

# Green Colonialism and Decolonial Feminism

A Study of Wayúu Women's Resistance in La Guajira

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**Title:** Green Colonialism and Decolonial Feminism: A Study of Wayúu Women's Resistance in La Guajira

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**Abstract:**

This qualitative study scrutinises how green energy investment affects Indigenous Wayúu people in Colombia's La Guajira region. Employing coloniality of power and decolonial feminism frameworks, we delve into Wayúu women's struggles and resilience in defending territories against large-scale wind energy projects. Our findings suggest that governments and businesses are 'tuned in' to the economic benefits of these projects, yet 'tuned out' from Indigenous peoples' ontologies, concerns, needs, and cosmovisions. This dynamic prompts questions about the unintended consequences of organisations' engagement with Indigenous peoples through corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies. Despite good intentions, CSR practices that are 'tuned out' from Indigenous peoples' cosmovisions may inadvertently reinforce power imbalances and further marginalise Indigenous communities. Our study highlights the need to honour Indigenous territories and protect Indigenous women's rights in long-term investments. Clean energy focus can mask green colonialism, which Wayúu women

actively safeguard, upholding Indigenous worldviews via feminist decoloniality. We advocate for businesses to incorporate diverse perspectives beyond the dominant Western worldview into their climate change mitigation actions and CSR strategies, and for public policies to balance decarbonisation efforts with Indigenous rights to contribute to sustainable and equitable energy transitions.

**Keywords:** Wayúu women, Indigenous women, Indigenous peoples, green energy, wind energy, economic colonialism, decolonial feminism, coloniality of power, Colombia, La Guajira, CSR strategies

## **Introduction**

Indigenous women have long been at the forefront of the fight against climate change, witnessing first-hand its impacts on the environment, their worldview, and the socioeconomic development of their territories (Goeman, 2017; Thalji and Yakushko, 2018; Tzul Tzul, 2015). These experiences have also provided them with first-hand knowledge of the power dynamics associated with coloniality (Quijano, 2000, 2011). In this study, we argue that contemporary approaches to climate change mitigation through green energy investments perpetuate power imbalances and marginalise Indigenous peoples, enacting a new form of ‘green’ colonialism.

Green energy investments have become a neo-colonial means of exploiting Indigenous lands (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2017; Prasad, 2014; Shohat, 1992). This represents a form of epistemic violence in the Global South, where women’s voices and agency are ignored and silenced (Ehrnström-Fuentes and Böhm, 2022; Goeman, 2013; Manning, 2021). Green energy investors employ advanced technological resources to justify their investments as being crucial for climate change mitigation (Gobierno de Colombia, 2021). We argue that this technocratisation and institutionalisation, known as modern rationality and embedded in Eurocentricity (Quijano, 2017: 366), rejects cultural heritage and knowledge production from the Global South, including women’s efforts to protect Mother Earth (Lugones, 2008; Manning, 2021). This contradicts the very essence of climate change mitigation, as one of its core aims is to protect the human rights of present and future generations.

This study adopts a decolonial feminist perspective to examine how the Wayúu women’s cosmovision promotes resistance against green colonial investments, and how governments and businesses can learn from this resistance to safeguard Indigenous peoples’ epistemological heritage. We explore the knowledges and experiences of Indigenous women who strive for the right to a healthy, dignified, and self-determined existence amidst ongoing colonialism through green energy investment, driven by national climate change mitigation objectives (Altamirano-

Jiménez, 2017; Cabnal, 2010; Tzul Tzul, 2015). This is not to romanticise the struggles and oppression of Indigenous women; instead, it is to learn how they live and enact control to protect their territorial ontology and govern their families and education (Quijano, 2000). To accomplish this, we conducted a qualitative study (2019–23) in La Guajira, the ‘epicentre’ of Colombia’s energy transition (Ramirez et al., 2022), drawing on the theoretical frameworks of coloniality of power and decolonial feminism (Lugones, 2008, 2010; Manning, 2021; Quijano, 2000, 2017).

This paper offers three contributions. First, we explore the dichotomy between feminist decoloniality and economic colonialism through territorial control, which informs our understanding of Indigenous decolonial feminism. Second, we shed light on the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000) within Wayúu society. Despite the presence of a matrilineal clan system, a male dominance persists. Yet, Wayúu women actively resist this power dynamic. By highlighting their resistance, which is deeply intertwined with their cosmovision, we reveal how Wayúu women safeguard their communities against colonial power structures such as green colonialism. Third, and perhaps most importantly, we contextualise green colonialism in La Guajira as a new form of exploitation and domination of Indigenous territories by governments and corporations. These entities ‘tune in’ to the rhetoric of climate change mitigation, which they use to facilitate green energy investments and justify resource extraction. However, climate change mitigation actions and corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices that are (in)advertently blind towards Indigenous peoples’ cosmovisions – or ‘tuned out’ from them – often perpetuate injustices against Indigenous communities and their lands (Fjellheim, 2023).

We postulate that Wayúu women’s practices of feminist decoloniality are directed towards dismantling modernity and the rationality of the energy transition. This transition is presented by the Colombian government and businesses as a form of economic aid, with the dual purpose

of mitigating climate change and alleviating poverty. However, this process is not without the exploitation, domination, and dispossession of Indigenous peoples and their lands. Decolonial feminists demand respect for their self-determination to defend their territories. Yet, within the Wayúu community, embedded misogyny prevents men from respecting women or allowing them a voice and space in green energy consultations, leading to the pressing dilemmas of coloniality of power and gender-based oppression. In the face of economic bargaining between the government, businesses, and the Wayúu community, Wayúu women adhere to their traditional knowledge, which is to live in harmony with the environment and protect their lives and lands against green colonialism. We interpret these behaviours as decolonial feminist techniques. The ways in which Wayúu women exist in their territories provide insight into the Wayúu people's cosmovision and social organisation, as exemplified by their clan system. According to Seeger and colleagues (2019), most tribal societies in Latin America emphasise corporeality in their cosmologies. This is shown through Wayúu women's respect for their environment, the tangible and intangible elements that shape their lives, and their social roles, both as women and as guardians of their territories. However, the actions of governments and firms disrupt the harmony within the Wayúu people's cosmovision.

This article is structured as follows. First, we discuss the conceptual frameworks that underpin our study, specifically the coloniality of power and decolonial feminism in the Global South. We then present the research context by discussing the legal status of Indigenous peoples and their territories in Colombia, and the territory and clan structure of the Wayúu people. Subsequently, we outline our fieldwork methodology and data analysis. Our findings on Indigenous peoples' ontology and the pivotal role of women in Wayúu society are then set out around the emergent themes. The findings are then discussed from the perspective of our theoretical framework. Finally, we conclude by addressing the implications of our study, providing recommendations, and offering concluding remarks.

## **Theoretical framework**

### *Coloniality of power*

In Latin America, European colonisation introduced systems, policies, and ideologies that dehumanised non-Western people through racial and gender-binary taxonomies and hierarchical caste systems based on Roman Catholic dogmas (Lugones, 2008; Quijano, 2011; Ruíz, 2021). These systems involved racial discrimination, epistemic violence, and subordination based on colour, gender, and class (Quijano, 2000; Ramirez and Munar, 2022). Quijano (2000) proposed four domains of colonial power that Indigenous peoples were subjected to:

[1] Control of economy (land appropriation, exploitation of labour, and control of natural resources); [2] control of authority (institutions, military); [3] control of gender and sexuality (family, education); and [4] control of subjectivity and knowledge (epistemology, education, and formation of subjectivity) (Mignolo, 2007: 156).

These dimensions help us to contextualise the experiences of Indigenous women, who have endured ‘historical and oppressive violence’ in relation to their territories and land (Cabnal, 2010: 23). Latin America’s apparent development, underpinned by modern capitalism, upholds colonial power while institutionalising sexism, racism, anti-Indigenous cultural heritage, and neo-liberal economics (Quijano, 2000; Ruíz, 2021). Women face violence and dispossession for defending their territories. However, an increasing number of women in Colombia are fighting to resist trends of coloniality of power (Barney, 2023; Mendoza, 2022). These arguments are discussed in the following section.

### *Decolonial feminism*

Decolonial feminism is a way of dismantling, delinking, and unmaking colonial forms of social organisation, ways of life, and Eurocentric knowledge systems (Manning, 2021; Mignolo, 2007; Lugones, 2010; Quijano, 2000). It encompasses cosmological sensibilities, rooted in

Indigenous ancestral knowledge that remains valid today, as well as the violent realities of racist, capitalist, and sexist modernity that manifest through coloniality of power (Lugones, 2010; Vallega, 2021). To comprehend decolonial feminism, one must first comprehend gender coloniality and the history of racialisation, as race and the control of women are inextricably intertwined (Lugones, 2008; Tzul Tzul, 2015). The goal of decolonial feminism is to affirm life and all the personal and communal possibilities of racialised women (Espinosa et al., 2013: 404).

The decolonial perspective we adopt here focuses on women's tangible and intangible knowledge within their historical context (Rodriguez Castro, 2021). It offers valuable insight into the strategies employed by marginalised Colombian women to assert control over their territories, prevent displacement, and secure the rights to peace, freedom, and collective life (Miklian and Bickel, 2020). In defending their territories, Colombian women have tenaciously developed strategies to reclaim cultivation, promote traditional knowledge and practices, and strengthen ethno-territorial organisation (Escobar, 2015). These strategies have enabled them to pursue an alternative vision of development, establish harmonious relationships with nature, and embrace a different way of life (Escobar, 2015: 91).

Women's lives and experiences are inseparable from their territories (Goeman, 2013, 2017). Inspired by Escobar (2015), we view 'territory' as both a biophysical and epistemic space; the intersection between space-time and the natural world. It is in this space of territory that life is enacted according to a specific ontology and that life becomes a world. Tangible and intangible cultural heritage, humans and non-humans, and supernatural or spiritual elements are all integral to this world (Escobar, 2015: 98). This is why feminist collectives towards territorial defence recognise the inseparability of ontology and territory (Cabnal, 2010). Thus, ontology extends beyond cultural pluralism to encompass the multiplicity of worlds (Tola, 2020). This ontology of territorial community feminism is rooted in activist struggles in both rural and



urban areas, where marginalised individuals generate ‘different, more reliable, knowledge because of conditions of inequality that mean they (have to) know dominant frames of legitimation in order to survive or thrive’ (Hemmings, 2012: 155).

Large-scale green energy investments impact the interactions of living and non-living things, consequently altering the cultural heritage of the surrounding area (González Posso and Barney, 2019). Studies on large-scale extractivism and green energy investments reveal that resistance is a set of processes by which communities fight to protect their territories, inch by inch, and organise themselves to prevent investors from entering or displacing them (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2017; Composto and Navarro, 2014; Ramirez and Böhm, 2021; Tzul Tzul, 2015). Vachhani and Pullen (2019: 39) suggest that women resist gender-based discrimination and stereotyping through affective solidarity, which involves community-building to bring about specific social change against the debilitating effects of patriarchy, misogyny, and sexism.

To explore these intricate social conflicts, we conducted a qualitative study in La Guajira, Colombia (2019–23). Below, we present the empirical context, as well as the methodology and methods employed in our research.

### **Empirical context of La Guajira and the Wayúu people**

The Wayúu people constitute a binational group of approximately 440,000 individuals. The population is divided between Venezuela, home to around 255,000 members, and Colombia, where approximately 185,000 Wayúu people reside (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia, 2022). The geographic delimitation of the Wayúu nation is illustrated in Figure 1. In the Colombian Department of La Guajira, the Wayúu people constitute 94.1% of the Indigenous population and 48% of the total population (Gobernación de la Guajira, 2020). Their territory spans 1,080,336 hectares across more than eight reservations (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia, 2022), and they are organised into approximately 30 clans,

each with its own territory and totemic animal (Delgado Rodríguez and Mercado Epiyú, 2010). The social makeup of Colombia is often depicted as comprising Whites, Blacks, and Indigenous peoples. However, Blacks and Indigenous peoples are recognised as minorities (Rueda, 2009), and Indigenous peoples were only officially recognised in the Colombian Constitution as Colombian citizens in 1991 (Senado de la República de Colombia, 2011).

Spanish-speaking Wayúu individuals do not accept the translation of Wayúu as ‘Indian’. Instead, they translate Wayúu as ‘persona’ (person) in Spanish, as the Wayúu people consider themselves children of *mma*<sup>1</sup> (earth) and *juya* (rain) (Goulet, 1978; Perrin, 1987). Spanish settlers referred to the group as La Guajira or *Goajiro* (pronounced ‘Gwa-hi-ro’). Wayúu is the name given by the Guajiro to themselves (Perrin, 1987). The Guajiro term *Alijuna* refers to a foreigner, ‘White man’, or non-Indian representative of Western society (Perrin, 1987: 160). In a broader sense, *Alijuna* encompasses anyone of any colour, race, language, or national origin who is not Guajiro or Indian (Goulet, 1978: 1).

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The Wayúu territory in La Guajira is a semi-desert region characterised by *rancherías* or *piichipala*, small rural settlements where extended families of uterine relatives reside. These settlements comprise single-story ranches with collective corrals, orchards, and cemeteries (Mendoza, 2022). Some *rancherías* have water pumps or *jagueyes* (artificial wells) and *casimbas* (riverbed dams) to store water, as well as cooperative networks and access rights to local water sources [Interviews; Direct observations]. Wayúu people living in close contact with urban areas such as Riohacha, Uribia, and Maicao have been exposed to Western acculturation, posing challenges to the preservation of their cosmovision (Goulet, 1978; Guerra Curvelo, 2002; Perrin, 1978).

La Guajira holds geopolitical significance due to its location on the Caribbean Sea,

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<sup>1</sup> The words in cursive are in *Wayuunaiki*, the language of the Wayúu community.

bordering Venezuela, and its wealth of natural resources such as coal, oil, wind, and sun. The recent history of the Wayúu people has been marked by oil exploitation, the establishment of the Cerrejón coal mine (one of the largest surface coal mining operations in the world (NS Energy, 2022); Figure 1), and the opening of the Puerto Bolívar maritime port in the 1980s. The exploitation of natural resources has caused problems for the Wayúu people, including violations of their rights to property, health, life, a healthy environment, security, personal integrity, and the full enjoyment of natural resources (Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros de América Latina, 2021).

Recently, the territory of the Wayúu people has been rediscovered by renewable energy companies owing to its wealth of renewable resources, such as sun and wind. La Guajira experiences strong trade winds throughout the year, which makes it one of the most attractive regions for both onshore and offshore wind energy projects in South America (Ministerio de Minas y Energía, 2021; The Renewables Consulting Group RCG, 2022). The average wind speeds exceed 9 m/s (at 80 m above sea level), suggesting an estimated installable wind energy capacity of around 18 GW (Asociación de Energías Renovables Colombia, 2017).

## **Methodology**

We began our research with an open agenda to study the implementation of the energy transition in Colombia, starting with desk research on its legal framework. This led us to La Guajira, which was declared the ‘epicentre’ of the transition by the Colombian government (Mesa, 2021; Ramirez et al., 2022) after being ‘rediscovered’ for its wealth of renewable resources. This study was a reflexive journey for us as researchers, considering the epistemological approach adopted and our positionality and history of decoloniality. The complexity of these factors cannot be explained in full here. Our empirical research, set in a colonial community, was shaped by reactions, interactions, and influences between us as researchers and the observed phenomena. The authors hold multiple and complex identities:

Ramirez, with ancestral roots in the Indigenous Zapotec community of Juchitán (Oaxaca, Mexico), is motivated by research and engagement with Indigenous communities on human rights issues. This inspired a workshop on business and human rights in relation to Colombia's 'green transition' in La Guajira, which sparked our interest in women Wayúu defenders of Mother Earth and led to the conception of this study. Velez-Zapata is from Latin America and holds a PhD from a Spanish university governed by the ideology of the Catholic Church, and Maher is a non-White European scholar living and working in Latin America, specialising in Indigenous peoples' human rights. Ramirez and Maher's scholarship is marked by their respective identities linked to Indigenous peoples in the Global South and the colonisers of Latin America, experiences living and working in foreign countries, and multilingualism, while Velez-Zapata is Colombian, strongly interested in the profound social problems in her country, and influenced by her conservative Catholic upbringing and so-called Christian humanism. Our collaborative authorship arose from our work on Indigenous, feminist, and human rights advocacy, as well as our familiarity with women's resistance movements against the El Cerrejón coal mine and paramilitary groups<sup>2</sup> and criminal gangs in La Guajira. Given our focus on decolonial feminism, our own 'coloniality of power' from formal European education was a recurrent topic of discussion and reflection (Lugones, 2010).

The theory–methodology employed here aims to avoid epistemic violence and allow for spatial movement between feminism and its emotions within an autonomous and sovereign territory, without being centred around capitalism. Our methodology was a guided approach to theorise from contextual explanations (Welch et al., 2022). The ethnographic nature of the study seeks to understand the role of Wayúu women in Colombia's energy transition through sensitivity and psychic perception. Blaser and de la Cadena (2018) caution against treating non-

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<sup>2</sup> The massacre of an estimated 30 Wayúu people and displacement of 250 more by a paramilitary group in the La Guajira port town of Bahía Portete on 18 April 2004 was a devastating event for Indigenous women.

human reality (wind, birds, the beyond) as culture, as this can blind the ontological nature of these conflicts. This perspective reinstates and reinforces our ontological assumptions. Furthermore, we recognise that decolonial research necessitates the deconstruction of knowledge production, collection, and presentation (Smith, 2001), which entails understanding silenced emotions and feelings when epistemic horizons take centre stage.

### *Methods*

*Data sources.* In February 2020, Ramirez was invited to speak at a series of events on wind energy projects in Uribia, La Guajira for the launch of a book by González Posso and Barney (2019). The first event was attended by approximately 75 participants, including students, academics, businesspeople, and government officials. The second event spanned two days and exclusively targeted Wayúu people, with around 150 attendees, and included a presentation from a government official to explain the consultation process for large-scale investments in Indigenous territories. Informal conversations during these events led to semi-structured interviews with Wayúu individuals and five focus groups with diverse Wayúu communities on topics such as land, territory, and natural resources; public consultations; the impact of wind energy on their territory and socio-economic activities; and conflicts with multinational corporations (MNCs) and government officials. Ramirez's positionality as a Latin American academic from a European university played a significant role in establishing relationships with Wayúu people and local organisations, fostering trust for the research process. Semi-structured interviews were also held with government officials and businesspeople on the motivations and challenges of wind energy investment in La Guajira; relations with government officials; and their perspectives on the Colombian National Energy Plan 2050 (E2050 plan). These interviews were conducted online in 2021 (Teams) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ramirez's relationship with the Danish Embassy in Colombia was instrumental in the identifying and engaging with relevant government officials and businesspeople. The embassy facilitated

contact with Colombian government officials involved in areas such as consultations with Indigenous people. Ramirez also attended publicly accessible online seminars focused on Colombia's green transition, which served as a valuable platform for identifying and inviting suitable businesspeople for interviews.

Further fieldwork in 2020 and 2022 was spent observing the daily activities, interactions, and rituals of the Wayúu people. Through this engagement, we began to comprehend how tangible lifeforms such as soil, birds, goats, vegetation, and intangible aspects like the wind intertwine to shape the cultural heritage of the Wayúu people. This understanding deepened as we witnessed Wayúu women weaving textiles, engaging in market and fishing activities, and maintaining the cemetery grounds. Informal conversations provided insight into the Wayúu people's 'magical' cosmivision. Anthropologist Guerra Curvelo (2006) referred to La Guajira and the city of Riohacha as a 'reserve of the imagination', where significant historical and cultural wealth is produced. These riches shape the inhabitants' personalities, encompassing a broad range of emotional expression, strong familial bonds, and interpersonal conflicts [Notes from fieldwork, 2020, 2022]. Over the years, different narrative conversations and reports from governmental and non-governmental sources contributed to our understanding of how the Wayúu people's rituals and relationships with tangible and intangible elements shaped their daily lives.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, engagements with Wayúu people from March 2020 to February 2022 were conducted through WhatsApp. WhatsApp is used widely in La Guajira for mobilisation and information sharing, and proved a rich platform for learning about the Wayúu people's challenges, protests, and demands. The unreliability of electricity and internet services in La Guajira challenged conversations, so the informants responded to the authors' questions via voice messages. The informants also sent documents on consultation protocols, images of wind farm construction, and videos of mobilisation against these projects. Although WhatsApp

has proven valuable for data collection and information sharing, it has limitations in fully capturing the context of daily activities and on-the-ground dynamics. Therefore, the data acquired through WhatsApp was used to inform the content of semi-structured face-to-face interviews conducted during on-the-ground fieldwork in 2022 (Alcadipani and Cunliffe, 2023). These interviews aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the Wayúu people's experiences and perspectives.

We analysed our empirical data frequently, which helped us refine the focus of our data collection. For instance, in 2020, we found that our Wayúu informants held diverse opinions regarding energy investments in their territory. Therefore, from 2021 to 2022, we directly asked about the implications of wind energy investments on their rituals and daily activities, and about how government and companies engaged with Wayúu people. These topics were also addressed during focus groups in 2020 and 2022. In 2021, we discovered that the Wayúu people's cosmovision places particular significance on women's roles in society and on relationships with the land, environment, and rituals. Thus, in 2022, we explored the meanings of rituals and women's devotion to their territory, revealing the importance of 'tuning in' to nature and the environment. In 2021, interactions with government officials and businesspeople highlighted a lack of understanding of the Wayúu people's cosmovision, which we interpreted as a form of 'tuning out' that delayed wind energy projects. Consequently, in 2022, we sought to further learn about the Wayúu people's cosmovision to explore how business and government entities could begin to 'tune in' to this cosmovision during dialogue with Wayúu people in relation to Colombia's energy transition.

The majority of interactions were conducted in Spanish, although some took place in the Indigenous Wayúu language with the assistance of a Spanish–Wayuunaiki translator. All interactions were transcribed verbatim and stored in NVivo qualitative software. The quotes in this article were translated to English by the authors and edited for clarity. To respect

confidentiality and anonymity, and considering the physical security concerns for environmental defenders in Colombia (Ramirez et al., 2022), we do not present a detailed list of the 55 informants and 150 Wayúu individuals who attended the 2020 workshop.

Our secondary data sources were as follows: newspaper reports on green energy investments in La Guajira (1500 reports in English and Spanish, retrieved from Factiva); open sources of Colombian laws, decrees, and whitepapers on the E2050 plan; whitepapers from MNCs on their green energy investments in Colombia (75 documents); and social media posts on La Guajira's green energy investments from Colombian government officials, MNCs, Wayúu people, and NGOs (150 posts). All secondary data was encoded in NVivo.

*Analysis.* Our analysis focused on how wind energy investments challenge the Wayúu people's cosmovision, environment, and society. It also examined companies' strategies for planning, promoting, and implementing wind energy investments. We analysed statements on 1) the Wayúu people's ontology and their relationship with territory; 2) public policies regarding the E2050 plan; and 3) the impacts on the development and operation of wind farms. The findings were interpreted through the framework of decolonial feminism.

*Establishing trustworthiness.* To ensure the trustworthiness of our interpretation and findings, we employed data triangulation, drawing from multiple sources (Nielsen et al., 2020). Our diverse profiles and backgrounds contributed to the analysis. Ramirez and Velez-Zapata possess deep knowledge of the research context, while Maher brings experience working with Indigenous communities in other industries, providing a different perspective that enabled a critical analysis and interpretation of the findings (Gioia et al., 2013). All authors independently reviewed and coded the collected material, with 80% inter-coder reliability.

*Developing core concepts and relationships.* We analysed our empirical material for evidence of the impact of Colombia's climate change mitigation policies on the Wayúu people's cosmovision and decolonial actions. As we delved deeper, a clear alterity emerged in terms of



ontological difference. Colombia's E2050 plan, legal framework, and wind park construction were all climate change mitigation actions that resulted in the control and domination of Indigenous peoples' territories, a process we refer to as green colonialism. This is exacerbated by a lack of understanding of the Wayúu people's ontology, perpetuating an external coloniality of power manifested through the 'technocratisation of climate change' and 'marginalisation of Indigenous peoples'. These themes were integrated into the overarching global theme of 'green colonialism'. Our analysis also revealed a mechanism by which Wayúu women resist new colonialism in their territory, which we termed 'warrior women of the Wayúu clans'. This resistance stems from a decolonial feminist perspective rooted in matrilineal Indigenous education, which we named 'Wayúu women's cosmovision: guardians of territory'. These themes were integrated into the overarching global theme of 'feminist decoloniality'. The following section presents these findings, beginning with 'Wayúu women's cosmovision: guardians of territory' to lay the foundations for elaborating on Indigenous people's cosmovision and decolonial practices.

## **Findings**

### *Wayúu women's cosmovision: guardians of territory*

In the Wayúu people's ontology, territory encompasses both tangible sacred sites such as rivers, mountains, and family cemeteries, as well as intangible local narratives like 'the territory is calling you' or 'respect the territory' [Focus groups; Observations, 2020]. Our fieldwork revealed a profound and unwavering connection between the Wayúu people and their territory, which forms the basis of their cosmovision and prompts a re-evaluation of the concept of human and non-human (Ulloa, 2021).

The migration patterns of the Wayúu people have endowed them with the knowledge to map the tangible and intangible areas of natural and spiritual resources within their territory. During our visits to Wayúu rancherías, a group of Wayúu women skilfully identified goat feeders, bird

migration areas, and locations of pink-backed pelicans on a map of La Guajira. These locations are also depicted in traditional women's clothing, purses, and handicrafts [Direct observations, 2020]. Furthermore, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a female Wayúu leader mentioned that 'we [Wayúu women] know how to use all the herbs, roots, and flowers in our territory. We use them to prepare our own medicine for protection, such as against "corona"' [WhatsApp voice recording, 2021].

According to a Wayúu woman interviewed in 2020, the Wayúu people consider rivers, mountains, and oceans as sacred sites that are vital for their survival. These sacred locations hold great symbolic value and are used for death and burial rituals [Fieldwork, 2020, 2022]. Cabo de la Vela, a coastal village in northern La Guajira, is associated with the final journey of spirits. Surviving relatives maintain a connection with the deceased through dreams and visits to the cemeteries in Cabo de la Vela, where they perform songs and dances [Interviews, 2020]. After 6–12 years, once the bones have fully dried, an exhumation takes place, followed by a second burial that facilitates the spiritual journey of the deceased and enables their soul to transition to the spiritual realm [Focus groups, 2020]. Consequently, the cemeteries serve as tangible markers of matrilineal lineage, granting ancestral authority ownership and control over the territory. Thus, the continual mapping of their territory by Wayúu women, which includes the locations of cemeteries, appears to be a fundamental process that contributes to their ontology. This process manifests through the defence of the spaces they inhabit or avoid and the epistemological journey of building a comprehensive understanding of their territory, which extends beyond geographical points on a map. It encompasses ontologies that reflect their way of existing in the world, as proposed by Goeman (2013).

Research suggests that, in Wayúu ancestral knowledge, the woman is the source of all things: 'She is the owner and creator of the air, the water that shapes the human body, and the nourishment it provides. She is the transmitter of ancestral knowledge and cultural normativity'

(Mercado Epieyu, 2017: 14). Indeed, in Wayúu culture, women play a critical role in preserving the community's cosmovision, and are regarded as preservers of their lineage and guardians of ancestral knowledge. This is to preserve the roots of the territory, language, and collective way of life. A female Wayúu leader emphasised:

Our ancestors taught us an important lesson: to think and act collectively. The dignity of the community is priceless. They [firms] won't kill us at the point of lead; they will destroy us through the divisions that exist [among us]. We are deeply concerned, because the strong ties we had with the (ancestral) authorities before the [Spanish] conquest are being broken [Interview, 2020].

Wayúu feminist praxis, which is disseminated through traditional rituals and education that begins at puberty, centres on the symbiotic relationships between humans, non-humans, and land [Focus groups, 2020]. A Wayúu woman's voice exalts the strength inherent in her ancestral connection to the territory: always wise, prudent, counselling, serene, strong, and resilient [Focus groups, 2020]. These traits appear to be cultivated during the 'encierro' (a ritual of puberty that can last from six months to three years). Girls are bathed with cold water at midnight to teach them of their inner strength and the resilience and courage required to confront life's challenges. They are also taught that a woman's role is to be the foundation of the home, the safe and sacred port of each family member [Interviews, two Wayúu women, 2020, 2022].

The Colombian government trained Wayúu women as teachers to introduce formal education in rural settlements in La Guajira [Interview, NGO representative, 2022]. These teachers incorporate the community's vision and customs into the curriculum [Interview, 2022]. However, integrating Wayúu ontologies into education is challenging because, as Latin American feminism scholars argue, only Eurocentric knowledge is considered credible, while the knowledges of Indigenous and Black women are overlooked (e.g. Espinosa et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, Wayúu women's epistemology encompasses pedagogies that foster communal perception and influence daily life [Focus groups, 2022]. Our empirical data indicates that this education aligns with the Wayúu people's cosmovision, teaching not only vowel songs but also the importance of listening to and learning the songs of their grandmothers, grandfathers, lullabies, and eventually the song *Jayeechi*, which recounts the Wayúu origin (Mercado Epieyu, 2017). The acquisition and practice of traditional education and rituals by Wayúu women are interpreted in this study as decolonising practices in contrast to Western education systems.

### *Warrior women of the Wayúu clans*

In the previous section, we explored the foundations of Wayúu women's ontology. Now, we delve into the historical and cultural context of the Wayúu warrior women, and examine how their legacy continues to inspire and empower Wayúu women today.

The Wayúu people's ontology of territory and socio-political organisation revolves around the matrilineal nature of their clans. Clans, referred to as *e'irukuu* (lit. 'body'), follow the maternal family lineage. It is the women who inherit territory, while men (known as *achones* or nephews) can reside within it only if they respect the *Alaula* (maternal uncle) [Focus groups, 2020], who holds ultimate authority within the extended family and intervenes in all family and domestic problems. The matrilineal clan system provides Wayúu women with a leadership status that enables them to emerge as knowers, ceramists, weavers, artists, merchants, and peacemakers [Focus groups; Observations, 2020, 2022]. A female Wayúu leader reflected: 'There is a leadership vocation [in La Guajira]. Women have a greater number of voices and a greater degree of power. They "dress as managers" [assume the role] more frequently than [women in] other Colombian departments' [Interview, 2020]. Another Wayúu woman elaborated: 'Women are the ones who represent their people in public spheres' [Interview, 2022].

As well as holding crucial roles as leaders and organisers of their clans, many Wayúu women are politically active [Interview, Wayúu woman, 2021]. Indeed, the commitment of Wayúu women to align their lives with the environment makes them notorious activists in defence of the sacred circle of life in La Guajira (Martinez, 2021). Activism in La Guajira is also about the fight for women's rights [Focus groups, 2022]. The warrior women of the Wayúu clans foster spaces for dialogue and harmonisation, centred on reclaiming communication, practices, knowledge, and customs rooted in the Wayúu ancestral wisdom and orality [Secondary data]. The activist endeavours of Wayúu woman leaders exemplify their devotion to their territory. 'I am a feminist because I adore the earth, Mother Earth', stated a female Wayúu leader [Interviews, 2022]. We interpret Wayúu women's activism as a form of decolonial feminism, challenging oppressive social relations that enslave Wayúu women. This transformative practice not only impacts social relations but also the economy, epistemology, and being of a person (Lugones, 2008).

Feminist decoloniality involves fighting against heteropatriarchy, racism, misogyny, state brutality, capitalism, colonialism, and daily violence faced by women of colour (Espinosa et al., 2013). 'Machismo' persists within the Wayúu community as well. A female Wayúu leader highlighted the 'double demand' placed on women: they are expected to work and study outside the home, but also fulfil traditional gender roles by caring for their husbands and male children [Interview, 2020]. Inquiring about the relationship between the matrilineal clan system and machismo/misogyny, a Wayúu woman responded:

In Wayúu culture, the matrilineal clan system [...] coexists with machismo. Women in leadership roles are still subject to demands rooted in machismo, leading to oppression [misogyny]. For example, they may be judged as promiscuous if they deviate from established gender roles. [...] Wayúu women's matrilineal role allows them to participate in community mechanisms and have a voice in decision-making. However, this does not

negate the challenges they face in navigating the expectations imposed on them by the matrilineal system, machismo, and misogyny [Interview, 2023].

Regarding misogyny towards Wayúu women, a female Wayúu human rights defender highlighted:

Misogyny manifests as prejudice, with Wayúu women suffering defamation attacks from other Wayúu people for their work in defence of their territory. One reason cited for [these attacks] is that [women activists] prioritise ‘protesting and mobilising people to protect their territories instead of tending to the needs of men in their homes’ [Interview, 2023].

To contextualise the warrior women of the Wayúu clans in relation to economic colonialism, understood as green colonialism in this study, it is necessary to develop a reflexive awareness of the historical conditions under which colonialism persists (Banerjee and Linstead, 2004), in the Wayúu people’s territories, such as the struggle for territorial control. The following section delves into these arguments.

### *Technocratisation of climate change*

Despite being a major producer of oil and minerals (Unidad de Planeación Minero Energética, 2015), Colombia launched the National Energy Plan towards 2050 (E2050 plan) in 2015. Colombia’s energy supply largely constituted hydroelectric power (68.3%) and thermal energy (30.7%), with just 1% from wind and solar energy (Enersinc and DNP, 2017). The E2050 plan recognised the need to diversify the energy matrix and mitigate climate change, aligning with Colombia’s commitments to the Paris Agreement and International Energy Charter (Gobierno de Colombia, 2021; Oficina de Estudios Económicos del Ministerio de Comercio, 2020). Due to the high proportion of hydroelectric power, Colombia’s energy matrix was already considered ‘green’ [Interviews, Colombian government official, 2020]. Furthermore, due to the intermittency of green energy, the E2050 plan aims to diversify the energy matrix rather

than achieve complete decarbonisation [Interviews, Colombian government official, 2020].

As of February 2023, there were 13 wind and 33 solar energy projects underway in Colombia (Ministerio de Minas y Energía, 2021). A government official referred to La Guajira as the ‘epicentre’ of green energy investments in Colombia, emphasising the investment of ten billion Colombian pesos and the creation of 11,000 jobs (Mesa, 2021). However, it remains unclear what matters most to communities: revenue flow, job creation, environmental impacts, or having their voices heard in decision-making processes (Robinson, 2022). A female Wayúu leader and human rights defender reflected on the ‘rediscovery’ of La Guajira by renewable energy companies:

Like how fossil fuel investments, such as coal, were portrayed as a source of socioeconomic development in the 1970s, the E2050 plan has been presented with a similar rhetoric [of socioeconomic development] since 2015, while also incorporating climate change mitigation arguments [Interview, 2022].

The above quotation questions the effectiveness of Colombia’s legal and normative framework in facilitating dialogue and engagement between green energy firms, the government, and the Wayúu people (Table 1). The Colombian Constitution provides robust normative directives for such engagement; however, these frameworks fall short of considering Indigenous peoples’ worldviews. Moreover, their implementation faces significant challenges stemming from various factors, which are presented in the following section.

-----Please insert Table 1 about here -----

### *Marginalisation of Indigenous peoples*

Researchers argue that businesses prioritise economic control and land appropriation over the needs of local communities, prompting the Wayúu people to demand proper application of the Colombian legal framework in dialogue and consultation processes (Mendoza, 2022). A Wayúu woman expressed these demands to the Colombian government official at the event in

Uribia in 2020: ‘Companies must provide clear information, including maps, economic plans, satellite photos, and everything necessary for us to understand. [...] We have a right to know everything’ [Interview, 2020].

We inquired about the private sector’s approach to information sharing with the Wayúu people. The president of the Colombian Renewable Energy Association, SER Colombia, discussed their efforts:

We aim to communicate the benefits of wind energy to the communities and address concerns about birds, landscape, and potential displacement. It’s important to recognise and understand [...] these communities’ perspectives and connect with their culture and visions. [But] our communication efforts [only] target the communities [7% of the population] with access to digital media. Surely, we will need interpreters and other services [Interview on Teams, 2021].

Our data highlight the importance of timing in providing information. For instance, a Wayúu woman from Cabo de la Vela, who was the official authority in her territory participating in consultation processes for wind farms and electricity transmission lines (see Figure 1), shared her experience on the information provided by the government:

The government official gave me a document, about 30 pages in Spanish, a few days before the consultation process. I tried to read it, but I couldn’t understand. They said they would inform us about the consultation process with the community, but we don’t know when exactly, which leaves no room for proposing dates that align with our rituals [Interview, 2022].

Inquiring about these rituals, human rights defenders and Wayúu anthropologists emphasised the importance of respecting the Wayúu people’s cosmivision when considering investments in their territory. A Wayúu man elaborated: ‘Harmonisation rituals [Wayúu people’s rituals] are necessary. We need to reconcile ourselves with the wind and tell him [the



wind]: well, we need this route or these spaces, not to invade it but to make use of it' [Interview, 2022]. Further to this, in 2022, the United Nations recognised the Mandate of the Moral Authority of the Word of the Wayúu People (*Pütchikalu*), which includes basic principles for third-party intervention in the Wayúu people's sacred and ancestral territory. This mandate emphasises that harmonisation rituals should be prioritised, and that consultation processes require the participatory action of the spiritual authority in matrilineal territories (Woummain, 2022).

In addition to respect for their cosmovision, the Wayúu people demand equal treatment and respect for their human rights. A male human rights defender highlighted: 'It is essential to discuss the [wind] projects on equal terms, [...] in a respectful manner. This allows for a better understanding of the firms' true intentions and the opportunity to address issues. However, firms do not act in this way' [Interview, 2023]. Further accounts also spoke of this lack of respect: 'The companies lack respect for the Wayúu people. They refer to us as "orphaned animals". Yet, we have lost our food and dignity, which have been *taken* by the *Alijuna* [non-Wayúu people]' [Interview, female Wayúu leader, 2020]. Moreover, the Wayúu perceive a similar lack of respect from the Colombian government: 'For the government, the region of La Guajira, where Indigenous and Black people live, seems to be expendable' [Interview, Wayúu woman, 2020]. This amplifies the Wayúu people's perception of being marginalised and disrespected by businesses and the government.

Our informants also recounted how firms have approached Wayúu communities using arguments such as CSR projects, development projects, and promises of meeting immediate needs such as access to water, with millions of Colombian pesos of investment. However, a female Wayúu leader described the reality of this tactic: '[Firms] often reach agreements in Bogotá with [Wayúu] leaders or authorities, but the community does not fully understand the implications. They [Wayúu people] receive some gifts that temporarily fill their immediate

needs, leading them to approve everything. [...] They later realise that they were used, but by then it's too late, and poverty persists' [Interview, 2022]. Firms also embark on development projects with communities. However, a Wayúu woman explained how these projects function:

We need to write a project plan for any proposed development project. For example, if the firm suggests a gift-shop to sell handicrafts, we need to submit a project plan, which the firm will evaluate. From experience, this process takes long time. In addition, there is not room for us to propose projects that integrate our customs and unique way of selling our handicrafts [Interview, 2022].

The Colombian government claims to have demonstrated political will in developing a legal framework for renewable energy investment and technology transfer from the Global North to the South (Ramirez et al., 2022). Former President Iván Duque Márquez (2018–22) and current President Gustavo Petro (2022–) both expressed support for this initiative [Interviews, Government officials, 2020, 2022]. However, this political will has significant implications for Wayúu territory. La Guajira, for instance, has been designated a 'Strategic Zone of Comprehensive Intervention' for the production and promotion of renewable energy. Yet, this designation allows for the forced expropriation of Indigenous peoples' land under Article 4 of Law 2099, potentially impeding the Wayúu people's freedom to decide and defend the destiny of their territory [Leal Duque, 2021].

The system of coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000) referred to here as 'green colonialism' exemplifies how powerful actors, such as businesses, can exploit the pretext of climate change mitigation to dominate and exploit Indigenous peoples, continuing economic control over Wayúu territories. Consequently, Wayúu people and their territories become victims of both the carbon energy economy and the green transition via the E2050 plan (see Figure 1). While the Colombian government and businesses enjoy the economic benefits of green energy projects, they do so at the expense of the concerns, needs, and cosmovisions of Indigenous

Wayúu communities. Despite the robust directives provided by Colombia's legal and normative framework, its implementation is marred by a lack of recognition or ignorance towards the Wayúu people's cosmovision and heritage. This results in a skewed sense of morality: attuned to the economic discourse surrounding green energy but deaf to the cultural depth and philosophical nuances within Indigenous communities.

This green colonialism under the rhetoric of 'progress' and energy transition rekindles the Wayúu women's long history of activism, emerging as a form of decolonial feminism grounded in the Wayúu people's ontology. The direct links between the land and remnants of colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal empires are further elaborated on below.

## **Discussion**

In this study, we understand and frame Wayúu women's narratives through the theoretical lenses of coloniality of power and feminist decoloniality (Espinoza et al., 2013; Lugones, 2008; Quijano, 2000), offering a novel contextualisation of decolonial feminism seldom used in mainstream management and organisation studies (Goeman, 2017; Manning, 2021). Drawing from Latin American decolonial feminist thinking (Cabnal, 2010; Lugones, 2008; Quijano, 2000; Tzul Tzul, 2015), this theoretical framework aptly theorises Wayúu women's decolonial practices. The narratives of Wayúu women enable us to contextualise perceptions of ontological change within Wayúu communities as a result of the economic colonialism associated with the green energy transition.

Our first contribution centres on the dichotomy between feminist decoloniality practices and green colonialism through territorial control by new green-investor colonisers. Wayúu women have much to teach us about community feminism (Escobar, 2015), the preservation of environmental and cultural heritage, and the protection of sacred sites. Furthermore, our contextualisation of the activism of Wayúu women within its historical context sheds light on previously undocumented methods of feminist decoloniality (Lugones, 2008) that provide a

continuous space for the lived experiences of the Wayúu people. The collected narratives demonstrate the capabilities of Wayúu women, including territorial mapping, textile entanglement, rituals, Indigenous languages, and territorial memory practices, which serve as valuable sources of ancestral knowledge and enable them to implement practical solutions for their survival. Rooted in their ontology of Mother Earth, Wayúu women's deep devotion to their territory equips them with the tools to protect their lands from green colonialism, which we understand as feminist decoloniality.

Beyond the irreconcilable ontological differences between Indigenous peoples and businesses, and businesses' blindness to Indigenous ontologies in their climate change mitigation actions and CSR practices (Ehrnström-Fuentes and Böhm, 2022), our analysis elucidates how Indigenous women's pluriversal ontologies can propel resistance against large-scale investments and their associated CSR practices. We argue that an appreciation for the environment and sacred spaces such as cemeteries enables women to lay the foundations for their communities' long-term development. However, the survival of Wayúu communities is threatened for as long as the government and MNCs insist that wind energy investment is the sole means to mitigate climate change and exert coloniality of power through legal frameworks aligned with Colombia's national development plans and global concerns (Ramirez et al., 2022). This dichotomy between feminist decoloniality practices and green colonialism enhances our theoretical understanding of Indigenous decolonial feminism, which underscores the interconnectedness and mourning embedded within relational kinships shaped by oppressive histories. Wayúu burial rituals, symbolising the transition of bodies during their final return to earth, exemplify this concept. This transition signifies a passage to 'another world', yet the body remains 'alive' in the physical space of ancestral cemeteries. Wind turbines are believed to disrupt non-human lives in the territory, including the spirits of deceased Wayúu family members. As such, the Wayúu worldview inherently clashes with the

construction of wind farms in La Guajira, where approximately 30 clan cemeteries are situated. Insisting that these projects transpire through forced negotiations and consultations is akin to perpetuating coloniality and patriarchy at the expense of women's ontology and wider territory.

Although La Guajira's territory holds sacred significance for the Wayúu people, some *achones* (nephews) are willing to negotiate with wind energy firms, focusing on the economic benefits of granting access to Wayúu lands for the E2050 plan. We contend that if the Wayúu themselves struggle to recognise the value of these sacred places, it becomes even more challenging for *Alijuna* (non-Wayúu people) to understand. However, governments and MNCs that underestimate or overlook this context may act inconsistently with their corporate ethics, responsibility, and sustainability, and fail to safeguard Indigenous peoples' epistemological heritage (Ehrnström-Fuentes and Böhm, 2022). In such cases, turning to Wayúu women's feminist decoloniality practices can offer insight into how green energy investments fundamentally clash with the local ontology.

The relevance of Wayúu women's decoloniality practices is further amplified in the context of communal organising and collective societies. In collective and communal societies like the Indigenous communities in Latin America, women's ontologies are influenced by the broader collective (family, clan, and group), where the concept of 'territory' extends beyond the individual. Consequently, feminist decoloniality presents a perspective through which to dismantle the rationality of green coloniality. We urge feminist and decolonial thinkers to consider the collective organising of Indigenous peoples when advancing and applying these theories.

Our second contribution focuses on the power structure within Wayúu communities and its manifestation in the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000). Despite the matrilineal clan system, where Wayúu women serve as leaders and organisers, Wayúu society remains male-dominated. Our findings suggest that Wayúu women actively challenge the coloniality of power within

their own communities. As the cornerstone of the Wayúu people's cosmovision, women play a pivotal role in the pursuit of autonomy and resistance. However, misogyny operates to the advantage of governments and investors by stifling women's voices, marginalising their ancestral wisdom, and disregarding their traditional knowledge. This undermines the role of women, leading to confusion and disruptions within Indigenous communities, which can then be exploited for short-term gain or self-interest at the cost of long-term community benefits.

Decolonial feminists strive to restore women's rights, including liberty and freedom of expression (Lugones, 2008). However, it is important to recognise that silenced women in the Global South are not a homogeneous group characterised solely by their gender and being from the 'Third World' (Manning, 2021: 1204). Furthermore, we must acknowledge that feminist voices in the Global South are often silenced through physical violence (e.g., Barney, 2021), which occurs more frequently here than in the Global North (Vachhani and Pullen, 2019). Women in the Global South may experience harassment and violence if they fail to conform to domestic roles catering to men, contrasting with the workplace discrimination, sexual harassment, and violence experienced by women in Western societies (Vachhani and Pullen, 2019).

Our empirical material suggests that decolonial feminism in the Global South requires a nuanced perspective, considering that the goals, causes, and effects for women whose rights have been revoked are embedded in pluriversal non-Western Indigenous ontologies. Within the Wayúu community, embedded misogyny prevents men from respecting women or allowing them a voice and space in green energy consultations, further exacerbating the coloniality of power and gender-based oppression. Nevertheless, Wayúu women, who uphold their traditional knowledge of living in harmony with the environment and protecting their lives and territories against green colonialism, can be seen as employing decolonial feminist techniques.

White feminism in all its forms, as well as the state and international agencies influenced

by these feminisms, perpetuates gender coloniality and maintains a colonial understanding of the relationship between bourgeois White men and women (Lugones, 2008; Tzul Tzul, 2015). These feminisms fail to recognise non-White women in their public measures, except in covert or deceptive ways, often considering them a subsidiary within the general group of ‘women’ that is always conceived as White, or White-Mestizo, and bourgeois. Similarly, although they hide that their design excludes the perspective of most non-White women, state and international agencies’ measures aimed at assisting women do not address the issues faced by Indigenous women. The treatment Indigenous women receive is, therefore, always in colonial terms (Espinosa et al., 2013: 405).

Our final contribution is in advancing the discourse on the intersection of green colonialism and the coloniality of power within Indigenous territories (Fjellheim, 2023; Quijano, 2000) by critically examining how these systems manifest within the Wayúu territory of La Guajira (Barney, 2023). Our findings suggest that green colonialism is a novel form of exploitation and domination, with governments and corporations using climate change mitigation efforts to reinforce systemic oppression and perpetuate power imbalances in Indigenous territories. This exploitation is apparent through green energy investments, which amplify Quijano’s (2000) domains of colonial power. This includes the control of economy through the appropriation of territory and its natural resources, as well as the control of authority, which manifests in legal frameworks incentivising green energy investments and normative tools such as OECD guidelines (see Table 1) that overlook Indigenous cosmovisions.

The collected narratives shed light on how green colonialism is ‘partly constitutive of the remnants of the imperialist project’ (Prasad, 2014: 250), considering the colonial legacy. We posit that green colonialism persists in wind energy investments through economic bargaining practices such as donations, royalties, and assistance programmes that fail to address Wayúu women’s realities, including sexual, psychological, physical, and patriarchal violence. This

represents an epistemic violence in the Global South, whereby women's voices and agency are silenced and ignored (Manning, 2021). Furthermore, the systemic disregard of Indigenous peoples' cosmovisions in CSR strategies not only mirrors the colonial control of subjectivity and knowledge but also serves as a management tool to perpetuate economic coloniality of power under the guise of engagement (Ehrnström-Fuentes and Böhm, 2022). This continuation of historical economic control and subjugation faced by Indigenous peoples, or coloniality (Quijano, 2000), involves legal frameworks and tax incentives that disregard the practices, cultural heritage, and knowledge production of the Global South, including the important role of women in protecting the environment (Lugones, 2008; Manning, 2021).

This situation prompts the necessity for a paradigm shift towards a transformative, decolonial feminist approach (Murphy and Arenas, 2010; Maher, 2019; Manning, 2021). This approach proposes the dismantling of colonial social organisations, ways of life, and Eurocentric knowledge systems, advocating for the recognition and validation of Indigenous ancestral knowledge and cosmological sensibilities (Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2000). We advocate for meaningful partnerships, in contrast to superficial CSR commitments. These partnerships should honour Indigenous values, incorporate their perspectives, and challenge the colonial control of gender and sexuality (Bowen et al., 2010; Lugones, 2010). This shift calls for a fundamental change in worldview, moving beyond tokenistic gestures towards a genuine commitment to relationship-building and collaboration with Indigenous people. Such efforts align with the principles of decolonial feminism and actively resist the coloniality of power (Murphy and Arenas, 2010; Tzul Tzul, 2015).

We argue that the technocratisation of climate change mitigation reflects a Eurocentric worldview and reinforces global power imbalances in the Global South (Quijano, 2017). Engaging in dialogue that acknowledges the ways in which economic power is replicated in green energy investments and that recognises the knowledge production of the Global South,



including women's lived experiences, is crucial (Goeman, 2013; Manning, 2021). Despite conventions and regulations to guide wind energy investment, both in Colombia and internationally (Table 1), the Wayúu people have been inadequately informed and advised regarding the E2050 plan. This lack of contextualisation has led to confusion, misunderstanding, protests, and bargaining disputes. An ontological clash between Wayúu people and business and government informants regarding the future of Wayúu territories is evident. The historical pattern of 'modernising' the primitive, traditional Wayúu people is reinforced by wind energy investments that perpetuate green colonialism.

We argue that the issue with large-scale wind energy investments is that they prioritise profits over life, individualism over communalism, and business over communities, thus overlooking the more humanistic aspects of sustainable development. Our empirical findings highlight the emphasis placed by Wayúu people on Indigenous ancestral knowledge, which values being as a way of living and sets them apart from the mercantilist mentality of business (Blaser and de la Cadena, 2018). The contextualisation of green colonialism helps us to reflect on the neo-colonial dynamics arising from wind energy investments (Prasad, 2014; Shohat, 1992) and identify troubling Machiavellian practices by government institutions and national and international firms. Through these practices, ancestral communities are marginalised and dispossessed of their lands and food sovereignty, leading to increased impoverishment.

The findings presented in this study lead us to propose a metaphor of 'tuned in' and 'tuned out' to depict the nuanced dynamics between attention, engagement, and responsiveness versus disengagement, disregard, indifference, and (un)intentional blindness. This metaphor serves as a lens to understand the rising tensions in the context of green colonialism, seen in the energy transition and the development of wind energy megaprojects in the Wayúu people's ancestral territories (see Figure 1). There are three key players in this dynamic: the government, businesses, and Indigenous communities. While the government and businesses may be 'tuned

in' to climate needs and the economic benefits of green energy projects, they appear to be 'tuned out' to the concerns, needs, and cosmovisions of Indigenous communities. The Colombian government seems to show signs of 'tuning in' through a regulatory framework that facilitates investment and acknowledges co-responsibility with Indigenous territories and their communities. However, when it comes to truly engaging with these territories and Indigenous communities, the government and businesses' efforts appear to be limited and inefficient, resulting in a state of being 'tuned out' and disengaged. The phenomenon of tuning out can also be observed in CSR practices, which, despite seemingly good intentions, demonstrate a lack of awareness or intentional disregard towards Indigenous peoples' cosmovisions. These practices, operating within the frame of coloniality of power (Ehrnström-Fuentes and Böhm, 2022; Quijano, 2000), may inadvertently reinforce power imbalances and further marginalise Indigenous communities (Barney, 2023; Maher et al., 2022; Ramirez and Böhm, 2021). Consequently, they continue to perpetuate the issues and legacies of colonialism, leading to a discordant relationship through which conciliation and harmony become nearly impossible. As such, we advocate that businesses should 'tune in' to diverse perspectives beyond the dominant Western worldview when devising climate change mitigation actions and CSR strategies (Ehrnström-Fuentes and Böhm, 2022).

Research on opposition movements against extractive and green energy investments has revealed how resistance arises in the face of systemic inequalities and corporate and state authorities (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2017; Banerjee, 2018). Less privileged groups, notably Indigenous women, bear a disproportionate burden with little or no institutional capacity to negotiate at national and international levels (Tzul Tzul, 2015). Wayúu women born in La Guajira, who lack proficiency in Spanish and have not received education in public or private institutions, appear to face a challenging dilemma: either accept their inferiority or fight to prove their humanity on equal terms with those who classify them as second-class (Alcadipani

et al., 2015; Mignolo, 2011).

Our findings reveal the distinct reality of the Wayúu people. The Colombian constitution classifies all Indigenous peoples in Colombia as Colombians (Gobierno de Colombia, 2011), but in practice, this is not the case. Our findings suggest Wayúu people live under an infinite number of social stigmas, including natives, poor, savages, and Black. The social structure of Colombia appears to be corroding society while obscuring injustices from both locals and foreigners. We contend that the genocides of Indigenous peoples are historically embedded and worsened due to the increasing absence of the State in upholding Indigenous peoples' rights.

#### *Implications and directions for future research*

Based on our findings and discussion, we call on businesses and policymakers to prioritise the protection of Indigenous peoples' human rights when devising climate change mitigation plans and strategies, particularly regarding green energy investments. This means safeguarding the socio-economic and environmental systems of Wayúu territory, either by excluding wind energy investment or re-evaluating how it is implemented. A balance could be struck to address the perceived dilemma between preserving the Wayúu people's ontological legacy and promoting green energy investment.

We assert that, to establish meaningful dialogue on large-scale green energy investments that jeopardise Indigenous peoples' livelihoods, governments and MNCs must first understand Indigenous peoples' ontologies and histories of oppression and repression, as these factors shape women's devotion to protecting their territories, which turn out to be the territories of an entire country. One possible solution could be to engage in authentic intercultural dialogue where policymakers and managers spend most of their time listening and learning about how Indigenous peoples see and understand their territories and the wider world. Grasping and empathising with a pluriversal ontology can aid policymakers and businesses in determining whether it would be ethical and respectful of local spirituality and beliefs to proceed with large-

scale projects in and around Indigenous peoples' territories and lands.

The case of La Guajira holds great significance for the study of colonial feminism, as it highlights the inspiring resistance of Wayúu women against the way in which green energy investments are implemented, where their territories have become battlefields in the context of continued colonialism perpetuated by influential and privileged institutions through the E2050 plan (Ramirez et al., 2022). The framework of decolonial feminism allows us to critically reflect on the notion of Colombia as a 'postcolonial' state (Banerjee, 2022; Shohat, 1992); its Indigenous territories continue to be colonised and occupied, suggesting that Colombia has not yet reached this 'post' state.

In this article, we aim to amplify the voices of Wayúu women who, by being Wayúu and living their cultural legacy, practice decoloniality in ways that may go unrecognised by Western observers. For these women, this way of life is an affirmation of their humanity and an assertion of their equality against marginalisation. To ensure Indigenous peoples retain control over their culture and lands, corporations and governments must engage with them in a formal and meaningful manner, adhering to established norms and guidelines such as the Colombian framework for Indigenous engagement. However, economic power dynamics continue to compromise seemingly well-intentioned green transition policies, overshadowing Indigenous rights and self-determination. Future studies on the transformation of Indigenous territories should consider the political economy of territory (e.g. Lacerda, 2021) as a useful lens to analyse the material transformation of space through green energy investments.

It is important exercise caution in interpreting the theoretical and empirical contributions and implications of our research. Further ethnographic fieldwork is required to contextualise the emerging sources of social unrest related to green energy investments. Recognising other ways of understanding the world means moving beyond native epistemologies to embrace ontologies. For instance, the Wayúu people's understanding of reality in relation to their

environment should not be reduced to cultural imagination or mere symbols of ‘other cosmogonies’. Good intentions of investing in wind energy to address climate change can inadvertently slow progress, as seen in La Guajira.

We recommend that future management and organisation studies draw inspiration from decolonial feminism, particularly in the realms of CSR for social justice (Girschik et al., 2022), megaproject settings, the Global South, and development. By doing so, scholars can gain fresh theoretical insights from a gender-sensitive perspective on the ‘grand challenges’ facing society. If we are to achieve a more just transition to clean energy, women’s territorial concerns must be understood and addressed to avoid a perpetuation of coloniality and patriarchy.

### *Conclusions*

The energy transition has transformed Indigenous territories into a battleground where women are leading the charge against a new form of colonialism wrapped in green energy rhetoric. Indigenous women are combatting this by revitalising their ancestral cultural practices and wisdom, and reclaiming shared stewardship over community resources, thereby fostering the resurgence of a decolonised Indigenous identity (Nirmal and Rocheleau, 2019). Climate change is framed as a global crisis by Western cultures, many of which have been the protagonists of historical colonisation. Our research reveals the imperative of giving prominence to Indigenous knowledge and epistemologies within the framework of green transition policy decisions.

A decolonial feminist can only seek, above all else, the capacity to (re)think the world and question everything; the capacity to formulate questions about the current order of things, beyond assumed truths and imposed consensus (Espinosa et al., 2013). Our hope is that this research inspires individuals across society to join the defence of Indigenous ontologies, territories, customs, and human rights, including self-determination. The findings underscore the importance of women’s leadership in the realm of green transition, rooted in their ontological identity and deep understanding of their worldview and ancestral legacy, intricately

intertwined with the territories they staunchly protect.

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Table 1: Colombian Policies and Commitments for Large-Scale Investments and Human Rights

| <b>Framework</b>   | <b>Description</b>  |
|--|---|
| Colombian Constitution (1991)  | Recognises Indigenous peoples’ existence and inherent rights, with official titles granted for ancestral lands covering over 25% of the country.  |
| ILO Convention 169 (ratified in 1991)  | International treaty safeguarding Indigenous and tribal peoples’ rights, focusing on land rights, self-determination, cultural preservation, and participation in decision-making.        |
| OECD Membership (2020) and adherence to OECD Declaration and Decisions on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises | Promotes responsible business practices for multinational enterprises, covering sustainable development, human rights, employment, taxation, information disclosure, and anti-corruption. |
| EU–Colombia Economic Partnership, Political Cooperation and Cooperation Agreement, and Free Trade Agreement (2013)               | Agreement upholding democratic principles, fundamental human rights (as per Universal Declaration of Human Rights), and the rule of law.  |
| Colombian National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (2015)   | Part of Colombia’s commitment to implement and disseminate the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.  |

*Reference: ILO, 2017; OECD, 2011*

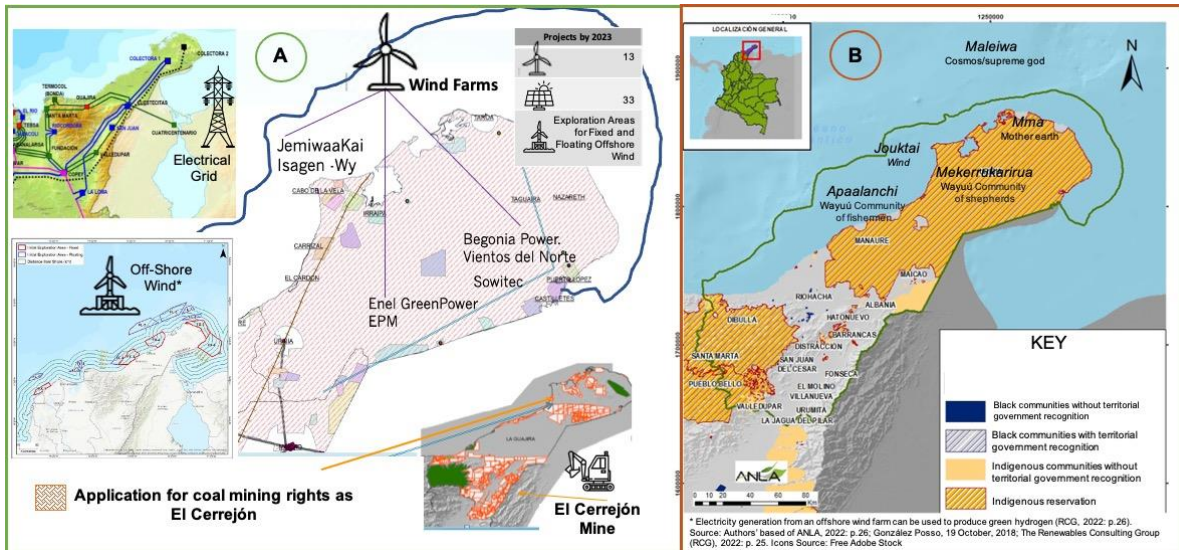


Figure 1: (A) Maps of La Guajira showing the electrical grid network (top left), locations of off-shore (bottom left) and on-shore wind farms (centre), and locations of coal mines and mining applications (bottom right). (B) Map of La Guajira showing Indigenous reservations and other Black and Indigenous territories.