

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the connection between incomplete decolonization and environmental injustices. It documents environmental injustices as the continuity of colonization, «colonialism with other measures», and argues that the incomplete decolonization is strongly associated with the phenomenon named 'neo-colonization' and 'settler colonialism'. To support our arguments, we examine the cases of Torres Strait Islanders of Australia and Inuit of the Arctic (Canada). The selected cases illustrate how historical and ongoing colonization policies contribute to indigenous communities' struggles for environmental justice. Utilizing theoretical frameworks such as structural violence, Marxism and constructivism we shed light on the complex dynamics behind environmental injustices, underscoring the necessity of comprehensive decolonization efforts that prioritize indigenous rights. These findings offer valuable insights into environmental injustice and colonialism's influence in shaping these injustices. Furthermore, it provides a basis for future research, policy formulation and transformative changes that aim at more equitable and sustainable futures for indigenous communities.

**KEYWORDS:** incomplete decolonization, settler-colonialism, neo-colonialism, environmental injustices, environmental justice, colonialism, Marxism, constructivism, indigenous rights, human rights.



**UNIVERSITY OF CYPRUS**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCES**

**« THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS, INJUSTICES, AND INCOMPLETE  
DECOLONIZATION »**

**THE CASE OF TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS AUSTRALIA & INUIT  
ARCTIC CANADA**

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This Thesis

Submitted for Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Acquisition

Master's Degree

in Political Science direction in International Relations in

The University of Cyprus

Recommended for Acceptance

by the Department of Social and Political Sciences

June, 2023

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# APPROVAL PAGE

Master's Thesis

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## **THANKS**

### Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks and appreciation to Professor Iosif Kovras for his unwavering support and guidance in shaping this dissertation with his expertise and insights.

His contributions were crucial in creating the quality of this dissertation.

I would also like to thank all the Committee Members, for providing invaluable feedback and contributions; their advice has also proven instrumental.

My heartfelt gratitude to my family, my partner and friends for their consistent encouragement and support over this project's duration.

Finally, thanks must go out to my wider academic community/institutions that provided resources which enabled this effort - thank you all involved!

Thank you all for making such important contributions to society! I sincerely thank each and every one of you.

Christina Ioannou

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
THESIS OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH.....	4
RESEARCH AIM, OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS.....	6
OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION STRUCTURE.....	7
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>8</b>
BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH TOPIC.....	8
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	9
<b>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: CONNECTION OF HISTORICAL VIOLATIONS TO ENVIROMENTAL INJUSTICES.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: CASE STUDIES .....</b>	<b>17</b>
ENIVROMENTAL INJUSTICES AND THE VULUNERABILITY OF INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS.....	17
VULNERABILITY OF TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS TO ENVIROMENTAL INJUSTICES.....	17
VOLUNERABILITY OF ARTIC INUIT TO ENVIROMENTAL INJUSTICES.....	19
CASE- STUDY CONNECTION TO INCOMPLETE DECOLONIZATION .....	22
CASE- STUDY CONNECTION TO THEORIES .....	23
INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSCTICE AS REMEDIE TO THE PROBLEM.....	25
<b>CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>36</b>
CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS .....	38
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>39</b>

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Issues surrounding violations of human rights by imperial powers in indigenous communities is of immense concern and requires special consideration. It is therefore important to examine whether we are currently witnessing an ongoing cycle of environmental injustices that serve as colonialist's 'instrumentalization tools' of ecological crisis against indigenous rights.

At the intersection of incomplete decolonization and environmental injustices lies an intriguing and pressing area of study that warrants close consideration and analysis. This dissertation seeks to illuminate this essential relationship while uncovering their impactful colonization policies which have had an impact on indigenous communities' struggles for environmental justice. We highlight the urgent necessity for comprehensive decolonization efforts based on indigenous rights as a key aspect in combatting these injustices.

In support of this assumption our research will investigate two core questions:

- i. How are the environmental injustices connected to incomplete decolonization?
- ii. How the phenomenon 'neo-colonization' and 'settler colonialism connect environmental injustices to incomplete decolonization?

Climate change is having a severe impact on indigenous rights, from ecocide and ecological refugees to displacement. Environmental harm and socio-economic effects affect livelihoods, health, and financial resources. This research will contribute significantly to our understanding of environmental injustices, colonialism's pervasive role in creating it, as well as aiding the arguments for creating more equitable and sustainable futures for indigenous communities. Furthermore, its insights are an ideal basis for future studies, policy formulation and transformative changes aimed at creating more just societies for indigenous communities. By exploring the complex relationships among incomplete decolonization, environmental injustice, and the need for urgent action taken towards sustainable justice, this dissertation seeks to prompt scholars, policymakers, and activists to engage in productive dialogue and at engaging in collaborative efforts aimed at rectifying historical injustices while forging pathways towards equity and sustainability. Examining how environmental justice plays an integral part of social justice for indigenous communities, this is necessary for safeguarding vital human rights as well as cultural, religious, economic, and natural resource rights. We identify environmental justice as an indispensable aspect of maintaining social equity for native communities by looking into mechanisms of safeguarding vital human rights and economic resource rights which are crucial for a comprehensive decolonization effort that prioritizes indigenous rights.



## **THESIS OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH**

The indigenous people are vulnerable to environmental injustices due to incomplete decolonization our case study Arctic Inuit and Torres Strait Islanders serve as specific examples to illustrate our arguments in question. Our case-studies establish the severity of climate change impacts on indigenous populations, their historical experiences of colonization and marginalization. We underline the severity of the various environmental and socio-economic challenges they are facing due to climate change impacts, and anthropogenic climate change effects due to governments inaction. The background highlights the ongoing effects of incomplete decolonization on indigenous rights and environmental injustices, emphasizes the importance to address the injustices and promote environmental justice for a sustainable future. We argue that indigenous people are facing indisputable violations of human rights inequality, marginalisation through politics of orientalism -imperialistic politics of colonial powers. Colonialism is vicious, cruel and racist, whose effects continue to be seen today. [1] As Weber noted power is acknowledged ‘as a tool for individuals or groups of humans to achieve their objectives even though their behaviours involve violence or coercion.’ [1]. In his conclusion, power is functionalized to achieve the objectives of powerful imperial powers, even with the use of violence, including violation of human rights. This is further exacerbated when it comes to the human rights of the vulnerable communities, severely affecting them by climate change environmental injustices. Indigenous violations and environmental injustices are closely linked and go hand-in-hand. Indigenous people, being the most vulnerable, are facing significant challenges when it comes to their rights protection and the preservation of their environment. Indigenous rights, which are the infringements of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the indigenous peoples, include: forced displacement, cultural assimilation, denial of their land and resources rights, discrimination, exclusion from decision-making processes and lack of access to basic services, as for example healthcare and education. Environmental injustices affect the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and burdens among different communities where disproportionate vulnerability of marginalized groups- such as indigenous people to the environmental hazards and severe impacts on their territories and lands. In this thesis we will seek to establish their interconnection by identifying the ecological impact of climate change and the ecological disruption in this communities. We recognise ecological injustices as deeply intertwined with indigenous rights violations, impacted on the vulnerable indigenous communities. Furthermore, by failing to address indigenous rights in climate change, and to promote sustainable mitigation and adaptation efforts the existing vulnerability of indigenous

communities is exacerbated, and environmental injustices are perpetuated. The acknowledgement of the indigenous rights violations and environmental injustices as interconnected is crucial for achieving social and environmental justice fostering sustainable and equitable development, hence respecting, and protecting the rights and well-being of indigenous communities. But to be able to address these problematic areas a deeper analysis of the violations is needed to help identify the root of this problem.

Our approach will be to question whether this is a vicious cycle of the ‘post- colonization effect’ an incomplete decolonization. We will argue the connection between incomplete decolonization and environmental injustices, and also examine the colonialism effect as a by-product of environmental (in)justices, thus arguing that these is ‘the continuity of colonialism with other measures. We speculate that there is an ongoing vicious cycle of colonization, (phenomena of ‘settler colonialism’ and ‘neo-colonialism’), which is the root of the problem. Given this postulate, we will examine environmental injustices as a structural problematic aspect within the lens of the political theories: constructivism, the theory of structural violences and Marxism.

In the first stage of our approach, we will examine our case in question, and in the second stage, whether our claim is verified. Our main research objective is to seek remedies to decolonization. We thus raise a question: “How environmental justice could be not only a remedy but an inextricable element of establishing social justice for indigenous rights?”. To support our analysis, we have selected the two cases of Arctic Inuit (Canada) and Torres Strait Islanders (Australia). This selection is due to their unique circumstances and the challenges they face, as outlined below. They exemplify the interconnectedness of indigenous rights violations and environmental injustices, and furthermore the severe challenges they face are exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. It is important to note that there are numerous other indigenous communities worldwide who also experience similar interconnected challenges and serve as examples in such discussions. The selection of this particular case is attributed to their historic and ongoing marginalization due to their colonial legacies. By examining these cases, we can investigate the long-lasting effects of colonization on indigenous communities and how they intersect with environmental injustices. Their distinct environmental context highlights the specific challenges related to incomplete decolonization and environmental injustices. For example, the case of Arctic includes, rapid climate change, loss of sea ice and impacts on subsistence hunting and livelihoods and the case of Torres Strait Islanders includes vulnerability to sea-level rise and costal erosion impacting their homes, food security and cultural practices. Thus, by investigating these cases we can deepen our understanding of the interplay between colonization, environmental change, and social injustice. Furthermore, both Arctic Inuit and Torres Strait Islanders have struggled for their self- determination and indigenous rights. This offers us insights into the

ways incomplete decolonization affects the recognition and implementation of indigenous rights, land and resources rights, self-governance, and cultural preservation. Considering above discussion, we seek to identify and find remedies; legal frameworks, policies, and mechanisms, as required to address these problems and historical injustices. These cases (which face environmental injustices e.g., pollution, loss of traditional subsistence practices), are interconnected with social inequalities health disparities and economic challenges that are perhaps the result of incomplete decolonization. By examining the intersectionality, we aim to develop a holistic approach to address both the environmental injustices and social dimensions of the injustices.

Additionally, since both of these communities have developed innovative approaches to adapt to environmental changes and address environmental injustices, we expect to use them as our guiding principle for indigenous-led-solutions and resilience strategies. Lastly, these case studies can provide us with nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding incomplete decolonization and environmental injustices and hence provide remedies to our problem. By understanding their approaches, we could start forming the path toward environmental justice with sustainability practice models, also addressing climate change.

## **RESEARCH AIM, OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS**

### **Research aim:**

Given above discussion, our research aim is to establish a connection between environmental injustices and incomplete decolonization and explore whether a rights-based approach can offer any remedies in this problematic aspect of international relations.

### **Main objectives:**

The main objectives of this dissertation are to explore:

- a. How the phenomenon neo-colonization and settler colonialism connect environmental injustices to incomplete decolonization?
- b. The potential of environmental justice being an inextricable element of social justice for indigenous communities.

### **Scope and Limitations of the study:**

In this study we will focus on two cases of Indigenous communities that are threatened by climate change impacts – The Torres Strait Islanders of Australia and the Inuit of the Arctic to identify the environmental injustices and human rights violations to them. These cases were selected due to their historically ongoing experiences of colonialism and their vulnerability to climate change effects. This study will use qualitative research methodology and data collection through a review of articles and academic literature. While this study is focused on the case of the two selected communities, our findings may be applicable to other cases of indigenous communities as well that have faced similar forms of colonialism and

environmental injustices. The limitations of the two cases may include potential bias in the selection of sources and due to their small number, some information on the topic may be excluded. In addition, the findings of this study are probably not generalizable to all the indigenous communities.

### **OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION STRUCTURE**

This research thesis is divided into 7 chapters. Chapter 1 provides a background and context for the research topic, a statement of the problem and research questions, introduces the significance and importance of the study, as well as its scope and limitations. The literature review and background follows in Chapter 2, whilst Chapter 3 presents the methodology, the adopted research design utilized in this study, and the selection of data collection methods and sources. Chapter 4, discusses the connection of historical violations to environmental injustices, whilst Chapter 5 presented the case studies and Chapter 6 offers analysis and discussion of the thesis findings. Finally, Chapter 7, offers the concluding remarks and future directions.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH TOPIC

We acknowledge that the protection of the indigenous communities and environmental justice have been at the forefront of global discussions in recent years. Despite the existence of the legal protection of indigenous rights by international and national laws and policies, indigenous communities are still facing inequalities and injustices. We acknowledge that indigenous rights are challenged by various aspects. Firstly, the lack of implementation of laws and policies of indigenous rights, there are many cases of inaction by governments and institutions which results in indigenous being without legal recourse when their rights are violated. [3]. We argue that this is rooted in colonialism legacies, as indigenous communities have been lacking consultation and participation in the decision-making processes. This undoubtedly has an enormous impact on their lives and communities. It has been noticed that such issues have resulted in various other problematic areas threatening indigeneity by creating a vicious cycle of rights violations. [4] [5] Indigenous historic, ongoing discrimination and marginalisation has caused more violations and harassment against the indigenous communities, facing political and economic oppression, loss of their lands; cultural and ethnic traditions, and violations of their fundamental rights. We can argue that the treatment of indigenous communities and the invasion into indigenous territories has been so severe that it has been referred to as "genocide" and as a "holocaust." [6], [7] "cultural genocide" the ultimate destruction of cultural values and practices [8]. It is reasonable to question, if the violations of indigenous rights is so severe without any external influences; such as climate crisis, what will be the consequences under climate crisis? The violations of their rights if they were identified as 'genocide' or 'holocaust' prior to the ecological crisis how can such notions be identified afterward the ongoing problem? Our considerable argument is that the indigenous are facing 'ecocide' due to ecological injustices, we could refer to the continuity of the existing violations of indigenous rights in a more severe phenomenon, the ecological crisis is directly affecting the indigenous resulting in their severe extermination and marginalization. This research argues that climate change is seriously affecting indigenous people and underlines the significance of that problem, the need to seek for efficient remedies. But prior to that it is vital to acknowledge the measure of the problem, root of the problem and the consequences. To be able to decide which policies are appropriate and efficient for the resolution of the problem, to put an end to this vicious cycle of indigenous human rights violations and a build strong foundation for environmental justice.

We will examine the cases of the Indigenous communities of Australia's 'Torres Strait Islanders' and Inuit of Arctic which are facing severe environmental injustices and are impacted directly by climate change.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

To provide a theoretical framework for our research we introduce several key theories which will assist as to acknowledge the environmental injustices against indigenous communities as legacies of colonialism. Which will verify our assumptions that we are facing incomplete decolonization.

### CONSTRUCTIVISM THEORY

The first theory we introduce is constructivist approach, which highlight the need to acknowledge the significance of understanding historical and social context of indigenous peoples within international law [9]. This means that colonialism and its ongoing effects cannot be ignored when considering the legal status and rights of indigenous peoples. Colonialism has contributed to an ongoing cycle of indigenous rights violations through its imposition of Western legal systems that do not recognize indigenous legal orders and systems [12]. Environmental inequities experienced by indigenous communities' stem from colonial attitudes and structures which prioritize economic development over the rights and well-being of native peoples. By exploring how these attitudes and structures are embedded into social norms, economic systems, and political institutions that often disregard indigenous knowledge, undermine self-determination efforts, and establish hierarchies that serve dominant societal interests. Indigenous People's struggles for recognition and rights can be greatly affected by perceptions from society, cultural biases, historical legacies and incomplete decolonization as well as continuing colonial attitudes and structures which contribute to environmental injustice in indigenous communities. [9] Under this framework it is difficult to define and recognize indigenous peoples in a way that is inclusive and respectful of their diversity and autonomy.

### THEORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AS STRUCTURAL VIOLENCES

It is important to view indigenous injustices as human rights violations which stem from structural violences through systematic means of social, economic, and political systems that perpetuate violence and oppression – as by acknowledging assist us halt violations to rights. We identify that colonialism's form of structural violence has resulted in their displacement, oppression, and marginalization worldwide. The imperial powers systems of governance, land ownership and resource extraction have had devastating repercussions for traditional ways of

life and autonomy within cultures, further deepening social, economic, and political inequalities while destabilising traditional ways of life and maintaining disparities between societies and continents. To address the structural violence to prevent future violations, we need to confront the legacy of colonialism - the continuing inequalities and injustices that impact indigenous communities through its root [13] Human rights violations as indications of structural violence, stemming from power imbalances, discriminatory policies, economic disparities, cultural biases and other structural elements which cause social inequities. Example of access limitations or denial in our case are related to the indigeneity which serves as a precondition of vulnerability and marginalization in any aspect of the society. The theory of human rights violations as structural violence, emphasizes the significance of taking a holistic and systemic approach when protecting and promoting human rights, targeting not just immediate acts of violence but also root causes such as inequality and oppression. Such approaches aim at dismantling unjust structures while simultaneously combatting inequality and oppression at an institutional level. [13]

### MARXIST THEORY

Marxist theory offers an effective tool to explore the structures underlying Indigenous oppression [14]. Colonialism, capitalism, and globalization all had an effect in shaping its landscape, leading to significant environmental and societal shifts such as climate change impacts, resource extraction for industrial use as well as lifestyle pattern alterations across society. We seek to understand these changes their impacts as well as their historical/cultural roots [15]. The historical, economic, and political factors that have contributed to Indigenous oppression in the context of capitalist economies are rooted in a legacy of colonialism; resource extraction and forced assimilation. These factors have had profound impacts on Indigenous peoples' material and cultural well-being, loss of land, resources, and traditional knowledge. By understanding these factors, it becomes possible to develop strategies for resistance and decolonization that address the underlying structural factors that have contributed to Indigenous oppression. To begin with, Neoliberalism's development model which emphasizes in economic development over environmental protection or social equity. [16]. Free markets and privatization, has caused environmental regulations to loosen over time, leading to ecological crises in this part of the globe. As colonialism's legacy remains relevant in our current globalized environment, even after many former colonies have achieved political independence, its legacies still affect indigenous communities through structural inequality and economic marginalization [17]. Such impacts on indigenous communities can be understood as environmental injustice - marginalized communities bear much of the responsibility for environmental degradation while often excluded from decision-

making processes [18] [19]. Marxist theory analysis of capitalist development can offer new insight into genocide and ecocide; Capitalism's social and ecological contradictions and the conceptual and historical dimensions analysis provide vital context to help understand its causes and effects; contributing to more holistic integrated approaches for understanding and confronting such phenomena. Ideal lens analysis to examine indigenous rights violations; genocide and ecocide interconnection, as interdependent problems of structures, with systemic dimensions that need addressing.

Colonialism's legacy continues to contribute to ecological and social crises facing many Indigenous communities today, drawing attention to both capitalist development and ongoing exploitation of Indigenous populations through ecocide as an idea. Genocide and Ecocide have devastating results in indigenous communities as they have long been used as tools of dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands and resources [96]. Capitalism's historical role as an enabler of both ecocide and genocide lies largely within its use of natural resources and labour for profit exploitation, and colonialism plays an instrumental part. We identified historical and contemporary impacts of colonialism on Indigenous populations, along with how this has led to loss of traditional ecological knowledge and practices. Ecocide refers to the systematic displacement of Indigenous populations who stand in the way of capitalist development as a concept helps bring attention to environmental and social costs of capitalist development while offering a framework for new forms of resistance and transformation for strategies to emerge. While Genocide involves deliberate acts of destruction intended to strip Indigenous people of their lands and resources.

Genocide and ecocide are interrelated, as both serve to strengthen capitalist systems by exploiting Indigenous peoples [20]. Ecocide is not simply an environmental concern; it also poses social justice concerns as it often adversely affects vulnerable groups like indigenous populations who often remain excluded from political power and decision-making processes. Ecocide represents a serious challenge to justice that needs to be tackled urgently. Ecocide concepts violate both justice and basic liberties of affected individuals and communities [21] We recognize the critical significance of safeguarding fundamental liberties, promoting social and economic equality, ensuring vulnerable populations are included in decision-making processes, as well as protecting ecosystems against harm caused by humans or nonhumans.



## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our study will utilize a qualitative research approach, which is well suited for exploring complex social phenomena like violations of human rights among indigenous communities.

### Research Design/Methods:

This thesis employs a qualitative research design known as comparative case-study to address research questions. Choosing this particular research design was justified due to its ability to gain an in-depth knowledge of complex social phenomena surrounding violations of human rights among indigenous communities.

### Justification for Case Selection:

Torres Strait Islanders and Arctic communities were carefully chosen as cases studies due to their relevance, central features, and ability to support our research questions and objectives, comparative analysis capabilities, and potential for comparative examination. Both have experienced environmental injustice and violations of indigenous rights that directly fit with the central focus of this study. Furthermore, they present us with the chance to examine effects and consequences of incomplete decolonization which provides vital insight into environmental injustice and colonial legacies in connection with each other. More specifically, these communities' geographic regions and cultural settings present us with an opportunity for comparative analysis. Both communities provide valuable insights into common patterns and dynamics associated with incomplete decolonization; by comparing experiences among these communities, we can strengthen our argument regarding environmental injustices linked to incomplete colonialism - specifically Torres Strait Islanders and Arctic communities may experience similar injustices which further support that incomplete decolonization plays an integral part in perpetuating them. Analysis of these cases allows for deeper insights into the causes and mechanisms that contribute to environmental injustices and incomplete colonialism, and helps us recognize shared experiences, challenges, and strategies employed by indigenous communities fighting for environmental justice and decolonization. In conclusion, these cases further expanding our knowledge about the complex dynamics at play in society today. The comparative approaches allow for deeper insight into all factors at play as well as potential shared experiences and difficulties between them all.

### Data Collection Strategy:

For data collection, our study relies heavily on secondary sources like books, articles, reports, and relevant literature that provides detailed knowledge regarding historical events, policy debates, perspectives frameworks and backgrounds relevant to our topic of interest. By drawing upon multiple secondary sources, we hope to gain a broader perspective and build an in-depth foundation for analysis.

### Data Analysis Strategy:

Our approach to data analysis will follow a methodical and rigorous methodology. Once secondary source data are compiled, they will be carefully examined against research questions and relevant theoretical frameworks in order to provide an in-depth exploration of this research topic. To do this effectively, information from various sources must be synthesized together so as to reveal key themes, patterns, or connections related to environmental injustice and incomplete decolonization processes. As part of its data analysis using secondary sources, our study will assess debates and discussions around environmental injustice and indigenous rights, our extensive research of many research areas of the topic guarantee relevancy, reliability and credibility of this analysis.

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Methods

Qualitative methods relying on bibliographic references provide several advantages, including an in-depth literature overview, efficiency, and the capacity to analyse large amounts of data efficiently; they also come with drawbacks like lack of control over data collection processes, validity/reliability concerns and potential limits in answering certain research questions. By acknowledging and taking note of both advantages and drawbacks associated with their chosen methodological approach effectively, researchers can navigate its challenges while capitalizing on its strengths effectively.

## **CHAPTER 4: CONNECTION OF HISTORICAL VIOLATIONS TO ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICES**

If our argument is verified, and colonization has created an ongoing cycle of indigenous rights violations tied to colonialism, then we are referring to incomplete decolonization. Which could be explained by many sub-category theories, some of those we will discuss deeper, we introduce ‘settler colonialism’ and ‘neo-colonialism’ as ‘colonialisation with other means’ – the new forms of colonialisation, in order to verify our arguments of incomplete decolonization and its association to environmental injustices. The concept of "incomplete decolonization" suggests that the decolonization process was not fully achieved and therefore the legacies of colonialism continue to impact indigenous peoples [22]. With the notion incomplete decolonization, we claim that the colonization has a continuity pattern with other measures and types, that decolonization is not fully achieved, the colonial status of the post-colonies continue to exist, and the inequalities, violations, and marginalization against indigenous communities. We acknowledge that colonialism is not only a historical phenomenon that we had put behind of us, since we had the historical patterns of violations of indigenous rights cycle keeps repeating. We identified that colonialism's legacy of limited control over indigenous lands and resources as well as limited recognition of rights and knowledge systems, leaves indigenous communities especially susceptible to climate change impacts as many lack the resources or political influence needed to adapt quickly to changing conditions. [23]. This incomplete decolonization contributes to ongoing social, economic, and cultural obstacles experienced by Indigenous communities today. [24]. Which position Indigenous peoples to remain merely an object of international law and struggle for sovereign autonomy, 'Raison d'être' of indigenous politics [25]. Indigenous rights violations stem from colonialism's longstanding and ongoing legacy on indigenous communities, legacies of settler colonialism/neo-colonialism is evident today [12]. Colonialism contributed to environmental injustices faced by indigenous communities; resource extraction and development on their lands has left behind environmental harm as well as challenges related to economic marginalization and social inequality [14].

### **SETTLER-COLONIALISM**

We introduce settler colonialism as a form of colonization, colonizer 'settle' and "erase Indigenous economies, cultures, and political organizations for the sake of establishing their own". establishes. Settler colonialism under the frame of Indigenous environmental justice disclosed that indigenous peoples compared to other marginalized groups are disproportionality impacted by environmental degradation. The pattern of dispossession and marginalization has continued through the process of "settler colonialism," which refers to the ongoing occupation and control of indigenous lands and resources by settler societies[26]. The ongoing subjugation and marginalization of indigenous peoples are rooted in settler colonialism, which seeks to replace indigenous peoples with non-indigenous settlers, resulting in the ongoing dispossession of indigenous lands, resources, and culture [24]. An environmental justice issue thought settler colonialism is a highly disruptive type of historic injustice, confirmed through existing laws, policies, and governance processes of the colonizing state [5] Therefore, we identified that the historic continuing 'vicious cycle' of indigenous rights violations is indeed rooted in colonialism, which has perpetuated the subjugation of indigenous peoples. This pattern of colonization has continued through different forms, including 'settler colonialism,' 'neo-colonialism identified 'colonialism with other means'. Colonization's different forms have resulted in ongoing violations of indigenous rights, such as the denial of their sovereignty, exploitation of their resources, and cultural erasure, the continuity of colonialism, including 'settler colonialism' and 'neo-colonialism,' is a root cause of environmental injustices in indigenous communities '[27]. Indigenous peoples have been subject to environmental injustice through the exploitation of their lands and resources, often for the benefit of non-indigenous populations. The impacts of colonialism are still being felt today, and many indigenous communities continue to experience the effects of colonization. Decolonization is necessary to address the ongoing injustices faced by indigenous peoples, including their land and resource rights and enhance social justice and protection of indigenous rights. [22] Addressing these issues requires recognizing the ongoing impacts of colonialism on indigenous communities and taking steps to redress past injustices. '[27]

### NEO - COLONIALISM

Neo-colonialism refers to the ongoing domination, exploitation of indigenous lands and resources and former colonial powers ongoing exercise of control over their former colonies through economic and political means [24], [28]. The imposition of Western economic and political systems has led to the exploitation and degradation of indigenous lands and resources, as well as the suppression of indigenous knowledge and cultural practices [24], in such a manner of perpetuating colonialism's cycle of inequality, and exploitation [29]. Environmental sustainability programs and initiatives, such as carbon offset programs and

conservation efforts have been criticized for their impact on indigenous communities' rights and well-being. Extractive energy industries rely heavily on settler-colonialism and capitalism which increase social inequality further by perpetuating existing imbalances[30].The fossil fuel projects often imposed without the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous communities on Indigenous lands, exacerbating the violations of their rights of self-determination and sovereignty. The use of state violence; police brutality, surveillance, and criminalization against Indigenous that resistance to fossil fuel projects protecting their lands and communities, underlines the injustices [31]. The impacts of colonialism on indigenous communities have been profound and far-reaching, Indigenous rights violations have long been seen as the result of colonialism's legacy; dispossession, loss of culture and identity all have their origin in colonization's historical processes and ongoing structures of inequality that it created [17].Neo-colonialism perpetuates and entrenches the social and economic marginalization of Indigenous communities intensifying the oppression and further marginalizing of indigenous peoples [17], [17], [28], [32].

We identified that environmental injustices, including climate crisis is inevitably tied to incomplete decolonization, capitalism, imperialism/globalization. We acknowledge through the historic roots of the violations of indigenous rights. The genesis roots of those injustices attributed to colonialism, as we perceive the current ecological crisis as 'intensification of colonialism', colonialism as a form of anthropogenic climate change” [33]. This exacerbate form is more intense and severe directly impacting the indigenous lives, livelihood, well-being, economically and socio-politically. In the case of indigenous peoples, the legacies of settler colonialism and neo-colonialism have resulted in the ongoing marginalization and exploitation of their lands and resources. For example, in the Arctic, the Inuit people have faced the impacts of colonialism through forced resettlement, resource exploitation, and the impacts of climate change on their traditional ways of life [34]. The incomplete decolonization contributed to the ongoing social, economic, and cultural challenges faced by Indigenous communities. The forced relocation of Inuit communities and the imposition of Western economic and political systems on Inuit and Torres Strait Islander communities are examples of settler colonialism that have resulted in the marginalization and erasure of Indigenous peoples and their cultures [17]. We are examining the roots of that serious problem of international relations to be able to tackle it.

## **CHAPTER 5: CASE STUDIES**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICES AND THE VULNERABILITY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

Firstly, through our case – studies of the Arctic Inuit and Torres Strait Islanders we examine:

- a. the environmental injustices against indigenous people
- b. if their environmental injustices are connected to their vulnerability environmental injustices.

We investigate the connection between environmental injustices and the vulnerability of indigenous communities. If indigenous vulnerabilities are connected, as we argued to colonialism legacies, then we can establish our argument that we are facing an incomplete decolonization which is connected to environmental injustices. We utilize our theories to our case studies to justify that incomplete decolonization is associated with environmental injustices under our theoretical framework, and we introduce environmental justice as a remedy to our problem.

### **VULNERABILITY OF TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS TO ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICES**

Torres Strait Islanders a milestone case of environmental injustices that establishes the severity of climate change, indigenous populations deprived of their fundamental human rights are vulnerable to marginalization, injustices, violations, the historical impacts of colonization. The environmental catastrophe has seriously compromised their way of life and cultural legacy as well as physical and mental wellbeing in recent years, jeopardizing basic life necessities like their basic survival [35] [36]. Even though their carbon emissions contribution is minimal, their inhabitants are feeling the ripple effects of global climate change first-hand. Facing an unfair ecological disaster that puts their existence and culture under threat [37] [38] [39] [40] [41] [42]. Such climate change consequences, rising sea levels, environmental concerns such as acid rain, and other environmental impacts threatened Torres Strait Islanders in recent years. [43] [44] [45] [46] [47] [48] [49]. Torres Strait Islanders bear the brunt of greenhouse gas emissions, generated in their region of Australia with the most greenhouse emissions globally. [50] The consequences have an especially dramatic effect on them. [51] [52]. Climate change is having a severe impact on Torres Strait Islands' infrastructure and natural ecosystems, including rising sea levels, more frequent severe weather events. Facing numerous environmental concerns beyond climate change, including ocean acidification, pollution, habitat destruction and rising sea levels and storm surges that affect their islands and inhabitants [38] [54] [55] [44] [56]. The loss of distinct

flora and fauna, essential to traditional lifestyles and forced migration have compromised Torres Strait Islanders' traditional way of life and are undermining their traditions. [57]. A lack of necessary infrastructure such as clean water access points, waste management systems and health services exacerbate these environmental worries further [58] [59] [44] [61]. Rising sea levels threaten this fragile ecosystem as one of its primary issues, Torres Strait Islands are low-lying and susceptible to flooding; as a result, many Islanders have already been forced to relocate due to rising sea levels and their effects. Making these nations highly vulnerable when it comes to national policies regarding climate change impacts and mitigation efforts. They remain particularly dependent upon national decisions for effective adaptation policies against its effects. Climate change will have serious ramifications on social and cultural cohesion among Island residents who rely heavily on land health for mental and physical wellbeing, identity formation and identity preservation. [43] These effects include losing land, homes, and cultural sites as well as traditional fishing/hunting methods being reduced significantly over time. As Torres Strait Islanders depend heavily on traditional fishing and hunting for sustenance; such activities play an essential role in their culture and way of life. Torres Strait Islanders have experienced both social and cultural fallout due to this ecological disaster, as well as the physical consequences of its physical manifestations. These issues are compounded by social, economic, and political injustice originated on historic colonialism effects, that has long marginalized and oppressed Torres Strait Islander people - such as Australia's response to environmental disasters in Torres Strait. [62], [63], [47], [48], [50]. Australia was heavily criticized by international bodies over their insufficient response to ecological crises and treatment of Torres Strait Islanders. Torres Strait Islanders accused their government of disregarding their needs, failing to allocate enough funding for adaptation and mitigation measures, as well as failing to recognize Torres Strait Islander rights as Indigenous Peoples. Torres Strait Islanders have fallen prey to climate change and other environmental disasters due to governmental inaction, making them particularly susceptible to its consequences. An ecological disaster is directly caused by climate change as governments fail to take effective steps against it. There have also been concerns raised regarding the government's management of commercial fishing operations in Torres Strait Island regions and their effect on Torres Strait Islanders' rights and interests. [67] [68]. The case of Torres Strait Islander ecological problem is multifaceted with environmental, social, economic, and political dimensions [65]. The settler- colonies have been marked by historical continuity, incomplete decolonization' and have proven 'relatively impervious to regime change'[26]. To address ecological inequities recognizing and responding to the ecological crises are of utmost importance; similarly, their views must be heard when making decisions that affect their lives and communities. The solution to this issue requires an inclusive holistic

plan that considers both Torres Strait Islander rights and needs, and any injustices which have led to their marginalisation and persecution [2] [69].

## **VOLUNERABILITY OF ARTIC INUIT TO ENVIROMENTAL INJUSTICES**

The environmental degradation in the Canadian Arctic has significantly impacted negatively the Inuit community [70]. Industrial activities, including mining, oil and gas extraction, and shipping, contribute to pollution, habitat destruction, and the degradation of the Arctic environment, sea ice loss, coastal erosion, wildlife changes, food insecurity, mental health, and exposure to toxic contaminants. Disruptions to the Arctic ecosystem, such as melting sea ice and changes in wildlife patterns, directly affect the Inuit's ability to sustain themselves and maintain their cultural identity. [71] [72]. Climate change has led to the loss of sea ice, which is essential for Inuit hunting practices and access to marine resources. [73] [74] [75] [76]. The Pollution and contamination of water, air, and land have detrimental effects on Inuit health, leading to increased rates of diseases and health disparities within the community. [77] [78]. Arctic environmental challenges range from climate change and melting sea ice, caused by increased shipping activities or resource exploration activities, to potential oil spills caused by shipping activity or accidental releases during exploration activities. Such challenges pose serious threats to both Arctic ecosystems as a whole as well as Indigenous communities that depend on them for livelihood purposes.[79] There are various effects that climate change in the Arctic has had on the human health of indigenous populations. Such as increased rates of infectious disease transmission and mental health challenges; food insecurity issues; as well as changes to traditional lifestyles. [80]. Arctic indigenous health, with environmental pollution being one major threat threatening nutritional quality.[79], while the twelve highly hazardous chemicals pose threats to ecosystem health as well as human wellbeing, urgent necessity to address toxic chemical use and release. Climate change impacts threaten this way of life as well as Inuit health, well-being and cultural identity [70]. Arctic is especially susceptible to the effects of climate change due to its unique climate and geography, noting how any shift in temperatures, precipitation patterns or other climate variables could lead to increased prevalence or transmission of infectious diseases. [81]. The significance of understanding and mitigating such health consequences within sustainable development initiatives.[80]. The necessity of including communities impacted by these chemicals' impacts in decision making processes related to use and regulation, including indigenous populations that often bear their effects most acutely. [82] It is required greater accountability and regulation from industries responsible for such pollution, to greater recognition of Inuit rights and expertise when



making environmental decisions. [83], increased recognition of indigenous rights as well as participation in decision making processes related to oil development in the Arctic [84]. Arctic populations are particularly at risk from climate change due to unique social, cultural, and economic aspects Arctic communities become highly exposed to any health implications from environmental change[70]. We must consider the complex interactions among social, economic, environmental factors to inform policies and practices which protect public health in this part of the globe. [81]. Proposition for greater remediation efforts and monitoring efforts, calls for stronger international governance mechanisms to better handle transnational Arctic pollution issues. [85]. It is urgent to prioritize the needs and perspectives of Arctic communities while adhering to principles of environmental justice, such as acknowledging indigenous peoples' rights as well as prioritizing intergenerational equity. [86]. The legal recognition and protection of their rights is required, under climate change impacts; potential displacement or relocation due to climate change impacts. [70] Climate change displacement of Indigenous communities poses a human rights crisis and should be accorded legal recognition and protection, including their human rights in this context.[87] Climate change poses a threat to the enjoyment of fundamental human rights. Climate change contributes to environmental degradation, leading to the violation of the right to a clean and healthy environment. Firstly, the extreme weather events, exacerbated by climate change, result in the violation of the right to life and the right to security, climate change-induced displacement and forced migration violate the right to freedom of movement and the right to seek asylum. [86], secondly, pollution represents a form of crime against future Inuit generations, endangering their health, well-being, traditional way of life, and cultural heritage. [70]. We underline that states have a duty to address climate change and protect human rights, states have a responsibility to prevent, mitigate, and adapt to climate change in order to protect the rights and well-being of their citizens. The intersection of climate change and human rights indicates the need for action at the individual, state, and international levels to address the adverse impacts of climate change and protect the rights of all individuals, particularly the most vulnerable. [86]. Climate change and other forms of environmental degradation have already had serious damaging impacts on Inuit communities, with further damages likely in future years. It has been argued that Canada hasn't done enough to address the challenges affecting these communities and requires greater recognition of their rights. Human rights should be mainstreamed into international climate agreements and frameworks to ensure the protection of vulnerable populations. Which highlight the intersection of climate change and human rights, emphasizing the need for action at the individual, state, and international levels to address the adverse impacts of climate change and protect the rights of all individuals, particularly the most vulnerable. Introduces the human rights implications of climate change for Indigenous communities such as Inuit people. [70]. Arctic indigenous peoples face various

difficulties related to climate change, environmental pollution, and economic marginalization; describes their historical and cultural context; Cultural and environmental challenges faced by indigenous Arctic communities. Which are impacting Arctic communities, environmental threats, political challenges, and economic pressures. Indigenous communities that have contributed the least to climate change are also experiencing less-quantifiable losses of cultural resources, traditional food procurement, storage, and ways of living [88]. Inuit identity is under attack, as the environmental change in in Arctic, threats, such as climate change or other environmental threats, has been threatening traditional knowledge or cultural practices. [89]. Their vulnerability establishes indigenous populations as victims of external problems, such as climate change [88]. Climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, exacerbating the existing inequalities. First point to argue the vulnerability of this community and is that marginalized communities, such as indigenous peoples are disproportionately impacted by climate change due to factors like unequal access to resources and limited adaptive capacities. Second point is that climate change exacerbates social and economic inequalities, leading to further disparities in accessing basic needs, such as food, water, and healthcare. Third point, the vulnerable populations often face barriers to participating in decision-making processes related to climate change, undermining their right to participate in public affairs. [86] indigenous people viewed as objects in the decision-making process, i.e., they take offense to being weighed and balanced along with polar bears and melting permafrost [90]. The Canadian Arctic as site of settler colonialism wherein Indigenous people were subject to forced assimilation and cultural erasure by colonial powers, legacy of settler colonialism and racism remains pervasive across the Arctic and elsewhere, and these historical injustices need to be addressed, to foster equitable societies [91].The environmental regulations and policies. Inadequate to protect the Arctic ecosystem and the rights of the Inuit communities. [92]. Asserting that existing legal and political frameworks fail to recognize or protect indigenous rights and interests adequately in the Arctic. [84]. Colonialism in the Arctic has long been at the core of many issues in that region, both past and present, state`s policies of land appropriation have resulted in marginalizing indigenous communities and knowledge systems due to denial of rights or discrimination against land rights claims; consequently, making adaption harder due to changing environmental conditions more challenging while leaving vulnerable to impacts of climate change. They specifically highlight extractive industries (oil/gas development etc), such as their effect on environmental degradation while further marginalizing indigenous communities by further contributing towards environmental degradation while contributing further environmental degradation by contributing towards environmental degradation while marginalizing indigenous communities further [76]. Climate change has had dire social and cultural ramifications on Arctic Indigenous communities that depend on its resources for livelihood

and culture practices yet remain excluded from decision making processes regarding resource exploitation or climate policy decisions. [93].The environmental degradation in the Canadian Arctic is exacerbated by climate change and human activities. [94]

### **CASE- STUDY CONNECTION TO INCOMPLETE DECOLONIZATION**

Overall, the vulnerability of this populations and their economic, political, social marginalization the inequality and the injustices they are continuously facing underlines our arguments that we are facing an incomplete decolonization which is severely affecting indigenous rights and creates environmental injustices. Torres Strait Islanders and Arctic communities `Inuit` remain highly susceptible to economic, political, and social marginalization as the ongoing effects of incomplete decolonization on indigenous rights, leading to environmental inequalities that persist even today. The economic disparities affecting them directly limiting access to resources or economic opportunities thus further compounding vulnerability due to limited means for adapting to changes or developing alternative sustainable livelihood options. Due to the incomplete decolonization , it fails to recognize and acknowledge indigenous communities` rights to sovereignty and self-determination, leaving limited representation and inclusion of indigenous voices in political structures and decision making processes regarding environmental policies responsible for perpetuating environmental injustices - this includes Torres Strait Islanders and Arctic communities being overlooked or dismissed when their interests and concerns regarding protection for land, resources, cultural heritage were overlooked or dismissed due to political power limitations that limit their influence over governance decisions and perpetuate unequal distribution of environmental harms amongst these communities. Social marginalization further compounds these communities` precarity, social inequalities such as limited access to education, healthcare and basic infrastructure - compounding environmental injustices further by exacerbating them and make them particularly susceptible to climate-induced health effects associated with environmental displacement, while limited educational opportunities prevent indigenous groups from engaging in sustainable resource management or engaging with decision making processes regarding their environments. Reducing environmental injustice requires an inclusive decolonization process which recognizes and respects indigenous rights, from acknowledging sovereignty to participation in decision making processes to supporting revitalization of traditional ecological knowledge and practices. Furthermore, providing indigenous communities access to equitable resources such as economic opportunities or

social services will reduce vulnerability while furthering environmental justice. In conclusion, Torres Strait Islanders and Arctic communities' vulnerability, economic, political, and social marginalization is indicative of incomplete decolonization processes that continue to exist today. By addressing underlying issues related to indigenous rights promotion we can create a more equitable and sustainable future where environmental injustices are effectively tackled while communities thrive under increased empowerment.

### **CASE- STUDY CONNECTION TO THEORIES**

Expanding upon our discussion and analysis of Torres Strait Islander and Arctic Inuit communities, we can further examine their relationships to theories such as constructivism, human rights violations as structural violence and Marxism. Such theories offer valuable insight into social, historical, systemic factors which contribute to struggles for indigenous rights and environmental justice within these contexts. By adopting the Constructivism lens, it becomes evident that environmental challenges faced by Torres Strait Islander and Arctic Inuit communities do not originate independently; their existence are intimately tied with colonization's legacy of legal systems, cultural assimilation policies, land dispossession, etc. that were implemented under European colonialism - shaping these indigenous groups' struggle for recognition, self-determination, and environmental justice [9]. Furthermore, this analysis emphasizes the necessity of comprehensive decolonization efforts to effectively address environmental injustices. Partial efforts only exacerbate inequalities and power imbalances which contribute to indigenous community marginalization; remedies must acknowledge historical injustices done against indigenous groups as well as create frameworks which prioritize their rights and wellbeing [96].

Human rights violations as structural violence sheds light on the systematic injustices suffered by Torres Strait Islander and Arctic Inuit communities, drawing attention to structural and institutional factors which perpetuate social and environmental inequalities that persist across society; such inequalities manifest through policies and practices which restrict indigenous rights, limit resources access and threaten self-determination. Understanding environmental injustice as structural violence allows us to look beyond individual acts of harm and examine broader systems and power dynamics that contribute to these injustices. Addressing inequality and discrimination are integral parts of this equation - hence this perspective emphasizes challenging discriminatory policies, promoting social justice initiatives and assuring indigenous communities have their voices heard during decision making processes affecting their land or environment. By offering an invaluable insight into understanding how environmental injustice affects certain communities. Environmental injustices aren't isolated

incidents but part of society's social, economic, and political structures that foster inequality and oppression. This perspective emphasizes the necessity of addressing structural violence at its source: power imbalances, discriminatory policies and economic disparities. By doing this, a more holistic approach to environmental justice may be taken that challenges systemic structures which perpetuate marginalization of indigenous communities while simultaneously increasing social equality [95]. Drawn upon Marxist theory, provides insights into the socio-economic structures underlying indigenous oppression and environmental injustice among Torres Strait Islander and Arctic Inuit communities, specifically. It explores capitalism, colonialism, and globalization - their intersection and effects upon social and environmental dynamics as a result. Capitalism's pursuit of profits often results in environmental destruction or social inequities [97]. Marxism illuminates how capitalist development models influenced by colonial legacies exacerbate the marginalization and dispossession of indigenous communities through capitalism's capitalist development model, often prioritizing powerful actors' interests over those of indigenous communities and ecological systems. Marxist analysis illuminate's links between economic exploitation, environmental degradation, indigenous oppression, and their oppressive relationship to urge us to challenge capitalism [96]. Adopting a Marxist perspective allows us to gain greater insight into the systemic factors causing environmental injustices within these communities, calling for transformative changes which challenge capitalist system structures of inequality; advocating for indigenous land rights and supporting sustainable development models which prioritize community wellbeing over corporate interests [97]. Solidarity must also be fostered among marginalized groups striving for social and environmental justice [97]. It becomes apparent that indigenous rights and environmental justice struggles are deeply intertwined; further, capitalism's impactful legacy from colonialism exacerbates these challenges further. Profit accumulation and resource extraction inherent to capitalist development models often take precedence over environmental sustainability and social equity. Indigenous communities bear the brunt of extractive processes, suffering land loss and resource depletion while their traditional knowledge dissipates. Resolving these challenges involves critically considering how capitalism, colonialism and globalization interact and seeking alternative forms of development that prioritize sustainability, indigenous land rights and community well-being [96], [97]. The analysis supports the research questions by showing historical and systemic links between environmental injustices and colonialism, and decolonization efforts and acknowledgment of indigenous rights as potential solutions. Environmental justice has emerged as an essential aspect of creating social justice among indigenous communities, necessitating challenging power imbalances, inclusive decision-making processes, and sustainable development models that prioritize indigenous well-being and sustainability.

Employing an integrative and interdisciplinary approach informed by constructivism, human rights violations as structural violence theory and Marxist thought can enable researchers and policymakers to tackle indigenous rights and environmental justice challenges effectively. In conclusion, the theories of constructivism, stresses the significance of historical and social context when considering indigenous people's rights and relationships to the environment, specifically among Torres Strait Islander and Arctic Inuit communities. More specifically, in their case this theory highlights colonization's history and lasting impacts; such experiences as dispossession of land, cultural assimilation and disrupted traditional practices have left their marks on these indigenous groups [9]. By adopting a constructivist lens, we acknowledge that struggles for indigenous rights and environmental justice cannot be isolated from historical processes that marginalized these communities. A comprehensive understanding of their unique cultural identities, knowledge systems and aspirations requires comprehensive recognition by everyone concerned - thus encouraging inclusive participatory approaches which respect indigenous autonomy while revitalizing traditional practices while respecting their significance in sustainable environmental management [96]. Human rights violations as structural violence and Marxism provide invaluable insights into the struggles encountered by Torres Strait Islanders and Arctic Inuit. These theories help us comprehend the historical, social and economic forces contributing to their marginalization, environmental degradation and violations of native rights. By applying these theoretical frameworks, we can gain an in-depth knowledge of the complex that undermine systemic structures of inequality and exploitation. These theories further emphasize the interdependent relationship between indigenous rights and environmental justice, emphasizing the necessity of recognising indigenous knowledge, protecting cultural practices, and engaging indigenous communities meaningfully in decision-making processes that impact their lands or environments. The analysis presented firmly supports the assertion that environmental injustice interconnection to incomplete decolonization.

### **INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AS REMEDIE TO THE PROBLEM**

Indigenous communities have historically suffered land dispossession, forced displacement and cultural disruption caused by extractive industries, infrastructure projects and discriminatory land management policies [98]. Environmental degradation and resource extraction disproportionately harm indigenous communities, leading to health impacts, economic marginalization, and displacement [99], [100]. Extractive industries' incursion into indigenous territories often leads to pollution, deforestation, and the exhaustion of traditional food sources - directly impacting indigenous livelihoods and well-being [98], [99], [100]. Such practices not only violate indigenous rights but also perpetuate social inequities such as poverty, health disparities and cultural erosion [101], [102]. The ongoing violations of

indigenous rights rooted in colonialism highlight the need for environmental justice to address the historical and ongoing injustices experienced by indigenous peoples. As the colonial structures underpin EJ [4] need to be overthrown to acknowledge and enact the knowledge, rights, and sovereignty of indigenous peoples [91]. IEJ establishes the crucial components of indigenous cultural continuance and sovereignty over, authority, and justice within the Indigenous context. [92] , [93] , [94]. Environmental justice initiatives that prioritize indigenous rights can ensure more equal distribution of environmental burdens and benefits among different communities. Environmental Justice recognizes the unfair treatment experienced by some communities when it comes to environmental impacts; rectifying such injustices is integral for creating greater equity [99], [100]. Address the unequal distribution of environmental burdens and benefits, recognizing that marginalized communities, including indigenous peoples, often bear a disproportionate burden of environmental harm [103]. By addressing environmental injustices, we can begin rectifying historical marginalization while working toward social justice for Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous cultural practices, traditional knowledge systems and spiritual beliefs are deeply interwoven with their ecosystems [104] [101], [102]; therefore, preserving and rejuvenating cultural connections between nature and indigenous communities is vital to uphold indigenous identities while simultaneously furthering social justice [100], [105], [106] [104]. Environmental degradation or loss can erode indigenous cultural heritage as well as disrupt intergenerational knowledge transmission [101] [102]

IEJ serves as a framework to understand how economic development, ecological protection and Indigenous sovereignty relate [16], is a sustainable approach that prioritizes sustainable economic practices and environmental protection, could better meet the values, and needs of Indigenous communities. Recognizing indigenous self-determination and meaningful participation in environmental decision making empowers indigenous communities to shape environmental governance and implement sustainable practices [38], thus strengthening both indigenous rights as well as creating more equitable approaches to environmental management that serve both indigenous peoples and society at large. IEJ is essential to solve the ecological catastrophe as well as the different types of violence and injustices faced by indigenous people, environmental injustice can be eliminated while safeguarding indigenous lands and resources to promote social justice [38]. We stress the necessity of exploring alternative perspectives and forms of knowing - particularly Indigenous populations' Traditional Ecological Knowledge) creating social and ecological justice for all, to move beyond Western liberal thought [95] introducing the formulation of Indigenous environmental justice (IEJ), we are able to address the various forms of violence, injustices, and challenges of the ecological crisis, the truly impact of environmental contamination against. Indigenous

enhance the capacity to promote measures of action that are "environmentally Just" and have a deeper focus on the reproduction of culture. Environmental justice plays an integral part in maintaining indigenous cultures and identities. The Environmental justice and respect for indigenous rights can work hand-in-hand to create more equitable approaches to environmental management that benefit both indigenous people and society at large. Their holistic and long-term perspectives on resource management and conservation offer vital clues towards ecological balance and resilience to address the climate crisis [38], prioritize social and ecological justice as well as recognize Indigenous rights and sovereignty [5]. These alternative life systems serve as a valuable counterbalance to the dominating capitalist system and offer significant insights of sustainability. [20] Indigenous knowledge offers key insight for living sustainably while adapting to ever-evolving circumstances. [15], [96], through indigenous knowledge systems, modes of life, tribal sovereignty of Indigenous communities [97].



## CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the preceding chapter, findings were reported from case studies and an examination was done of how environmental justice protects indigenous rights. This chapter will analyse its ramifications on indigenous rights and environmental justice, its limitations, future research needs and recommendations, as well as presenting some final thoughts regarding this research topic. Indigenous rights may have been recognized through international agreements and national legislation, yet indigenous communities still encounter many hurdles to their entitlement to self-determination, land rights and resources. Legal frameworks and international agreements play a pivotal role in upholding indigenous rights and environmental justice. For instance, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [107] serves as a landmark document that affirms indigenous people's rights, yet still face difficulties asserting them despite formal recognition, as evidenced in case studies reviewed for this study. Furthermore, indigenous communities continue to experience environmental degradation that violates both individual freedoms as well as communal ones resulting in further degradation to the land itself and resources. Though UNDRIP represents an impressive step forward, its implementation and enforcement still present numerous hurdles. Many countries have yet to adopt or integrate its principles fully into their legal systems. Our study demonstrated a longstanding pattern of violations against indigenous rights that stems back to colonialism, continuing as settler-colonialism or neo-colonialism today. It is yesterday's news that environmental injustice against indigenous communities remains as an unfortunate legacy from history, further compounded by climate change impacts today. Furthermore, it stresses the significance of acknowledging historical forms of colonialism with its associated impacts on environmental quality as well as indigenous communities' rights. We are investigating the intersection of environmental justice and indigenous rights, exploring the mechanisms and ways in which environmental justice is integral to social justice for indigenous communities. Therefore, this study emphasizes the need for an approach to environmental justice rooted in rights-based principles which takes into account indigenous perspectives and needs as part of environmental sustainability efforts. Firstly, to examine the interconnection between incomplete decolonization and environmental injustices, draw connections among Marxism, structural violence theory and constructivism theories and case studies from Arctic Inuit communities and Torres Strait Islanders that illustrate environmental injustice faced by indigenous communities due to colonialism - providing valuable insight into its perpetuation - using selected theories as lenses through which we may gain a better understanding of

underlying dynamics related to environmental injustice and colonialism as research questions are raised and answered.

Our theoretical framework illustrates its effects, particularly how incomplete decolonization contributes to Torres Strait Islander and Arctic Inuit communities facing vulnerability, economic, political, social marginalization; limited representation, exclusion from decision-making processes as well as limited resources, resulting in environmental inequalities or injustices. Marxism offers an insightful critique of economic and power structures which contribute to environmental injustice. Climate change and resource extraction industries have had devastating repercussions for Arctic Inuit communities, altering their lifestyle and cultural identity and leading to widespread disruptions of life and culture. Climate change-driven Arctic melting has opened doors for oil and gas exploration, leading to potential conflicts between multinational corporations and indigenous communities, who claim they need their rights protected. Conflicts over resource extraction demonstrate how capitalist-led economic development and resource extraction further is the environmental injustice against indigenous communities. By placing economic gain ahead of indigenous rights and well-being, capitalism reinforces existing power imbalances while contributing to their marginalization. Marxist analyses of capitalism's role in perpetuating environmental injustices, including concepts like extracting surplus value from indigenous lands and labour; unequal distribution of resources and wealth; and the commodification of nature. By investigating specific mechanisms through which capitalism operates in relation to environmental injustice issues, more nuanced understanding can be gained. Marxism provides essential insights into the socio-economic structures underlying indigenous oppression and environmental injustice, exploring their interactions between capitalism, colonialism, globalization, and their effects on both social and environmental dynamics necessity of challenging capitalist systems by advocating for indigenous land rights while prioritizing sustainable development models that prioritize community welfare over corporate interests.

Structural violence theory provides insights into systemic forms of violence within social, economic, and political structures which perpetuate environmental injustices. Rising sea levels and climate change present Torres Strait Islanders with an imminent danger to their homelands and cultural traditions. Environmental changes impose displacement upon indigenous communities while taking away land resources resulting in structural violence against indigenous groups. Lack of adequate support from government authorities' further compounds indigenous communities' vulnerabilities. This case illustrates environmental and social injustice, emphasizing the necessity to address systemic factors contributing to marginalization of indigenous communities and vulnerability of native groups. It is critical to examine structural violence's relationship to environmental injustice. To do this effectively, power dynamics, institutional practices, and policies that contribute to unequal distribution of

environmental burdens and benefits, by observing its operation at various scales from local to global can give insight into all forces that perpetuate environmental injustices. Human rights violations as structural violence theory illuminates the systemic injustices confronting indigenous communities, such as restrictions to their rights and limited resource access, which threaten self-determination. It highlights the necessity of combatting discriminatory policies as well as creating initiatives promoting social justice initiatives while including indigenous populations in decision making processes about land or environment decisions.

Constructivism emphasizes the historical and societal context surrounding indigenous rights and their relationship to nature, drawing particular attention to colonization policies such as land dispossession and cultural assimilation policies that have adversely impacted indigenous communities' struggles for recognition, self-determination, and environmental justice.

Incomplete decolonization often has led to the destruction and devaluation of indigenous cultural heritage. Colonization efforts aimed to establish dominant cultures over indigenous identities, leading to loss of traditional knowledge and practices; this had severe repercussions for indigenous communities' ability to manage lands sustainably while contributing to environmental protection efforts. Indigenous knowledge and practices were disregarded or suppressed to accommodate Western-centric approaches to resource management, leading to power imbalances which resulted in marginalizing indigenous voices that continue to impact decision making processes and perpetuate environmental injustices. Colonization efforts aimed to establish dominant cultures over indigenous identities, leading to loss of traditional knowledge and practices; this had severe repercussions for indigenous communities' ability to manage lands sustainably while contributing to environmental protection efforts.

Constructivism calls for comprehensive decolonization efforts which take account of past injustices, sheds light on the cultural, historical, and social dimensions of environmental injustice while prioritizing indigenous rights and traditional ecological knowledge.

Inuit communities' deep connections to their environment and dependence upon subsistence hunting and fishing reveal distinct cultural practices cultivated over centuries by Inuit culture.

However, Western-centric approaches to resource management and policy making often disregard or discount indigenous perspectives and knowledge systems. Respecting and adopting indigenous knowledge while applying external frameworks contribute to marginalizing and disempowering indigenous communities. Torres Strait Islanders share similar cultural identity and spiritual ties with both land and sea which inform their understanding of environmental issues as well as potential responses to climate change.

Cultural practices and knowledge systems that are deeply ingrained within their ecosystems offer invaluable insight into sustainable resource management. Lacking recognition and inclusion, Indigenous perspectives in decision making processes create environmental injustice that undermines self-determination of those living on reservations. This case study

highlights the necessity of centering Indigenous knowledge and perspectives to combat environmental injustice and promote ecological justice. Indigenous communities possess invaluable knowledge and practices that can contribute to sustainable resource management and conservation efforts. Traditional ecological knowledge passed down from generation to generation provides insight into ecosystem interdependencies, the efficient utilization of resources, and protecting biodiversity. Integrating this traditional ecological knowledge with scientific research results in more effective yet culturally sensitive approaches for environmental management. This involves investigating how cultural values, knowledge systems and identity shape environmental experiences and responses as well as ways in which incorporating indigenous perspectives may bring greater environmental justice for all. Environmental policies and practices which promote ecological justice offer real solutions to environmental injustice. Utilising these theories with research questions involving environmental injustice and colonialism, we found that both historical and contemporary forms of colonialism contributed directly to environmental injustice experienced by indigenous communities. Case studies of Arctic Inuit communities and Torres Strait Islanders illustrated how colonialism led directly to dispossession, marginalization, environmental degradation of indigenous lands and resources while capitalism, power dynamics, and Western-centric approaches for resource management further perpetuated injustice while exacerbating indigenous vulnerability.

As part of expanding this discussion, it is critical to provide in-depth analyses on how colonialism has contributed to environmental injustices. This may involve studying historical processes of colonization and its impacts, land dispossession rates and legacy impacts of systems of governance and resource management imposed as part of Western imperial policies during their regime of colonization in contemporary settings as well as any ongoing legacies it still leaves today. Applying Marxism, structural violence theory and constructivism theories to case studies Arctic Inuit communities and Torres Strait Islanders has provided us with invaluable insight into the social, historical, and systemic forces driving struggles for indigenous rights and environmental justice. By understanding the root causes and systemic factors involved, it has identified the environmental injustices, as well as colonialism's contribution in perpetuating such injustices. Enhancing environmental justice for indigenous communities involves dismantling oppressive systems, questioning dominant narratives and elevating indigenous knowledge and perspectives through transformative change grounded in solidarity, equity and respect for indigenous sovereignty. Resolving these challenges requires significant decolonization efforts, inclusive decision-making processes and sustainable development models that prioritize indigenous well-being and cultural heritage. Integrating environmental justice frameworks can create more equitable futures where indigenous communities thrive while attaining increased empowerment.

We evaluate our assumptions through the lens of structural violence theory, Constructivism and Marxism. The results of our case studies demonstrate the complex and multifaceted relationship between environmental justice and indigenous rights. The findings highlight the importance of recognizing and addressing the historical and ongoing legacies of colonialism, which have resulted in indigenous peoples being disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation and pollution. This study presents evidence for incomplete decolonization within its case studies; we identified environmental degradation and violations of indigenous rights. These findings emphasize the significance of understanding and addressing systemic factors which perpetuate environmental injustice. Colonialism, capitalism and neoliberal globalisation all create systems of power and privilege which marginalise and exploit indigenous populations. Such structures prioritize profit over people; favouring corporate or government interests over community rights or wellbeing in indigenous communities. The ongoing legacy of colonialism, capitalist exploitation, and environmental racism has led to the marginalization and disenfranchisement of indigenous peoples, as well as the degradation of their lands and resources. Examining historical context, inequities against indigenous communities can be traced to colonial expansion and exploitation during its early days. European colonizers saw indigenous land and resources as commodities they could exploit for economic gain, thus setting into motion an ongoing cycle of dispossession, marginalization and environmental degradation that continues to impact indigenous communities today. Environmental injustice against indigenous communities today can be traced back to colonialism's long legacy.

We identified that colonial policies and legal frameworks exacerbated environmental injustice against indigenous communities by dispossessing them of their land and resources under the pretext of progress and development. Extractive industries forced relocations and land enclosures have altered indigenous communities' traditional livelihoods by uprooting relationships to land and resources that existed prior to these interventions.

Economic development projects and natural resource extraction activities often disproportionately damage indigenous communities by exacerbating existing inequalities or further marginalizing vulnerable groups; it is thus imperative that sustainable development practices prioritize environmental conservation while upholding social equality while supporting indigenous self-determination and community empowerment. As demonstrated by the case studies, environmental degradation and the violation of indigenous rights are deeply interconnected. Our findings support our assertion that environmental injustice experienced by indigenous communities stems directly from historic and contemporary processes of colonialism; environmental degradation, indigenous rights violations and colonialism all link closely together, underscoring the urgent need for transformative change founded in solidarity, equity and respecting indigenous sovereignty.

An intersectoral approach that acknowledges the interdependency between environmental justice and social justice is necessary in understanding and correcting environmental injustice against indigenous communities. We introduce some additional theoretical frameworks of environmental justice, indigenous rights, and critical race theory, which emphasize the need for structural analysis of power and inequality in understanding environmental and social issues. The exact frameworks provide valuable perspectives into the power dynamics and structural inequalities that contribute to injustices. By carefully considering these systems of power, we can identify the root causes of environmental degradation and indigenous rights violations and work towards dismantling these structures. Reducing structural inequalities that foster environmental injustice requires challenging the underlying power dynamics and systemic oppressions that perpetuate them, including legacies of colonization, capitalism and globalization that marginalized indigenous communities by exploiting their land and resources for profit. Dismantling discriminatory policies and practices as well as supporting initiatives for justice that prioritize equity inclusivity and human rights must also be part of any response plan for environmental injustices. Therefore, addressing these structural factors requires a fundamental transformation of our social, economic, and political systems. This means that environmental justice must be approached not only as a technical issue of pollution control or resource management but also as a broader social and political issue that requires transformative social change. Our findings indicate that environmental justice is integral to providing social justice for indigenous communities. Without environmental justice in place, there can be poor protection of human rights as well as violations to cultural, religious, economic, natural resources rights of Torres Strait Islanders of Australia or Inuit of the Arctic; while when environmental justice exists, it leads to better social equality as well as better protection of their rights. for safeguarding indigenous rights and creating social equity among these communities. When this crucial principle is absent, vital human, cultural, religious, economic resource rights may be violated leading to violations against them as individuals as well as against society at large.

Furthermore, this study offers a framework for understanding and addressing environmental justice issues among indigenous communities, which take account of indigenous needs and rights. As part of protecting indigenous communities' rights to achieve true ecological sustainability and justice for indigenous communities. Our case studies reveal how environmental justice is integral for protecting indigenous communities' rights. For instance, Australia's Torres Strait Islanders serve as evidence that when environmental justice exists it can result in social justice for indigenous groups, successful direct action in challenging environmental injustice. To effectively combat these challenges requires advocating for laws which recognize and safeguard indigenous rights including their right to free, prior, and informed consent. Recognizing Indigenous communities' inherent rights to self-determination,

land and resources is at the core of environmental justice; strengthening legal and institutional frameworks securing those rights should therefore take precedence, as research's case studies illustrate this is of utmost importance. Indigenous communities have demonstrated that through collective action and strategic advocacy, they can hold governments and corporations accountable for environmental harms, as in the case of Torres Strait Islanders and the groundbreaking decision of the UN Human Rights Committee that decide in their favour and found Australia guilty of inadequately protect of Indigenous rights against climate change impacts. Australia violated their rights. Remedies proposed for indigenous environmental justice include sustainable models of development that prioritize both environmental and social concerns, while simultaneously adhering to degrowth principles that prioritize economic sustainability, ecological preservation and recognition of Indigenous sovereignty and rights. Environmental justice initiatives play a pivotal role in rectifying historical injustices while safeguarding cultural heritage protection, building local community resources, and counteracting resource extraction that unfairly affect indigenous communities. To achieve environmental justice for indigenous communities, environmental justice requires recognising the complex web of relationships among incomplete decolonization, constructivism, human rights violations as structural violence and Marxism. Decolonization requires systematic efforts that address past injustices while upholding indigenous rights, cultural heritage and traditional ecological knowledge. Inclusive decision-making processes, sustainable development models and the preservation of indigenous cultural heritage are essential in rectifying environmental injustices and creating more equitable and sustainable future. By respecting indigenous rights, revitalizing cultural heritage and encouraging collaboration and dialogue we can work toward environmental justice as well as foster harmonious relations between indigenous communities and nature. To meet these challenges, it is critical that environmental injustice be tackled from its roots: incomplete decolonization, systemic discrimination and unequal power dynamics. To do so effectively requires transformative changes at individual, societal, and institutional levels: dismantling colonial structures and attitudes while supporting cultural diversity and inclusion as well as honouring indigenous perspectives, knowledges, and practices. Finally, as demonstrated by the case studies, struggles for environmental justice must be recognized as an ongoing journey requiring long-term commitment and sustained efforts. Progress has been made, yet significant challenges still persist including climate change impacts, resource extraction practices and environmental degradation, which disproportionately afflict indigenous communities, further exacerbating existing injustices and vulnerabilities. Our study highlights the need for further research into the intersection of environmental justice and indigenous rights.

CHRISTINA IOANNOU



## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

This research explored the relationship between environmental justice and indigenous rights, with consideration of historical and contemporary forms of colonialism on indigenous populations. Two case studies--Torres Strait Islanders of Australia and Inuit of the Arctic--illustrate its value for protecting their rights. It further stresses the importance of a rights-based approach that accounts for indigenous perspectives and needs and recognizes all forms of colonialism that has occurred throughout history up until today.

Overall, this research contributes to an emerging body of literature concerning environmental justice and indigenous rights. Our finding suggests that further research be conducted, and that greater recognition be accorded for environmental justice's significance for indigenous communities. This research reveals environmental justice to be an essential aspect of social justice for indigenous communities. These case studies demonstrate how environmental degradation adversely affected indigenous people due to past and ongoing processes of colonization, dispossession, and marginalization; consequently, exacerbating existing inequalities like poverty, poor health outcomes and limited access to education or other resources. Comparing our findings to previous studies conducted in this field, our study builds upon and expands upon existing literature pertaining to environmental justice and indigenous rights. However, while prior research had pointed out the negative consequences of environmental degradation on indigenous communities, our focus specifically laid emphasis on protecting indigenous rights using environmental justice measures - further providing proof of how important environmental justice can be when combatting social injustice among indigenous populations. An unanticipated result of our case studies is the extent to which indigenous communities have been excluded from decision-making processes related to environmental policy and resource management, despite legal frameworks mandating their participation. Indigenous voices and perspectives were frequently marginalized or disregarded despite legal frameworks mandating participation; this illustrates the continued need to address power imbalances while assuring meaningful participation and representation for indigenous people in environmental governance processes. Implications of our findings for wider studies are profound. Our research underscores how environmental

justice is an integral component of social justice for indigenous populations, specifically by showing the ways environmental degradation exacerbates existing inequalities; further contributing to an overall discussion around interconnections between environmental and social issues. This further suggests that addressing environmental injustice is an essential approach for making effective advances for indigenous rights.

Our critical discussion on environmental injustice suffered by indigenous communities and colonialism's role in perpetuating it has shed light on an urgent need for ecological justice. Furthermore, our findings indicate that environmental injustice experienced by these populations results directly from historical and contemporary processes of colonialism. These interconnections among environmental degradation, indigenous rights violations, colonialism, are clear reminders that transformative change must take place through solidarity, equity and respecting Indigenous sovereignty if environmental justice is to become reality for these vulnerable groups. The historical context reveals colonialism's expansion and exploitation as the root cause of environmental injustice against indigenous communities, fitting neatly within theoretical frameworks such as environmental justice, indigenous rights, critical race theory which provide essential insight into power dynamics or structural inequalities underlying such injustices. Colonial policies and legal frameworks contribute to environmental injustice by dispossessing indigenous communities of their lands, resources, driving ecological injustice into indigenous communities worldwide. Theories like Constructivism, Marxism, Structural violence theory provide explanations, while at the same time drawing attention to how such systems should be challenged and transformed to achieve ecological justice for all. Contemporary manifestations of environmental injustice against Indigenous communities trace their source deep within colonialism's legacy. Although internationally and nationally recognised indigenous rights may exist, indigenous communities still experience great difficulty asserting them to protect self-determination, land ownership rights and resource use rights.

Engaging indigenous communities and including their perspectives in decision-making processes are integral parts of addressing environmental injustice and upholding indigenous rights. This is consistent with principles underlying indigenous rights theory - self-determination, acknowledgment of indigenous knowledge and

practices as well as strengthening legal and institutional frameworks that protect these rights. The Case studies presented here illustrate the struggle for ecological justice. Ecological justice provides one approach to combatting environmental injustice against indigenous communities.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

Our research supports the theory that environmental injustice exacerbates social inequalities, especially for marginalized groups like indigenous peoples. Furthermore, our results challenge assumptions regarding legal frameworks guaranteeing indigenous participation in decision-making processes as effective; instead, we observed instances in which indigenous voices and perspectives were often disregarded or marginalized regardless of legal protection, despite existing frameworks. Further evidence for more robust efforts to address power imbalances while assuring meaningful representation for indigenous communities is also evident from this finding.

Our research has several practical ramifications. First, it identifies the need for policies and practices which prioritise indigenous participation and representation in environmental decision-making processes. Furthermore, this study:

- highlights a critical requirement of more effective mechanisms to combat environmental injustice, such as stronger enforcement of legal frameworks or incorporation of indigenous knowledge/perspectives/perspectives into resource management decisions.
- evidence combatting environmental injustice plays a fundamental role in upholding indigenous rights while furthering social justice more generally.
- highlights the critical need to address power imbalances and ensure indigenous voices and perspectives are heard and considered when environmental governance takes place - failure to do so perpetuates colonialism and marginalization of indigenous populations, making such practices unethical inherently.
- emphasizes the recognition of indigenous knowledge and perspectives when managing resources as this contribute to both environmental justice and social equality for these indigenous communities.

One limitation of our research lies in its narrow scope, as case studies from one region may not generalise to other contexts and qualitative data may not represent experiences across indigenous communities. However, its strengths lie in its in-depth

examination of environmental justice's role in safeguarding indigenous rights as well as using case studies to illustrate complex dynamics at play - providing rich, nuanced accounts from indigenous communities which contributes towards developing greater insight into this complex issue.

In terms of recommendations for future research and practice, this study suggests several avenues for further inquiry. For example, there is a need for further research on the interconnections between environmental justice and social justice issues, particularly as they relate to the experiences of indigenous peoples. This requires a deeper understanding of the ways in which environmental degradation and resource extraction intersect with issues such as poverty, inequality, and racism.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to a growing body of research on environmental justice and indigenous rights, highlighting the interdependence of these issues and the need for intersectional approaches to addressing them. By recognizing the unique cultural, spiritual, and ecological relationships that indigenous peoples have with their lands and resources, and by addressing the root causes of environmental degradation and indigenous rights violations, we can work towards a more just and sustainable future for all.

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