0001 transect). Seagrass presence colour ramp represent the relative density of points classified as seagrass (i.e. the relative density is based on point count).

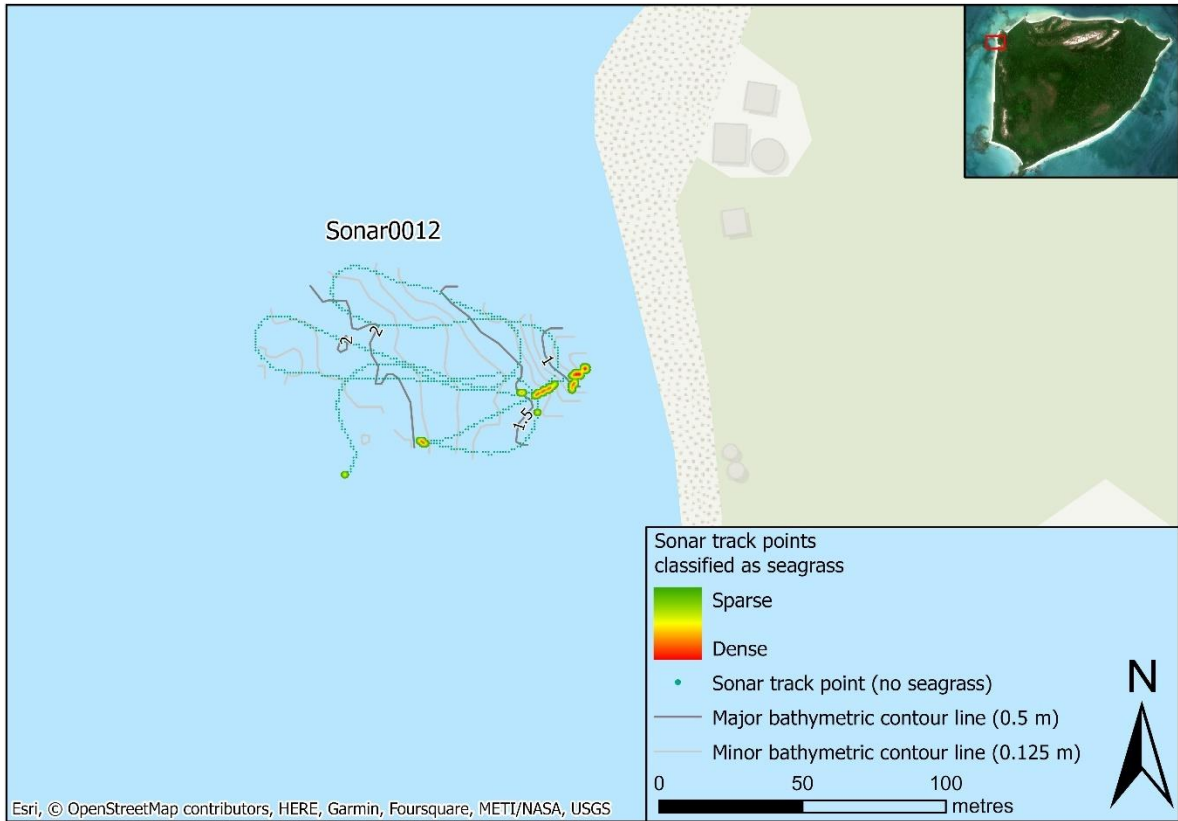


Figure 70 : Bathymetric contours and seagrass presence derived from sonar data gathered in Joao Vieira's coastline (Sonar 0012 transect). Seagrass presence colour ramp represent the relative density of points classified as seagrass (i.e. the relative density is based on point count).

ANNEXE 2 COORDONNEES GPS DES LIEUX D'ECHANTILLONNAGES DES CAROTTES DE SEDIMENTS

Table 18 : Details of the locations where the sediment cores were collected (date, country, site name, coordinates, water depth, seagrass species forming the meadow). The percentage of sediment compression during core sampling is also provided.

| Core # | Sampling date | Country | Site | Latitude | Longitude | Water depth (m) | Seagrass species | % Compression |
|--------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------|
| CV31 | 23/06/2022 | Cabo Verde | Gamboa | 14.91 | -23.51 | 1.8 | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 18.87 |
| CV32 | 23/06/2022 | Cabo Verde | Gamboa | 14.91 | -23.51 | 1.8 | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 14.71 |
| CV33 | 23/06/2022 | Cabo Verde | Gamboa | 14.91 | -23.51 | 1.8 | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 11.54 |
| CV34 | 23/06/2022 | Cabo Verde | Gamboa | 14.91 | -23.51 | 1.8 | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 11.76 |
| CV35 | 23/06/2022 | Cabo Verde | Gamboa | 14.91 | -23.51 | 1.8 | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 18.48 |
| CV36 | 24/06/2022 | Cabo Verde | Pedra Badejo | 15.13 | -23.52 | 0.5 | <i>R. maritima</i> | 17.39 |
| CV37 | 24/06/2022 | Cabo Verde | Pedra Badejo | 15.13 | -23.52 | 0.5 | <i>R. maritima</i> | 20.83 |
| CV38 | 24/06/2022 | Cabo Verde | Pedra Badejo | 15.13 | -23.52 | 0.5 | <i>R. maritima</i> | 16.67 |
| CV39 | 24/06/2022 | Cabo Verde | Pedra Badejo | 15.13 | -23.52 | 0.5 | <i>R. maritima</i> | 36.00 |
| CV40 | 24/06/2022 | Cabo Verde | Pedra Badejo | 15.13 | -23.52 | 0.5 | <i>R. maritima</i> | 22.73 |
| GB52 | 01/08/2022 | Guinea Bissau | Jão Vieira | 11.03 | -15.65 | | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 3.85 |
| GB56 | 01/08/2022 | Guinea Bissau | Jão Vieira | 11.03 | -15.65 | | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 13.33 |
| GB57 | 01/08/2022 | Guinea Bissau | Jão Vieira | 11.03 | -15.65 | | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 5.77 |
| GB62 | 01/08/2022 | Guinea Bissau | Jão Vieira | 11.03 | -15.65 | | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 8.82 |
| GB60 | 02/08/2022 | Guinea Bissau | Meio | | | | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 18.27 |
| GB63 | 02/08/2022 | Guinea Bissau | Meio | | | | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 20.37 |
| GB42 | 31/07/2022 | Guinea Bissau | Unhocomo 1 | 11.32 | -16.45 | | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 4.41 |
| GB43 | 31/07/2022 | Guinea Bissau | Unhocomo 1 | 11.32 | -16.45 | | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 5.26 |
| GB47 | 31/07/2022 | Guinea Bissau | Unhocozinho (Unhocomo 3) | 11.31 | -16.40 | | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 3.57 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|------|------------|---------------|----------------------------|-------|--------|------------|--|-------|
| GB51 | 31/07/2022 | Guinea Bissau | Unhocomozinho (Unhocomo 3) | 11.31 | -16.40 | | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 10.71 |
| GB44 | 01/08/2022 | Guinea Bissau | Unhocomozinho (Unhocomo 4) | 11.30 | -16.39 | | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 19.35 |
| GB46 | 01/08/2022 | Guinea Bissau | Unhocomozinho (Unhocomo 4) | 11.30 | -16.39 | | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 17.78 |
| GB48 | 01/08/2022 | Guinea Bissau | Unhocomozinho (Unhocomo 4) | 11.30 | -16.39 | | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 8.33 |
| GB49 | 01/08/2022 | Guinea Bissau | Unhocomozinho (Unhocomo 4) | 11.30 | -16.39 | | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 10.20 |
| SE3 | 06/05/2022 | Senegal | Delta Saloum 1 | 13.76 | -16.67 | 0.5 | <i>Z. noltei, H. wrightii, C. nodosa</i> | 4.95 |
| SE4 | 06/05/2022 | Senegal | Delta Saloum 1 | 13.76 | -16.67 | 0.5 | <i>Z. noltei, H. wrightii, C. nodosa</i> | 2.08 |
| SE15 | 06/05/2022 | Senegal | Delta Saloum 1 | 13.76 | -16.67 | 0.5 | <i>Z. noltei, H. wrightii, C. nodosa</i> | 8.11 |
| SE20 | 06/05/2022 | Senegal | Delta Saloum 1 | 13.76 | -16.67 | 0.5 | <i>Z. noltei, H. wrightii, C. nodosa</i> | 4.59 |
| SE5 | 07/05/2022 | Senegal | Delta Saloum 2 | 13.78 | -16.65 | intertidal | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 18.52 |
| SE6 | 07/05/2022 | Senegal | Delta Saloum 2 | 13.78 | -16.65 | intertidal | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 25.00 |
| SE18 | 07/05/2022 | Senegal | Delta Saloum 2 | 13.78 | -16.65 | intertidal | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 25.24 |
| SE19 | 07/05/2022 | Senegal | Delta Saloum 2 | 13.78 | -16.65 | intertidal | <i>H. wrightii</i> | 33.33 |
| SE7 | 07/05/2022 | Senegal | Delta Saloum 3 | 13.69 | -16.66 | 1.5 | <i>C. nodosa</i> | 40.43 |
| SE8 | 07/05/2022 | Senegal | Delta Saloum 3 | 13.69 | -16.66 | 1.5 | <i>C. nodosa</i> | 32.69 |
| SE17 | 07/05/2022 | Senegal | Delta Saloum 3 | 13.69 | -16.66 | 1.5 | <i>C. nodosa</i> | 27.88 |
| SE21 | 07/05/2022 | Senegal | Delta Saloum 3 | 13.69 | -16.66 | 1.5 | <i>C. nodosa</i> | 24.21 |
| SE1 | 05/05/2022 | Senegal | Joal | 14.17 | -16.85 | 2 | <i>H. wrightii, sparse C. nodosa</i> | 18.18 |
| SE2 | 05/05/2022 | Senegal | Joal | 14.17 | -16.85 | 2 | <i>H. wrightii, sparse C. nodosa</i> | 18.75 |
| SE16 | 05/05/2022 | Senegal | Joal | 14.17 | -16.85 | 2 | <i>H. wrightii, sparse C. nodosa</i> | 19.64 |

ANNEXE 3 : DETAIL DE LA VALEUR ECONOMIQUE PAR SITE POUR LE SERVICE DE PROTECTION COTIERE

Table 19 : Détail de la valeur économique par site pour le service de protection côtière

| | Place | Length | Price per meter | % Swell attenuation | Economic Value (Fcfa) |
|-------------------|----------------|--------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Senegal | Dakar | 500 | 183440,4 | 30% | 27 516 060 |
| | Palmarin | 14300 | 183440,4 | 45% | 1 180 438 974 |
| | Saloum Betenti | 200 | 183440,4 | 45% | 16 509 636 |
| | Joal Centre | 6650 | 183440,4 | 45% | 548 945 397 |
| | Joal sud | 1600 | 183440,4 | 45% | 132 077 088 |
| | Joal nord | 1500 | 183440,4 | 45% | 123 822 270 |
| | Joal nord | 1500 | 183440,4 | 30% | 82 548 180 |
| Cabo Verde | Gamboa Nord | 200 | 393463,4 | 17,50% | 13 771 219 |
| | Gamboa Ouest | 100 | 393463,4 | 10% | 3 934 634 |
| | Gamboa Sud | 275 | 393463,4 | 17,50% | 18 935 426,13 |
| | Gamboa fond | 165 | 393463,4 | 35% | 22 722 511,35 |

