

## **Project Title**

Exploring the relationship between climate change, violence and inequality under contemporary neoliberalism: A case study of Papua, Indonesia

## **Project description**

I plan to situate my PhD project within the well-established research field that explores the social impacts of environmental degradation. My project focuses on how climate change interplays with inequality and violence. I will address this primary research question through analysing the understudied case of Papua, Indonesia which has rich natural resources that are extracted and has experienced high levels of inequality and violence. The research will focus on Indonesia because it is both a key regional power with the largest and fastest-growing economy in Southeast Asia, but also one that relies heavily on its natural resources (Krampe and Nordqvist, 2018). The Papua region is made of two provinces named, according to the official government terms, Papua and Papua Barat. I plan to explore three key sub questions within this region:

1. What impact has climate change had on the Papuan population in terms of rising violence and inequalities?
2. How has Indonesia's status as an 'emerging market' affected responses to climate change in Papua?
3. What gendered, ethnicised and racialised impact has long-term extractive industrialisation had in Papua?

My hypotheses include that climate change has exacerbated violence and inequality in the region of Papua due to the undercurrent of extractive capitalism, which is based on a long history of colonialism, racism, and sexism. I will consider how climate-related violence and inequality has escalated between groups in society but also between the state and society, subjugating the marginalised indigenous population further. The three proposed questions will enable me to explore the interplay and intersections of various factors driving extractive capitalism globally and specifically, in Papua, Indonesia.

To explore these questions, I propose to take a framework of postcolonial feminism and intimacy-geopolitics. This combined approach will enable me to conduct intersectional analyses. Intimacy-geopolitics as a framework highlights that conservation efforts aimed at local people may overlook the role of global structural violence and inequality, whilst placing disproportionate blame onto local people (Howson, 2018). The research will also draw upon an analytical framework, developed by a group of scholars from the University of Hamburg (Scheffran et al., 2012), to analyse how climate change interconnects with violence and inequality. The framework highlights interactions of factors associated with climate change that can

contribute to collective violence under four main categories: natural resources, human security, societal stability, and the climate system. The project also builds on research showing how climate change has exacerbated violence and inequality against vulnerable minority groups, whose voices tend to be overlooked at every stage of climate policy (Levy et al., 2017: p.241; Baird, 2008: p.1, 11; UNGA, 2018: p.12). This situation is clear when looking at the case of indigenous peoples and local communities in Indonesia who, as the UN Special Rapporteur in 2018 established, “face disproportionate barriers to accessing land”, particularly the Malind people in Papua (UNGA, 2018: p.12).

The key sources I plan to consult include academic literature surrounding problems of environmental racism, which show how climate change disproportionately impacts the marginalised in the Global South and former colonies based upon extraction and inequality. In particular, Tilley’s (2020) and Pulido’s (2017) postcolonial work will be central to this project. Further, the research draws on literature surrounding racial capitalism and super-exploitation based upon race, ethnicity, gender and geopolitics (Sassen, 2014; Jackson, 2014; Bhattacharyya, 2018; Mies, 2014; Federici, 2012; Virdee, 2019). Many scholars within postcolonial feminist literature have outlined the relationship between climate change, violence and inequality as one inextricably linked to extractive capitalism, which will provide a basis for the research.

The project proposes to focus on a case study from Southeast Asia given the lack of research into the security impact of environmental degradation within this region, despite being particularly susceptible to climate change and its socio-economic impacts, especially at local levels (Krampe and Nordqvist, 2018: p.9). A report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2015 estimated that Southeast Asia could face more socio-economic losses than most regions in the world due to the climate crisis (Raitzer et al., 2015). As the Hamburg framework highlights, the negative impact (and likely exacerbation) such a trend has on human security and societal stability could lead to an increase in collective violence (Scheffran et al., 2012).

Indonesia has an important role to play in advancing climate policy, particularly in protecting Papua’s forests as the region contains the largest virgin rainforest left in Indonesia and therefore Southeast Asia (RFN, 2020). Indonesia’s colonial history and rich extractive resources have resulted in its status as an ‘emerging market’ (Tilley, 2020), which has influenced (and restricted) its response to the climate crisis. For example, Indonesia strives to maintain its position as the world’s largest palm oil producer, a product which increasingly comes from Papua since forests in the Western archipelago (such as Sumatra and Java) have already been largely depleted or were too densely developed for new oil palm plantations (Kesaulija et al., 2014).

While the connections between climate change, extractive industries and harm to indigenous and vulnerable communities is a global problem, Papua presents a

particularly severe but also understudied case. I seek to investigate this case because Papua has had enduring conflict and violence across the region for over 50 years (Blades, 2020), extremely high levels of inequality - in 2017, poverty rates in Indonesia were the highest in Papua and Papua Barat (BPS, 2018: p.212) - and has consistently experienced some of the worst impacts of climate change across the Pacific and Southeast Asia, particularly in relation to its deforestation for palm oil (350 Pacific, 2016). Further examples of climate impacts include Southern Papua's particular susceptibility to flooding, and across Papua the occurrence of disease is the highest in Indonesia alongside the region of Nusa Tenggara (UNDP, 2009). According to 350 Pacific (2016), a grassroots NGO based in Fiji, there has been insufficient research into the impact of climate change in Papua overall. My research project aims to contribute to an emerging body of work focusing on the social and security impact of climate change in Papua in relation to violence and inequality.

I propose to use an interdisciplinary and mixed methods approach to explore my core research questions, using both quantitative and qualitative analyses. I will draw on academic literature and local climate and government records, and propose to develop a unique analysis via data collection from archives, and surveys or interviews with local people within Papua as appropriate. I will likely use descriptive statistics but where feasible, I would like to create a database from data gathered through surveys. Archival data collection will be needed to examine the trends of climate change in Papua over time, particularly comparing the late colonial, post-independence and post-democratic government regimes, and correlate this with data on violence and inequality. Much of this data is only available in the state and NGO archives in the Netherlands, Jakarta and local collections in Papua itself.

Crucially, surveys and interviews will be gathered via a participatory approach, working with local and regional NGOs such as Jaringan Advokasi Sosial dan Lingkungan Tanah Papua (JASOIL) – a local NGO, working with regional NGOs like PUSAKA and international NGOs such as Forest Peoples Programme, to support indigenous and farming communities impacted by palm oil plantations in Papua (Forest Peoples, 2011). Working in partnership with local NGOs to formulate questions will enable the research to be guided by people's wants and needs, since local people best know the land, power structures and the changes they want to see (if any) to their environment (Murray Li, 2008). Each interview or survey would be designed specifically to the locality, taking account of cultural, lingual and structural differences. I will discuss in detail with my supervisor the ethical and practical considerations and ensure that I conduct the research in the most appropriate and least invasive way possible.

My proposed research project is important, timely and original. I hope that my research will have an impact on both theory and policy. The research particularly seeks to raise awareness of the importance of Papua's forests, which must be

recognised urgently by the Indonesian government. There has been a lack of research into the impact of climate change on the security of Papua specifically and Southeast Asia more widely (350 Pacific, 2016; Krampe and Nordqvist, 2018). This needs addressing with the aim of tangible transformation, creating changes in perspective on climate change as a real and important threat to humanity (anthropocentric) and not just our environment (ecocentric).

**Timescale:**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Months</i>	<i>Goals</i>	<i>Activities</i>
<b>1</b>	1-3	- Writing the introduction and structure (this will change as the research develops) [approx. 8,000 words]	- Reading each week - Write first chapter (introduction) - Continue with learning Indonesian throughout first year of PhD project
	3-10	- Literature review and reading, analysing and writing around as much literature as possible on the topic [approx. 12,000 words] - Drafting ethics forms and planning interviews (identifying gaps in the literature/data)	- Reading each week - Begin second chapter (literature review)
	10-12	- Methodology and research questions section [approx. 10-12,000 words]	- Reading each week - Finish second chapter (methodology)
<b>2</b>	1-3	- Preparing for fieldwork in Indonesia - Revising methods and focus	- Plan fieldwork - Submit ethics application - Apply for a research visa
	3-9	- Spending time in Indonesia, collating primary data	- Conduct interviews and surveys as appropriate by working with local NGOs, and meeting government and local officials
	9-12	- Writing section one of results and discussion (main body of the thesis) [approx. 12,500 words]	- Write third chapter (section one of results and discussion): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Outline the relationship between climate change, violence and inequality</li> <li>● Climate change in Papua – what are the impacts?</li> <li>● The response at local, national, regional and international levels</li> </ul>

3	1-3	- Writing section two of results and discussion (main body of the thesis) [approx. 12,500 words]	- Write fourth chapter (section two of results and discussion): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Indonesia's position as an extractive/emerging market</li> <li>● Economic and environmental impacts of extractive industry in Papua</li> <li>● Cultural identity, philosophical debate</li> </ul>
	3-6	- Writing section three of results and discussion (main body of the thesis) [approx. 12,500 words]	- Write fifth chapter (section three of results and discussion): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discussion on gender, ethnicity, race and geopolitical position in relation to extractive capitalism</li> <li>● Findings of fieldwork research – who is most impacted? What is the response and what is needed?</li> <li>● Local power networks and local people's role in climate activism</li> </ul>
	6-9	- Conclusion [approx. 10,000 words]	- Write sixth chapter (conclusion)
	9-12	- Proofreading - Final discussions with supervisor - Estimated total word count: 77-79,500 words	- Revise and fill gaps - Any interviews to follow up with? - Ensure the thesis is up to date with all current literature and data - Rewriting the introduction with updated findings if needed

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