

Decolonising Ecologies: Unlocking Thrivability Through Indigenous Knowledge

Over the last nine months, THRIVE Project researchers, alongside a diverse team of collaborators and strategic partners, carried out an extensive investigation into the intricate dynamics surrounding thresholds and allocations within [ecological and social systems](#). The emergent understanding unlocked the value of indigenous knowledge through systems thinking. The science of systems and systems theory is most notably attributed to seminal authors Forrester, Senge, Ackoff and Meadows ([Academy for Systems Change](#)). This comprehensive inquiry is characterized by meticulous research, in-depth discussions, and collaborative analysis. It unearthed several insights and revelations, shedding light on the complex interplay between cultural contexts, colonial legacies, and sustainability imperatives. A [values-based innovative](#) approach was employed to gauge a necessary and sufficient shift to [thrivability](#).

Understanding Thresholds and Allocations

At its core, the investigation delved into the fundamental concepts of [thresholds and allocations](#). These thresholds represent critical boundaries delineating the limits of ecological and social systems, beyond which they risk toppling into unsustainable states. Allocations, on the other hand, pertain to the equitable distribution of resources and responsibilities to ensure the continued well-being and resilience of these systems.

The original text highlights how thresholds mark danger zones where sustainable ecological and social systems risk collapsing into unhealthy ones. When this happens they may no longer sustain [urban life](#) and [well-being](#). Furthermore, this understanding forms the foundation of the investigation's exploration into how thresholds are determined, respected, or breached. It also guides how responsibilities for managing [impacts on vital capital resources](#) are allocated. These impacts are best exemplified in the [THRIVE Framework's Ciambella Charts](#) as seen below. Impacts within these limits, the outer environmental ceiling and inner social floor are sustainable. Impacts outside of the coloured region are not.

Ciambella Chart



THRIVE Framework Ciambella Chart with the coloured arcs delineating the “Danger Zone”.

Source: [THRIVE Framework](#).

Global Challenges and Systemic Risks

The investigation underscored the gravity of the global challenges facing humanity. The findings revealed that [humanity is currently transgressing](#) six out of nine ecological ceiling thresholds and all twelve social foundation thresholds. This alarming reality highlights the urgency of addressing the causes of ecological degradation and social inequality. It also elucidates how the misallocation of responsibility for threshold transgressions often stems from predominant cultural contexts characterized by [colonialism](#), [slavery](#), [racism](#), [capitalism](#), and [sexism](#).

The investigation builds on existing research findings that indicate humanity’s unsustainable trajectory in breaching ecological and social thresholds. In identifying the systemic [risks](#) posed by these transgressions, the investigation emphasizes the imperative of [collaborative efforts](#). These address the underlying causes and mitigate the impacts on both ecological and social systems.

Unpacking Root Causes and Cultural Contexts

A critical aspect of the investigation involved unpacking the root causes of ecological overshoot and social system undershoot. It became evident that these issues are deeply intertwined with the predominant hegemonic cultural contexts, which perpetuate patterns of unsustainability and [injustice](#). Therefore, to effectively address these challenges, the investigation emphasized the importance of adopting a decolonial approach that centres on Indigenous knowledge and marginalized voices. By dismantling Western dominance – exploitative extractive industries and [consumeristic capitalist economies](#) – and embracing pluriversal perspectives, the path to [sustainability and beyond](#) can be reimagined.

The investigation drew from the original text's insights and delved into the complexities of addressing root causes. These include colonial legacies, systemic [inequalities](#), and cultural biases. The investigation also advocates for holistic approaches that challenge dominant cultural norms and centres diverse perspectives in sustainability efforts. In short we acknowledge the interconnectedness of ecological and social issues.



[Image by freepik](#)

Dynamics of Indigenous Knowledge and Coloniality

One of the key insights from the investigation was the pervasive influence of coloniality dynamics in threshold and allocation determinations. However, despite efforts to counteract colonial influences, initiatives such as the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC Loss and Damage Fund, continue to grapple with challenges in implementation. The investigation underlined the complexities of navigating [colonial legacies](#) while promoting justice and sustainability on a global scale.

Additionally, through the examination of case studies and real-world examples, the investigation highlights the persistent challenges posed by coloniality in sustainability governance and decision-making. These colonial legacies continue to shape thresholds and allocations in ways that perpetuate systemic [inequalities and injustices](#) — from the [unequal distribution of resources](#) to the perpetuation of power imbalances.

Strategies for Decoloniality

The investigation proposed a range of strategies for advancing decoloniality in thresholds and allocations in response to the entrenched coloniality dynamics. These strategies include prioritizing the participation of impacted communities, integrating thriving through Indigenous knowledge into decision-making processes, and reevaluating existing [allocation metrics](#) to ensure equity and justice. Thus, the centring of diverse perspectives and the challenging hegemonic cultural norms allows for progress towards [decolonizing thresholds and allocations](#).

Therefore, building on the original text's recommendations, the investigation offers actionable steps for dismantling colonial structures and fostering inclusive and equitable approaches to [sustainability governance](#). Thus, through amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and challenging the dominant paradigms, this investigation catalyzed [transformative change](#) by determining and implementing thresholds and allocations.

Embracing Interdependence and Entanglement

Another crucial aspect explored in the investigation was the concept of [interdependence and entanglement](#) within ecological and social systems. Traditional approaches to thresholds and allocations often overlook the systemic complexities in these systems. Adopting a [systems approach](#) is necessary to frame impacts and assess such entanglements. Thus, acknowledging and embracing entanglement provides a [holistic understanding of sustainability](#), paving the way for transformative action. Furthermore, this approach instills [universal rights](#) and places humanity back onto the trajectory towards thriving.

Holistic Unlearning and Context Setting

The investigation emphasised the importance of holistic unlearning and context setting. Acknowledging the cultural context and historical legacies that shape perceptions and actions provides meaningful progress towards decolonizing thresholds and allocations. This process requires a commitment to humility, reflexivity, and ongoing dialogue to navigate the [complexities of sustainability challenges](#).



[Image by freepik](#)

Furthermore, [systems change](#) will be necessary to align society with the best path towards a flourishing future. It will not be easy but certainly necessary to avoid a

future filled with [death and destruction](#). If civilization is to thrive, we will need to apply the best scientific understanding to ensure a thrivable future.

Practical Implications and Future Directions

The investigation yielded practical implications for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders in sustainability efforts. It underscored the need for continued collaboration, advocacy, and transformative action to drive systemic change. The [report](#) is just phase one of an effort towards establishing Global Thresholds and Allocations. Looking ahead, integrating decolonial principles into policy frameworks and institutional practices will be essential for building a more just, equitable, and sustainable future for all. We see indigenous knowledge as a major contributor towards such an outcome.

In conclusion, the investigation by Morris Fedeli on behalf of [THRIVE Project](#) and colleagues including the [Taskforce on Inequality-related Financial Disclosures](#), the [World Benchmarking Alliance](#), [Future-Fit Foundation](#), [Flourishing Enterprise Institute](#), and [r3.0](#) highlights the urgency of addressing thresholds and allocations through a decolonial lens as captured in this [report](#). Unravelling the complexities of coloniality and embracing diverse perspectives illuminate the groundwork for transformative action towards sustainability and justice. As we transition towards a more equitable and sustainable world, continuous efforts to decolonize thresholds and allocations will be paramount.

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