



**LUNDS**  
**UNIVERSITET**

Master of Science in International  
Development and Management (LUMID)

## **Resilience in Action**

An Exploration of the Motivations of Wayúu Indigenous Women  
Human Rights Defenders in their Endeavor to Safeguard their  
Rights in La Guajira, Colombia.

Author: Evelina Karlsson  
Supervisor: Helle Rydström  
August 2023

## Abstract

---

Evelina Karlsson

World Count: 14165

*(Excluding bibliography and annexes)*

### **Resilience in Action:**

An Exploration of the Motivations of Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Rights Defenders in their Endeavor to Safeguard their Human Rights in La Guajira, Colombia.

---

**Objectives:** Colombia is proving to be a notable epicentre of risk for individuals actively engaged in human rights advocacy. Notwithstanding this pervasive risk, individuals continue to champion their cause on a daily basis. A trend is emerging of more and more Indigenous women taking prominent leadership roles to catalyse social change. With determination, these women are challenging entrenched systems of oppression, marginalisation, and discrimination. Drawing on the theoretical foundations of intersectionality, resistance, and resilience, as well as insights from previous research, this thesis explores the motivations of Wayúu Indigenous women to take on roles as human rights defenders.

**Method:** A qualitative, instrumental case study approach was adopted, with information gathered from fourteen semi-structured interviews with Wayúu Indigenous women.

**Main Findings:** The findings suggest that there are a variety of compelling factors that motivate people to take up the role of Human Rights Defenders. Despite the many challenges that stand in their way of upholding their rights, it is evident that for many there is a prevailing feeling that there is no alternative. Anchored in an unwavering commitment to their Wayúu heritage, they resolutely and persistently champion their cause, demonstrating their willingness to persevere even in the face of formidable adversity

---

*Key words: human right defender, Indigenous Peoples, women human right defenders, intersectionality, resistance, resilience.*

## Acknowledgements

---

Es un honor y un privilegio para mí que las líderes Indígenas mujeres, sus organizaciones y muchas otras personas que las apoyan hayan compartido conmigo su conocimiento y experiencia. Sin su disposición y solidaridad, este estudio no habría sido posible. Les expreso mi gratitud sincera a ellas y a todos los que participaron.

*Anaayawatchi.*

I would further like to express my gratitude to the people who provided me with contacts, and advice – I am grateful for your dedication, assistance, and time.

Finally, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the remarkable individuals in Lund who have been part of this incredible academic experience. My thesis supervisor, Helle Rydström, whose guidance and support have been instrumental throughout the process of writing this thesis. To the professors and staff at LUMID who have consistently challenged my critical thinking and provided fascinated and new insights. A special thank you goes to my wonderful classmates with whom I have shared this learning journey. Your camaraderie has made this journey even more enjoyable, and your constant encouragement has been invaluable, not only for the challenges of LUMID, but also for navigating life itself. Thank you all for being an integral part of this enriching and memorable experience.

*Evelina Karlsson*

# Table of Contents

**ABSTRACT**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

**DEFINITIONS**

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

1.1. MOTIVATION OF STUDY ..... 1  
1.2. RESEARCH PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE ..... 2  
1.3. RESEARCH QUESTION ..... 3  
1.4. OUTLINE OF THESIS ..... 3

**CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND ..... 4**

2.1. SETTING THE SCENE: COLOMBIA ..... 4  
2.2. LA GUAJIRA AND THE WAYÚU ..... 5  
2.3. FOUR DIMENSIONS TO CONTEXTUALISE THE SITUATION IN LA GUAJIRA ..... 6

**CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW ..... 9**

3.1. THE INDIGENOUS IDENTITY ..... 9  
3.2. INDIGENOUS WOMEN HUMAN RIGHT DEFENDERS ..... 10  
3.3. NEOLIBERAL EXTRACTIVISM ..... 11  
3.4. ANTI-SOCIAL CONFLICT ..... 13

**CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ..... 15**

4.1. INTERSECTIONALITY ..... 15  
4.2. RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ..... 16  
    4.2.1. *Resistance* ..... 16  
    4.2.2. *Resilience* ..... 18

**CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY ..... 20**

5.1. RESEARCH DESIGN ..... 20  
5.2. RESEARCH METHOD AND INFORMATION ..... 20  
5.3. ANALYTICAL APPROACH ..... 21  
5.4. LIMITATIONS ..... 22  
5.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ..... 23

<b>CHAPTER 6: ANALYSE OF FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>25</b>
6.1. SETTING THE SCENE.....	25
6.2. INTERSECTING IDENTITIES: POWER AND INFLUENCE.....	27
6.2. RESISTANCE: ACTIONS FOR CHANGE.....	30
6.3. RESILIENCE: NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF CHANGE.....	33
<b>CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS .....</b>	<b>38</b>
7.1 DISCUSSION.....	38
7.2. FUTURE RESEARCH .....	39
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>APPENDIX.....</b>	<b>48</b>
ANNEX I: INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW .....	48
ANNEX II: LIST OF RESPONDENTS .....	49
ANNEX III: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW.....	50
ANNEX IV: CODING SCHEME .....	51

## List of Acronyms

---

<b>GW</b>	Global Witness
<b>HRDs</b>	Human Right Defenders
<b>IACHR</b>	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
<b>ILO</b>	International Labor Organization
<b>IWHRDs</b>	Indigenous Women Human Rights Defenders
<b>LAC</b>	Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHCHR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>WHRDs</b>	Women Human Rights Defenders
<b>UNDRIP</b>	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

# Definitions

Human Rights	<p><i>Human rights</i> are inherent and universal entitlements that guarantee the fundamental dignity, freedom, and equality of all human beings, regardless of their race, religion, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin or other status, and provide protection against discrimination and arbitrary treatment. (UDHR, 1948).</p>
Human Right Defenders	<p>Fact Sheet No. 29 elaborates on the UN Declaration on <i>Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)</i>, which describes <i>HRDs</i> as persons who, either alone or in collaboration with others, actively work to promote and protect human rights. Furthermore, the fact sheet highlights that the true nature and scope of this definition can best be explained by examining the actions of <i>HRDs</i> and exploring the different contexts in which they operate. (UNHCHR, 2004).</p>
Machismo	<p><i>Machismo</i> encompasses beliefs and expectations about men’s roles in society, including attitudes, values, and beliefs about masculinity or what it is to be a man. It includes ideas about bravery, dominance, aggression, and reserved emotions, among others. <i>Machismo</i> also reinforces traditional gender norms, promoting male dominance over women. (Nuñez, et al., 2016).</p>
Poverty	<p>Traditionally, <i>poverty</i> has been equated with a condition characterised by inadequacy and deprivation. This characterisation denotes an inability to achieve a minimum threshold of quality of life, a dimension often described through monetary terms. However, the monetary approach may overlook multidimensional, dynamic, subjective, and geographical aspects of vulnerability, including factors such as personal freedoms, discrimination, insecurity, and limited access to vital services such as health and education. (Turriago-Hoyos, et. al., 2020).</p>

Vulnerability

*Vulnerability* refers to a situation in which factors such as physical conditions, social dynamics, economic circumstances, and environmental influences come together. This combination makes it more likely that individuals, communities, assets, or systems will experience poorer outcomes when exposed to different types of hazards or risks. (Butler, et al., 2016)

---



# Chapter 1: Introduction

---

## 1.1. Motivation of Study

All over the world, social structures are inherently riddled with injustice. They are characterised by complicated power dynamics that often manifest themselves in an unbalanced distribution of resources, opportunities, and rights (Stewart, 2011). These dynamics tend to disproportionately affect certain social groups, often leading to their systematic oppression and marginalisation (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Throughout history, this trend has been particularly noticeable among Indigenous Peoples. Centuries of colonisation, land dispossession, resource appropriation, systematic oppression and discrimination have collectively led to their marginalisation within the dominant society (Kendrick & Lewis, 2014; McKenzie & Cohen, 2018).

In recent decades, a global trend has emerged, described by Niezen (2003) as a ‘new global phenomenon’, characterised by widespread mobilisations of Indigenous communities around the world. In the midst of these movements, women have significantly increased their participation and visibility, challenging oppressive structures and discrimination and drawing attention to violence and discrimination that have a gender dimension (Siedler, 2017). At the same time, they have taken proactive steps to establish numerous women-specific organisations to address the widespread injustices that strongly affect their everyday life (Torrado, 2022). The Wayúu Indigenous group in the Colombian department of La Guajira is an example of this global phenomenon. Throughout the centuries, their quest for rights has continued unabated, with a growing group of women gradually assuming important roles in this ongoing endeavour (Torrado, 2022).

However, this pursuit is not without risks. According to Amnesty International (2021), the persecution of human rights defenders (HRDs) has reached alarming levels with various forms of violence such as assassination attempts, intimidation, death threats, arbitrary arrests, abductions, and cases of sexual abuse (Torrado, 2022). In the complex Colombian reality, marked by decades of armed conflict, the expansion of extractive industries, and lack of state presence, political violence has established itself as a permanent feature infiltrating every facet of society. Noteworthy is the fact that Colombia remains the country with the highest assassinations of HRDs in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) (GW, 2020). Moreover, Indigenous Human Rights Defenders (IHRDs) are often disproportionately affected by such attacks. This is particularly evident in cases

involving resistance to resource extraction, environmental degradation, and unsustainable land use. Further, many Indigenous populations have come to formulate a critique of the dominant society's pursuit for growth, highlighting the discrepancy between the dominant society's perception of 'development' and the lived experiences of Indigenous communities. Thus, this heightened vulnerability is not only due to their marginalised status but is also inherent in their strong attachment to land and their cause (GW, 2020).

While recognising the profound and central role those Indigenous women occupy, we must also acknowledge the complicated obstacles they face in their quest. These challenges are not limited to their marginalisation as Indigenous, but are exacerbated by their gender, resulting in an enduring reality of intersections of vulnerabilities (Tauli Corpuz, 2015). Equipped with this empirical basis, the objective of this thesis is to explore the motivations behind Wayúu Indigenous women taking on roles as human rights defenders. In order to encapsulate such question, the concept of intersectionality will provide a useful approach for examining how systems of oppression deeply intertwine and influence experiences and opportunities (Crenshaw, 2001). Further, the theoretical foundations of resistance and resilience can serve as valuable tools to understand both the daily acts of resistance to actively oppose oppressive structures (Scott, 1985) and the strategies that are used to mitigate the effects of oppressive structures (Adger, 2004).

## 1.2. Research Purpose and Objective

There is numerous research that has been dedicated to addressing the situation of women human right defenders (WHRDs) and Indigenous women human right defenders (IWHRDs). Beyond the realm of academia there are reports and documents from both national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and intergovernmental institutions. However, there are very few studies that address the subject of study from a comprehensive theoretical approach, combining analyses of the socio-cultural environment, geographical challenges, and systemic obstacles. Existing works tend to focus on the challenges of Indigenous women, frequently portraying them as victims (Torrado, 2022), which fails to involve a holistic perspective that highlight the capabilities, strengths, and crucial role of these women.

This study thus aims to contribute with relevant novel research by pursuing two different approaches. First, it examines the challenges and obstacles faced by IWHRDs in a specific milieu: La Guajira, a department facing significant poverty and climate-related challenges, situated in a

country that has experienced a protracted 57-year armed conflict and pervasive violence. Secondly, it places a particular emphasis on the agency and motivation of these Wayúu IWHRDs.

The overall objective of this thesis is to explore the motivations that lead indigenous Wayúu women to take on roles as human rights defenders. The findings of this research could thus contribute to a deeper understanding of the underlying motivations leading Indigenous women to become HRDs. Furthermore, it could offer valuable insights into the complex nature of human rights activism in the context of Colombia and Indigenous Peoples, particularly regarding the intersections between gender and ethnicity.

### 1.3. Research Question

RQ: How do Indigenous Wayúu women become motivated to assume roles as Human Rights Defenders?

*Sub-Question 1: How do Indigenous women resist and overcome obstacles while fulfilling their role as human rights defenders?*

*Sub-Question 2: In what ways does resilience influence Indigenous women's persistence in defending their human rights?*

### 1.4. Outline of Thesis

Second to the introduction, a brief insight into Colombia is given, followed by an overview of the demography and socio-economic conditions in La Guajira. Third, a comprehensive review of the relevant literature and academic discussion related to the research objective is provided. Fourth, the theoretical foundations of intersectionality, resistance and resilience are explained. Fifth, information of the methodological choices underlying this study is offered. Sixth, the findings from the information collection will be presented, and simultaneously analysed in accordance with the theoretical foundations and prior research. Additionally, 6.2. and 6.3. is intended to give answers to the two sub-questions presented in 1.3. Seventh, the implications of the findings are explored by answering the overarching research question. Section seven additionally offers a concluding reflection on the ramifications of this thesis, together with the concluding remarks and future research.

## Chapter 2: Background

---

To answer the research questions, it is crucial to consider the unique contextual elements of the Wayúu in the Department La Guajira, Colombia. Thus, when exploring the motivations of IWHRDs, it is essential to understand the particular social and cultural aspects that are intertwined with the particular local environment in which they operate (IACHR, 2016). Therefore, this section will first set the scene in Colombia and then briefly explore the specific characteristics of the Wayúu. In conclusion, this section offers an exploration of four key dimensions that highlight the complex challenges in the operational landscape of La Guajira.

### 2.1. Setting the Scene: Colombia

In Colombia, decades of armed conflict, the widespread expansion of extractive industries and the lack of state presence have led to pervasive political violence. This appalling situation is reflected in alarming murder rates, pronounced cases of violence against women and a prevailing climate of impunity for crimes (Forst, 2016). In addition, violence against HRDs has increased significantly in the country (McKenzie & Cohen, 2018), and Colombia remains the country with the highest number of murdered HRDs in LAC (GL, 2020). Regrettably, these acts of violence disproportionately affect already vulnerable groups, such as Indigenous Peoples (Sanchez Lara et al., 2020)

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight Colombia's committed efforts to improve the situation of Indigenous People in the country. An important step was the recognition of Indigenous Law in the Colombian Constitution of 1991, which led to profound socio-political and cultural change (Brunnegger, 2011). This Constitutional document granted 87 recognised Indigenous communities far-reaching political, cultural, linguistic, and territorial rights. In particular, Article 246 acknowledged Indigenous authorities the right to 'exercise jurisdictional functions within their territories in accordance with their own norm and procedures'<sup>1</sup>. Constitutional recognition holds significant importance to Indigenous peoples, as it not only recognises their existence, but also establishes and protects their fundamental rights (Sanchez, 2011). Colombia has further demonstrated its commitment by adopting the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous

---

<sup>1</sup> Republica de Colombia. (1991). Constitución Política de Colombia.

Peoples<sup>2</sup> in 2017 and strengthening the protection of their cultural heritage and way of life by ratifying the ILO Convention 169<sup>3</sup>.

However, the implementation of the Constitutionally guaranteed rights of Indigenous Peoples and the adoption of related standards have posed significant challenges, particularly in relation to land rights (Brunnegger, 2011). As a result, the nation continues to struggle with the effects of its historical legacy and current circumstances. Thus, despite progress, much remains to be done to ensure their effective implementation and protection of Indigenous Peoples in Colombia.

## 2.2. La Guajira and The Wayúu

La Guajira is a department in the North-eastern coast of Colombia, bordering Venezuela and the Caribbean Sea. As the northernmost point of South America, it has a unique landscape that is more reminiscent of a remote desert in sub-Saharan Africa than a typical Caribbean region (ONIC, nd; Ulloa, 2020). This place, often referred to as the Indigenous capital of Colombia, is home to the Wayúu. With a population numbered approximately 380 460 (DANE, 2021), the Wayúu is the largest Indigenous group in the country and make up around half of the population of La Guajira (Avilés, 2019).

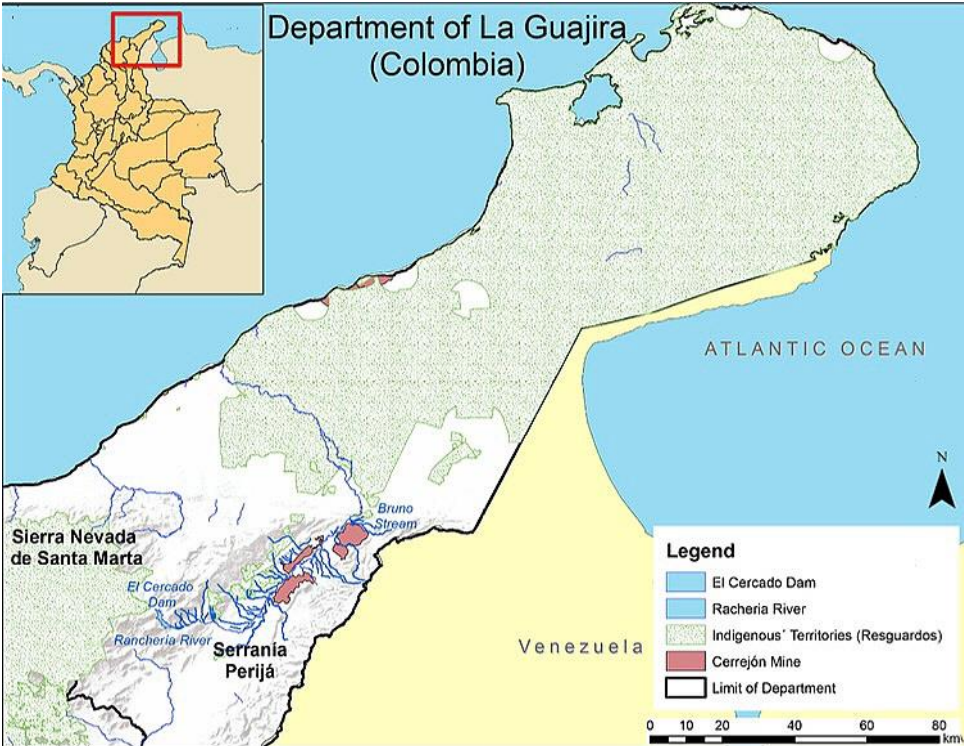


Figure 1: Map of Colombia, highlighting the geographic area of La Guajira. (Ulloa, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. A/RES/61/295.

<sup>3</sup> International Labour Organization. C169 – Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169).

The Wayúu, who are renowned for their production of handicrafts and trading skills, have been tirelessly advocating for their rights for centuries (DANE, 2021; Hylton, 2021). The distinctive feature of Wayuu society is its clan organisation, based on unilineal kinship, governed by the female axis (Alarcón Puentes, 2006). In the Wayúu society, women hold leadership positions within this matrilineal structure (Hylton, 2021). However, the persistence of machismo still requires that they navigate and negotiate gender norms when exercising power. Thus, according to Acosta-Contreras, (2022) women are still expected to fulfil traditional gender roles, including maintaining the household and conform to male authority in both familial and communal settings. They also must deal with societal expectations in order not to be perceived negatively (Alarcón Puentes, 2006; Torrado, 2022).

The Wayúu typically live in scattered settlements known as *rancherías*, (DANE, 2021; Hylton, 2021), and many individuals solely speak Wayuunaiki (Avilés, 2019; Rosenthal, 2020). Their social dynamics have allowed them to preserve aspects of their ancestral political structures, and although they have resisted assimilation efforts by both the Spanish Empire and the Colombian Republic (Robles, 2008), they do not live in a state of isolation. As a result of their prolonged and extensive contact with mainstream society, the Wayúu have had to engage in cultural negotiations to preserve essential features of their ethnic identity (Alarcón Puentes, 2006).

### **2.3. Four Dimensions to contextualise the situation in La Guajira**

La Guajira faces many challenges and has earned a reputation of being the department left behind (Rosenthal, 2020). Since colonial times, the department has been seen as isolated, antagonistic, and godless – inherently incompatible with civilised Western society (McKenzie & Cohen, 2018). Today, the region suffers from high levels of poverty, water scarcity, poor access to health services, along with challenges connected to climate change and palpable government mismanagement and corruption. These factors, among others, have contributed to a humanitarian crisis with high levels of malnutrition, especially among Indigenous communities (Rosenthal, 2020).

First, the crisis has its roots in a complex set of structural and historical factors that continue to cause violence and harm. These challenges are many and include institutional and social neglect as well as negative stereotypes that have their roots in the colonial past (Hylton, 2021). They are also closely linked to the devastating effects of the 52-year armed conflict. Throughout this conflict, the Wayúu were victims of severe violence, massacres, murders, forced disappearances and displacements (García De Oteyza, 2020; Vidal Parra, 2019). The violence in the area was

particularly extreme due to its strategic location and minimal and weak state presence. As a result, many illegal armed groups were attracted to the area and fought fiercely for control of all trade flows, vehicles, and people. Moreover, the armed conflict ultimately paved the way for private and transnational companies, which later planned and implemented massive mining and energy projects without consulting the affected Indigenous population (Vidal Parra, 2019)

Secondly, there is the economic and social dimension. La Guajira is one of the most impoverished departments in Colombia, and poverty levels remain appallingly high (McKenzie & Cohen, 2018). According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), 67 per cent of the total population is affected by poverty, while extreme poverty stands at 48 per cent (DANE, 2021). Poverty is particularly severe in the centre and north of the department, where the majority of Wayúu live (Vidal Parra, 2019).

Thirdly, La Guajira has a long history of weak state presence, non-interference, and corruption (Banks, 2017). This weak presence, corruption, and lack of collective action by state institutions have meant that government-backed programmes and payments to support vulnerable populations have not reached them (Vidal Parra, 2019). As a result, Indigenous Peoples are exposed to inadequate availability, accessibility, and quality of basic rights such as water supply and health care, inadequate quantity and quality of various nutrition programmes, and lack of roads and transport infrastructure (Rosenthal, 2020; Vidal Parra, 2019). According to Banks (2017), this weak state presence, neglect and corruption have also helped to strengthen and legitimise the coal mining company Cerrejón's control over the area and its resources – especially water resources.

Fourthly, there is a dimension related to the environment and climate change. The region is facing a severe water crisis due to a combination of prolonged droughts, coal mining activities, damming of waterways that disrupt natural flow, and corrupt local governance. This has led to a lack of clean water sources, which poses a significant threat to both people and wildlife (Banks, 2017; Ulloa, 2020). The Wayúu people, who used to rely on rainfall and colder winters, now face scarcity of nutritious food and clean water sources. As wells that depend on groundwater dry up, livestock die and water for irrigating fields becomes scarce, access to basic resources for survival becomes increasingly difficult (Rasolt, 2021).

In essence, the current socio-environmental crisis in La Guajira is the result of a complex interplay of factors, including global climate change, unsustainable land use, corruption, and conflicts of

interest between national, local and traditional governance structures (Banks, 2017; Vidal Parra, 2019). The crisis is further intensified by issues such as incompetent resource management, the prioritisation of the economic interests of multinational corporations and the difficulty of adapting traditional customs to current realities (Vidal Parra, 2019). This confluence of factors combined with extreme weather events related to climate change is a common challenge in developing countries (Masron & Subramaniam, 2021). The situation in La Guajira and specifically for the Wayúu Indigenous People is an outstanding example of the impact of these conflicting interests on a vulnerable environment and its inhabitants.



## Chapter 3: Literature Review

---

The following discussion is intended to provide an overview of the academic discourses and operational concepts relevant to the scope of this study. First, the broad field of ‘Indigenous’ is explored, followed by short discussion of IWHRD. Secondly, neoliberalism and extractivism are briefly discussed, with reference to the discussed idea of ‘development’. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the contemporary notion of anti-social conflict.

### 3.1. The Indigenous Identity

The term ‘Indigenous’ is a subject of ongoing debate due to its broad and diverse application (IACHR, 2016; Mills, 2002). In both legal discourses, and common usage, ‘Indigenous’ is usually understood as ‘native’ or ‘originating’ naturally (Kendrick & Lewis, 2004; Shrinkhal, 2013). Li’s (2000) assertion is that the construction of Indigenous identity is a dynamic process that is neither predetermined nor solely the product of invention. Rather, it arises through active engagement and struggle, and draws upon a range of practices, meanings, and contexts.

Most scholars believe that it currently is impossible to formulate a single, universally applicable definition that is workable and encompasses neither too little nor too much (Lehman, 2007; Mills, 2002). According to Kingsbury (1998) a rigid definition tends to include rationales and references that are relevant in some societies but not in others. There are however existing standards in International Law that can assist in deciding what constitutes a human group as ‘Indigenous Peoples’. The main elements to be considered have been codified in Article 1.1 of ILO Convention 169, which underline objective elements concerning historical continuity, territorial connection and the existence of unique policies and distinctive social, economic, and cultural institutions. As for the subjective element, ‘[s]elf-identification as Indigenous [...] shall be regarded as the fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the provisions of this Convention apply.’<sup>4</sup> (ILO, 1986).

Although the classification ‘Indigenous Peoples’ implies a representation of human diversity (IACHR, 2016), its conceptualisation is based on a common ‘origin’, underlined in particular by shared experiences marked by historical injustices that include colonisation, dispossession of land, territories and resources, systematic oppression, discrimination, and limited exercise of their right

---

<sup>4</sup> International Labour Organization. C169 – Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169). Article 1.2.

to self-determination (Kendrick & Lewis, 2014; McKenzie & Cohen, 2018). Further Indigenous Peoples have long histories with their land, which has provided sustenance in direct and intimate ways (Abas, et al, 2022). As Cohen (2011) describes, they tend to view nature as a mutual partnership and appreciate its intrinsic value, rather than seeing it merely as a means to satisfy human needs. Renglet (2022) further emphasises the importance of this relationship, highlighting the complex interplay of social, cultural, spiritual, economic, and political factors. This relationship is important not only to preserve their cultural heritage, but also to pass it on to future generations (IACHR, 2016; UNPFII, 2021; Whyte, 2004).

The ambition to reclaim and preserve cultural heritage, traditional practices, languages, identities, and the fundamental right to culturally appropriate forms of economic development, in legal and multifaceted ways has led to the rise and development of Indigenous activism (Aspin, 2014). Niezen (2003) and Albó (2004) have similarly observed how the ‘Indigenous movement’ has transformed from an abstract concept into a diverse set of struggles, strategies, and discourses. Furthermore, Albó (2004) explores the causes of these struggles and identifies several potential factors. These include both local conditions, such as the inadequacies of development models, and external influences, such as the collapse of communism, the imposition of neoliberal economic models and the establishment of the human rights regime. Further Albó and Niezen, emphasises the fluid nature of collective ethnic identities, highlighting their constant evolution across time and space. Indigenous communities often draw on historical references to strengthen their identity. Nevertheless, the use of historical facts is subject to constant reconstruction to meet ever-changing challenges. Regrettably, they argue that this process of adaptation can occasionally lead to the negation or denial of certain historical realities (Albó, 2004; Niezen, 2003).

### **3.2. Indigenous Women Human Right Defenders**

Throughout history, women have found ways to resist social exclusion and improve their situation. All over the world Indigenous women are increasingly at the forefront of Indigenous peoples’ struggles, challenging oppressive structures and discrimination and demanding respect for their basic human rights (Siedler, 2017; Torrado, 2022). Drawing on a collective experience, Crenshaw (1991) emphasises that women have realised that the political demands of millions are more persuasive than the appeals of a few individuals. At the same time, their activism has brought to light the widespread presence of interconnected forms of threats and violence that permeate their everyday lives (Amnesty, 2021; IACHR, 2016; Tauli Corpuz, 2015).

As Eichler (2019) notes, Indigenous women struggle with a range of challenges that are closely related to persistent and pervasive forms of discrimination rooted in both their gender and ethnicity. Furthermore, the conflation of political, social, and economic exclusion leads to a state of structural discrimination that makes Indigenous women particularly vulnerable to various acts of violence (Siedler, 2107; Torrado, 2022). Additionally, Siedler (2017) claims that violence directed against Indigenous women cannot be reduced to physical or interpersonal violence alone, but also includes elements of psychological, structural, political, and sexual violence.

The violence may be perpetrated directly by state actors or enabled by the failure of the government to uphold the rights and protect citizens (Doran, 2017). At the same time, systemic discrimination and violence do not only manifest themselves from the outside, but also arise within communities due to deeply rooted gender-specific social prejudices (Acosta-Contreras, 2022; Alarcón Puentes, 2006). In this context, ‘custom’ is often invoked to justify localised, intimidating, and patriarchal forms of exclusion and control (Siedler, 2017). These practices and norms are evidence of different gender ideologies that are upheld by both men and women to enforce certain ideas of female behaviours, or to deny women equal access to land, or participation in community affairs (García-Del Moral, 2022). In this context, women who actively participate often become the target of smear campaigns aimed at demonising their ‘deviant behaviour’, exposing them to discrimination and human rights violations (Torrado, 2017).

Notwithstanding the fact that the various forms of violence experienced by women are interconnected, Eichler (2019) and Siedler (2017) contend that legal and judicial systems tend to reduce ‘violence against women’ to discrete and isolated incidents of interpersonal aggression, ignoring the broader social, structural, and historical factors that contribute to it.

### **3.3. Neoliberal Extractivism**

The concept of development is inextricably linked to the idea of progress, which assumes that societies advance through distinct stages of development in a manner similar to how infants mature into fully developed adults (Barker, 2016; Smith, 1999). Kuznets (1973) argues that the dominant development path revolves around economic growth. This means that countries that experience growth-induced expansion increase their productive capacity, which in turn makes them ‘develop’. Nevertheless, as Kallis (2011) asserts, this emphasis on growth has often displaced the fact that resource depletion and unsustainable development are often a direct consequence of growth itself. Thus, the recent rise of neoliberal policies has generated a growing sense of concern about the

significant impact it entails on the environment and society (Acosta, 2013; Avilés, 2019). This growing concern is marked by the ongoing discourse that addresses the possible overlap between the pursuit of economic growth and the needs of environmental and social considerations (Kallis, 2011)

Neoliberalism has often been viewed exclusively as an economic project involving privatisation, regulation, individualisation, deregulation, and a change in the relationship between the state and its citizens (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2017). To better understand the broader scope and ambitions of neoliberalism, Li (2014) draws on Foucault's concept of 'governmentality' to argue that neoliberalism is a particular form of 'governance assemblage' that encompasses knowledge, practises, discourses, and ways of living in the world. At its core is the promotion of the market, efficiency, individual rationality, and the responsibility of corporate subjects (Li, 2005; 2014).

One of the forms of these interactions in LAC and in many other parts of the world has emerged through the logic of extractivism (Powęska & Raftopoulos, 2020; Avilés, 2019). Corral-Montoya et al. (2022) define the paradigm of extractivism as a framework for capital accumulation that focuses on the efficient, large-scale, and export-oriented extraction of natural resources. As Powęska and Raftopoulos (2020) point out, this concept has its origins in a Euro-modernist perspective that views nature primarily as an exploitable resource rather than as a living entity and object of rights. The increasing demand for natural resources in both industrialised and newly industrialised nations has led to the political acceptance and imposition of natural resource exploitation as a legitimate development strategy, often at the expense of alternative development approaches (Powęska & Raftopoulos, 2020).

Fundamentally, Hirstov (2010) argues that extractive activities have the potential to contribute to the realisation of human rights, particularly when it comes to alleviating poverty and inequality, promoting economic growth, and creating employment opportunities and investments that generate productivity in the countries where they operate. However, these activities, plans and projects are often located in specific physical spaces where the populations living there are severely affected by the expansion and intensification of these activities (Hirstov, 2010; IACHR, 2016). Further, it is well established that the above activities dump large quantities of waste materials on vast areas, causing pollution of groundwater and surface water, affecting the vitality of local flora, and contributing to soil degradation through increased erosion (IIED, 2002; RRI, 2015). In addition to the pronounced environmental impacts, these activities also have notable social

consequences, including the forced displacement of entire communities and the accompanying disruption of established economic, social, and cultural structures (Eichler & Bacca, 2020).

Private and transnational companies often launch ambitious ‘megaprojects’ in the Americas, taking advantage of the prevailing narrative of ‘progress’ and ‘development’. Unfortunately, this narrative often diverges from the reality of Indigenous peoples’ lives, as Torrado (2022) points out. Adding to this exploitation is the fact that a significant part of this production is destined for export and not for domestic consumption, often bringing few benefits to the country concerned. The growing influence of transnational corporations not only changes socio-territorial dynamics, but also affects state power and national sovereignty (Acosta, 2013). Consequently, Acosta (2013) argues that extractivism serves as an instrument of colonial and neo-colonial exploitation, which ultimately leads to the appropriation of developing countries’ resources. This perception is shared by many Indigenous communities who argue that extractivism is a manifestation of neo-colonialism that invades and destroys territories, ecosystems and human life while turning them into objects of a global capitalist commodity chain (Li & Semedi, 2021; Powęska & Raftopoulos, 2020). As a result, Indigenous communities and marginalised groups have become targets of serious human and environmental rights violations, making them what Kothari (1996) describes as the new victims of development.

### **3.4. Anti-Social Conflict**

The escalation of socio-environmental conflicts that have followed the expansion of resource extraction have challenged the political and economic ideology on which the current development model is based (Acosta, 2013). This challenge stems from ‘new relational ontologies of local and Indigenous communities and cultures who have opened up debates about the relationship between the human and non-human world, the rights of nature and human rights and duties’ (Powęska & Raftopoulos, 2020:17). In essence, Zhouri (2014) argue that these conflicts are not about natural resources per se, but about the fact that the meanings and uses of a given territory by a given group come at the expense of the meanings and uses that other social groups may employ to secure their social and ecological reproduction. Several scholars (Cohen, 2011; Powęska & Raftopoulos, 2020; Zhouri, 2014) emphasise that Indigenous self-determination is not always synonymous with the romanticised notion of as guardians of nature. Instead, it represents the agency to choose their own development paths based on their own visions for the future. As such, protests are a means for communities to regain sovereignty, and control over decision-making in relation to their own

territory, including natural resources, which is essential for the enjoyment of their rights to existence under dignified conditions (IACHR, 2016; Powęska & Raftopoulos, 2020).

In the context of socio-environmental conflict, mediators such as social movement activists, HRDs, Indigenous leaders and NGOs are caught in a human rights discourse that is situated in a liminal, ethical, and legal space, leading to both empowerment and increased vulnerability (Goodale & Postero, 2013). According to Doran (2017) the emergence of a new form of intimidation, whereby civil and political rights are portrayed as a threat to national security and interests, poses a significant challenge to the basic principles of democratic governance. Further, this does not only undermine the legitimacy of citizens, but also creates a dangerous environment that facilitates the commission of serious human rights violations that often go unpunished. Doran (2017:196) extends this argument by arguing that countries like Colombia, which have not made the transition from authoritarianism to democracy, still adheres to the notion that a stable democracy is inherently free of social conflict. Marques-Pereira (2005:147), meanwhile, notes that many nations approach democratic transitions with the aim of avoiding social conflict and dealing with complicated issues such as human rights violations.

Mobilised populations are at high risk of serious human rights violations, including arbitrary imprisonment, torture, sexual violence, assassinations and forced disappearances, which almost always go unpunished (Powęska & Raftopoulos, 2020; McKenzie & Cohen, 2018). As Doran (2017) notes, criminalisation means legitimising the suppression of peaceful democratic behaviour by labelling mobilisations as enemies of the state and accusing them of illegitimate acts. The objective is thus to constrain democracy and justify its compatibility with the use of systematic violence towards opposition.

Lessa (2011:37) further argues that the increasing oppression of the poorest and most mobilised population groups by LAC governments is due to the perception that these groups pose a threat because of their demands for social change. Thus, she argues that protests by Indigenous peoples are often seen as an obstacle to 'development' or a threat to national security, which legitimises the widespread use of physical and legal force to suppress dissent (Lessa, 2011; Siedler, 2017). Furthermore, Indigenous women, particularly in the context concerning territories and natural resources, are often subjected to gendered and pernicious forms of attacks, especially when they occupy prominent positions of resistance (Torrado, 2017).

## Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

---

The following chapter builds on the demonstrated reality faced by Indigenous women and IWHRDs. To understand the complicated interplay of intersecting forms of oppression and disadvantage that shape individuals' experiences, the theory of intersectionality is introduced as an analytical framework. Further, as the focus of the research question is to explore the motivational factors underlying the defence of human rights and the agency of these women, the theoretical concepts of resistance and resilience are made acquainted with. These theoretical foundations will not only inform the subsequent analysis but will also serve as a structural guide for organising the findings and discussions in this thesis.

### 4.1. Intersectionality

The development of the concept of intersectionality has been influenced by the contributions of black feminism, women of colour feminism (hooks, 2004; Collins, 1990, 1998; Crenshaw, 1991) and decolonising feminism in LAC (Davis, 2004; Lugones, 2008). From an analytical perspective, intersectionality challenges the efficacy of essentialist social categories such as 'race' or 'women' or 'Indigenous' in guiding our understanding of the concrete circumstances of people's lives. As such, intersectionality draws attention to the need to examine the unique ways in which these broad social categories intersect in a specific historical milieu to create different social hierarchies, or what Patrica Hill Collins (1990) calls a 'matrix of domination'. In essence, intersectionality emphasises the intertwining of different forms of power and oppression that work together to legitimise hierarchies and forms of violence based on characteristics such as race, gender, and sexuality. These social categories are not experienced in isolation, resulting in unique and complex experiences. The intersections between these categories are key to understanding how individuals ascribe social roles, experiences, and life prospects (Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1991). Thus, intersectionality can serve as a basis in this thesis for the exploring of the linkages between structural and interpersonal forms of oppression and violence experienced by Indigenous women. These forms of violence are, as Merry (2006) and other scholars have noted, closely connected.

The advancement of intersectionality theory has been greatly enriched by the work of Indigenous scholars and activists in LAC, by emphasising the meaning of colonial legacies and categories in understanding intersectional forms of domination and exclusion across the continent (Davis, 2004; Lugones, 2008). A limited understanding of intersectional subordination risks perpetuating the homogenous, oppressed subject through processes of totalisation and reproduction. Policies are

often constructed in ways that obscure the diverse needs and concerns of Indigenous Peoples. As a result, development discourses and practices tend to overlook the suffering of the diverse forms that identity has taken in its ethnic, racial, class, geographical and gendered manifestations (Radcliffe, 2015).

Further, the paradoxical effects of developmentalism, driven by the expansion of extractivism, have meant that nature has become an intersectional aspect to be considered alongside ethnicity, class, and gender (Radcliffe, 2015). Intersectional subordination is not necessarily a product of deliberate action, as it is often the result of the imposition of a burden that interacts with pre-existing vulnerabilities, creating an additional dimension of disempowerment (Crenshaw, 1991). In her work, de la Cadena (1991) uses intersectionality to illustrate how social dynamics not only encompass the colonial barriers of 'Indígena' and 'mestizos' in the Andes, but also reveal gender hierarchies within families and communities that often further perpetuate systems of subordination. Moreover, patriarchy is not limited to political and economic colonialism, but transcends to various domains of society. It permeates political economies, intimate relationships, gender and racialized identities, and daily life. Heteronormative patriarchy is further shaped by societal expectations and norms (Lugones, 2008).

## 4.2. Resistance and Resilience: A Conceptual Framework

Although contested in its meanings and measurements, *resistance* is usually understood as the capacity of a community to remain unchanged when faced with disturbances (Grimm & Wissel, 1997) whereas *resilience* denotes a system's ability to 'absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks' (Walker et al, 2004:2). Albeit commonly understood as distinct, they will in this study be connected.

### 4.2.1. Resistance

I use Scott's (1985, 1989) notion of 'everyday resistance', which conceives of resistance as an oppositional act that is historically intertwined with power through multiple, intersectional power relations. Resistance is not limited to a single relationship, but can take different forms, ranging between everyday/'covert' and organised/'overt'. In Scott's (1989) view, the form of resistance depends on the form of power exercised. Those who argue that 'real resistance' must be organised, principled and revolutionary fail to recognise the pervasive influence of power dynamics that limit the range of possible resistance strategies. Thus, throughout much of history, subordinate classes



have seldom had the opportunity to engage in open, organised political activity, due to the inherent dangers and risks involved (Scott, 1985).

Scott (1985, 1989) has contributed significantly to the conceptualisation of 'everyday resistance' as an analytical category and his work has inspired numerous researchers by showing how non-organised resistance can have a significant impact on social change. However, he focuses primarily on class struggles and may overlook the dynamic interactions and ongoing activities of the marginalised poor. It is at this point that Bayat's (1997) development of resistance becomes valuable to this work. Thus, Bayat (1997) argues that marginalised groups are not only covert, silent, disorganised, and individualistic, but above all proactive and political. Their forms of mobilisation and resistance are different from those of the more powerful groups who tend to engage in sustained mobilisations and traditional social movements. Instead, much of the mobilisation among the marginalised is characterised by fluid and heterogeneous groups, often organised around kinship or ethnic networks and 'imagined solidarities' (Lilja, et al., 2017). Using different tactics, these people put up a resistance that both meets their needs and counteracts the existing oppressive political conditions. Building on this, Kandiyoti's (1988) concept of 'bargaining with patriarchy' describes how *women* negotiate their roles and relationships in patriarchal societies. Different forms of patriarchy present women with different 'rules of the game' and thus influence strategies of women's active or passive resistance to their oppression.

Furthermore, Mahmood's (2005) interpretation of Foucault, emphasises the interdependence between agency and the historical and cultural context through which the subject is formed. Paradoxically, certain relations of subordination may provide the necessary capacities to undertake specific moral actions. Foucault's reflections on ethics also encompass the ways in which individuals are 'called upon' to recognise their moral obligations, whether through divine law, rational rule, or cosmological order, as it is through these authorities that the subject acknowledges the truth about themselves and their interactions with those who are considered the holders of truth (Mahmood, 2005).

#### 4.2.2. Resilience

*Resilience* theory seeks to comprehend the role and origins of change, particularly those that are transformative, within adaptive systems (Holling, 1973, 1986, 2001). The concept of resilience has primarily been used in ecological studies to comprehend the responses of ecosystems to natural and anthropogenic disturbances. More recently, however, scholars have started to develop the concept to encompass multiple dimensions, seeking a more nuanced understanding that accounts for the cultural and political context, as well as the broader social and ecological systems in which resilience operates (Adger, 2000; Endreß, 2019; Qamar, 2023).

Social resilience, Adger et al (2002) explains is ‘the ability of a community to withstand external shocks and stresses without significant upheaval’. Social resilience is shaped by the ‘dynamic structures of livelihoods, access to resources, and social institutions, as well as external shocks and stresses, such as changes in government policy, civil strife, or environmental hazards that exert pressures on social structures, livelihoods, and resources’ (Adger et al, 2002:358). Furthermore, Qamar (2023) argues that social resilience emerges from the social experiences and practices of *vulnerable* individuals or groups facing political, economic, cultural, and environmental changes and challenges. When confronted with such circumstances, these individuals or groups learn to re-evaluate their lives within the new context and develop adaptive and transformational capacities. It is a complex and cohesive entity that is deeply embedded in the social, political, economic, and cultural context of the individual. It is shaped by factors such as interdependence, adherence to cultural norms, informal social networks, local knowledge, belief systems, the social value of relationships and the contributions of community members (Qamar, 2023). Strengthening social resilience is crucial as it enables communities to better resist and adapt to change while maintaining their essential functions and structures. Furthermore, the interdependence between ecosystems and communities emphasises the importance of individuals and social groups in maintaining the stability and adaptability of these intricate systems (Adger, 2000).

To elaborate further, Indigenous resilience can be argued to be based on a holistic view of the interconnectedness of all aspects of life, centred on place, culture and various forms of spirituality (Cohen, 2001). Throughout history, Indigenous communities have demonstrated extraordinary resilience in the face of adversity, particularly colonisation (Aspin et al. 2014). This resilience, according to Aspin et al. (2014), is grounded on the strong attachment to ancestral lands and subsequently, the interconnection with the environment; traditions and narratives that go back generations; strong individual and collective identities; and the recovery and resurgence of language

and culture. This resilience can thus be seen as a kind of social capital that can be used, especially in times of adversity, to mobilise resources and skills that enable the maintenance of health and well-being. Aspin et al (2014:156), describes Indigenous resilience as ‘a testimony to the refusal of indigenous peoples to accept assimilation or integration as an acceptable strategy for their ongoing survival’ and a ‘refusal to disappear’ (Cohen, 2001:147). However, indigenous resilience is not only about survival, but also about the everyday actions that enable the sustainable viability of nature and communities for future generations. Resilience in this sense is the steadfast determination by Indigenous peoples who put their bodies on the line to safeguard their rights (Stewart-Harawira, 2018). Resilience proves beneficial in my analysis as it pertains to the day-to-day strategies used to mitigate the effects of structures of oppression, and thus differs from organised forms of mobilisation and resistance.

## Chapter 5: Methodology

---

In the following discussion, I describe the methodological choices made in this thesis. First, I provide an overview of the research design, followed by an explanation of the research techniques and information sources. This part covers pragmatic details of fieldwork and information collection, including discussions on sampling and information processing. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the methodological limitations and ethical dimensions inherent in the chosen approach.

### 5.1. Research Design

This study is based on a qualitative instrumental case study approach to create a contextual understanding of how Wayúu IWHRDs navigate in a violent political milieu. As explained by Yin (2019), a case study is an empirical inquiry that provides an in-depth understanding of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. Qualitative case studies are thus characterised by their focus on understanding the complexity and richness of a phenomenon and the context in which it occurs (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2019). Therefore, the analysis is restricted to the Wayúu Indigenous Peoples and their local environment in La Guajira making them the sole unit of analysis of the thesis. Thus, the intent in this study is not to generalise information but rather about clarifying the particular, the specific (Creswell, 2007). However, by contributing with a contextual understanding of the Wayuu IWHRDs subjective perceptions, this study can allow for further comprehension of additional, similar contexts. Hence, the aim is to uncover how individuals perceive and ‘make sense’ of the world around them, by relying on their perspectives and actions (Creswell 2007).

### 5.2. Research Method and Information

The empirical information was collected through semi-structured interviews with fourteen respondents. This approach offered flexibility and allowed respondents to construct their answers based on what they considered important, increasing the likelihood of obtaining comprehensive and nuanced responses (Bryman, 2018:561). In the pursuit of depth, qualitative interviews were deemed more appropriate than quantitative methods, which tend to prioritise the collection of data of quantity for the purpose of width and generalisation (Bryman, 2018).

Conducting research among Indigenous communities requires a culturally appropriate and careful approach that acknowledges their knowledge (Datta 2018). In this context, the concept of

decolonisation is of great importance. According to Smith (1999:24), decolonisation refers to a systematic endeavour that places Indigenous Peoples' voices and epistemology at the centre of research concerning them, thus foregrounding their perspectives and knowledge. Therefore, prior to the collection of information, I was in contact with researchers and activists to gain an understanding of the most appropriate methods for approaching and conducting this research.

To ensure that the interview adhered to the research topic, an interview guide was prepared prior to commencement (see Appendix III). The approach used for the guide was informed by prior research, employing a funnel technique in which more general questions were followed by narrower sub-questions (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Accordingly, the interview guide served as a template to ensure that the dialogue focused on the topics of interest while providing the flexibility to adapt to new perspectives that might emerge during the interview. All interviews conducted live or via video call, were audio-recorded and then transcribed with the explicit consent and approval from the respondent (Bryman, 2018).

The selection of respondents proved challenging, given the vulnerability of the group and the history and oppression that Indigenous communities have experienced at the hands of Western researchers (Datta, 2018; Smith, 1999). For the purpose of the study, it was important to determine whom I was to contact and for what purpose, so as to make the research transparent, provide information, maintain respondent confidentiality, and use the material collected in a purposeful way. The selection of respondents was therefore based on purposive sampling. Once contact had been established, snowball sampling was used, which proved to be beneficial (Bryman, 2018). Sampling was terminated when theoretical saturation was reached, i.e., a point at which it became clear that no significantly different or relevant information emerged from the interviews (Saunders et al., 2018).

### **5.3. Analytical Approach**

The analytical approach of the study is based on thematic analysis, which allows for effective systematisation of the information (Bryman, 2018). After completion of the initial information collection phase, the collected material was processed using NVivo data analysis software. The use of this software allowed the analytical process to be considerably systematised. In this way, each transcript could be coded into freely defined categories and subcategories, which were further refined during the process. It is important to recognise that the framework of a thematic analysis does not provide a definitive method of constructing themes (Bryman, 2018). I am in a social

context and my biases and preconceptions inevitably influenced the process of constructing themes and codes. Furthermore, it was equally important to interpret the meaning of the interviews holistically and remain faithful to the narratives of the respondents rather than simply focusing on coding the responses, recognising that the accounts are not ‘collected’ by me but created together with the respondent during the interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014)

## 5.4. Limitations

Although some limitations have been accounted for in this chapter, it is imperative to give further thought to additional considerations. Given the sensitive nature of the research, it was deemed necessary to adopt a flexible approach to the means of communication. This was essential for ensuring inclusivity and reaching participants who may have had limited access to resources such as time, internet connection or other factors that may have posed obstacles to their participation. To this end, this study used a range of communication channels, including face-to-face encounters with an interpreter, virtual video calls, WhatsApp audio messages and email interviews. Despite possible limitations of using many of such methods, it is worth noting that this approach allowed for an expansion of the target group, which would otherwise have been a limitation.

There were some challenges in conducting digital interviews. In reviewing the literature, it became clear that there are several disadvantages and security risks associated with digital research methods. For example, McLennan and Prinsen (2014) point out online security, limited relationship building and difficulties in recognising non-verbal codes as a possible disadvantage. However, several researchers also point to the advantages of the above methods, such as flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and environmental friendliness (Bryman, 2018). While virtual video calls enabled the preservation of the visual and instinctive elements present in physical conversations (Bryman, 2018), WhatsApp audio messages and email interviews ceased the opportunity to see how something was said, which is a source of error that I cannot fully make up for. Notwithstanding the partial loss of spontaneity, I found that WhatsApp audio messages and email interviews were a suitable and acceptable mode of inquiry for the purpose of this study. These methods enabled respondents to provide well-structured and thoughtful responses, albeit in a more deliberate manner. In addition, those means of communication afforded a greater opportunity for sustained engagement with those who participated in the study and allowed for follow-up contact with additional questions and reflections (Bryman, 2018).

Another limitation in this study was the unshared language competencies between myself and many of the respondents. To bridge the language barrier, the presence of an interpreter was essential during the face-to-face encounters and the digital interviews with the respondents. An important methodological challenge in research is the accuracy of translation, especially when it comes to capturing the essence of the respondents' answers (Edwards, 1998; McLennan & Prinsen, 2014). Regrettably, information could possibly have been either forfeited due to language, or lost in translation, which is a further source of error that I cannot fully make up for. However, I have a functional understanding of the Spanish language and can understand it to a considerable extent. Therefore, I was able to understand much of the information conveyed. Further, while the transmission of concepts and meanings through language and translation can be problematic, it also offers opportunities for intercultural communication and other forms of understanding (Hammet, et al, 2015).

## 5.5. Ethical Considerations

Throughout the study, adherence to the Swedish Research Council's recommendations on good research practice was a priority to protect participants from harm. As the Council (2017:7) states, the value of knowledge should not supersede the importance of individual privacy and protection from harm and risk. Therefore, this study was guided by four principles: Ensuring that participants receive appropriate information, obtaining their informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and using the material collected in a purposeful way. An information and consent document were given to all participants prior to the start of an interview and no interviews were conducted until consent had been given.

As the research sample consists of Indigenous Peoples, several ethical considerations and additional precautions were taken to minimise any potential negative impact of this study. Scholars have recognised that talking about violent encounters can have negative effects on the individuals involved (Ellsberg & Heise 2002). Therefore, the principle of doing no harm served as an ethical basis to guide the discussion cautiously and prevent respondents from reliving possible experiences of violence (Krystalli, 2021). To some extent, these ethical challenges could be averted as the study focuses on the agency of these HRDs, rather than focusing on their personal experiences of violence.

Scheyvens (2014) have pointed out that the positioning of the researcher in relation to the respondent can further exacerbate power inequalities and academic paradigms. The epistemological implications of being a foreign researcher with a sense of being allowed to conduct research in a challenging context, despite having no personal connections or experience of living there (Höglund & Öberg, 2011), raised critical questions about how to ensure that participants' interpretations were accurately reflected. Hence, to avoid Eurocentrism and ensure that participants' agency was not compromised (Hammersley, 1992; Sultana, 2007), a critical focus was placed on the elaboration of culturally appropriate, respectful, and collaborative knowledge that respected and honoured Indigenous ways of knowing (Datta, 2018). Given my personal involvement in the matter, I needed to find a middle ground between using the results responsibly, thinking about how to make participation valuable and worthwhile despite being voluntary and unpaid, and avoiding 'going native' and maintaining a critical distance when examining respondents' narratives during analysis.

The researcher's epistemology plays a crucial role in the formulation of the conclusion. An understanding of the constructivist ontology of knowledge highlights that the findings of this research represent a particular and subjective interpretation of a social reality rather than an objective and conclusive one (Bryman, 2018).



## Chapter 6: Analyse of Findings

---

Before we begin presenting the findings and delve into the analytical part of this thesis, it is important to outline how this chapter will answer the research question. Recalling that the overarching research question seeks to understand what motivates Indigenous Wayúu women to act as human rights defenders, this chapter directs its focus to answer the two sub-questions: *How can Indigenous women resist and overcome obstacles while fulfilling their role as human right defender and in what way does resilience influence Indigenous women's persistence in defending their human rights.* The information, comprising fourteen semi-structured interviews, has been analysed, thematically processed, and presented within the theoretical foundations of intersectionality, resistance, and resilience, as well as relevant prior research.

Before examining the two relevant sub-questions (6.3. and 6.4.), this section obscure and analyses contextual aspects that are important for a more comprehensive understanding of the analysis that follows, including the notion of neoliberal extractivism and the idea of 'development' (6.1.) and intersectional challenges in relation to gender (6.2).

### 6.1. Setting the Scene

All respondents in this work self-identify themselves as Indigenous Peoples belonging to the Wayúu Indigenous group. Thus, in the context of the ongoing debate about the term 'Indigenous' (IACHR, 2016; Mills, 2002), this thesis uses the principle of self-identification, as affirmed by the ILO (1987), as the primary criterion for determining membership of an Indigenous group. By emphasising self-identification, the respondents' identification as Indigenous Peoples of the Wayúu community carries considerable weight and legitimacy for understanding their unique perspectives and experiences in the context of this work. Although the respondents in this work do not always explicitly identify themselves as HRDs, they are all actively involved in the defence of human rights, and many refer to themselves as leaders or activists. Their shared commitment and involvement in activities related to the defence of human rights unites them, despite the different terminology they use (UNHCHR, 2004).

The first clear trend identified in the interviews was the experience of a profound threat to the Wayúu people from exploitative activities related to industry. It was clear that mining was identified as the main culprit for the degradation of the environment and the health of the people which can be illustrated by the quote below:

As an Indigenous woman, as someone with Indigenous blood in my veins I see how mining fuels life in the cities, in western societies, but in our territory mining only brings disease and death. [...]. The mine has been leaving a series of human rights violations in its wake which along with the armed conflict has meant there have been many difficult situations. (R7).

The experiences of the respondents, which can be attributed to the increasing global demand for natural resources, reflect a broader trend (Acosta, 2013; Avilés, 2019). This trend is characterised by the political acceptance and endorsement of natural resource exploitation as a legitimate development strategy, driven primarily by economic motives and often overshadowing other sustainable and inclusive development approaches (Powęska & Raftopoulos, 2020). The respondents argue that the challenges extend beyond mere threats to their livelihoods but also undermine their spiritual and cultural practices that are closely linked to the land they inhabit (Eichler & Bacca, 2020). ‘Without territory there are no Wayúu, there are no people without territory’ (R10).

Throughout the interviews, the respondents’ stories shed light on the harsh realities of the Wayúu community and revealed the perceived disregard by those in power for the detrimental impact on the land and its inhabitants. Recurring themes included forced displacement, water and air pollution, habitat destruction, loss of biodiversity, worsening poverty and the negative impact on Indigenous cultures, traditions, and languages.

In reality we see more poverty when [extractive industries] enter the territory, it comes and destroys our life, it comes to contaminate our water, it comes to destroy everything we have, our wealth, and even our own language. We have seen with our own eyes that these companies only bring disease and death. (R13).

One respondent (R6) provocatively questioned the very essence of development, calling for a critical examination of whether it entails further environmental degradation or the pursuit of a more harmonious way of life. This statement can be linked to the ongoing discourse exploring the potential convergence between the pursuit of economic growth and the imperative to take environmental and social considerations into account (Kallis, 2011). Rather than honouring the

land as an ancestral entity with rights and values, the respondent (R6) argues that the intrusion of Western values has reduced the value of nature to a mere commodity, valued for its economic potential (Cohen, 2011; Powęska & Raftopoulos, 2020). Building on Radcliffe's (2015) insights, the spread of extractivism and the paradoxical consequences of developmentalism underlines the need to recognise nature as an intersectional aspect alongside ethnicity, class, and gender. Intersectional subordination is not necessarily the result of conscious action, but often the result of a strain that interacts with pre-existing vulnerabilities and creates an additional dimension of disempowerment. These vulnerabilities are rooted in experiences marked by historical injustices, which encompasses colonisation, expropriation of land and resources, systematic oppression, discrimination, and limited enjoyment of their right to self-determination (Kendrick & Lewis, 2014; McKenzie & Cohen, 2018)

Furthermore, another respondent (R1) pointed to the persistence of colonial education systems that continue to denigrate ancestral knowledge and consider it inferior to Western ideas. This erasure of Indigenous wisdom, she argues, contributes to the prevailing social belief in the superiority of externalised ideas. The findings highlight the dissonance between the dominant society's drive for growth and the consequences it has for the environment, people, and prospects of future generations. This observation aligns with Kallis (2011) assertion that the overemphasis on growth often obscures the inherent interaction between growth, resource depletion and the emergence of unsustainable development.

## **6.2. Intersecting Identities: Power and Influence**

The interviews conducted provided insights into the lived experiences and the challenges Wayúu Indigenous women face. Particularly noteworthy is the emphasis on their role as women and their determined efforts to protect human rights, protect the environment and preserve their cultural heritage. While the study aimed to avoid portraying IWHRDs as victims, the interviews inevitably shed light on the challenges associated with their situation and the obstacles that are at the forefront of their work. It was deemed important to include these challenges to understand the contextual complexities, the hardships they face and the concerted attempts to silence their voices. When analysing the main points of these interviews, several important themes emerged.

The narratives in the interviews revolved around the intersecting power dynamics and structures that perpetuate challenges for Indigenous women. It is well documented that Indigenous women often face multiple and successive forms of discrimination that combine and intersect based on

their gender and ethnicity (Siedler, 2017). Drawing on Crenshaw's (1999) concept of intersectionality, one respondent (R4) highlights the influential role of patriarchal norms, colonialism, racism, and displacement that contribute to the marginalisation and exclusion of Indigenous women from decision-making processes and the recognition of their rights and contributions.

Indigenous women around the world have been facing different challenges such as racism, violence, exclusion or colonialism, loss of their land and culture for many centuries. [...]. [I]n patriarchal societies, Indigenous women need to be included in decision-making processes. (R4).

Understanding intersectional subordination makes it clear that Wayúu Indigenous women are disempowered at multiple levels due to the intersection of various pressures and pre-existing vulnerabilities. Intersectionality recognises the intertwining of power dynamics and forms of oppression, based on factors such as race, class, gender and sexuality (Collins, 1990). It shows how these intersecting factors legitimise hierarchies and violence. For Indigenous women, structural and interpersonal violence are closely linked and inseparable (Merry, 2006).

Furthermore, all respondents reported the omnipresence of threats and the constant fear of violence. It is common for Indigenous women to be subjected to threats and violence, which are used, according to the respondents, as a tactic to suppress and punish their determined commitment to the protection of human rights. In this context, Doran (2017) highlights the emergence of a particular form of intimidation where civil and political rights are presented as a potential threat to national security and interests. This development seriously challenges the fundamental principles of democratic governance and not only undermines the legitimacy of citizens, but also creates a dangerous environment that facilitates the commission of serious human rights violations that often go unpunished. As Lessa (2011) further notes, the increasing oppression of the most marginalised and mobilised populations is due to the fact that these groups are perceived as a threat because of their advocacy for social change.

We have had to live through many situations of violence, from threats to stigmatization and harassment. But those are the consequences, because defending human rights in Colombia is very difficult and even more so in regional areas, where the real problem of the country are. (R9).

Moreover, two respondents (R2, R13) pointed out the different experiences of threats based on gender, emphasising that threats for women differ from those for men and that this results in different risk scenarios. Furthermore, they emphasised that the consequences suffered by women

as targets of threats are also different from those suffered by men, suggesting that the intentions underlying threats directed against women are also different. This form of aggression encompasses various manifestations, including physical attacks, verbal abuse, and psychological torment (Torrado, 2022; Siedler 2017). Disturbingly, one respondent (R2) argues that these acts of violence are also occasionally directed at the children and families of these women.

A recurring theme is the fact that this discrimination and threats comes not only from outside, but also from their own communities. One respondent (R1) shared the challenges she and other women faced when they began speaking out about human rights violations. They were accused of being feminists and trying to change their traditional culture, leading to threats and attacks of all kinds. At the time, she argues, the community was less accepting of women speaking out, and although progress has been made in the last two decades, there are still challenges. Thus, despite improvements, many respondents report that power hierarchies, machismo and patriarchy still permeate Wayúu society, where traditional gender roles marginalise women, and that there is a complex interplay between cultural norms and evolving gender dynamics. Accusations of attempts to change cultural norms are still used to undermine their efforts, resulting in threats and various forms of violence. This is consistent with Siedler's (2017) observation that 'custom' often serves as a justification for localised, oppressive, and patriarchal forms of exclusion and control. These practises and norms bear witness to different gender ideologies that are upheld by both men and women to enforce certain notions of female behaviour (Eichler, 2019; García-Del Moral, 2022). Accordingly, gender hierarchies within families and communities often perpetuate systems of subordination (de la Cadena, 1991). As such patriarchy extends to various spheres of society. It permeates political economies, intimate relationships, gendered and racialized identities and daily life and is shaped by societal expectations and norms (Lugones, 2008).

I think one of the biggest challenges for us women are that our surroundings are sexist. One of the first barriers we must overcome is that of our men, the indigenous men. We also come from that patriarchal culture that does not think of women as another part of a whole, part of the duality that is within the harmony of the territory, but instead thinks that women must be in the kitchen. (R2).

The sheer frequency of these threats creates an environment of constant unrest that undermines the respondent's sense of safety and security. The effect goes beyond the immediate harm done to these individuals. It permeates their personal lives, their relationships, and their ability to carry out their work. Notwithstanding the fact that the various forms of violence experienced by these women are interconnected, legal and judicial systems tend to reduce 'violence against women' to

discrete and isolated incidents of interpersonal aggression, thereby failing to consider the broader social, structural, and historical factors that contribute to it (Eichler, 2019; Siedler, 2017).

## 6.2. Resistance: Actions for Change

In gathering and analysing the findings, one observation emerged that highlights the resistance of the women involved and the broader significance of their personal involvement. It became clear that these individuals were not only advocating for themselves, but also acting as representatives of a larger collective. The statement of one respondent (R13) during an interview illustrates the representative role these women take. She explicitly emphasised that her voice does not only represent her, but also other women leaders and defenders in Colombia, as well as for those who do not have a platform to raise their voices.

One respondent (R1) played an important role in the early women's initiative in the area, which first began as a proactive stance against the prevalent violence and killings in the territory. When starting to raise her voice, she found that other women in the territory shared her aspirations:

We found that there were many other women who were trying to denounce a situation that was going on invisibly, and we came together [...]. [It] was very difficult and also because we were the first women in the territory who began to talk about human rights issues, who began to talk about violations in the territory, who began to talk about issues related to the [challenges] that we were facing. (R1).

As their collective efforts grew, these women expanded their agenda to denounce existing injustices, address cultural practises that were unhealthy for women, and raise global awareness of the dire circumstances in the region. This shift marked a departure from the past where women, who have often been traditionally considered subordinate, did not have the opportunity to express their needs and actively participate, which is in line with Scott's (1985) perspective of the subordinate classes. This raises the interesting question of the way in which certain relations of subordination can provide the necessary capacities to perform certain acts. Drawing upon Kandiyoti's notion of 'bargaining with patriarchy', these women skilfully negotiated their roles and developed strategies of active resistance, even if they were not previously organised or familiar. They united through kinship, ethnic networks and 'imagined solidarities' (Lilja et al., 2017) gender, and will, all of which had practical and political implications (Bayat, 1997).

For a long time we women have felt powerless in the face of everything that was happening. But lately we are saying enough is enough, we are saying that our voices will be heard, our opinions will be valued, our decisions will now be respected. (R3).

The emergence of multiple women-led organisations and mobilisations in the territory has led to a significant change in the discourse on gender, power, and rights. Using various tactics, these women resist repressive political conditions and fulfil their needs despite multiple challenges and limited resources (Bayat, 2017). Several respondents speak of the importance of recognising women as a force to be reckoned with, to acknowledge all their strengths and contributions. Moreover, all respondents strongly believe that women's participation and active engagement in the overarching struggle for rights and gender equality is essential. Within this context, respondent 3 is critical of the perpetuation of insecurity and the confinement of women to prescribed roles within the patriarchal system. She stresses the importance of actively involving men in the struggle for gender equality and advocates for their involvement as a strategy in dismantling these systems. She also emphasises the need to empower Indigenous women so that they can exercise decision-making power and participate fully in society.

[W]e need to reach out to men for them to understand, acknowledge and act on the existing discrimination and patriarchal system and culture, and work with women in developing an enabling environment for Indigenous women to participate equally and have their specific rights recognised and protected. (R3).

Further, two respondents (R6, R14) point out that the focus of their organisations is on empowering women and youth, combating human rights violations and promoting unity. Thus, the organisation's mission is to educate young people and equip them not only with the necessary skills and knowledge to face future challenges, but also to preserve the wisdom and traditions of their ancestors. Respondent 14 further emphasises the importance of youth and recognises their central role as capable, compassionate, and informed future leaders. "[T]he best way is to educate our youth, who are the future of our organisation and, I would say, also of the country" (R14).

Furthermore, information is recognised by many respondents as an important tool to address the widespread problem of people's limited awareness of rights, which is mainly due to insufficient access to relevant information. This lack of information results in people not being able to navigate their situation. In this regard, two respondents (R2, R12) talk about their organisation's dedicated efforts to inform people, recognising that defending one's rights requires awareness. To bridge the

information gap, the organisation has proactively set up a training school for women to impart knowledge about rights. Moreover, some of the respondents emphasise the need for global attention. In this context, two of the respondents (R6, R11) strongly emphasise the importance of disseminating information about their struggles to a wider audience. Consequently, they state that many individuals and organisations have proactively built a stronger presence on social media platforms and use various media strategies to increase the visibility of their causes.

The power of unity and cooperation seems to be a crucial aspect for all the respondents. One respondent (R3) specifically expresses her personal preference for working with strong women, recognising that their collective strength enhances individual potential. This is consistent with Crenshaw's (1991) assertion that by drawing on their shared experiences, women have realised that the plight of millions has more power than the appeals of a few individuals. Further, this underlines the importance of surrounding oneself with people who are actively committed to the cause, fostering a sense of collective resistance. Additionally, many respondents recount how shared experiences of historical injustices, colonial legacies and current challenges have created a deep sense of collective solidarity. One respondent (R8) reflected on how her personal experiences and formative influences, particularly growing up in a conflict-ridden region and being raised by a mother who tenaciously fought for community rights, profoundly shaped her motivation to advocate for better opportunities and protect women from threats and violence. The shared history and experiences have awakened a determination for all the respondents to protect their ancestral land, culture, and rights, and ensure their preservation for the benefit of future generations.

[Coming together] really fostered a sense of unity and awareness that we are stronger together and even though we come from different communities and have different backgrounds we are facing the same threats to our lands and our cultures and our children's future. (R11).

The collective sentiment of all respondents underlines the importance of territory not only for their individual survival but also for the preservation of humanity in general. Their resistance efforts are thus based on a deep-rooted desire to protect the land, to recognise its rights, to uphold the rights of all people and to create a world where security and respect for human rights prevail (Albó, 2004; Niezen, 2003). Indigenous communities have a long history of resistance, which is underlined by many respondents' recollections of their ancestors' involvement in this struggle. In this context, these ancestors are often seen as martyrs, people who made great sacrifices for the common cause. Nevertheless, many respondents also refer to a broader historical narrative and invoke the bravery of past 'warriors' who fought fearlessly for liberation in the resistance to colonial rule. One



respondent (R5) exemplifies this through her sense of responsibility to defend her community and the natural world. She is aware of the urgent need to combat the threats and shows a willingness to put her own life at risk to protect her community and preserve her territory.

And I understood that the fight was mine too. I understood that all previous fights of our relatives were to defend our territory. There was no way not to get involved. I gave myself, body, and soul, to the fight [...]. (R5).

This commitment is driven by a vision that goes beyond their own lives to encompass the well-being and prospects of future generations. For example, another respondent (R6) expresses that her motivation and drive stem from a deep sense of responsibility as a mother where she wants to create a better future not only for her own child but also for all children. A deep attachment to a place can help build moral relationships that foster a sense of responsibility for its protection and well-being. These ideas resonate with Foucault's reflections on ethics, in which he explores the notion that individuals are 'called upon' to recognise their own moral obligations and to fulfil them (Mahmood, 2005), which in this context could be argued to be a call to act.

The collective experience of the threat of resources extraction invading their lands and depleting natural livelihoods and resources is shared by all respondents. Yet, the foundation of their resistance seems to go deeper for many of the respondents. Accordingly, one respondent (R6) highlights a deep awareness that their existence and way of life are in direct contradiction to colonial and contemporary neoliberal ideologies. Furthermore, Indigenous Peoples often have a unique, complex, and nuanced understanding on natural resources (Cohen, 2011), that differs from market-based interpretations. This view is deeply interwoven with ancestral meaning, culture and spiritually (Renglet, 2022) – an awareness that four respondents (R1, R6, R7, R10) consciously relates to, and encourage their impetus to defend.

### **6.3. Resilience: Navigating the Challenges of Change**

Indigenous communities have demonstrated a remarkable ability to withstand external shocks and stresses without major upheaval, a resilience they have demonstrated over centuries (Aspin et al. 2014). As the information was gathered and analysed, a clear understanding emerged of the remarkable value of the territory – a multi-faceted resource that provides Indigenous communities with unparalleled benefits that extend beyond livelihoods (Renglet, 2022). Furthermore, this understanding is complemented by the realisation that sound ecological knowledge and close links to the environment are essential for the future of humanity.

This recognition is for thousands of years. For centuries, our ancestors, our grandparents, defended their territory. [W]e continue to fight, because we know that our land, our territory gives us life. Without the territory, without the land, we would not exist as Indigenous Peoples (R9)

In line with this perspective, one respondent (R3) emphasises the central role of Indigenous women in the management of land and resources in their communities. This involvement goes beyond livelihood security, but also includes essential cultural and spiritual practises. She further argues that their deep connection to nature gives them a comprehensive understanding of resources that can be used for food, medicinal practises, and ceremonial rituals. In addition, she argues, Indigenous women know how to determine the optimal time for planting, how to select the right seeds for field cultivation and how to find the right time for rituals to honour spirits and ancestors. Another respondent (R4) echoes this sentiment, claiming that Indigenous women are rightly recognised as custodians of nature because of their comprehensive understanding of the environment.

The dedicated efforts to revitalise forest ecosystems and apply their enduring traditional knowledge in addressing the complex challenges facing Mother Earth is a further aspect many respondents highlight. Their livelihoods and harmonious coexistence with the environment testify to Indigenous communities' understanding of nature as an entity with rights and values (Abas, et al, 2022; Cohen 2011). This observation is consistent with Adger's (2020) assertions. Moreover, the interdependence of ecosystems and communities underscores the importance of individuals and social collectives in maintaining the stability and adaptability of these complicated systems. Thus, these qualities, rooted in their unique traditional knowledge systems and practises, have enabled their survival for centuries.

But also, the care of nature and the conservation of the earth, which is fundamental for the air we breathe, for the water we need, for the ecological balance we have between the human, the wild and also the fauna and flora. (R4)

Moreover, many of the respondents emphasise not only the significant role that Indigenous women play in preserving Mother Earth, but also the profound importance of culture. These accounts illustrate how indigenous women have taken responsibility for the preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge, spiritual practises, and languages, which are considered essential features for the overall well-being and sustainability of their communities.

Women are key in the development of all the actions of Indigenous Peoples [...], because we fulfil a mission that really allows us to maintain the cultural integrity of the peoples to balance our life missions, with the children, with the women, with the men and with nature. (R9).

Aligning with this, one respondent (R1) goes on to underscore the significance of women in this context. Their role transcends childbirth, encompassing the vital responsibilities of nurturing and cultivating children within the cultural context. This close connection to the generational cycle consolidates their central position in the preservation and development of the community's traditions, values, and heritage.

Amidst their ongoing interaction with mainstream society, the Wayúu communities do not exist in isolation (Alarcón Puentes, 2016). Consequently, a few of the respondents emphasise a growing concern about the knowledge gap between older and younger generations within these communities. In this context, the voices of two respondents (R1, R8) resound as they advocate and identify the paramount importance of intergenerational education. Concerted efforts are therefore being made to advance intercultural education, with elders taking on the role of educators to impart the wisdom of the ancestors and revive cultural elements that have waned among the younger generation. One respondent (R8) highlights the positive results of these educational efforts, citing successful examples of preserving the language, strengthening territorial ties, and reviving the wisdom of ancestors.

The ongoing commitment to preserving and sharing knowledge can be examined in the context of social resilience (Adger, 2002; Qamar, 2023). This form of social capital can be argued to be fostered through the maintenance of ancestral traditions and narratives, the cultivation of robust individual and collective identities, and the revitalisation of language and culture (Qamar, 2023; Aspin et al, 2014). Through the interweaving of these elements, the Indigenous women in this context, demonstrate a resilience that is deeply rooted in their ability to nurture and preserve their cultural heritage. As Qamar (2023) points out, this perspective focuses on the critical importance of strengthening social resilience. This concept is closely linked to the notion that communities can skilfully navigate and embrace a variety of changes while maintaining their core functions and structures. In this respect, the foundations of resilience are rooted in enduring cultural values that have withstood historical adversity or emerged through the revival of Indigenous identities. Further, to preserve fundamental elements of their ethnic identity, the Wayúu have engaged in complicated cultural negotiations (Alarcón Puentes, 2006). This commitment to preserving their

heritage is evident not only in the proactive initiatives mentioned above, but also in the Wayúu's strong social cohesion and communal way of life (Hylton, 2021).

Finally, a recurring theme that clearly underpins the findings is the respondents' determined desire to remain. Similarly, as Aspin et al. (2014:156) assert, this desire can be understood as 'the refusal of Indigenous peoples to accept assimilation or integration as an acceptable strategy for their ongoing survival' and a 'refusal to disappear' (Cohen, 2001:147). This desire finds its firm foundation in an Indigenous identity that can be said to contain an inherent resilience. The Indigenous identity thus holds significance for their continued existence, and in this context, the issue of land and territory becomes even more important as it plays a central role in sustaining the Indigenous way of life. As noted by one of the respondents (R9), their survival is intertwined with the land, and they are committed to defending it for the benefit of future generations. Another respondent (R6) tells of her enduring commitment to protect the planet and its inhabitants. Her mission in life is to advocate for the recognition of the Earth's rights and to fight the exploitative use of territories. Her determination underlines the importance of nature conservation for the well-being of future generations.

We do not want them to exploit us, we do not want them to destroy our life, our land, the nature, it is the only inheritance, and where will our grandchildren live if we allow them to enter the land and destroy it? (R13)

The intergenerational dimension of resilience becomes particularly clear in this context. It demonstrates the capacity of current generations to create and sustain systems, structures and practises that enable future generations not only to thrive but also to navigate a variety of challenges and changes. As outlined earlier, this embodies the concept of passing on knowledge, skills, values, traditions, and a sustainable environment. This intergenerational facet of resilience involves a comprehensive and forward-looking strategy to address the difficulties of the present while preserving the needs and prospects of future generations. Thus, as explained by Stewart-Harawira, (2018) resilience is not only about survival, but also but also about the everyday actions that enable the sustainable viability of nature and communities for future generations. Resilience in this sense is the steadfast determination by Indigenous peoples who put their bodies on the line to safeguard their rights.

With a lot of courage, strength, and anger, I started to fight, thinking about the future of the Wayúu. The world needs to listen to the voices of Indigenous women because we as women are the ones who go out to defend it, we are the ones who want our children to live well, and we are the ones fighting. Taking care of the territory is not only of importance to Indigenous People. The fight – what we are doing day after day – is for all of us living on this planet, all of us in this world. (R9).

## Chapter 7: Discussion and Concluding Remarks

---

Following the presentation and analysis of the findings of this thesis, this section provides a discussion that aligns these findings with the overarching research question of this thesis – namely, to explore what motivate Indigenous Wayúu women to take on roles as human rights defenders. As such, this section will offer a concluding reflection of the ramification of this thesis, followed by future research.

### 7.1 Discussion

A consistent theme running throughout the thesis is the assertion that women do, and have always, skilfully found ways to resist social exclusion and improve their situation. What can be attributed is a prevailing collective sentiment, wherein shared experiences and a sense of a common purpose serve as motivating factors for resistance. Even though the adversities are not limited to their marginalisation as Indigenous people but are exacerbated by their gender, the collective feeling of being Indigenous and being a woman seems to create a bond. Consequently, belonging to a cohesive unit, a unified force with which one can identify, could in this context be seen as the motivation to engage in the endeavour to stand up for human rights.

Further, if we recall the findings, inspiration seems to be another important catalyst that drives motivation. In this area, inspiration manifests itself in various forms ranging from ancestral roots to maternal figures, leaders, identity, and other women united by a common purpose. Taking into consideration the ancestral lineage, this source of inspiration can be traced back to the tales and narratives of their ancestors' engagement in the struggle. These ancestors often embody the essence of martyrs who made significant sacrifices for the survival of the Wayúu. The deep connection with the land, the ancestors and the metaphysical realms serves as an additional source of inspiration that motivates the ongoing commitment to continue the struggle.

Another important motivation for engagement appears to be an inherent sense of purpose and responsibility. As indicated earlier, this motivation can be traced back to the courageous efforts of ancestors who fought tirelessly in the past leaving a legacy marked by persistence and selflessness. The mantle of responsibility arising from the ancestors' efforts to preserve their heritage echoes across all dimensions of time and fills the present with an inescapable sense of obligation for the well-being and transmission to future generations. This includes protecting the environment from external threats such as extractive industries, unsustainable land use and environmental

degradation. In addition, it is also about the danger of cultural erosion and loss when inherent heritage values and identities are at stake.

Further, the environment holds significant importance here. The environment, with its abundance and vitality, has provided nourishment, protection, and spiritual sustenance to the Wayúu people for generations. It is a reciprocal relationship in which the land and its resources are cared for in return for livelihood and harmony. This ecological responsibility is not characterised by a solitary commitment, but rather signifies a recognition of the intricate reciprocal relationship that exists between the community and the land they consider their home. In this way, protecting nature becomes an extension of protecting oneself, the community, and future generations.

Focusing on gender, another important motivating factor is the unwillingness to come to terms with the prevailing realities of gender inequality, deep-rooted stereotypes, and pervasive violence against women. This unwavering rejection of the status quo means a determined rejection of the existing circumstances that perpetuate the violation of women's rights and dignity.

In essence, there are a variety of compelling factors that motivate people to take up the role of human rights defenders. Despite the many challenges that stand in their way of upholding their rights, it is evident that for many there is a prevailing feeling that there is no alternative. Anchored in an unwavering commitment to their Wayúu heritage, they resolutely and persistently champion their cause, demonstrating their willingness to persevere even in the face of formidable adversity.

## 7.2. Future Research

The scope of the research I conducted was limited by the number and diversity of people I had the opportunity to speak with. Being an Indigenous Human Right defender in Colombia is a dangerous occupation and with it comes many vulnerabilities. Furthermore, there is a plethora of additional, overlapping identities beyond those I originally identified that have the potential to influence this dynamic.

As this study was conducted exclusively with female respondents, a possible avenue for future research could be to include male perspectives through interviews. This approach would have captured a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the topic and thus enrich the overall perspective on the subject.

A further promising future research area could be to conduct a comprehensive comparative analysis of the experiences, challenges, and contributions of Indigenous women human rights defenders in different regions and contexts.



## Bibliography

---

- Abas, A., Aziz, A. and Awang, A. (2022). 'A Systematic Review on the Local Wisdom of Indigenous People in Nature Conservation'. *Sustainability*, 14(6), pp. 3415.
- Adger, W. N. (2000). 'Social and ecological resilience: are they related?'. *Progress in Human Geography* 24(1), pp. 347–364.
- Adger, W.N. (2006). 'Vulnerability'. *Global environmental change*, 16(3), pp. 268–281.
- Albó, X. (2004). Ethnic Identity and Politics in the Central Andes: The Cases of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru. In Burt, J-M and Mauzeri, P. (Eds). *Politics in the Andes: identity, conflict, reform*. University of Pittsburgh Press. pp. 17
- Altamirano-Jiménez, I. (2017). 'The sea is our bread': Interrupting green neoliberalism in Mexico'. *Marine policy*, 80, pp. 28–34.
- Aspin, C., Penehira, M., Green, A., & Smith, L. (2014). 'Resilient communities: Community-based responses to high rates of HIV among indigenous peoples'. *MAI journal*, 3(2), pp. 153–164.
- Avilés, W. (2019). 'The Wayúu tragedy: death, water and the imperatives of global capitalism'. *Third world quarterly*, 40(9), pp. 1750–1766.
- Acosta, A. (2013) 'Extractivism and neoextractivism: two sides of the same curse', in M. Lang, M., and D. Mokrani, D. (Eds.). *Beyond Development: Alternative Visions in Latin America*. Quito: Rosa Luxemburg.
- Acosta-Contreras, F. (2022). La Guajira in Colombia between paradoxes of ancestral care and exploitation Available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/blog/2022/08/02/la-guajira-in-colombia-between-paradoxes-of-ancestral-care-and-exploitation/> (Accessed 28 February 2023)
- Alarcón Puentes, J. (2016). 'La Sociedad wayuu: entre la quimera y la realidad'. *Gazeta de Antropología*, 22(21).
- Arjona, A. (2021). *The Effects of Violence on Inequality in Latin America and The Caribbean: A Research Agenda*. United Nations Development Program LAC. Working Paper Series: 12.
- Banks, E. (2017). 'We Are Bruno: Citizens Caught Between an Absentee State And a State-Like Corporation During Water Conflicts In La Guajira, Colombia'. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, 46(1/2), pp. 61–94.
- Barcia, I. (2017). 'Women Human Right Defenders Confronting Extractive Industries: An Overview of Critical Risks and Human Rights Obligations'. From Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) and Women Human Right Defenders, International Coalition (WHRDIC). Available at <https://www.awid.org/publications/women-human-rights-defenders-confronting-extractive-industries> (Accessed 1 February 2023)
- Bayat, A. (1997). 'Cairo's Poor: Dilemmas of Survival and Solidarity'. *Middle East Report*, 27(1), pp. 2–6.
- Berkes, F., Colding, J. and Folke, C. (2003). *Navigating Social-ecological Systems: Building Resilience for Complexity and Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brunnegger, S. (2011). 'Legal Imaginaries: Recognizing Indigenous Law in Colombia'. *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society*, 55(55), pp. 77–100.
- Bryman, A. (2018). *Samhällsvetenskapliga Metoder*. (3rd ed.). Translated by Nilsson, B. Stockholm: Liber.

- Butler, J., Gambetti, Z. and Sabsay, L. (eds) (2016) *Vulnerability in resistance*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Castañeda Camey, I., Sabater, L., Owren, C. and Boyer, A.E. (2020). Gender-based violence and environment linkages: The violence of inequality. In Wen, J. (Ed.). Switzerland: International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- Cohen, B. (2001). 'The Spider's Web: Creativity and Survival in Dynamic Balance'. *Canadian journal of native education*, 25(2), pp. 140–148.
- Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman
- Collins, P. H. (1998). 'It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation'. *Hypatia*, 13(3), pp. 62–82.
- Corral-Montoya, F., Telias, M. and Malz, N. (2022). 'Unveiling the political economy of fossil fuel extractivism in Colombia: Tracing the processes of phase-in, entrenchment, and lock-in'. *Energy research & social science*, 88.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color'. *Stanford Law Review* 43(6), pp. 1241–1299.
- DANE. (2021). Información sociodemográfica del pueblo Wayúu. Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística: Bogota, D.C.
- Datta, R. (2018). 'Decolonizing both researcher and research and its effectiveness in Indigenous research'. *Research Ethics*, 14(2), pp. 1–24.
- Davis, Y. A. (2004). *Mujeres, raza y clase*. Madrid: Akal Ediciones.
- Daza Niño, N. (2022). *El Nexco Entre Género, Cambio Climático y Seguridad en Colombia*. DCAF: Centro de Ginebra para la Gobernanza del Sector de Seguridad en Colombia
- de la Cadena, M. (1991). 'Las mujeres son más indias: Etnicidad y género en una comunidad del Cuzco'. *Revista Andina* 9(1), pp 7–45.
- Doran, M. C. (2017). 'The Hidden Face of Violence in Latin America: Assessing the Criminalization of Protest in Comparative Perspective'. *Latin American perspectives*, 44(5), pp. 183–206.
- Edwards, R. (1998). 'A critical examination of the use of interpreters in the qualitative research process'. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 24(1), pp. 197–208.
- Eichler, J. (2019). *Reconciling Indigenous Peoples' Individual and Collective Rights : Participation, Prior Consultation and Self-Determination in Latin America*. New York: Routledge
- Eichler, J. and Bacca, P.I. (2021). 'Contemporary forms of cultural genocide in the natural resource sector: indigenous peoples' perspectives from Bolivia and Colombia'. *Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, 42(4), pp. 459–477.
- Endreß, M. (2019). The Socio-Historical Constructiveness of Resilience. In Rampp, B., Endreß, M., Naumann, M. (eds). *Resilience in Social, Cultural and Political Spheres*. Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Folke, C. (2006). 'Resilience: The emergence of a perspective for social–ecological systems analyses'. *Global environmental change*, 16(3), pp. 253–267.
- Forst, M. (2016). Situation of human rights defenders. A/71/281. General Assembly.
- García De Oteyza, M. O., Estupiñan Estupiñan, Ó., and Fuentes Lara, C. M. (2020). 'Retos de paz y derechos humanos en la comunidad Wayúu en la Alta Guajira (Colombia)'. *Peace and Conflict Review*, 13(2), pp. 25–51.

- Global Witness, (GW). (2020) 'Defending tomorrow: The climate crisis and threats against land And environmental defenders'. Retrieved from <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/defending-tomorrow/> (Accessed 10 Mars 2023)
- Goodale, M., and Postero, N. (2013). *Neoliberalism, Interrupted: Social Change and Contested Governance in Contemporary Latin America*. California: Stanford University Press
- Grimm, V. and Wissel, C. (1997). 'Babel, or the Ecological Stability Discussions: An Inventory and Analysis of Terminology and a Guide for Avoiding Confusion'. *Oecologia*, 109(3), pp. 323–334.
- Hammett, D., Twyman, C., and Graham M. (2015). *Research and Fieldwork in Development*. London: Routledge.
- Hammersley, M. (1992). 'On feminist methodology'. *Sociology*, 26(2), pp. 187–206.
- Harrell, C., and Bradley, A. (2009). *Data Collection Methods: Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus Groups*. CA, USA: RAND Corporation.
- Holling, C. S. (1973). 'Resilience and stability of ecological systems'. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, 4, pp. 1–23
- Holling, C. S. (1986). The Resilience of Terrestrial Ecosystems. Local Surprise and Global Change. In Clark W.C. and Munn R.E (eds) (1986). *Sustainable Development of the Biosphere*. UK: Cambridge University Press
- Holling, C.S. (2001). 'Understanding the Complexity of Economic, Ecological, and Social Systems'. *Ecosystems*, 4(5), pp. 390–405.
- Holling, C.S. and Gunderson, L.H. (2002) *Panarchy: Understanding Transformations in Human and Natural systems*. Washington: Island Press.
- Holden, W., Nadeau, K., and Jacobson, R. D. (2011). 'Exemplifying Accumulation by Dispossession: Mining and Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines'. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 93(2), pp. 141–161.
- Hristov, J. (2010). 'Indigenous Struggles for Land and Culture in Cauca, Colombia'. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 32(1), pp. 88–117.
- Hylton, F. (2021) 'What is history? Reflections from the edge of empires, nation-states, and disciplines'. *Dialect Anthropology* 45, pp. 333–355
- International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). (2002). *Breaking New Ground: Mining, Minerals and Sustainable Development*. From International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). Retrieved from <https://www.iied.org/9084iied> (Accessed 14 April 2023)
- International Labour Organization (ILO). (1986). *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, C169*.
- International Labour Organization (ILO). (2021). *International Labour Organisation Exploring and tackling barriers to indigenous women's participation and organization: A study based on qualitative research in Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Cameroon and Guatemala*. Switzerland: ILO.
- Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR). (2016). *Indigenous Peoples, Afro-Descendent Communities, and Natural Resources: Human Rights Protection in the Context of Extraction, Exploitation, and Development Activities*. Washington, DC: IACHR.
- Kallis, G. (2011). 'In defence of degrowth'. *Ecological Economics*, 70(5), pp. 873–880.
- Kandiyoti, D. (1988). 'Bargaining with Patriarchy'. *Gender and Society* 2(3), pp. 274–290.

- Kanosue, Y. (2015). 'When Land is Taken Away: States Obligations under International Human Rights Law Concerning Large-Scale Projects Impacting Local Communities'. *Human Rights Law Review*, 15(4), pp. 643–667.
- Kenrick, J., & Lewis, J. (2004). 'Indigenous peoples rights and the politics of the term 'indigenous''. *Anthropology Today*, 20(2), 4–9.
- Kingsbury, B. (1998). 'Indigenous Peoples' in International Law: A Constructivist Approach to the Asian Controversy'. *The American Journal of International Law* 92(3) pp. 414–457
- Kothari, S. (1996) 'Whose Nation? The Displaced as Victims of Development' (1996). *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31(24), pp. 1476–1485.
- Krystalli, R.C. (2021). 'Narrating victimhood: dilemmas and (in)dignities'. *International feminist journal of politics*, 23(1), pp. 125–146.
- Kuznets, S. S. (2004). 'Modern economic growth: findings and reflections'. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 31(4), pp. 247–258.
- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2014). *Den kvalitativa forskningsintervjun*. (3rd ed). Lund: Studentlitteratur AB
- Lehmann, K. (2007). 'To define or not to define - the definitional debate revisited'. *American Indian Law Review*, 31(2), pp. 509.
- Lessa, F. (2011). 'Beyond Transitional Justice: Exploring Continuities in Human Rights Abuses in Argentina between 1976 and 2010'. *Journal of human rights practice*, 3(1), pp. 25–48.
- Li, T.M. (2014). 'What is land? Assembling a resource for global investment'. *Transactions – Institute of British Geographers (1965)*, 39(4), pp. 589–602.
- Li, T.M. (2005). 'Beyond 'The State' and Failed Schemes'. *American anthropologist*, 107(3), pp. 383–394.
- Li, T. M., and Semedi, P. (2021). *Plantation Life: Corporate Occupation in Indonesia's Oil Palm Zone*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Lilja, M., Baaz, M., Schulz., and Vinthagen. (2017). 'How resistance encourages resistance: theorizing the nexus between power, 'Organised Resistance' and 'Everyday Resistance''. *Journal Of Political Power*, 10(1), pp. 40–54.
- Lugones, M. (2008). 'Colonialidad y género'. *Tabula Rasa, Revista de Humanidades* 9, pp. 73–101.
- McLennan, S., and Prinsen, G. (2014). Something Old, Something New: Research Using Archives, Text and Virtual Data. In Scheyvens, R. (2014). *Development Field Work: A Practical Guide*. London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.
- Mahmood, S (2005). *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press
- Marques-Pereira, B. (2005). 'Le Chili: une démocratie de qualité pour les femmes?'. *Politique et Sociétés* 24(2-3), p. 147–169.
- Masron, T. A., and Subramaniam, Y. (2021). 'Renewable energy and poverty – environment nexus in developing countries'. *GeoJournal* 81(1), pp. 303–315.
- McKenzie, V. and Cohen, S. (2018). 'Death and Displacement: A USAID Export'. *NACLA report on the Americas (1993)*, 50(2), pp. 128–138.
- Merry, S. E. (2006). *Human rights and gender violence: translating international law into local justice*. The University of Chicago Press
- Mills, J.A. (2002). 'Legal Constructions of Cultural Identity in Latin America: An Argument

- Against Defining “Indigenous Peoples”. *Texas Hispanic Journal of Law & Policy*, 8, pp. 49.
- Niezen, R. (2003). *The origins of indigenism : human rights and the politics of identity*. University of California Press.
- Nuñez, A., González, P., Talavera, G., Sanchez-Johnsen, L., Roesch, S., Davis, S., Arguelles, W., Womack, V. Y., Ostrovsky, N. W., Ojeda, L., Penedo F. J. and Gallo, L. (2016). ‘Machismo, Marianismo, and Negative Cognitive-Emotional Factors: Findings From the Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos Sociocultural Ancillary Study’. *Journal of Latina/o Psychology*, 4(4), pp. 202–217.
- ONIC. (nd). *Wayúu*. From National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (Orig: Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia) Available at: <https://www.onic.org.co/pueblos/1156-wayuu> (Accessed 25 January 2023)
- OMCT–FIDH. (2014). “No tenemos miedo”, *Defensores del derecho a la tierra: atacados por enfrentarse al Desarrollo desenfrenado*. Annual Report from Observatorio para la Protección de los Defensores de Derechos Humanos (Omct–Fidh).
- Powęska, R and Raftopoulos, M. (2020). Forces of resistance and human rights: deconstructing natural resource development in Latin America in Powęska, R and Raftopoulos, M. (eds). *Natural Resource Development and Human Rights in Latin America*. London: University of London Press (HRC series).
- Radcliffe, S.A. (2015). *Dilemmas of difference : indigenous women and the limits of postcolonial development Policy*. Durham: Duke University Press
- Rasolt, D. H. (2021). *Drought, Disease and Isolation: The Urgent Situation of the Wayuu in La Guajira, Colombia*. Weave News. New York. Available at: <https://www.weavenews.org/stories/2021/1/29/drought-disease-and-isolation-the-urgent-situation-of-the-wayuu-in-la-guajira-colombia> (Accessed 15 mars 2023)
- Renglet, C. (2022). “The recognition of the special relationship of indigenous peoples with their environment under international law a potential advantage in climate litigation? *International journal on minority and group rights*, 29(4), pp. 720–746
- Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) (2015). *Who owns the world’s land? A global baseline of formally recognized indigenous and community land rights*. Washington, DC: RRI.
- Robles, D. A. (2008). ‘Beyond Assimilation vs. Cultural Resistance Wayuu Market Appropriation in Riohacha, La Guajira, Colombia’. The Department of Anthropology, University of Kansas.
- Rosenthal, H. (2020). *People of Resilience: Colombia’s Wayuu Indigenous Community Confronts a Malnutrition Crisis Amid Covid-19*. From Human Rights Watch (HRW). Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/video-photos/interactive/2020/08/13/people-resilience-colombias-wayuu-indigenous-community> (Accessed 3 December 2022)
- Sanchez, B. E. (2011). El reto del multiculturalismo jurídico. La justicia de la sociedad mayor y la justicia indígena. In M. Garcia Villegas, M and de Sousa Santos, B. (Eds). *El Caleidoscopio de las Justicias en Colombia: Análisis Socio-Jurídico*, pp. 5–142. Vol. 2. Bogotá, Colombia: Siglo del Hombre Editores, Ediciones Uniandes.
- Sanchez Lara, D. Muñoz Murillo, S. Ulcué Campo, G. Pinzón, S. Díaz Morales, L. Herrera, S. & Llanos, C. (2020). ‘La Ceguera: Informe Anual 2019: Sistema de Información sobre Agresiones contra Personas Defensores de Derechos Humanos en Colombia SIADDHH’. Programa Somos Defensores, Bogota D.C, Colombia.

- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Barlam, B., Burroughs, H., and Jinks, C. (2018). 'Saturation in qualitative research: exploring its conceptualization and operationalization.' *Quality & quantity*, 52(4), pp. 1893–1907.
- Scott, J. C. (1985). *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Scott, J. C. (1989). 'Everyday Forms of Resistance'. *Copenhagen Papers*, 4, pp. 33–62.
- Scheyvens, R. (2014). *Development Field Work: A Practical Guide*. London: SAGE Publications, Ltd.
- Shrinkhal, R. (2021). 'Indigenous sovereignty' and right to self-determination in international law: A critical appraisal'. *AlterNative: an international journal of indigenous peoples*, 17(1), pp. 71–82.
- Shrinkhal, R. (2013). 'Problems in Defining 'Indigenous Peoples' under International Law'. *Chotanagpur Law Journal* 7(7).
- Sidanius, J., and Pratto, F. (1999). *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Siedler, R. (2017). Introduction. In Siedler, R. (Ed.). (2017). *Demanding Justice and Security: Indigenous Women and Legal Pluralities in Latin America*. Rutgers University Press.
- Smith, L T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.
- Stewart, F. (2011). 'Inequality in Political Power: A Fundamental (and Overlooked) Dimension of Inequality'. *European journal of development research*, 23(4), pp. 541–545.
- Stewart-Harawira, M. (2018). 'Indigenous Resilience and Pedagogies of Resistance: Responding to the Crisis of Our Age'. Alberta: University of Alberta.
- Sultana, F. (2007). 'Reflexivity, Positionality and Participatory Ethics: Negotiating Fieldwork Dilemmas in International Research'. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 6(3), pp. 374–385.
- Swedish Research Council. (2017). *Good Research Practice*. Stockholm: Swedish Research Council.
- Tauli Corpuz, V. (2015). Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples. A/HRC/30/41. United Nations Human Rights Council.
- Torrado, N. R. T. (2022). 'Overcoming Silencing Practices: Indigenous Women Defending Human Rights from Abuses Committed in Connection to Mega-Projects: A Case in Colombia'. *Business and Human Rights Journal*, 7(1), pp. 29–44.
- Turriago-Hoyos, Á., Martínez Mateus, W.A., and Thoene, U. (2020). 'Spatial analysis of multidimensional poverty in Colombia: Applications of the Unsatisfied Basic Needs (UBN) Index.' *Cogent economics & finance*, 8(1), pp. 1–19.
- UDHR. (1948). United Nations General Assembly. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). New York: United Nations General Assembly.
- Ulloa, A. (2020). 'The right of the Wayúu people and water in the context of mining in la Guajira, Colombia: demands of relational water justice'. *Human Geography* 13(1), pp 6–15.
- UNHCHR (2004) Human Rights Defenders: Protecting the Right to Defend Human Rights. (Fact Sheet No. 29). Switzerland: Geneva. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-no-29-human-rights-defenders-protecting-right-defend-human> (Accessed 14 may 2023)
- United Nations. (2021). *Challenges and Opportunities for Indigenous Peoples' Sustainability*. From the United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Social Inclusion. Available at:

- <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2021/04/indigenous-peoples-sustainability/> (Accessed 11 December 2022)
- UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII). (2021). *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*. (5th Volume) ST/ESA/375. Available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2021/03/State-of-Worlds-Indigenous-Peoples-Vol-V-Final.pdf> (Accessed 28 October 2022)
- van Baalen, S. (2018). 'Google wants to know your location: The ethical challenges of fieldwork in the digital age'. *Research ethics review*, 14(4), pp. 1–17
- Vidal Parra, S. (2019). 'The Water Rights-Based Legal Mobilization of the Wayúu against the Cercado Dam: An Effective Avenue for Court-Centered Lawfare from Below?' *Antípoda: Revista de Antropología y Arqueología*, 34, pp. 45–68.
- Walker, B., Gunderson, L., Kinzig, A., Folke, C., Carpenter, S., & Schultz, L. (2006). 'A Handful of Heuristics and Some Propositions for Understanding Resilience in Social-Ecological Systems'. *Ecology and Society*, 11(1), pp. 1–15.
- Whyte, K. P. (2004). 'Indigenous Women, Climate Change Impacts, and Collective Action'. *Hypatia*, 29(3), pp. 599–616.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. (4th ed). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Inc.
- Qamar, A. H. (2023). 'Conceptualizing social resilience in the context of migrants' lived experiences'. *Geoforum*, 139, 103680.
- Zhour, A. (2014) Mapping Environmental Inequalities in Brazil: Mining, Environmental Conflicts and Impasses of Mediation (Berlin: desigALdades. net)

# Appendix

---

## **Annex I: Informed Consent Form for Semi-Structured Interview**

### **Information and Consent Document**

This document is intended to provide you with information about your participation in a qualitative research study. The objective is to explore the experiences and motivations of rights defenders. In this case, I am particularly interested in mobilisations led by indigenous women defending their rights, and the intrinsic factors that motivate you to engage despite facing numerous challenges.

I want to clarify that participation in this study is voluntary. You may cancel your participation at any time, and if you do not wish to answer a specific question, you do not have to do so. All information provided will be kept anonymous and will only be used for the purposes of this study.

At this time, do you have any questions or concerns about the interview?

With this information, do you agree to participate in this study? YES/NO?

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_. Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Annex II: List of Respondents**

Respondents			
Name	Acronym	Gender	Title
Respondent 1	R1	Woman	Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Right Defender
Respondent 2	R2	Woman	Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Right Defender
Respondent 3	R3	Woman	Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Right Defender
Respondent 4	R4	Woman	Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Right Defender
Respondent 5	R5	Woman	Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Right Defender
Respondent 6	R6	Woman	Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Right Defender
Respondent 7	R7	Woman	Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Right Defender
Respondent 8	R8	Woman	Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Right Defender
Respondent 9	R9	Woman	Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Right Defender
Respondent 10	R10	Woman	Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Right Defender
Respondent 11	R11	Woman	Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Right Defender
Respondent 12	R12	Woman	Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Right Defender
Respondent 13	R13	Woman	Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Right Defender
Respondent 14	R14	Woman	Wayúu Indigenous Women Human Right Defender

## Annex III: Interview Guide for Semi-Structured Interview

Interview Guide			
Type	Question	Follow-up/Specification	Notes
<p>Once again, thank you for participating in this research. Before we start, I want to remind you that the material from this interview will be handled confidentially. If you do not want to answer a question you do not have to, and if you want to end the interview, do not hesitate to let me know.</p> <p>Do you have any questions for me or about the study?</p>			
Introduction	Can you tell me a bit about yourself?	Where are you from?	
		Tell me about your community	
		What do you do? Your work?	
Background /Livelihoods	Can you tell me about your background and how you became involved in human rights activism?	How long have you been engaged?	
		What motivated you to engage?	
		Can you describe any strategies or tactics that you have used to mobilise and engage other Indigenous women in the defence of human rights?	
		+/Can you describe your experiences as an Indigenous women rights' defender in Colombia?	
Challenge identification	What are some of the main challenges that you are facing?	Can you describe some of the challenges you have faced?	
		+/Have you ever experienced challenges related to your gender? /Gender stereotypes in your activism?	
		+/Have you ever experienced challenges connected to your Indigenous identity?	
		+/How do you stay motivated to continue your activism despite these challenges?	
		+/How can these challenges be best addressed?	
		Can you discuss any specific moments or incidents that have been particularly inspiring or significant for you in your work as a rights defender?	
Future		How do you see the role of Indigenous women in the larger human rights movement, both in your community and beyond?	
		Do you have any hopes and aspirations for the future of human rights activism, both for yourself and for Indigenous women more broadly?	
Other reflections	Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about your life, challenges that you face, or improvements that can be made?		

## Annex IV: Coding Scheme

Name	Description	Files 13	References 269
<b>Challenges</b>			
Indigenous Women	We have had to live through many situations of violence, from threats to stigmatisation and harassment about issues related to the fact that we are Indigenous Women.	2	2
Indigenous Peoples	In reality we see more poverty when [extractive industries] enter the territory, it comes and destroys our life, it comes to contaminate our water, it comes to destroy everything we have, our wealth, and even our own language. We have seen with our own eyes that these companies only bring disease and death.	12	1
<b>Motivation</b>			
Personal Agency	And I understood that the fight was mine too. I understood that all previous fights of our relatives were to defend our territory. There was no way not to get involved. I gave myself, body, and soul, to the fight.	5	5
Future	With our influence, power, and voices we will be able to ensure there are more women leaders who can unify our message in a single voice so that soon rights can be respected and there can be full and effective participation of Indigenous People and women in the dialogue.	8	2
<b>Resistance</b>			
Everyday Resistance	We began to unite by having exchanges with people from communities in my territory. It is a way of educating them about their rights. This was a powerful part of movement building	11	3
Marginalised Resistance	I love to be in combo with women conspiring to save the world, I still think that there are possibilities to do it and for me to be surrounded by powerful women also gives me that power.	1	9
<b>Resilience</b>			
Ecological	But also, the care of nature and the conservation of the earth, which is fundamental for the air we breathe, for the water we need, for the ecological balance we have between the human, the wild and also the fauna and flora.	9	1
Social	Indigenous women are active Indigenous knowledge holders which have sustained the culture and customs of Indigenous Peoples in many ways. These include teaching our children of our Indigenous language, Indigenous songs, music, dance, and sacred rituals among others, these are all important in ensuring that Indigenous cultures and customs are not forgotten.	4	2

