

New Voices in Cultural Relations 2025: Special Commendation

**Arctic Capital and Indigenous Peoples: a Postcolonial Critique of
an Ecologically Unequal Exchange**

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List of abbreviations

In alphabetical order:

AHDR-II: Arctic Human Development Report II

AFA: American Fisheries Act

CAOFA: Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement

COP: Conference of the Parties

EUE: Ecologically unequal exchange

GHG: greenhouse gas

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

IR: International Relations

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

NIEO: New International Economic Order

TNC: transnational corporation

UN: United Nations

UNCCC: United Nations Climate Change Conference

UNDRIP: United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Abstract

This dissertation is a case study on the effects of capital accumulation on the governance of land and natural resources by indigenous peoples of coastal Alaska and Greenland. It identifies an ecologically unequal exchange (EUE) taking place between these two peripheral Arctic regions with a core concerned with a green transition due to a changing climate. Alaska and Greenland are both undergoing transitions in their economies and geographies due to climate change; the study will focus on the indigenous governance of fish in coastal Alaska, and rare-earth minerals in Greenland, which are mined for green technologies. EUE theory is a world-system theory that focuses on the trade of natural resources and has the potential to highlight imperialism and neocolonialism where the intention is a strategy of sustainability (see the Greenland case) or of neoliberalisation (see the Alaska case). This trade is ecologically unequal due the nature of extractive industries that remove non-self-reproducible materials from geographies, with consequences for the environment and welfare of populations. I will argue that due to a colonial legacy, indigenous peoples are constructed as a sub-category of citizens and lose agency over their land and natural resources at the domestic and international levels. In Greenland there is the potential for neocolonialism through an extractive form of colonisation, where rare-earths are mined with cheap local labour in an unequal trade exchange, and inconclusive evidence is found about the future of mining. In Alaska indigenous peoples live in a settler colonial society, where the ahistorical social contract denies them historical claims to the land and resources they see as theirs. This contractualism translates to the international level through Western norms and values and hinders rights-based claims to land. Despite this, indigenous peoples organise transnationally as sub-state actors in NGOs in a struggle for their land.

Key words: Arctic, natural resources, land, governance, neoliberalism, settler colonial societies, neocolonialism, indigenous peoples, self-determination, state sovereignty, trade, political economy, global justice, ecology, postcolonialism, green transition, extractive industries.

Chapter 1. Introduction

In this dissertation I will argue that capitalist accumulation is differentially affecting natural resources and land claims of indigenous peoples of Alaska and Greenland. I will demonstrate how contractualism affects these claims in settler colonial societies, and how unequal trade of extractive industries poses issues for indigenous land rights and a risk of neocolonialism.

1.1 Context

The Arctic is a Northern, low-densely populated region that is interdependent with the rest of the world economically, politically, socially and ecologically. Of 4 million inhabitants, 500,000 are estimated to be indigenous to the region (Arctic Council, 2024). The region has a unique ecosystem which indigenous peoples' cultures, traditions and ways of life rely on. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2023b), the Arctic has warmed twice as fast as any other region of the planet over the past 50 years and in the next half-century it is estimated all sea-ice will periodically melt entirely in the summer season. A lot of the change is due to human activity (IPCC, 2023a). With warmer temperatures, land and sea is melting, making mining increasingly feasible in Greenland which is being prospected for the extraction of metals and rare-earths used in phone and computer manufacture, nuclear energy production and green technologies like wind turbines and electric cars (Henriques and Böhm, 2022, p.1). In recent years there has been a scramble for these natural resources, as rich countries transition to greener industries, energy sources and commodities. The mining of these resources comes with an ecological impact as well as social and economic changes on the Arctic region, and brings resistance through social movements, for instance Greenland had a referendum that chose at 71% against uranium extraction at the Kvanefjeld mine (*ibid.*). Coastal Alaska has seen the expansion of its commercial fisheries which are important to the cultural and economic lives of 100,000 Alaskans, both indigenous and non-indigenous (Sea Grant Alaska, 2024). This intensified activity increases greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions directly in the region where ice is melting, which affects the subsistence economy of coastal Alaska Natives (Stowers, 2016).

Climate change is affecting extractive industries and indigenous peoples of the Arctic, who live with a legacy of colonialism; policies were enforced to discourage the practice of indigenous cultural knowledge and institute widespread violence (Marx, 1976, p.915-916). Still today, there is stigma and violence reported against indigenous people in Denmark and Greenland (UN, 2023) and Alaska, with unequal legal capacities (Rosay, 2016). The different Arctic states use varying definitions for what constitutes an indigenous or non-indigenous person. Broadly, the consensus is that indigenous peoples of the Arctic are those born in the Arctic whose ancestors have resided in the region for millennia and are considered indigenous to the region (AHDR-II, 2015, p. 83-85). The USA names the Alaska indigenous population 'Alaska Native' and so 17% of Alaska's population is considered indigenous (*ibid.*, p.85-86). Greenland mostly differentiates by birthplace and uses 'Native' in its language to distinguish Greenlanders from non-Greenlanders (*ibid.*, p.85). Greenland's

population has Natives as its largest group with 89.9% Greenlanders, the second largest group is Danish citizens as Greenland is a subject of Denmark and therefore 98.6% of all Greenland are Danish citizens (*ibid.*, p.87). The third largest group is made by just 0.3% of the population and are Thai citizens.

Wolin (1989, p.137-150) and Nichols (2019a; 2019b) find a distinct social relationship to happen in settler colonial societies, where indigenous people are deemed 'superfluous' and integrated without their consent into a 'new' society formed by the settlers, which mimics the 'motherland' through its social institutions. The social relationship of these settler colonial societies is one of market exchange, where the social contract with the state keeps individuals of a society complying with property rights and individualism, and a common reimagined 'new' history invented by the coloniser. This 'new' society has the effect of trapping indigenous peoples in a forever present where procedural justice fails them (*ibid.*). I will elaborate on this in parts 2.3 and 3.2. International institutions like the United Nations (UN) recognise the rights of indigenous people and the climate emergency, respectively with the 2007 *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) and the 1987 United Nations' report that introduced the concept of sustainable development, the *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*, commonly known as the *Brundtland report*. While these declarations and reports carry an authoritative value internationally, they are not legally binding by their signatories, which will be elaborated on in chapter 5. Regionally, six non-governmental indigenous groups have a permanent participatory status with the Arctic Council, an international economic body that directs decisions in the region, but which is also non-legally binding. This grants however consultation rights for the drafting of reports to indigenous peoples' NGOs. However, it is found that indigenous voices are struggling to be heard, especially when in relation to their claims for natural resource or land governance as we will see in the case studies of chapter 5 (Scopelliti, 2021, p.71).

My argument is that two different mechanisms are acting on indigenous peoples in the Arctic, namely colonialism and climate change, which are the consequence of the expansion of a single mechanism: capitalist accumulation, an ecologically unequal exchange (EUE) (Bunker, 2019) in a world-system seeking to accumulate capital from natural resources extracted then traded from the Arctic region, the periphery, to benefit core countries such as Denmark and the USA. Dependency and world-system theories tell us that there is a hierarchy of states created by the peripheralisation of trade in poorer regions of the world, with a transnational hierarchy of class (Wallerstein, p.2011). I argue that this hierarchy of class, in the Arctic is additionally met with a hierarchy of race (Morefield, 2019), where there is a correlation between territorial sovereignty and indigenous rights, and that these links present in a specific fashion in settler colonial societies (Nichols, 2019a). In the later parts of the study the link between world-system theory, EUE and postcolonialism will become clearer (see chapter 3).

1.2 Research focus

The UNDRIP (UN, 2004) and the *Brundtland report* (UN, 1987) both attract critical analysis from scholars. The UNDRIP serve as an international direction for the rights of indigenous people on their land, as well as their economic, social and political rights (Article 3, UN, 2004). Lu (2019, p.253-257) defends that for the UNDRIP text to be implemented and have indigenous rights existing such as the text promotes, the Westphalian concept of state territorial sovereignty would need to be changed or abandoned.

Hutchings (2019, p. 211-212) reports on the presentation of cosmopolitan just war in colonial wars; colonisers are seen by the external world as having impunity in exercising 'just violence' for their ends, and the external world sees the conquered land as already belonging to the coloniser, "whose just violence has to be imagined as a permanent possibility" (Hutchings, 2019, p. 212). Colonialism is a form of injustice in international law and for liberals who recognise the rule of law, as colonisation is accompanied by the destruction of previously governing groups (Moore, 2016, p.453). Imperialism has many wrongs defined by scholars, such as political domination, cultural destruction and imposition, and exploitation (Bell, 2019, p.13). Moore (2016) points out how insufficient those accounts of colonisation are, because they do not distinguish the specific case of settler colonialism where the indigenous persons, a collective group, are dispossessed of their land. Moore (2016) and other postcolonial scholars (Nichols, 2019a) offer a critique of cosmopolitan global justice and liberal individualism as being an adequate approach to dealing with the domination and injustice of settler colonial societies, as the injustice is carried out onto a collective community that shares a common identity and common attachment to their land. Empirical evidence of this with procedural justice will be approached in chapter 5.

The *Brundtland report* (UN, 1987) also attracts criticism from scholars. Its text guides the climate and environmental transition into sustainable development and reserves a sub-part of chapter 4 on 'population and human resources' to the case of indigenous people. Although the articles are promising in recognising the rights to land, self-determination, and economic, social and political choices, problematic discourse of indigenous people sees them as carers of the land and as a homogeneous, isolated, uneducated group (Thisted, 2019, p.176). Denmark slides into this representation of Greenland as will be shown in chapter 5 (Bjørst, 2019, p.124,127). The *Brundtland report* attempts to protect indigenous peoples by integrating them into the capitalist system of work, education and natural resource extraction; this could be seen as a 'double movement' as defined by Polanyi (2001), where the UN makes recommendations for the protection of workers, which indigenous peoples are part of, and the global market from its own instabilities (UN, 1987, chapter 4, part 3.3).

While Alaska is a region where its indigenous persons live inside the USA state, Greenland is gaining increased autonomy from Denmark. Since 2009 it is a self-governing territory of Denmark formed by an indigenous Inuit government which holds future independence claims through its Self-Government Act (Naalakkersuisut, Government of Greenland, 2009). With the changing Arctic climate, there is a rather minimal number of studies done on the capacity of

indigenous communities to govern the land they live on, and natural resources they depend on. The focus of the study will be on looking at mechanisms of capitalist accumulation in global trade for two specific groups of people: coastal Alaska Natives and Greenlanders. More specifically, there will be a focus on three selected mechanisms that can influence land and resource self-governance: colonial mechanisms of contract in settler colonial societies, mechanisms of trade between core and periphery in the context of Arctic natural resources, and mechanisms of procedural and climate justice.

The main question of the study is: in the context of core states scrambling for the control of economic resources, what mechanisms make or unmake territorial and natural resource sovereignty for indigenous peoples of Greenland and Alaska?

1.3 Research aims and objectives

The objectives of the research are to show what natural resource and land governance, self-determination and agency are available to indigenous peoples in Greenland and Alaska.

To answer this question the study aims to deconstruct mainstream narratives of economic development and trade and offers ecologically unequal exchange theory (EUE), a world-system theory of core and periphery with a focus on natural resources extraction and trade, to approach the social and material effects of capital accumulation. Because native individuals of settler colonial societies are dispossessed of their land, and that Western norms and values foreshadow global justice, a postcolonial framework is used to highlight how mechanisms of the social contract in neoliberal, cosmopolitan settler colonial societies affect justice claims of indigenous persons. The postcolonial framework identifies communities of indigenous persons with a collective identity and attachment to their land, who are met with a double hierarchy in a world-system of trade, and a hierarchy of race which affects their use and claim to land and resources.

The research seeks to contribute to the literature on Arctic regions and settler colonial societies in several ways. The study as a whole aims to contribute to finding out about the effects of colonialism in the present day. By focusing on this region which receives very little scholarly attention with regards to global trade, better understanding of the mechanisms at play and their effects on the indigenous population should be obtained. A critical investigation into the historical constitution of global justice and its significance in settler colonial societies should highlight a distinctive coercive and consented mechanism of liberal cosmopolitan individualism which affects the cultural, self-determination and economic possibilities of indigenous peoples. The tensions in green development brought to light by EUE showcases how natural resource extraction for the development of green technologies in core states poses the risk of neocolonialism.

The next chapter will define the theoretical framework, the main concepts and ontological and epistemological assumptions used in the research which broadly belong to a critical postcolonial Marxist discourse focusing on trade with

ecologically unequal exchange theory. Note that throughout the term post-colonialism with a dash is used to indicate the period after the departure of colonisers. The term postcolonialism in one word indicates the discourse that studies the impacts in present day that are a consequence of colonial legacies.

Chapter 2. Theoretical framework

2.1 A postcolonial Marxist framework

In this part it is elaborated how the study fits together postcolonial discourse with EUE theory, a world-system theory of periphery and core with a focus on natural resource extraction. EUE theory of trade is human-centred, with a built-in assumption that the accumulation mechanism of capitalism irrevocably continues (Bunker, 2019). In its analysis, ecologically unequal exchange theory looks at the trade of natural resources between different agents, and the effects on the economic, social and political capacities of agents. These agents can be states, transnational corporations (TNCs), institutions, groups, or individuals in communities.

To answer the question raised in the study, additional factors need to be added. As a reminder, the research looks at structure and agency in answering the main question posed: how do obstacles and opportunities manifest in indigenous peoples' self-governance of land and resources in Greenland and Alaska? The research looks at the scramble for natural resources of the Arctic, part of a historical global race for mineral resources (Henriques and Böhm, 2022, p.2) and more recently fisheries (Richmond, 2013, p. 1071). This scramble has long included the constructed hierarchy of certain groups over others based on their place or socially-constructed race (Marx, 1976, p.914-926), and in world-system theory, of some states over others in the form of periphery and core (Wallerstein, 2011). Because indigenous peoples of Greenland and Alaska are socially constructed as belonging to a race (Broderstad and Dahl, 2004), postcolonial perspectives are used to highlight what additional mechanisms come to alter answers to the main question. The continuous unequal exchange between former colonisers over formerly colonised states is termed neocolonialism, which leads to dependency on the formerly colonising state and a fragile position in international trade (Kočí and Baar, 2021, p. 192). Postcolonialism has some overlaps with historical materialism in that it gives attention to social forms, the historical events that lead to the power relations and political constitution of societies (Pradella, 2013; Ciplet and Roberts, 2019; Nichols, 2019a; Bhambra, 2020).

The study assumes an international society of states with some common interests, common observance of regulations, and some common institutions. A brief discussion on the debate between cosmopolitans and communitarians is approached in chapter 3.2, and pluralism is mentioned in the approach of culturally inhomogeneous settler colonial societies. For pluralists, states are the actors of international society and are inhomogeneous culturally but there is tolerance between them for international affairs.

Analytically, the framework assumes a changing and dynamic world where agents and ideas shape the way that natural resource extraction of sovereign territories are negotiated and controlled (Dodds and Nuttall, 2019). This political power over material resources takes place in a global structure of sovereign states that exchange according to trade agreements. Meaning that these structures are made up and constructed. The dynamic changes are seen as continuous through regional and global systems that are interlinked and the result of historical processes (Wu, 2019, p.222-224). To understand land and natural resource sovereignty, it is necessary to determine what mechanisms are constructed to support the structure mentioned. The study identifies that these mechanisms are two-fold: the implications of the social construction of indigenous people as a race (see for example Richmond, 2004; Broderstad and Dahl, 2004; Nichols, 2019a) and the scramble for economic resource control under the capitalist mode of accumulation.

To summarise, the framework uses a postcolonial discourse, where a world system shapes the trade of states, and where economic, social and political choice and possibilities are additionally influenced by the existence of distinct socially-constructed communities. In the next parts of this chapter a deeper definition of the concepts of the framework are divided into two parts. The first part (2.2) discusses the concepts that led to the formation of ecologically unequal exchange theory. The second part (2.3) focuses on how indigenous peoples are constructed in settler colonial societies and what implications this has. In the last part (2.4) the criteria for the research are listed.

2.2 Defining ecologically unequal exchange: a world-system theory of trade with a focus on natural resources

This part sets up EUE theory by retracing its theoretical origins within historical materialism and world-system theory, and links are drawn with dependency theory. The purpose of EUE in the study is to shed light on the expansion of capitalism and accumulation, the dilemma in regions suffering the worst climate change also having heightened environmental impacts in doing their development and risking multilateral or bilateral trade becoming neocolonialism.

Henriques and Böhm (2022) write about the scrambling of superpowers for the control of natural resources in the Arctic to facilitate their green transition at home. The authors use EUE to analyse the potential for neocolonialism to happen in the trade of resources with peripheral regions. The importance in studying the economic relations of a society to understand its motivations has been studied since the beginning of historical materialism, as Gramsci writes:

"To understand precisely the historical goals of a country, a society, a group, it is important, above all, to know the systems and relations of production and exchange of that country, or of that society."
(Gramsci, 1975a [1918], p. 10)

Here Gramsci defines some of the analytical tools of historical materialism, which were part of the undertaking of Marx in *Capital* (1976 [1867]). Marx established a theory of production, which divides humanity in two classes, the

ones who work for a wage, the proletariat, and the ones who employ them and own the means of production and surplus that comes from said production, the bourgeois. Marx demonstrated how unequal and exploitative this relationship is. Some elements of this work have been brought into the present day, for instance by scholars of critical discourse who study social injustice relating to economic opportunities, or hierarchies of place, or race as is the case with postcolonial (or) Marxist research (Cox, 1993b; Mansfield, 2004; Pradella, 2013; Nichols, 2019a; Bhambra, 2020). In historical materialism, the class struggle that divides the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is the result of social forms, i.e. historical events and political choices, meaning that the economy and political power have close relationships (like in mercantilism). Meaning that the market and the global structure of trade are politically chosen (Burkhardt, Elsinger and Zimmermann, 2024). We will see the idea of contradiction of the neoliberal free market applied in the case study (Mansfield, 2004; see 5.1.1).

The decolonisation of the 1960s-to today has led to the formation of dependencies. A dependency is a term used to identify a former colony, which has gained in governance (sometimes independence) but that still relies on a financing plan from the former coloniser for its economic development. The term comes from dependency theory, which takes elements from historical materialism, except the focus is on international economic relations and trade rather than domestic relations of labour and production. Dependency theory focuses on the colonial legacy structure that keeps states of the periphery from developing to the level of a core country; core countries buy cheap materials and commodities from the periphery, then manufacture commodities for the market with a high surplus (Burkhardt, Elsinger and Zimmermann, 2024). Dependency theorists defend that this process is an unequal exchange that maintains the periphery in a position of dependency and unable to compete to grow their economy and industry; they defend that this system is a new imperialism (Katz, 2022). We will see in the case study how Greenland is considered a region in development belonging to the periphery (see chapter 5).

In International Relations (IR) the traditional unit of analysis is the state, however Wallerstein (2011) introduced the world-system as a whole for the unit of analysis of trade, within which class struggles continue transnationally, as states have become guardians of their part of the international market on which TNCs operate between core, semi-periphery and periphery. This global scale of analysis becomes an important argument in our case study as indigenous peoples of the Arctic are sub-state actors, a non-traditional role in IR that however brings results in terms of authority in the international scene through participation and NGO organising (see chapter 3 and 5; Scopelliti, 2021, p.67, 71). To Wallerstein (2011), it is the production that is part of the core or the periphery, and not the state, therefore when looking at unequal relationships and exploitation, the accent needs to be on the global structure of capitalism. With globalisation the bourgeois, or capitalists, now hold private property within a global capitalist structure, where states set up the market structure that allows TNCs to carry out their goals.

On the domestic scale the result of core and peripheral relations lead to a double movement which Polanyi (2001) defined as the protection the state

needs to bring to the workforce as a result of exploitation and the crisis-prone character of capitalism. To Cox (1993b, p.261-262), globalisation has led to a 'peripheralisation of the core', with a loss of the geographical attachment of the terms periphery and core. Meaning that there is both a hierarchy of states in global trade, and a hierarchy inside sovereign territorial limits, which has led to a double movement, with the creation of social security, trade unions, and recognition by the state for some welfare responsibility. In addition to a hierarchy of states and 'peripheralisation' of the core, indigenous peoples experience a domestic racial hierarchy (Bhambra, 2020, p.2). In the case of the Arctic regions, there is a question about the consequences of extractive industries operating where climate change is at its highest form, and where these industries might create employment for a determinate time set with competitive wages for the TNCs or local industries, but with a cost to the environment and future possibilities to use the region's own resources (Bunker, 2019; Henriques and Böhm, 2022). This question is very well defined by the analytical tools of EUE.

EUE is a theory that derives from dependency theory but with a focus on the mechanisms of natural resources extraction and trade (Henriques and Böhm, 2022). EUE stems from world system theory which recognises the existence of a core and a periphery, organised in an unequal world-system of trade of raw resources and commodities. The addition in EUE is that it accounts for the dependency on materials and resources for the production, extraction and transportation, and the social relationships that form from these processes; it also accounts for the consequence in the reduced possibility of development for the periphery regions, once resource extraction happens in those places, and any accompanying environmental degradation and associated welfare degradation for the workers or population at large (Bunker, 2019, p. 13-14). In (post-)colonial dependencies resource extraction might take a neocolonial character, which the literature review (see 3.1) will develop on, making the links between EUE and postcolonialism clearer (Clark *et al.*, 2019).

Dependency and world-system theories introduce the ideas of periphery and core and a global trade structure with high stakes in the hands of TNCs, allowed by state regulations and multilateral agreements. EUE theory additionally highlights the social and ecological transfers and inequalities that are fostered by the global capitalist structure. In the next part a postcolonial focus highlights domestic and global injustices and how their interconnection disrupts justice claims of indigenous peoples.

2.3 Neoliberal global justice in settler colonial societies affecting self-determination claims of indigenous peoples

In this part the concepts of global justice and settler colonial societies are introduced into the framework, mostly based on the analytical framework of Nichols (2019a). After an introduction to the origins of global justice and contractualism in Western political philosophy, the specific colonial case of land dispossession associated with settler colonial societies is tied to the dilemma of domestic justice elevated to global justice. This demonstrates how

contractualism's ahistorical quality drastically reduces indigenous peoples' claims to land and natural resources.

While contractualism tends to have an abstract meaning within the discipline of global justice, the concerns of indigenous struggles take both an ideological form: ownership, self-determination, nationhood; and a material form: most often land or resources. There is a post-colonial tension on the territorial sovereignty of the coloniser after the forceful seizing, displacement and occupation of indigenous land in a constructed 'new' settler society that mimics the motherland (Nichols, 2019a, p.241-242), versus indigenous rights to their land and freedom in their economic, social and political choice as established by the UNDRIP (2007).

To know the present form of global justice, attention is now brought to its constitutive history. In the 1970s there was an increased focus on how the basic institutions of a liberal society might be chosen, after the publication of *A Theory of Justice* (1999 [1971]) by Rawls. Rawls revived the idea of a social contract between a state and its citizens to talk about how a society might choose its basic principles and domestic institutions in a way that is fair, and that benefit the worst well-off. This work had several radical elements in that it wanted to create equal freedom of opportunity for all citizens and used the difference principle. Due to its revolutionary nature, it became a central point for critique and was used to elevate 'justice as fairness' from a domestic society to a global society, as was done for example by Beitz (1979). Beitz showed that Rawls's assumptions that nations are self-contained and self-sufficient were wrong (Moyn, 2019, p.65); Beitz believed states to be interdependent, so principles of distributive justice could transfer to make a basic international structure. Rawls defended that his work was not meant for an international society but for individuals within a domestic neoliberal society who share common norms and values. However, Beitz and other scholars (Shue, cited in Moyn, 2019, p.52-58) have used the *Theory of Justice* as a starting point for what is today global justice discourse, shifting the focus from a domestic one to international political relations. Therefore, global justice has a distinctive set of underlying principles that belong to Western political philosophy.

Nichols (2019a) presses on with what it means to make the distinction between domestic and global justice in the context of settler colonialism. As settler colonialism is the result of a conflict between two distinct nations on the same territory, settler colonialism highlights the tensions within the discipline of global justice, and the unsuitability of global justice to address indigenous struggles. In chapter 5 we will see this issue in indigenous peoples' rights and climate claims on land and natural resources. What Nichols (2019a, p. 236-237) points out, citing the work of Wolin (1989), is that putting in place a new social contract in a society has the effect of cutting historical ties and making individuals relate to each other through contractual and equal relations. In the context of settler colonial societies, contractualism has the effect of making a society ahistorical, erasing the memory of the colonial war and its meaning in the present, and reduces social interactions to market exchanges. Indigenous peoples of settler colonies are usually integrated into the new society and given the citizenship of the colonising society. This makes the process of colonisation an internal

colonising process and shifts the focus of the injustice from an international injustice to a domestic injustice, all the while making indigenous people a minority within a larger society. While the discipline of international relations as a whole tends to rely on notions of inside/outside, West/the rest, North/South, indigenous struggles do not wholly belong to any of those categories, making their claims for justice at the domestic level, or at the global level, a dysfunction.

Global justice is built on ahistorical, Western philosophy of contractualism, making it an inadequate domain for indigenous peoples to make claims on their rights to natural resources or land. However, international institutions of human rights or climate justice function on the premise of this Western philosophy. Whether domestically or internationally, Western philosophy has an upper hand on the claims of indigenous peoples as it rejects historical legacies (this will be developed in the literature review of chapter 3). In the next part we introduce the criteria used for the research.

2.4 Research criteria

The criteria used for analysing the obstacles and opportunities of indigenous peoples' self-determination over land and natural resources in coastal Alaska and Greenland are as follows:

- 1) how does global resource accumulation pose the risk of neocolonialism in the context of extractive industries?
- 2) how do mechanisms of contractualism affect indigenous peoples in settler colonial societies with regards to land and natural resources?
- 3) what counter-mechanisms or protections exist for self-determination of indigenous peoples with regards to land and natural resources in the Arctic?

From these criteria the study should define what possibilities and obstacles currently exist for indigenous peoples of Greenland and Alaska in the governance of land and natural resources.

In the next chapter a critical literature review is offered to give perspectives on the concepts introduced so far.

Chapter 3. Critical perspectives of postcolonialism

Previously, the context of the study, the research focus and the proposed theoretical framework have been introduced. This chapter consists in a critical literature review of the concepts underlying the theoretical framework of the previous chapter. The first part will use EUE theory to develop on the ecological, political and social consequences of trade with (post-)colonised peoples and various counter-measures. The second part will analyse how domestic contractualism has translated into global justice, and how indigenous peoples are disadvantaged or organising within settler colonial societies built on

Western philosophy. The last part will showcase the motivations behind the study.

3.1 Ecologically unequal exchange (EUE) of natural resources in colonial production and extraction

3.1.1 An EUE theory critique of global neoliberal trade

Liberalism has its origins with two prominent political economists, Adam Smith and David Ricardo. Smith was at the origin of *laissez-faire*, or the market's invisible hand: the idea is that the market should be left to regulate itself to increase competition between individuals and keep prices low. Later, Ricardo introduced the concept of comparative advantage, where a state should make the goods that it can make well and sell on the market at a higher price, then import the products it doesn't have or that are available at a better quality or lower price outside the state. These two concepts, *laissez-faire* and comparative advantage, are still used today to some extent, however scholars of postcolonial theory defend that in international political economy, these two concepts are still isolated from the real world where they originated from, which is one of imperialism, for instance with the use of empire, slavery, and cheap labour at home and abroad (Pradella, 2013, p.119; Watson, 2016, p.259; Burkhardt, Elsinger and Zimmermann, 2024). In fact, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill and David Ricardo had already stressed how the capitalist system had expanded due to colonialism (Clark *et al.*, 2019, p.200). Bhambra (2020, p.2) speaks of the importance of bringing colonialism into political economy; she critiques the acceptance of the expansion of capitalism as a logical, natural process of expansion from Europe to other places; she places colonialism at the centre of capitalism: without it, capitalism would not have expanded globally like it has. Her critique speaks to the critical interest in postcolonial studies to include the historical developments of societies and the rejection of 'constant' economic models.

In the last few decades, Bunker (2019) has established with other scholars a new theory of trade named ecologically unequal exchange. The basic principles of this theory deconstruct global neoliberal trade into two distinct categories to shine a light on their unequal economic nature: one category of production, and one of extraction (Bunker, 2019, p.17). Productive industries can be established together in a vicinity and reproduce themselves economically, as if they become obsolete, they can give space to other productive industries where workers can go to; this mode of production means that usually the different parts of production are near each other (such as transport and energy) and people can easily move from site to site. With extractive industries on the other hand the availability of the work is dependent on where the resources are. Meaning that when resources become depleted in one location, the industries cannot take advantage of the built extractive infrastructures at future locations. These infrastructures may not be easily convertible or useful for other companies if they are remote from labour sources or other infrastructures. Therefore Bunker (2019, p.16) makes the argument that the model for global and regional economies needs to account for the difference and interactions between modes of extraction and modes of production. The argument on the two unequal

modes comes from the resource-depletion that comes from modes of extraction. In extractive economies, once natural resources have been taken out from the region's ecosystem, the economy exporting those resources loses the value associated with its physical environment (*ibid.*). Meaning that these depleted, non-renewable resources cannot be used in future development projects of the extractive economy. Additionally, the extraction means that eventually resources will deplete and decrease a region's economy. The economies that buy the raw resources on the other hand will transform them into commodities and market them, thus seeing profits in value and growth in their economy. We will see in chapter 5 with the case of Greenland how this can lead to the risk of neocolonialism where the former colony is getting less from the market exchange of resources (Henriques and Böhm, 2022, p.1).

To Clark *et al.* (2019, p.200) the control of resources for energy usage or production happened with an international hierarchy of states and produced direct social inequalities and environmental degradation; therefore, capitalist accumulation in trade is inextricably linked to unequal economic and ecological exchange. Scholars of EUE argue that there is an "exchange of more ecological value (or nature's product) for less" (Foster and Holleman, 2014, cited in Clark *et al.*, 2019, p.202) and that this exchange happens with a cost to the South's environment's degradation based on the consumption of commodities in the North (*ibid.*) (see green technologies in chapter 5).

3.1.2 Counter-measures to capitalist accumulation: international institutions and social movements

Several attempts have been made to counteract these negative consequences linked with extractive and productive industries. The concept of sustainable development was set by the *Brundtland Report* (UN, 1987) which led to regulations by Northern countries as an attempt to find win-win situations where economic growth can go hand-in-hand with development. Trade regulations were implemented at regional levels with the target to reduce energy consumption and environmental damage, for instance as was done by the European Union in the 1990s (Redclift, 2018, p.697). However, sustainability as a concept shifted from nature conservation to nature as a commodity (*ibid.*), which we will see with the case of Alaska in the management of sustainable fisheries. This shift became a political tool to find win-win situations for TNCs' profit and a green agenda (Redclift, 2018, p.699), which we will see in the case of Greenland.

Another attempt to counteract the negative social impacts of the capitalist mode of accumulation is in climate justice movements, for instance organised around United Nations frameworks on climate change (Smith and Patterson, 2019, p.247-250). These social movements organise around human rights, labour unions, food sovereignty and environmental risks. Some of these movements propose alternative economic models based around alternative forms of communities that reinforce sustainability and challenge capitalist logics that separate individuals from their social and economic activities (*ibid.*, p.260). We will see in chapter 5 how indigenous peoples in the Arctic organise around climate justice to further their land rights. Climate justice applied to trade highlights the mismanagement of peripheral economies as proposed by core

countries, as seen during the Rio climate summit where southern states underlined the role of the North in keeping them in peripheral extractive industries (Ciplet and Roberts, 2019, p.274). We will see in chapter 5 how Greenland uses these claims as a peripheral state.

The various strands of ecologically unequal exchange theory have been introduced here via a critique of global trade. The injustices raised are environmental, economic, social and political, grounded in historically and socially-constructed hierarchies of place, race, and class. The UN and social movements seem like a way to pursue indigenous claims to land and resources. In the next part the concept of contractualism is introduced to showcase how indigenous peoples in settler colonial societies have to organise within Western ideological and structural concepts, which hinders their cultural reconciliation, and natural resource and land self-governance.

3.2 Settler colonies and the social contract: consequences for indigenous peoples and global justice

This section explores how tensions within Anglo-American global justice have a particular influence in settler colonial societies. Postcolonial scholars have taken apart the constitutive elements of this ethical discipline to show how cosmopolitan arguments, international organisations and resulting international order are built on a colonial legacy (Moore, 2019; Nichols, 2019a; Moyn, 2019). A debate on the suitability of global justice to deliver justice between colonisers and colonised nations or communities existing today in the same territories will be approached. Other cases of settler colonial societies exist, especially made by the French, Spanish, German, and Israeli, however, this study focuses on the Anglophone case which receives substantial attention in the literature, and to ask what it means to attach a discipline to Anglo-America and not engage more substantively with the history of the establishment of Anglo-America (Nichols, 2019a, p.236). Chapter 5 uses this focus with Alaska and Greenland.

As defined earlier, the most distinct element in settler colonialism is its relationship to land. Extractive colonisation focuses on the dominance over land and societies, combined with the exploitation of people for their labour power (Nichols, 2019a, p.243). In settler colonisation however, indigenous people are "superfluous" and vulnerable to extinction. We will see in chapter 5 how these two different colonisation forms present in Greenland and Alaska and current effects.

As mentioned previously, global justice has taken on liberal and cosmopolitan values and norms (Nichols, 2019a). Scholars such as Beitz have elevated the central ideas of the *Theory of Justice* (Rawls, 1999) to an international level. Rawls defended that the book should not be used between nations to determine how they might interact with one another in a world society. However, Beitz thought the difference principle and distributive justice could be brought to the world level to determine basic international justice principles, which he does in *Political theory and international relations* (1979). These international justice principles are to be applied in the interests of individuals in a world society that sees individuals as its constituents; the advantage is that such a justice would

be able to call out injustices of states, TNCs, and resource distribution to meet the needs of individuals (see case study chapter 5). However, there is no international body capable of carrying out that political will to enforce a "universal system of social distribution" (Thompson, 1992, p.15). Thompson thus puts in doubt how a world society based on the *Theory of Justice* (1999) of Rawls could be practical. Additionally, changes would need to be done in global capitalism, such as political interventions on the free market, which is opposite to the liberal values of private property and *laissez-faire* that both Rawls and Beitz adhere to (Griffiths, Roach and Solomon, 2009, p.315). The *Theory of Justice* (1999) was criticised by communitarians for starting from an original position that is not universal in pluralist societies (Thompson, 1992, p.15); for instance, to Sandel (1982, p.179) Rawls's approach is ahistorical because it takes out that moral obligation that people have for their communities who share a common history. To indigenous people, a 'new' form of society which ideological constructions come from politically chosen forms (Nichols, 2019a, p.236-237) erases their own cultural belonging, social structures, and the history of land dispossession and genocide. This ahistorical character of the 'new' settler society hinders their claims for land which they were displaced from. This imposed ideological construction of history creates equality between all individuals and assumes citizens do not have a prior history (Wolin, 1989, p. 139). It also supports the denial of colonisers that they destroyed legitimate forms of political communities: "these colonizers often denied that the political orders they encountered were legitimate governments in the ordinary sense" (Pagden, 1995, cited in Moore, 2016, p.453).

Wolin identified a contractualism in the USA seen as the norm, where powerful political elites lead the economy, swayed by corporate money, at the cost of the marginalised and what he calls their 'politicalness', which is the ability of individuals to relate to and use their political belonging within the collective (1989, p.137-150). In the case of indigenous peoples, their belonging to their indigeneity comes from their collective cultural attachment to land and its resources; as Moore (2016) writes:

"it is not individual freedom that is preserved when a person affirms her political community and its institutions. It is rather a matter of a group seeing the institutions of the state as reflective of their collective identity, on land that they regard as theirs"
(Moore, 2016, p.454)

In chapter 5 we will see how indigenous persons organise in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to overcome their sub-state agents' status in domestic and international issues on land and resources.

Contractualism is additionally hindering collective struggles of indigenous peoples, as it puts individuals at the centre of their political choices and inclinations, making collective historical injustices' claims dysfunctional in settler societies (Nichols, 2019a, p.238). Beitz, a cosmopolitan, does not see the moral significance of nations and their self-identity as communities or collectives; rather, he supports global egalitarianism for individuals. Beitz saw agency to be with Northern leaders and was critical of Southern states and of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) where a new vision of global

justice was led by an African-Asian alliance (Moyn, 2019, p.66). It is noteworthy that Beitz disregarded dependency theory or inequality and poverty causes being historical (Forrester, cited in Bell, 2019, p.47). After the second world-war the USA proclaimed itself to be post-national and cosmopolitan liberal; to indigenous peoples this was a furthering of what was already the theft and ongoing occupation of their land: "multicultural liberalism has effectively worked to erode indigenous collective self-determination." (Nichols, 2019a, p. 245)

Natural resources governance is an issue of colonisation, of indigenous peoples' self-determination. While structural and governance injustices could be issues of global justice, the discipline is not equipped in its current state to deal with this issue. Global justice would need to be reformed to be able to deliver justice on these transnational issues, that is issues between First Nations and Settler Society Nations (Lu, 2019). Because first nations are sub-state actors on the international scene, their indigeneity sometimes work to their disadvantage in their claims to land and resources; however, in other cases indigenous people organise and use their status to their advantage (see chapter 5).

3.3 Summary of issues and the need for further research

This chapter outlined how EUE theory highlights environmental, economic, social and political injustices, grounded in historically and socially-constructed hierarchies of place, race, and class. Despite these obstacles, indigenous peoples continue to claim land and natural resource governance based on their indigenous rights (UN, 2007) or climate change justice (*Brundtland report*). Due to ahistorical contractualism and Western norms and values of global justice (Nichols, 2019a), indigenous peoples have to organise within a Western ideology, and a capitalist structure of trade (Bunker, 2019), which hinders their cultural reconciliation which is tied to their communities' cultural attachment to the land and its resources (Moore, 2016).

EUE theory has showcased how different forms of industrialisation, whether productive or extractive, need to be analysed and accounted for differently within global trade (Bunker, 2019). The social and economic relations of natural resources and agricultural industries differ from those of manufacturing, meaning that theories of capitalism should not be applied uniformly but adapted to regional cases, depending on geographies and histories (Mansfield, 2004, p.571; Richmond, 2013). The background force at play, capitalist accumulation, creates a global system which is at the origin of unequal state relations, cheap labour and exploitation (Clark *et al.* p. 196). While a world-system theory is useful for looking at the global trade system of production and extraction as a whole, a focused regional analysis of the Arctic is needed, where regional systems and global systems intertwine and are linked through historical events (Wu, 2019, p.224).

Regional case studies are critical to highlight different circumstances across globe, and exploitation on local populations. While some parallels might be drawn between different peripheral or core regions, a more in-depth study of the social and political forces at play, and the context in which they take place, needs to be studied. As sub-state actors on the international scene,

Greenlanders' and coastal Alaska Natives' indigeneity often work to their disadvantage in their claims to land and resources; however, in other cases they organise to use their status to their advantage in these claims (see chapter 5). In our case study we will focus on the collective governance of rare-earth mining in Greenland, and the collective governance of indigenous peoples in fisheries of Alaska; in both cases we will want to know what domestic and international regulations help or hinder indigenous peoples land and natural resource governance, and how Greenlanders and Alaska Natives associate and organise to make their claims heard.

Chapter 4. Method

This chapter describes the research design and method for the undertaking of the case study section on Greenland and Alaska.

4.1 Research design

In the next part I will use a qualitative analysis to approach my case studies. Two case studies have been selected which are in my region of interest, the Arctic. Before I begin the research, my hypothesis is that there is a social/Nature rift in settler colonial societies (Todd, 2021), and that this clashes with indigenous communities' ways of life who form an attachment to their land. Indigenous people globally face a struggle to have their voices heard and to have their self-determination and claims for governance recognised. Greenland is a particular case as its population is mostly Inuit, while coastal Alaska Natives form a minority in the region where they reside; I assume that greater power will come to Greenlanders as they form a majority.

With the two distinct case studies, it is assumed that a contrast will be established based on a region that is undergoing formal decolonisation through governmental acts (Greenland), versus a region that has been absorbed into a 'new' country as a settler colonial society (Alaska). It is not assumed that parallels or oppositions might appear, however the theoretical framework introduced previously will help to shed light on what characteristics and mechanisms exist in each region relating to resource and land governance by indigenous peoples.

4.2 Research method

A collection of international texts and declarations, inter-governmental acts (in the case of Greenland and Denmark) and domestic regulations will be used. A range of analyses and studies already treated by scholars in books and journals will be used here and built upon.

Chapter 5. Case studies of Alaska and Greenland

Alaska and Greenland are both undergoing transformation in their geographies and economies due to the changing climate and global trade system. With the emergence of the climate crisis, there is a scramble for resources due to the transition to green technologies and energies; we ask what impact for the periphery, especially indigenous peoples? As indigenous peoples continue to claim for land and natural resource governance, how do they navigate the international and domestic scene with their sub-state actor status to carry out their claims? The study finds that core states compete for natural resources in Alaska and Greenland, which both have former colonial status, and indigenous peoples residing in those regions. In the United States in the middle of the 1800s, relations with the First Nations were moved from the Department of War that handled relations with “domestic dependent nations” to the Department of the Interior which manages natural resources and wildlife (Lu, 2019, p. 261). We will see how Greenlanders and Alaska Natives are constructed as a sub-category. We will see how the literature on the climate transition uses the concept of sustainability, which offers diverse political strategies for core or peripheral states, or sub-state actors. The focus will be on the governance of two specific natural resources: fish in coastal Alaska, and rare-earth minerals in Greenland. Alaska and Greenland both have extractive fishing industries and rely on fishing for their cultural and reproductive ways of life. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), part of the UN, estimates that about two-thirds of global fisheries are either fully depleted or over-extracted (UN, 2014), which we will see is greatly due to privatisation of fisheries. Private property is a concept that does not exist in indigenous society and models of accumulation are foreign culturally (Kočí and Baar, 2021, p. 195). The first case study focuses on Alaska, the second Greenland, then a discussion ends this chapter.

5.1 The case of Alaska

This section is a case study on the governance of coastal lands and fish of indigenous peoples of Alaska. The focus will highlight the tensions between non-indigenous commercial goals and indigenous subsistence and cultural goals.

5.1.1 Neoliberalisation as a political act: how it is created in the context of fishing in Alaska

In 1976 the USA released an Act extending their political jurisdiction from 100 to 200 miles offshore, making state property now extending far beyond Alaska due to the presence of islands across the North Pacific Ocean (Mansfield, 2004, p.566). Until then, fishing was mostly done by small fishing boats, but with this act and the addition of the 1998 American Fisheries Act (hereafter AFA), fishing in the region of Alaska drastically changed, with the privatisation of parts of the ocean. In just 25 years, fishing went from a domestic, small-scale capacity in a national commons, to a large industry with enclosed fishing schools. The AFA named specific vessels which had the right to fish in certain waters, and the pre-existing North Pacific Fishery Management Council (hereafter “the council”) was appointed to determine yearly fishing quotas by interested parties. This made the region closed to any new entrants, unless the designated vessels were sold and exchanged with their fishing rights. The original idea for the AFA

was based on the economic rational idea that sees inefficient use of resources where there is no privatisation (Mansfield, 2004, p.567).

The AFA was passed without much debate or consultation from fishers and fishing communities or regulators (Mansfield, 2004, p.568). Through neoliberal practice, the AFA turned a public resource which enabled people to make a living into a privatised commodity reserved to a small, defined, closed class of firms and individuals. Meaning that through making fisheries private property, fishing firms could now lease their vessels, and sell their quota, thus making profit without going fishing (Mansfield, 2004, p.569). This practice had been defined by Marx as the reinvestment of the surplus value of production, which he named "self-valorisation" (Nichols, 2019b, p.56), which illustrates the exploitative character of the AFA with its capital accumulation. This has a practical effect on indigenous peoples of Alaska, as a daily quota is reserved to them in the AFA for their private use. The American North Pacific fisheries are the world's largest, and are valued at \$1 billion yearly (McBeath, 2004, p. 523). Globally, fisheries were valued at \$406 billion for the year 2019 (FAO, 2021). The daily fishing quota for indigenous persons in coastal Alaska is of 2 fish a day per person, which is not enough for feeding and economic activity of exchange for other materials (Stowers, 2016, p.51).

The AFA can be seen as a "reregulation" of the ocean to protect market mechanisms through neoliberal reforms, which is a neoliberal contradiction to *laissez-faire* (Mansfield, 2004, p.572). Polanyi defined this as "double movement", where due to the fragile state of the market, policies have to be implemented to maintain it "Laissez-faire was planned; planning was not" (Polanyi, [1944] 2001, p.147). Consequently, to the adoption of the AFA, a double movement was seen with multiple new regional regulations coming into existence to protect the environment and people; for instance, regulations addressing Steller sea lions' declining populations in the 1970s-1990s, which are significant to indigenous peoples' cultural traditions, attracted intense scrutiny and lawsuits (McBeath, 2004). Literature on these lawsuits reveals that scholars see the move towards privatisation as increased community control over ocean resources (McBeath, 2004; Jackson *et al.*, 2024); however, Alaska "fishing communities" are a narrow group of firms with fishing rights chosen by the AFA and whose organisation is governed by a non-democratic council (Mansfield, 2004, p. 577). The AFA applied in coastal Alaska is an example of the strong hold of the state on the economic present and future of the region, with close ties to corporations (Wolin, 1989, p.149).

Beyond the coastal region of Alaska, indigenous peoples are impacted by possible fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean (CAO), a high sea commons not part of any state jurisdiction (Molenaar, 2024, p.1-2). An international law treaty on fisheries, namely the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement (CAOFA), aims to prevent unregulated fisheries appearing in the region; it was motivated in part due to the lack of information of climate change on the ecosystem, and as of today, its main rule is all fishing is prohibited in the CAO unless previously agreed (*ibid.*, p.4). The agreement came into force in 2021 after two rounds of negotiations with five main Arctic states and five states with high economic interests; representatives of Arctic Indigenous peoples were present to

advocate for the continued participation of indigenous peoples on all matters relating to fishing in the Arctic (Molenaar, 2024, p.2). The CAOFA is significant as it recalls the 2007 UNDRIP, which the United States initially voted against adopting, but adopted in 2010. The ratification of the CAOFA by the USA can be seen as an agreement to the UNDRIP which acknowledges indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination (article 3), the right to participate in matters that would affect their rights (article 8) and the recognition of their rights being extended to coastal regions (article 25) (UN, 2007). The CAOFA however does not acknowledge the right of indigenous peoples to participate as a dedicated body for Arctic indigenous peoples, but as part of a delegation of CAOFA parties, which downgrades them as a subset of Arctic residents (Molenaar, 2024, p. 6-7). The specific needs and impacts on indigenous peoples are addressed, which starts from the point that they see themselves as part of the ecosystem (*ibid.*, p.1 and 8). As the agreement and latest COP are recent, it is unlikely that operations or regulations have been devolved in the region in a significant way. While Arctic indigenous people do not have their own independent voice in the decision-making of future COPs, they can participate within delegations of the states where they reside. It seems unlikely that they would vote for exploratory fishing in the high seas as they are not themselves engaged in those activities (*ibid.*, p.9). The organisation of the AFA and the CAOFA highlight the limited relation that Alaska Natives can have with those institutions, and the limited representation in their political collective identity, on land that they occupy (Moore, 2016).

In this section the neoliberalisation of what is the subsistence economy of Alaska Natives was shown. The extraction of fish, a natural resource, is part of a global system of trade where Alaska Natives are sub-state actors. In the next section we look at how postcolonial and climate justice intertwine and how Alaska Natives may further their claims on land and natural resources.

5.1.2 Postcolonial and climate justice for indigenous peoples of Alaska

It is estimated that Alaska Natives have occupied the region for 7,000 years, where their subsistence came mostly from fishing and hunting sea mammals (Stowers, 2016, p.43). Today there are five Alaskan Native villages where around 400 to 1,500 people still live on this subsistence lifestyle. The Supreme Court in 1978 reduced the power domestic indigenous nations had which was contrary to policies that granted them self-determination; in 1993 the Secretary of Commerce took away the right of indigenous tribes to fish and hunt on their land (Stowers, 2016, p.44). The Alaska Native villages filed lawsuits, appealed and to this day have lost, with the courts denying them rights to hunt or fish on their land, because USA laws preclude any previous treaties made with indigenous peoples, which is an example of the ahistorical contractualism presented in chapter 3 (Carothers, 2011, p.220; Stowers, 2016, p.44-45). This has significance for indigenous peoples, as their culture relies on passing down ancestral knowledge through generations of fishing and hunting routes and spots, and seasonal subsistence lifestyles on which some of the indigenous peoples depend to feed their families or trade for other materials.

By adding a historical and postcolonial lens to North Pacific fisheries, it is found that the Alaskan fisheries management have colonial heritage (Richmond,

2013, p.1071). Fisheries' managers are confronted with making complex choices on quota attributions depending on estimated seasonal fish populations. In the daily management of fisheries, historical colonisation can be overlooked as being part of the base for the regime that their structural management relies on (*ibid.*). Alaska Natives have experienced a double colonisation, first by the Russians in the mid-1700s where Alaska Natives population declined by an estimated 80% when many became slaves in the hunting and processing of seal furs (*ibid.*). Russia then sold Alaska to the USA without prior information or consent by Alaska Natives. The USA acquired new territory without the consent or knowledge of indigenous peoples and implemented regulations to claim control over resources and lands; regulations which operate on the base of profit, starkly in opposition to the subsistence economy and traditional indigenous ways (Kočí and Baar, 2021, p.195). Several federal and state regulations are in place to protect Alaska's indigenous peoples' fishing subsistence economy; however, it is not enough to sustain other activities related to the economic fishing activity of trading fish for other resources and using resources in social or religious ways (Richmond, 2013, p.1073). There is a gap between what USA regulations allow and what indigenous people need; indigenous peoples struggle for their land in legal cases, but courts rule do not recognise the seasonal use that Alaska Native villagers make of the land as being sufficient to gain access rights (Richmond, 2013, p.1074; Stowers, 2016, p.67). Procedural justice recognises private property in the fisheries and ruled against restoring indigenous peoples hunting and fishing privileges to levels sufficient to sustain their culture.

This erosion of commercial fishing access for indigenous people has presented struggles for indigenous cultures; in some cases, industrial fishing and fisheries management has depleted culturally important fish populations (Richmond, 2013, p.1072), which EUE would see as the depletion of a resource through extraction, no longer available for the cultural, economic and social use of the indigenous peoples. Continental indigenous tribes do have historical treaties with the USA state, which led to favourable court ruling and fishing quotas distribution; indigenous groups of coastal Alaska do not have such signed treaties due to their different history (*ibid.*, 2013, p. 1073), therefore, they have to rely on different procedures to fulfil their rights relating to fishing and culture. Article 26 of the 2007 UNDRIP recognises the right of indigenous peoples to "develop and control" their ancestral lands and their resources and recommends that states recognise the "traditions and land tenure systems of the indigenous peoples concerned" (UN, 2007, p.19). In the fisheries context, this means that indigenous peoples should have the right to participate in the management of fisheries for a sustainable reproduction of wildlife and fulfilment of economic and cultural traditions. However, the UNDRIP is not legally binding for its signatory states, and while Alaska Natives do hold a sub-state indigenous status, they are primarily seen as American citizens in international and domestic law.

5.1.3 Discussion

In *the Great Transformation* (2001, p.300-304), Polanyi speaks of the importance of land tenure for the survival of culture:

"Cultural degradation can be stopped only by social measures, incommensurable with economic standards of life, such as the restoration of tribal land tenure or the isolation of the community from the influence of capitalistic market methods"
(Polanyi, 2001, p.302)

The Alaska case study points to the incompatibility of two different institutional systems, where the living conditions of indigenous peoples of Alaska are an example of economic exploitation, and disadvantage over non-indigenous peoples, and an example of economic change due to the neoliberalisation of their land and resources, within a global trade system, which affects their traditions of subsistence economy.

Marx had talked about the "force" that was used as an economic power for capital accumulation, which translated into the dispossession of land, enclosing property that was previously a commons, by the organised state (Marx, 1976, p.915-916). In the case of colonies, this force is institutionalised violence, which persists today. A National Institute of Justice funded study shows that institutionalised violence exists in Alaska, as indigenous tribes do not have jurisdiction to prosecute criminal offences of non-indigenous persons, whether committed in or outside tribe reservations; this means that non-indigenous persons have immunity, and that indigenous victims may lose days of pay or school days (Rosay, 2016). This creates an institutionalised hierarchy of race within the USA where Alaska Natives are made unequal despite being American citizens.

What Alaskan indigenous peoples face now is challenges with working as sub-state actors within western systems of resource management (Carothers, 2011, p.219-220), within a global unequal ecological and economic exchange, that profits AFA-chosen firms and depletes certain species of fish. The word "community" is found in the literature to speak of those fishing firms with permits (McBeath, 2004; Jackson *et al.*, 2024), with the assumption that this includes indigenous peoples; however, few references are made about the lack of consultation of indigenous peoples and their needs, or about the existing support available for indigenous groups (Mansfield, 2004; Richmond, 2013). Similar indigenous issues are present elsewhere, for instance in Iceland two lifelong indigenous fishermen became bankrupt due to the imposition of quotas and similarly lost legal cases in court (Carothers, 2011, p.220). Some social movements resist the privatisation of fishing rights but because they present a radical challenge to current management systems, their success is limited (*ibid.*).

5.2 The case of Greenland

This section will expand in its first part on the decolonisation of Greenland and the associated self-determination of Greenlanders in becoming a fully independent post-colonial state. The second part focuses on the EUE coming from extractive industries in Greenland with regards to rare-earth minerals and associated indigenous governance of land and resources.

5.2.1 Decolonising Greenland

Greenland is a territory of Denmark, part of the Community of the Realm (Kočí and Baar, 2021, p.189-190). It was colonised by Denmark in 1721, which is when colonial administration in Greenland seized powers over trading, whaling and mining. Gradually, Greenland has become more independent, and has recently gained self-governance, which grants it control over its mining resources through its Self-Government Act, which also reserves Greenland a future claim to independence (Naalakkersuisut, Government of Greenland, 2009). However, Denmark is still financing Greenland with an annual finance plan. Greenland is now looking to gain complete independence, for which it needs to form a self-sustaining economy. As part of this move towards independence, the Greenlandic government started a reconciliation procedure in 2014, which was met by a refusal to participate by Denmark (UN, 2022). This reconciliation has for its end goal the recognition by Denmark of its past racial, social and economic injustices on Greenland based on their socially-constructed race (*ibid.*). Denmark's colonisation program has been one of assimilation of the Natives (Broderstad and Dahl, 2004, p. 85-86). Several scandals are part of the proceedings for justice in the UN process for the reconciliation commission between Denmark and Greenland, which appeared in the decade after 1953 when Greenland was integrated as a county of Denmark; this was a period of intense control and modernisation of Greenland under Danish cultural society standards, rather than an era of post-colonialism with deferred powers (*ibid.*). Among the injustices, differential salary scales were applied depending on ethnic belonging, children were separated from their families in Greenland and sent to Denmark, women were fertilised through a mass campaign of fertility coils during medical examinations without the consent or knowledge of girls (4,500 women estimated, half the fertile Greenland population) (*ibid.*; UN, 2022). This last case is now subject to an ongoing legal case between a group of 143 Greenlandic women and the Danish state as portrayed in the press by the Guardian "Greenlandic women sue Danish state for contraceptive 'violation'" (Bryant, 2024). A recognition of these colonial events would be a first step in acknowledging the hierarchy of race that subjects the collective identity of Greenlanders.

These recent injustices illustrate the fragile status of Greenland becoming a new country in the international scene due to its recent colonial history. In the next section a focus on what Greenland wants for its development is looked at.

5.2.2 Sustainability or ecologically unequal exchange in Greenland?

In this section a discussion about the language and politics of sustainability is offered, while EUE theory highlights unequal trade and a risk for neocolonialism to happen in Greenland in the context of green technology extractive industries. EUE has the potential to reveal the impacts of global trade at regional levels, and here the focus is on the governance of rare-earth minerals in Greenland, and specifically how this affects indigenous peoples, or Greenlanders.

What is most important about using the concept of sustainability, is getting its definition right. In Arctic constructive discourse, sustainability is at the centre of political discourse to preserve natural habitats, while "sustaining" Greenland

economically (Pram Gad, Jacobsen and Strandsbjerg, 2019, p.1). In critical discourse, the concept of sustainability is seen as a way of keeping existing hierarchies in place, for instance keeping the global South poor (Clark *et al.*, 2019). Redclift (2018) demonstrated how sustainable development is an oxymoron, as it is trying to commodify nature and its self-reproducing capabilities, while economies and technologies grow and transform. With EUE the focus instead can be on the trade of irreplaceable resources (that are not self-reproducing in the natural world), and the associated pollution or negative impacts on the environment and social sector. These resources may be returned to the place of origin but as a transformed commodity with a surplus value. While core countries want to gain access to these rare-earths in Greenland for the development of their green technologies at home, there are questions on whether their extraction might constitute neocolonialism (Kočí and Baar, 2021, p.192; Henriques and Böhm, 2022, p.1).

Greenland in the 2000s did not yet consider itself a developed country; like periphery countries it wanted the ability to develop (Bjørst, 2019, p.123, p.127-128). In this decade, as Greenland was negotiating its self-government Act with Denmark (2009), economic "self-sustainability" was at the priority, leaving GHG emissions reduction as a later commitment. This is significant because Greenland, a periphery country, relies on the industrial sector to meet its development and independence goals (Bjørst, 2019, p.127). At the UNCCC COP16 of 2010, Greenland could not speak independently as it is not a sovereign state, but instead acted as a delegation of Denmark. Denmark showcased both the potentials for green technologies in the core and Greenland as victims of global climate change (*ibid.*), posing the dilemma of coercing Greenland into an ecologically unequal exchange for its resources to this end (Bunker, 2019). Greenland on the other hand, using the UNDRIP (UN, 2007), asked for a differential development as a developing country, with higher GHG emissions; this was a way for Greenland to speak independently despite not being considered an independent UN party, which used the UNCCC global climate change agenda to recentre the debate on national development and emission rights (Bjørst, 2019, p.132).

5.2.3 Discussion

Greenland's government priority is a growing economy that can support the creation of jobs and infrastructures, and eventually support an independent Greenland (Bjørst, 2019, p.131-132). However, as EUE tells us this image is incomplete. As we have seen in previous chapters of this study, extractive industries create temporary jobs, and temporary infrastructures that cannot be used at new extractive sites or may not be convertible for other uses due to their distance to other services or places where labour is available (Bunker, 2019). Additionally, as we have seen, EUE tells us about the permanent loss of non-self-reproducing resources in extractive industries, meaning that once uranium or other mined resources leave Greenland, they are not reproducible in nature like for instance agricultural resources. Therefore, EUE tells us that extractive industries needs to be accounted for differentially for the development of green technologies in core countries, as without this neocolonialism is a prospect (Henriques and Böhm, 2022). From the literature,

there seems to be a gap between Greenland's government initiatives and the voice of the people of Greenland, as the Special Rapporteur to the UN reported on:

"The Special Rapporteur observed a lack of established mechanisms to implement Inuit's right to free, prior, and informed consent, including when allocating tourism concessions, implementing business projects, and adopting legislative and administrative acts in Greenland."
(UN, 2023)

There are four different voices: (1) Greenland politicians present as wanting development through extractive industries, (2) Denmark showcasing Greenland as global warming victims and advocating for green technologies through Greenland's mining, (3) academics of critical discourse warning about neocolonialism in the injustices of trade, (4) academics of constructive discourse who speak of the privileges (Bjørst, 2019, p. 128-129) and unique degree of representation that indigenous peoples enjoy in the Arctic (Scopelliti, 2021, p. 64). However, a fifth voice is missing, the constituents of the indigenous peoples. Seeing that referendums have shut down mining projects (Henriques and Böhm, 2022), and policies have reopened the rights of foreign extraction of rare-earths (Pram Gad, Jacobsen and Strandsbjerg, 2019), it is difficult to make sense of what direction Greenlanders want to take; time will tell, and further research is required.

5.3 Discussion and summary

Recent fishing regulations by USA congress and the federal states preclude coastal Alaska Natives' rights in the use of their ancestral lands (Stowers, 2016, p.69; Dodds and Nuttall, 2019, p.230). Internationally, indigenous rights are supported by the UNDRIP (2007), but these rights are not legally-binding inside member states (Scopelliti, 2021, p.64). In Greenland, indigenous peoples represent the majority of the population, and the government is Inuit however, the periodic change in direction on the extraction of rare-earths shows that the future of this industry is uncertain, even though Greenland wants to develop its economy to become independent from Denmark.

On the international scene, indigenous peoples have permanent participant status in the Arctic Council; however, it is not a legally-binding organisation (Molenaar, 2024, p.6). While indigenous peoples in the Arctic do not constitute a nation, except for Greenland, they have associated into six distinct NGOs across the Arctic states and they make considerable contributions to the Arctic Council reports, for instance on "traditional knowledge", Arctic pollution, and the climate impact reports (Scopelliti, 2021, p.67). Some scholars (Bjørst, 2019, p.132; Scopelliti, 2021, p.68) see the Arctic Council as a body that has made uniform the voice of indigenous peoples and propelled them to the international scene where they have become empowered; these scholars ask the question of the existence of a homogeneous indigenous diplomacy, which would be a new political actor along with NGOs (Scopelliti, 2021, p.71-77). While this would help further indigenous voices, it is important to keep in mind that participation in the Arctic Council or the UN as a non-sub-state actor does not make legally binding laws devolved at the state level. In 2008 the Arctic five coastal states

(USA, Canada, Denmark, Norway and Russia) met for the Ilulissat Summit (in Greenland) where they reaffirmed their commitment to the state sovereignty system of the Law of the Sea, for the settlement of any potential dispute (*ibid.*). This led to two Inuit declarations in 2009 and 2011, respectively on sovereignty in the Arctic, and on resources development principles in the Arctic, where indigenous peoples reaffirmed their legitimacy in participating in the region (Scopelliti, 2021, p. 71). These documents and participations are evidence of a transnational struggle of indigenous peoples to have their voices heard and a request to be included on the basis of a rights-based discourse for their land and natural resources.

From a postcolonial Marxist view, the participation of indigenous peoples in the drafting of reports for the Arctic Council is an unequal exchange, as indigenous peoples give knowledge without gaining much in return from member states, other than recognition, and a growing list of failed legal cases for land and resource rights; this constitutes a form of exploitation as Nichols (2019b) writes:

"But it is also the employ of this hierarchical relationship for the compulsory transfer of benefit from the subordinate partner to the agent or agents in a position of superiority. Exploitation mobilizes the creative-productive powers of subordinates for the well-being and improvement of governing parties." (Nichols, 2019b, p.55)

While Greenland's politicians prioritise economic development and ask for a differentiated approach to development and GHG emissions, Inuit NGOs represent the indigenous peoples desires for climate change mitigation. While the *Brundtland report* (1987) focuses on present and future generations, there is still plenty to be done in terms of social, economic, environmental and political 'sustainabilities', due to the unique contexts encountered across the Arctic region, starting with coastal Alaskan villages and Greenland.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of the dissertation's objectives

The goal of this dissertation was to find out what governance indigenous peoples of coastal Alaska and Greenland have over natural resources and land they consider theirs. The main argument was that capital accumulation has been a vector in unequal climate change and trade. Using a postcolonial Marxist discourse and EUE theory, the study aimed to find (1) what is specific to the presentation of contractualism in settler colonial societies, and how this impacts justice claims, (2) what neoliberalisation and green sustainability discourse does to resource claims of indigenous peoples that they culturally need, (3) what measures and social movements exist regionally and internationally to protect these indigenous self-governance claims.

6.2 What knowledge was acquired

The study found limited governance powers for indigenous peoples, due to their sub-state status. While they are citizens of states where they reside, Alaska Natives' indigenous status works to their disadvantage when it comes to fishing quotas, as indigenous quotas determine that they cannot extract sufficient quantities for their subsistence economy (Stowers, 2016, p.51). A way out is through organising in labour unions locally, or transnationally, as other cases of unfavourable quotas on economic and social capacities appear elsewhere (Carothers, 2011, p.220). In Greenland, the indigenous status of Greenlanders continues to have an effect on their claims for reconciliation with Denmark (UN, 2022). Climate change politics are used by Denmark to promote green technologies in UN talks (Bjørst, 2019, p.127), while Greenland uses its indigenous status (UN,2007) to speak independently in climate talks where it is not a state but a sub-state actor (Bjørst, 2019, p.132). Greenland politicians seem to want to go ahead with rare-earth mining, for which they have the governance of since 2009 (Naalakkersuisut, Government of Greenland, 2009).

Postcolonial scholars warn of the mining in Greenland becoming neocolonialism, through a new form of extractive colonisation by core states, with exploitation through cheap local labour (Kočí and Baar, 2021, p.192; Henriques and Böhm, 2022, p.1), in an unequal exchange (Clark *et al.*, 2019, p.200-202). In Alaska, they warn of cultural degradation and pauperisation (Polanyi, 2001, p.302), and a neoliberalisation of nature as an enclosed commodity which enables corporate profit through leasing private property (Mansfield, 2004, p.569), which Marx named self-valorisation. These two systems together, exploitation in Greenland, and self-valorisation of surplus value in Alaska, was to Marx the true expression of capital accumulation (Nichols, 2019b, p.56).

The dissertation demonstrated that despite the climate transition, capital accumulation is still a main driver for international relations. Internationally, the UN (1987) recognises the need for sustainable measures, however the incentive for application is limited due to its non-binding status. The Arctic Council gives a voice to indigenous peoples through their permanent participation; however, this could be seen as a form of exploitation of their knowledge without giving them much in exchange (Nichols, 2019b, p.55). Domestically, contractualism applied on indigenous peoples who are citizens in the country they reside, but with a different and downgraded status due to their historical socially-constructed racial belonging (Bhambra, 2020, p.2), does not help make them equal to other non-indigenous citizens and instead erodes their historical claims to collective self-determination (Nichols, 2019a, p.245).

6.3 Reflections and further angles to deepen the research

While some scholars of EUE see no way out of the ever-expanding force of capitalism to drive further inequalities (Dahms and Frey, 2019, p.313-314), they do agree with radical social movements in the necessity to take a first step towards equalising human rights and ecological exchange globally, or rethinking democracy and individual identity which has been slipping away from its originally intended participatory form, which could confer collective needs for

health, education, and access to resources (Wolin, 1984, p.149-150). As Dahms and Frey (2019) write pessimistically:

"The evidence suggests that the retreat of democracy predicted during the last decade [...] is continuing [...] The retreat and weakening of democratic processes and institutions do not bode well for efforts to reign in, redirect, or contain the process of EUE."
(Dahms and Frey, 2019, p. 309)

For indigenous persons to gain improved status in the societies where they live, either a truer form of democracy is needed, or state sovereignty needs to be updated to give indigenous peoples a stronger claim to the land and resources that they see as theirs (Moore, 2016, p.454).

Beyond what contractualism means for political philosophy, it affects the political conscience of citizens (Wolin, 1989, p.138-141). It would be interesting to find out to what extent the capitalist mode of production and trade is perpetuating cultural hegemonies in the neo-Gramscian sense. Gramsci ([1916]1975b) developed the concept of 'culture' to mean the capacity of an individual to know themselves and others to understand their condition; with this 'culture' Gramsci wanted the proletariat to become aware of the coercive and consented forms that the bourgeoisie implement for dominance, which he named as 'hegemony'. Gramsci defended that 'hegemony' worked through the market as well as through culture, ideology and politics, therefore a critical analysis of a society needed to be extended to all these parts. Using this analytical framework, with a Coxian angle (1993a) on international trade, it would be interesting to find out about individual's positions on their relation to democratic tools (Wolin, 1989), and their awareness of Gramscian 'culture' and 'hegemony' in their daily lives. Hence studying hegemonic and counter-hegemonic movements with respect to the claims that groups hold on natural resources and land. It could constitute in a survey on neoliberal hegemony as a dynamic historic bloc (Cox, 1993a, p.60-61) where agents are individuals, communities, states, institutions and TNCs.

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