

**Feminist Action For Climate Justice: coloniality of gender-nature on the Generation  
Equality Forum**

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## Abstract

This study takes a decolonial approach to analyze the discourse generated by the Generation Equality Forum, which aims to address gender inequality, having as one of its principal axis climate justice. The forum was launched in 2021 in Mexico and France, during the Covid-19 crisis, as an effort to address gender inequality by continuing the agreements of the Beijing Declaration and embedding them in the Sustainable Development Goals. The forum poses itself as innovative for the integration of a variety of stakeholders and organizations, ranging from civil society, governments, philanthropies, and the private sector. In this sense, this research analyzes how the forum's discourses and the groups present are constitutive of power relations, resulting in the coloniality of power, coloniality of gender, and coloniality of nature. The findings indicate that despite the forum's overarching mission of achieving gender equality and climate justice, its primary actors are private companies that perpetuate the logic of capital accumulation through cheap labor and natural resource exploitation. Furthermore, the forum's conceptualization of the relationship between gender equality and environmental justice relies on instrumentalist discourses that primarily focus on women as subjects of vulnerability. In this sense, this research uses a decolonial feminist approach to expose how the relationship between the subordination of gender and nature stems from colonialism and the now-called colonial system, where the subordination of one cannot exist without the subordination of the other; what this study calls the coloniality of gender-nature. In conclusion, we have that addressing gender inequality and the environmental catastrophe requires addressing problems at their root and from the margins, an aspect the forum does not have.

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word count for this thesis are accurate:

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Signed: Laura Vigil Escalera Mier

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## **Introduction**

Droughts, floods, fires, desertification, famine, and displacement are some of the effects of environmental degradation worldwide. Since the mid-60s, advocates, scientists, and politicians have been speaking loud and clear about the importance of the environment's well-being and, more recently, about keeping global temperatures under 1.5 Celsius degrees above pre-industrial levels (Ippc, 2022). Numerous conventions, frameworks, and agreements have developed policies and strategies to achieve this goal; however, little has changed. In addition, the first scientific research tendency on climate change was largely focused on biological, ecological, and chemical aspects. It was not until a decade after that social scientists started to get involved and investigate the linkages between climate change, environmental degradation, and the social implications; However, structural inequalities, including but not limited to gender, were at first not a primary focus (Terry, 2009). During the past two decades, scientists and politicians have recognized that environmental degradation and climate change have differentiated effects on different people, drawing a scenario where poor indigenous women of the peripheries are among the most affected by it (Castañeda Carney et al., 2020). Furthermore, research on gender inequalities in environmental sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, land, and natural resource management has helped to gather valuable data on these topics (Castañeda Carney et al., 2020).

Under this scenario, the United Nations has created different mechanisms to address environmental matters and gender equality (Burns & Daniel, 2020). Some of these efforts include the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), UN Women, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It was during the Fourth World Conference on Women that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was created. This was and still is considered one of the most important documents for advancing women's rights. However, although these mechanisms have been in place for around three decades, environmental problems do not seem to cease, and quite the opposite global temperatures have been picking up, catastrophic natural events are becoming more and more frequent, and the agreements on gender equality set by the Beijing Declaration are far from being achieved. Under this context, the UN Women, in coordination with the Governments of Mexico and France, launched the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) in 2021 to overcome gender inequality



by proposing a new interdisciplinary approach where the decision-makers come from different backgrounds with the intention of having a different result from previous efforts.

The Beijing Declaration and GEF emphasize the significance of gender equality and environmental well-being. Something that has been revolutionary in the sense that activists and academics have been trying to bring out that there is a connection between them since the 1970s, as could be observed with the Chipko movement or the green belts movement. However, the efforts and conceptualization of this link have fallen into gender stereotypes in which cis-women and nature have been linked by the fact of being life-givers; by considering that women have specific knowledge about nature in an intrinsic way; or that women are vulnerable to the effects of climate change without giving explanations of this. In this sense, the conceptualization of the linkages between society and nature has been addressed from the different understandings and relationships of various communities with their environment (Escobar, 1998). However, the conceptualization we have today about human and nature relations has been dominated by Eurocentric thinking that has been prevailing since the colonization of Latin America and the creation of the globalized world.

In this sense, activism, and theorist have developed a decolonial approach with the intention of making clear that the problems of social inequality and environmental catastrophe are the legacy of oppression during colonization and the origin of the ongoing colonial system. The decolonial theory focuses on how current power relations and the capitalist economic system cannot be understood without the oppression of racialized bodies, gender oppression, and the plundering of natural resources in what is known as the global south. In this sense addressing gender and environmental inequalities requires examining the problem at its root; coloniality, and the system it unleashed; coloniality. Something that the international mechanisms have failed to do and for which their solutions have not been successful.

This research explores how the coloniality of gender and nature are interconnected and cannot be understood independently (coloniality of gender-nature), where the aim is to investigate how the GEF is tackling the issue of gender inequality, specifically the intersection between gender and nature, using a decolonial and communitarian feminist approach. I start with the premise that the subordination of gender and nature comes from the same root, and my research seeks to explore whether and how the GEF perpetuates patterns of colonial power dynamics. Finally, through the lens of decolonial feminist theory, I developed a critical understanding of how neoliberal gender

and nature discourses are being shaped on the international stage as gender equality and green economy.

## **Objective**

I argue that both the subordination of gender and nature are patterns inherited from colonialism; and that to address the environmental crisis, gender inequality, and gender-environment linkages, it is essential to be aware of the relationship between gender and nature and how this is situated within and articulated through coloniality. The aim of this work is, therefore, to develop the concept of coloniality of gender-nature to understand the power dynamics within the Generation Equality Forum and specifically in the Feminist Action for Climate and Justice and to investigate whether and how these dynamics reproduce or transform patterns of coloniality.

## **Assumptions/Hypothesis**

This study starts with the belief that there cannot be gender equality unless there is also environmental justice, and vice versa. I assume that the oppression of both gender and nature are intertwined due to colonialism and the current coloniality system. I argue that the Generation Equality Forum keeps reproducing the coloniality of gender-nature and therefore, the proposed solutions fail to tackle the underlying issues of gender equality and climate justice.

## **Research questions**

- How are the discourses around gender and nature, presented in the Generation Equality Forum and specifically in the Feminist Action for Climate Justice, constitutive of colonial relations of power regarding gender and nature?

## Literature Review

### *The linkages between gender and climate change in the public eye.*

We can trace the mainstreaming of the linkages of the subordination of women and nature since the end of the last century when the term “Ecofeminism” was coined by French feminist Françoise D'eaubonne in 1974. The term has gained widespread popularity today and has inspired the creation of public and private institutions, NGOs, and collectives working on the relationship between gender and climate change. As for today, the origin of this link is conceived as an *essentialist* idea due to the main argument that cis-women and nature are intrinsically linked due to the capacity of cis-women to bear children and give life; however, the conceptualization of this relationship has changed to a focus on the analysis of differentiated effects that climate change has on different genders (Puleo, 2009; Salleh, 2003).

Since the Earth Summit in the early 1990s, research on the effects of climate change on women and the relationship between gender and the environment has increased, and it was also this summit that led to the creation of the three primary mechanisms for addressing climate change, biodiversity, and environmental matters: the CBD, UNFCCC and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), making specific mention (in the case of the CBD) of gender issues. In most of these cases, gender was understood as women's matters and by addressing women as victims (Broeckhoven, 2014). In the case of the UNFCCC, it wasn't until 2001 that gender conversations began to emerge, thanks to the lobbying efforts of activists and NGOs (Broeckhoven, 2014).

From 2001 until today, there are over a hundred documents referencing gender under the UNFCCC agreements and negotiations, many of them taken during events such as the Conference of the Parties (COP) (Gender Climate Tracker, 2023). At the same time, more research and theory have been built on understanding the specific connection between climate change and gender, as well as environmental matters and gender, non the less, it's important to highlight that this research was focused on women and centered on the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions a pivotal component of the UNFCCC's strategy to combat climate change (Terry, 2009). Along the same lines, many studies have been conducted on energy consumption patterns to make specific public policies or develop technologies for women and men roles, such as cooking or using the car, developing (for example) in energy-efficient cooking stoves (Armendáriz-Arnez et al., 2010;

Nzengya et al., 2021; Romieu et al., 2009; Schilman et al., 2015; Women and Gender Constituency, 2019), an important solution in a short term, but that lacks addressing the roots of the problems. In this sense, experts have noted that discussions about gender and climate change often depict women in two distinct roles: as either victims or tools. *“Depicting women as “agents of change”, for example, can lead to the instrumentalization of women by making them the sole responsible actors for environmental conservation and management, hereby adding to their already stretched workloads. In this case, men are conveniently let off the hook”*(Broeckhoven, 2014).

Following the previous ideas, researchers and activists call for a more open and inclusive way to mainstream gender and climate change issues, demanding that women should be part of the decision-making table at CBD, the UNFCCC, and COPs, as a way to reach gender parity and therefore work towards an inclusive public policy that takes women into account when addressing climate change. Authors such as Broeckhoven, 2014 are worried that the integration of women into decision-making spaces is only a tokenistic way to fill out a quote. It is crucial to take a moment and analyze the women who are occupying these powerful positions and ask why are they in the position of representing the needs and ideas of women as a whole. The idea of gender parity without a deep understanding of race, ethnicity, class, religion, disability, and sexuality falls into the mistake of lumping all women into the same category. The concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) is much-needed if we want to avoid creating useless strategies to address climate change (Cifor & Cgiar, 2015).

As mentioned previously, the conversations regarding the gendered effects of the environmental crisis have focused on women, creating a synonymous between gender matters and women as a homogeneous group. Fortunately, we can find a more updated bibliography on how men and other gender diversities are also affected by climate change and more deep thinking on how social categories have to be taken into account (Gender, G., & Alliance, C., 2016). Overall, the literature and research have shown that due to gender norms and impositions within the same culture, women and men have differentiated knowledge regarding climate change and environmental practices and take different actions in the face of a climate change disaster (Broeckhoven, 2014; Cifor & Cgiar, 2015; Dankelman, 2010; Djoudi et al., 2012; Gender, G., & Alliance, C., 2016; Kameri-Mbote, 2013; Khan et al., 2022a, 2022b; Mai et al., 2018; Pearse, 2017; Puzyreva et al., 2018), as an example of this we can think of how it is common for men to emigrate

to seek new opportunities after a climate disaster while women stay in the same place to take care of children and the elderly (Djouidi et al., 2012), actions fully related to gender roles.

Feminist academics have questioned the objectivity and neutrality of the sciences (Haraway, D. J., 1989), in order to re-thing affirmations like women as a vulnerable group in the face of climate change and questioning how the research regarding this topic is built into power relationships and how has led to a research trend of addressing women as one vulnerable entity (Moosa & Tuana, 2014). It is worth questioning how the knowledge that we have today was generated and asking if it is truly unbiased. Moosa and Tuana suggest that we should be more critical of the well-known IPCC report that established a limit of 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels for the benefit of the world. Today this target has been lowered to 1.5 as the past goal meant to have underwater many island and coastal zones. This is a great example of the importance of situated knowledge and research, as well as integrating diverse people in research and public policy spaces as different realities develop in different knowledge (Code, 2006; 2012 in Moosa & Tuana, 2014), making a call to de-centralized and de-colonized western production of knowledge.

Overall, studies show that the effects of climate change do have a differentiated effect on different genders. However, it is important not to overlook the importance of race, class, and ethnicity as these categories also play an important societal response to the effects of weather changes and natural disasters due to climate change (Broeckhoven, 2014; Djouidi et al., 2012; Moosa & Tuana, 2014; Terry, 2009). It is important to denote that the mainstreaming of the conversations regarding the linkages between climate change and gender, call it; ecofeminism, gender, and climate change research, the gender just climate solution movement, or the feminist action for climate justice, have had an upbringing from countries considered as the global north, the same countries with a history of colonialism; just as the same articles, that I have been citing in this first section. The mainstream international lobby surrounding this topic has been carried out by Western activists, NGOs, and Institutions, and it is until recently that people from the peripheries have been entering the public conversation; nonetheless is also worth asking who is considering the periphery and why are they being *integrated* into these spaces, who are those who are *integrating* them, and why they have the power to take these decisions.

*Critics of the neo-colonial UN system.*

Questioning the institutions of power and decentralizing knowledge has been the task of activists, theorists, academics, NGOs, and Civil Society located in both the global north and global south. In this sense, the UN has performed as the rightful international mechanism to ensure justice and peace all over the world, and under this scenario, criticisms have emerged regarding their operation and discourse. What do they mean by justice and equality? What are environmental and gender matters? What solutions have the UN proposed to address the planetary crisis?

Many researchers and activists have expressed their worries about the UN's insufficient dedication to implementing actual change. They have noted that the proposals put forth by the UN are primarily based on a Eurocentric viewpoint, which does not promote inclusivity; for instance, the concept of human rights is a topic of debate when viewed from a decolonial perspective (Maldonado-Torres, 2017). The questioning of human rights involves challenging the timeline of the notion of what constitutes to be "human" and who can access these rights, because the current understanding of humanity has been rooted in European rationality and has undergone significant evolution over time (Maldonado-Torres, 2017). Historically, women, black people, and indigenous communities were excluded from this framework, considered less humans (Maldonado-Torres, 2017). The Declaration of Human Rights was established by the UN after World War II and it's worth noting that the document was primarily influenced by European countries as well from the United States leading to the inclusion of racist and stereotypical categories, like orientalist-colonial discourses (Cetinkaya, 2023). In the same tone, the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (WPS) launched in 2000 by the UN has been put under the eye of the hurricane. Their objective is to promote gender equality and integrate a gender perspective in issues related to global peace and security. However, it has been argued that they reproduced a neo-colonial logic in terms of race and gender (Achilleos-Sarll, 2023). The UN has also been criticized in relation to the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs); a framework developed for each country individually in order to address gender, climate, and economic injustices; A study was carried out in the Latin American region, analyzing its links with the WPS agenda, showing that NAPs have inadequately addressed the prevalence of violence experienced by women and girls according to the context of the region (Drumond & Rebelo, 2020).

Latin American scholars have also made significant contributions to the understanding of how the UN mechanisms have reproduced forms of coloniality because of measures and agreements that are not possible for all contexts. This is the case of the Beijing agreements and the spread of neoliberal feminism in the Latin America (Cabezas Fernández, 2017). According to Cabezas, these agreements have often prioritized white and white-mestizo women, neglecting the experiences of racialized women and perpetuating neo-colonial power structures. Castriela E. Hernandez-Reyes suggests that the neo-colonial structure exacerbates the crisis of globalization and capitalism by perpetuating extractivist in global south countries and consolidating capital within organizations based in the global north. (Hernández Reyes, 2019). Critiques have also been made about the role of NGOs and how these can serve as an independent figures from the government and the UN, but have also demonstrated elitist patterns in Bolivia and across Latin America, as they may not accurately represent the diverse perspectives of the communities they claim to serve (Cabezas Fernández, 2017).

The global north has traditionally held power over what-to-do and what-not-to-do toward fairness and equality in the world, resulting in the emergence of different types of power relations. In light of this debate, the current analysis aims to add to this conversation by highlighting that the root causes of gender inequality and climate change stem from the coloniality of nature and gender, which continue to be replicated under UN mechanisms that seek to address the problem, such as the Generation Equality Forum.

## **Theoretical framework**

Analyzing the traces of coloniality of nature and gender in the GEF is only possible by understanding the work of decolonial theorists; These studies aim to reveal the significant role that colonialism played in shaping current global power dynamics, where academics in this field claim that the current relations of power between the so-called global north and global south are a direct continuation of these events. Colonialism is understood as a historical event framed in a determined time and space in which, through force, a country or nation takes power over natural resources and over people in other geographies. On the other hand, “*coloniality refers to the logic, culture, and structure of the modern world-system*” (Maldonado-Torres, 2017, p.117). In this sense, coloniality is the ongoing system that keeps reproducing patterns installed during colonialism.

The analysis of the construction of categories, such as gender, race, and nature, is central to the study of post-colonial, anti-colonial, and de-colonial theorist scholars, as it allows them to understand the current power dynamics worldwide. In this sense, Fanon states “*Colonial racism is no different from any other racism*”(Fanon et al., 2008. p.65) , as a way to make clear that racism cannot be understood without colonialism. Fanon's (1952) “Black Skin White Mask” book depicts racism as a structural system inherited by colonialism. This piece is pivotal in unveiling how the notion of difference that is still present in today’s world is part of a hegemonic European rationale about who is the norm and who is different, and more importantly, who is superior and who is inferior, in accordance with the differences. In this sense, the so call colonizers were the ones that established notions of race as we understand them today (Fanon et al., 2008), and so they did with gender (Lugones, 2007) and nature (Alimonda, 2019). In relation to the UN system, researchers and activists have discussed how coloniality is the core of their functioning, and only by understanding this pattern of mechanisms, will be able to approach pressing matters such as gender inequality and the environmental crisis, in a way that respects cultural identities and different life histories. BahBah (1994), in construction to Fanon's ideas, focuses on the idea of cultural identities and cultural differences as an individual and societal factors. In his eyes, cultural identity is a self-perceived identity drawn upon collectivity (Bhabha, 2004), a process of cultural differentiation where for someone to identify themselves as black or indigenous, has to be other people or entity supporting that idea (Fanon et al., 2008). Moreover, saying that this difference makes someone more or less valuable is to fall into a cultural authority of domination (Bhabha, 2004) values that began with colonization and continue to be replicated to this day. “*Let us have the courage to say it outright: It is the racist who creates his inferior*”(Fanon et al., 2008, p.69). These ideas will be pivotal to analyze today's discourses in UN forums such as the GEF in order to be able to translate the ideas of superior-inferior, normality-different into the present time and to propose solutions to subvert this power relation.

### *Decolonial Theory in America Latina.*

As for today, Latin-American scholars have developed a large school of thought named the decolonial theory or the colonial/modernity project; with the interest of making visible that Latin American inequalities and struggles can be traced from colonial times and making it clear that it is necessary to question these patterns in order to overcome injustices that are still happening today.



These academics and activists have created critical thinking on categories such as race, sex, gender, nature, knowledge, academia, institutionalization, and government, following Fanon's thoughts (Alimonda, 2019; Cabnal, 2010; Cumes, 2012; Curiel Pichardo, 2009; Dussel, 1994; Escobar, 2020; Grosfoguel, 2011; Lugones, 2007; Mignolo, 2003; Quijano, 1992). The decolonial theory is a way of resistance; however, as Ramon Grosfoguel mentions, decolonial practices and thinking are not something that emerged from the academy; decolonial practices have been around since the beginning of colonialism.

Scholars identify the colonialism of Latin America as the primary driver of power dynamics between the center and periphery, which has contributed to the globalized world we currently inhabit. The term "coloniality" refers to the continuous system that perpetuates power dynamics because of race, sex, gender, and class, even after colonized countries have gained "independence" (Quijano, 1992). The concept of "coloniality of power" was coined by Quijano in 1992 to describe how the distinction between colonizer and colonized based on race has led to a system where certain categories hold the most power. In his approach, the domination of power can be perceived in layers including the power over race, labor, gender, and nature, ideas that I will be further developing with the concepts of the coloniality of nature and coloniality of gender.

The coloniality of power involves the use of dichotomies and classifications; human and non-human, civilized and non-civilized, men and women, reason and emotion, etc., Within these dichotomies, certain beliefs and individuals are prioritized over others. The imposition of Catholicism by Spanish colonizers in Latin America serves as an example, as indigenous beliefs were suppressed by the beliefs of Spanish colonizers; more over colonization established a new social structure where labor was determined by skin color (Quijano, 1992). Race is a categorization system created by Europeans to assign different types of value and work within colonies. This system separated people into whites, indigenous, mestizos, and black people, and the effects of this pattern are still present today (Quijano, 2000), and that can be observed at the GEF where white, *educated* women are at the top of the forum making decisions for indigenous and marginalized women. Following these ideas, I conceptualize the term racialized as people who have been given the category of otherness because of skin color with respect to the "normality" that in the first instance was the white European and now can also be seen as the US, Canadian, or Australian.

The generation of differences and the racialization of the body is only a part of colonialism and coloniality, Quijano argues that globalization is the final form of colonialism, where there is a globalized understanding of the world led by dichotomy dynamics, such as the colonial/modern system, in which Europe is viewed as rational and modern, and the periphery as emotional and uncivilized, but where one cannot exist without the other (Quijano, 2000), and where the most significant achievement is, until today, to make people located in colonized countries conceive Europe as rational, wise, and civilized; and to hold in power the ones that “*think epistemically like the ones on the dominant positions*” (Grosfoguel, 2011, p.6). In this sense, the power structure of the global and capitalist world system has been conceptualized by different fields of knowledge, such as post-colonial theory, which puts culture in the center of the conversation, like Fanon and Bhabha thinking, or through political economy, where the main focus has been on the economy (Grosfoguel, 2011). In political economy theory, the labor force of the proletariat is what maintains the economic system and the power imbalance between the bourgeois and proletarian, where the first ones generate goods and surplus value by the exploitation of the second (Marx, 1867). In contrast, the decolonial theory argues that the current system struggle cannot be addressed just by tackling the economic or cultural system but with a full understanding of the many dichotomies in the complexity of the world's dynamics (Grosfoguel, 2011).

*Coloniality of gender and coloniality of nature: the two wings of the same bird.*

The concept of gender can be understood as a category that is attached to cultural norms, in which what is expected of a woman and what is expected of a man is directly related to power dynamics (Butler, 1999). The current gender norms, and specifically what women are and what women do, are notions attached to culture, and inherited from colonialism, that cannot be understood without a specific context and its historical relations (Lugones, 2007). Under the same logic, the division between nature and humans has been a complicated line, as from the Eurocentric point of view, the value of natural resources rests on their use value, while for other cosmovision, nature is perceived as an integral part of life, granting it an intrinsic value (Grosfoguel, 2011; Gudynas, 2010). I conceptualized the understanding of gender and the expected roles of men and women, as well as our relationship with nature, as the same form of colonial repression due to its dehumanization; The idea that women and nature are inferior to the category of man and human

as something given in nature is an incorrect idea. According to research, there are several examples of the relationship between the sexes, where women also had a position of power and not of subordination in conjunction with the values of nature and space prior to colonialism; this is the case of indigenous communities of what is known today as Bolivia (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1997), of the development of patriarchal and macho culture in Latin America (Hardin, 2002), or the position of power of Maya textile women (Chase et al., 2008).

The coloniality of gender highlights how gender, as a social and cultural construct, was imposed on colonized places as a tool that reinforced power relations of dominance and subordination between colonizers and colonized, as humans and not humans, as well as non-men and non-women (Lugones, 2010). In this sense, while Quijano asserts that race is a fundamental criterion for understanding power dynamics worldwide, Lugones introduces the concept of the coloniality of gender, building upon Quijano's ideas and adding gender to the dichotomies of power. In continuation with previous ideas, another dualism inherited by colonialism is the dichotomy between humans and nature and, therefore, the subordination of nature. Coloniality of nature implies, in the first place, changing the dynamics and relationships between humans and their environment, as well as the plundering of natural resources in the colonized places for the enrichment of the colonizing countries (Alimonda, 2019) Both the coloniality of gender and the coloniality of nature have as a basis the use and plundering of the non-human; the exploitation of the body of the non-human male as labor force, the exploitation of non-human female as both labor force and for the reproduction of new individuals that could be exploited in the future, and the indiscriminate use of nature; all for the purpose of the accumulation of capital. The transactional relations and the model of accumulation that we have today could not be understood without this exploitation of nature and racialized bodies (Quijano, 2000).

The categorizations of gender and race are important to understand power dynamics, however, it is also important to bring the concept of intersectionality, developed by Crenshaw, 1991 to understand how a racialized woman could experience different power dynamics in contrast, for example, to a white woman or a black male (Crenshaw, 1991). Following this idea, the colonial power matrix shows its complexity, where the categories are not fixed but mutable, as some European women could be in a higher power position (within the access to resources) than many men from the peripheries, complicating the global gender hierarchy (Grosfoguel, 2011). Communitarian and decolonial feminists position themselves as anti-racist, anti-heterosexist, and

anti-patriarchal; by a critical resistance from the protagonist of what has been considered the subaltern (Curiel, 2017). Communitarian and decolonial feminism goes beyond the concept of intersectionality because they make clear that to advance and think of a just world, we must challenge oppression from the people who have been on the margins, respecting their ways of life together with their relationship with nature. (Cumes, 2012). The idea of intersectionality is gaining popularity among those in positions of power such as governments, institutions, and NGOs, inserting them into the mainstream feminist movement. However, decolonial and community theory suggests that legitimacy should be given from the margins instead.

Decolonial feminism is a way of resistance of the coloniality of gender and coloniality of difference (Lugones, 2010). This feminist movement originated in Latin America with a political agenda of making women from the peripheries be heard (Curiel, 2009), questioning the notion of womanhood and proposing new social relations embedded in anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-patriarchal and anti-sexist principles (Peña, 2018). In her text “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (Spivak, 2003) talks about the otherness, the periphery, the ones who are outside of the political discourse and agenda; decolonial feminism seeks, through activism and theory, to take over the political discourse, such as *Borderlands/La Frontera* (Anzaldúa, 1987). Decolonial feminism emerges from Latin American activists and thinkers, and as Maria Lugones states, “*the possibility of overcoming the coloniality of gender is the so call “decolonial feminism.”*” (Lugones, 2010, p.747). In this sense, decolonial feminism will be a central approach to analyzing the GEF and the FACJ to understand how the subordination of gender and nature cannot be understood separately and how we should be thinking about the coloniality of gender-nature.

### **Methodology framework.**

#### *Critical Discourse Analysis.*

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) asserts that language is not impartial and can be influenced by various contexts (Tonkiss, 2004). Discourse refers to the intentional use of language to convey meaning and reproduce social relationships, identities, and ideas within a specific context, known as the interpretive context, as this makes it easier to identify the power relationship in that space (Chiapello & Fairclough, 2002; Tonkiss, 2004). Norman Fairclough's critical approach revolves around improving human living conditions and addressing the contradictions of the capitalist mode

of production by highlighting the connection between criticism, explanation, and action; for CDA is not enough to describe something but to explain the contradictions within capitalism and to propose a way to change the social reality (Díaz, 2020).

In this sense, Fairclough, 1999, developed a methodology in which discourses can be classified in three gradients: as a social activity (genres), as social actors' ways of being (style), and in the construction of identities (discourse); Fairclough's categories are great tools that can be used to identify the neoliberal reasoning in a text's discourse because its tactics are socially and politically committed to challenging and exposing the principles of neoliberalism. (Díaz, 2020). In this sense, several works have been carried out using CDA on decolonial feminist theory to analyze in depth where this line of thought comes from and where it is positioned, as is the case of the literature review of three compilations of works: 1) *Tejiendo de Otro Modo: Feminismo, Epistemología, y Apuestas Descoloniales en el Abya Yala*, 2) *Feminismo Descolonial: Nuevos aportes metodológicos a mas de una década* and 3) *Decolonial Feminism in Abya Yala: Caribbean, Meso, and South American Contributions and Challenges*; to analyze solidarity, resistance and community issues (Lao-Montes, 2022). CDA has also been carried out to analyze the trend of the growing number of studies of decolonial feminism from the global north and the implications this has for the conceptualization of this theory (Tlostanova et al., 2019).

Regarding the GEF, it's essential to consider its political stance on GE discourse, how the forum perceives gender, nature, and the interlinkages between these two to understand the reasons behind its commitments in a particular context. By using Fairclough CDA, I explored how values that are essential for the current society, like gender equality, become mutable in order to fit a neoliberal apparatus. By exploring how corporations, civil society, NGOs, governments, and activists are participating in the forum, we can have a clearer image of the GEF power structure and the tactics they use to ensure coexistence between different actors.

### *Materials for chapter analysis*

In the first chapter, I examined the overall forum functioning without necessarily focusing on the integration of gender and climate change. In this sense, I conducted an analysis of the institutionalization of the GEF with the aim of giving an overview of the semantics operating in the core documents. To do this, I focused on the forum's kick-off documents through three specific

focuses 1) the contradictions between discourses in the forum, 2) the use of the categories of gender and women indistinctly and how this is related to the coloniality of power and coloniality of gender, and finally 3) the understanding of gender equality as economic progress for women under a neoliberal logic. During the second chapter, I brought together the coloniality of nature, gender, and power in order to analyze the discourse and commitments of the Feminist Actions for Climate Justice Coalition (FACJ), focusing on the instrumentalization of both gender and nature and asserting that there is no separate gender coloniality and nature coloniality, but rather gender-nature coloniality. In this chapter, I also included an analysis of the geospatial view of the coalition, specifically in the Americas in order to understand the coloniality of power in the FACJ and in the GEF. Finally, in the conclusions, I summarize how the GEF and, specifically, the FACJ constitute of power relationship, and I propose to take a closer look at decolonial feminists from Latin America to have a different perspective to address the interlinkages between gender and nature.

The documents used for the analysis of this thesis are as follows:

1. Announcement on Process for Leadership of Generation Equality Action Coalitions (2020). <https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/genequality-actioncoalition-leadership-en.pdf>
2. Action Coalitions: Global Acceleration Plan Executive Summary (2021). <https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/UNW%20-%20GAP%20Report%20-%20EN%20-%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>
3. Feminist Action for Climate Justice Coalition (2021). [https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/FACJ\\_AC%20.pdf](https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/FACJ_AC%20.pdf)
4. Action Coalitions: A Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality (30 March, 2021). [https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/AC\\_Acceleration%20Plan.Final%20Draft%20%28March%2030%29\\_EN.pdf](https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/AC_Acceleration%20Plan.Final%20Draft%20%28March%2030%29_EN.pdf)
5. Generation Equality Forum: Mexico 2021 report (March 2021). [https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/GEF%20in%20Mexico%20City\\_Report\\_072021.pdf](https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/GEF%20in%20Mexico%20City_Report_072021.pdf)

## *Positionality*

It was difficult for me to decide to write this thesis because it involves confronting the intersections of my identity. As a Latin American woman with both Cuban and Mexican heritage, I have experienced discrimination due to my physical appearance, such as my skin color, eyes, and size. Therefore, I have found that using decolonial theory is the most appropriate approach to understand the ways in which I have been seen as "the other." I am also very aware that I am a privileged person, I have never experienced a shortage of basic necessities such as shelter, food, or love. In addition, I have acquired fluency in a language other than my native Spanish, and I have achieved a high level of academic success, to the point that I am currently writing my thesis in Vienna while attending a private school; Just as I am aware of these privileges, I'm sure there are many things that I'm unaware of. Decolonial feminist theory, originating from Latin America by women of different races and backgrounds, including those who may be considered privileged within the continent but marginalized outside of it. I understand decolonial feminism as a practice and theory from the *margins*, which presents a challenge when discussing it in the context of an institution that is saturated with neoliberalism and colonial practices. I am not trying to claim that the GEF can be a decolonial space; on the contrary, I want to use decolonial feminism to understand whether the forum is constitutive of the coloniality of gender-nature or not, and to understand how gender, women, and nature are depicted.

Finally, I want to mention some details about this work. Firstly, I understand that I may use informal language in some parts of the paper that may not be suitable for academic writing. However, since the paper is not widely accessible and I am not entirely proficient in the language, I believe it is essential to make the writing easy to understand. After reading the inspiring work of Gloria Anzaldúa, the engaging texts written by bell hooks, and the eloquent lectures of Ochy Curiel and Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso, I have found the ease to feel good with a colloquial or *different* way of writing. On the other hand, throughout this text, I have used the terms north-south, center-periphery, and otherness interchangeably, depending on the context of the material. However, I wish to clarify that these terms are not fixed, and they all carry specific meanings discursively; for example, we can talk about the otherness of the global north and the center of the global south, complicating the matrix of power, influenced by factors such as geography, race, ethnicity, social class, sexuality, disability, and age.

## CHAPTER 1. Analyzing the goals and intentions of the GEF from a decolonial perspective

### *The institutional setup of the Generational Equality Forum.*

The Generation Equality Forum (GEF) is a five-year program launched in two conference editions during March and April of 2021 in Mexico and Paris, respectively. This is an effort led by UN Women to advance Gender Equality (GE) by implementing actions from the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* in conversation with the *Sustainable Development Goals*. The forum operates under the guidance of its main document, 'The Global Acceleration Plan for gender equality' (GAP), and its six action coalitions, including the Feminist Action for Climate Justice.

The forum consists of various organizations clustered into groups, including academia or research associations (19), civil society (923), governments (498), media organizations (13), youth-led organizations (228), philanthropies (57), and multinational or supranational organizations (132). The private sector and philanthropies have a strong presence in the forum, with big corporations such as Mary Key Inc, H&M, Open Society Foundations, Ford Foundation, and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundations committing significant funds, with the latter two contributing \$420 million and \$2.1 billion, respectively. The presence of organizations that provide financial resources has been essential for the forum, something that we can see on their webpage, where they have joyfully announced the amount of money raised: *“At the Forum hosted in Paris, diverse trailblazing stakeholders made over 1,000 policy, program and financial commitments, representing an unprecedented aggregate value of \$40 Billion.”*<sup>1</sup>

The GEF represents an attempt to tackle GE through a transdisciplinary lens by linking different (and needed) approaches, such as law and policy, education, financing, and gender data, in order to make a systemic change by addressing structural inequalities. The forum's main goal is *“to ensure that the bold ambitions of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action on women’s rights are finally implemented and that the Sustainable Development Goals are achieved”*<sup>2</sup>. In this sense, the forum is consistent with the fact that they have involved organizations from different sectors, where the main accountability mechanism is the commitment dashboard<sup>3</sup>; a platform where all the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://forum.generationequality.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Quote taken from the Generation Equality Forum home page <https://forum.generationequality.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://dashboard.commitments.generationequality.org/directory/>



organizations state what they are going to do to advance gender equality and under which coalition their commitment is framed.

At first glance, the discourse presented by the forum is attractive, as it evokes a way of approaching the issue of gender equality in an inclusive manner, however, the GEF's argument on diversity and inclusion falters when we realize that out of the 2,091 commitments made, none of them have been led by autonomous communities<sup>4</sup>. Contradicting the discourse and actions taken during the launching of the forum in Mexico, where the importance of people from the margins was emphasized; This is the case of the participation of Rigoberta Menchú<sup>5</sup>, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate for the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and reconciliation between ethnic groups. Rigoberta has been using her voice as a leader to advocate for the rights of indigenous people at the UN. Her presence at the forum represents a powerful statement of *inclusivity* for indigenous communities. On the other hand, during the closing ceremony, Mexican indigenous groups were prominently featured; the forum's website showcases numerous images of women wearing traditional costumes of various indigenous groups during the closing ceremony of a *traditional ancestral ceremony*. The women dressed in traditional clothing appear to be used as a symbol of inclusivity, as a token, rather than having a genuine role in decision-making. It is unclear why there is such a discrepancy between their representation on the website and their lack of representation on the commitment dashboard. Finally, the Generation Equality Forum: Mexico 2021 report presents the same pattern as the website, which is loaded with images of racialized women, and the word indigenous appears 42 times in phrases as the following “*The Generation Equality Forum made history in Mexico, for the mobilization of high-level commitments, for constituting a genuine space for inclusive participation of the different sectors of society, for the relevant participation of indigenous women, and for adopting the «difference» as a fundamental value and engine of transformative change.*” (Generation Equality, 2021d).

Each coalition in the forum is formed by organizations from all different groups, including business groups, philanthropies, and civil associations. Interestingly, the FACJ has the least

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<sup>4</sup> Data retrieved from the database downloaded directly from the commitment dashboard <https://dashboard.commitments.generationequality.org/directory/>

<sup>5</sup> Women and Transformative Leadership for Generation Equality conference <https://www.youtube.com/live/nKsKU5qL8IA?feature=share&t=2889>

number of organizations involved, accounting for only 7% of the commitments, what results interesting as the UN Women has reaffirmed its position that gender equity cannot be achieved without climate justice, yet something as central as this does not have the same force in the GEF. Another consideration to not be overlooked is that the FACJ has the least philanthropies and private sector involved, and while it was not possible for this research to make an in-depth analysis of why, it is worth noting that many of the organizations in the FACJ have been active in demanding that the UN refuse money from organizations that harm the environment and human rights. For instance, they were involved in ending the partnership between BlackRock and UN Women<sup>6</sup>, as this is the case for example of the Women's Environment and Development Organization who also forms part of the FACJ. That said, the philanthropies that are part of the FACJ are the RAJA-Danièle Marcovici Foundation and Urgent Action Fund Africa; while there are 7 private sector organizations, including Mary kay inc. Finally, the commitments made in the coalition have to fit within one of the four areas of implementation, as follows:

- FACJ 1: Increase direct access to financing for gender-just climate solutions, in particular for women and girls at grassroots levels.
- FACJ 2: Enable women and girls to lead a just transition to a green economy.
- FACJ 3: Build the resilience of women and girls to climate impacts, disaster risks, loss, and damage, including through land rights and tenure security.
- FACJ 4: Increase the collection and use of data on the gender-environment nexus.

The forum and FACJ have a complex organizational structure due to the large number of organizations and their diverse backgrounds. However, it is difficult to determine if there are any civil society or youth-led organizations led by marginalized groups among the over 2000 commitments without thoroughly reviewing them (an investigation that would need more time to be carried out). However, it is clear that there is no category for indigenous groups, and there are no organizations under the existent category of autonomous communities, something surprising, considering they are a main target for GEF and the FACJ coalition. This suggests that the forum operates from the center and favors institutionalized organizations that can operate under the UN women's umbrella.

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<sup>6</sup>Call for demanding UN to end its partnership with Blackrock <https://weddo.org/press-release-over-500-womens-rights-organizations-and-feminists-demand-end-of-un-womens-partnership-with-blackrock-inc/>

Regarding the FACJ coalition, I would like to point out that although there are various organizations and groups working towards positive change within the GEF, power dynamics and global consolidation can make it challenging to achieve complete congruence. Therefore, it is essential for them to remain present and maintain a critical perspective. To further this goal, I suggest exploring the dichotomies presented by decolonial theory and applying them to contemporary issues of gender and environmental justice. We must acknowledge how colonial power dynamics manifest in institutional categories and affect those fighting for justice. For instance, institutions in the global north like the UN and NGOs tend to overlook marginalized individuals, where this has representation only through institutional channels. After this overview of the GEF and the FACJ coalition, I will discuss in the following sections the coloniality of power and gender-nature within the forum.

#### *Paradoxes within discourse and action in the GEF.*

The GEF way of operations has at its core the creation of action coalitions. An interesting process in which the power dynamics between the actors involved are clear in relation to the role they play; in this sense, I identify two main categories of power: the ones with *knowledge* and the ones with the *resources*. The actors that fall within these two categories are not only constitutive of power within the forum but are the main catalysts to achieve GE, according to de GEF.

Under the forum terms, it is not possible to achieve action without knowledge of the problems and without propositions of what to do about it. In this context, activists, youth, and feminist collectives are described as the experts, being the first figure of power and decision-making: The ones with knowledge. The second figure of power comes with the idea that it is impossible to achieve and apply knowledge without the necessary financial resources; in the GEF, these power figures are formed by corporates, private companies, and philanthropic organizations.

At first glance, it appears as a novelty to put knowledge and resources together. However, there are things that should not be overlooked; if we take a closer look at the ones with knowledge and the ones with resources, we can notice two things:

- 1) Most of these companies and philanthropies making donations are huge monopolies that operate under the logic of wealth accumulation, giving space to terrible inequalities, among them those of class, race, and gender. This is the case of Gucci for inhumane working

conditions in China (Wang & Snell, 2013), or Rockefeller Foundation, founded by one of the richest families in the USA through oil exploitation, both being part of the GEF

- 2) Secondly, in the ongoing negotiations, most of the experts involved in the decision-making (the ones with knowledge) are from well-established corporations, NGOs, or activist groups from the global north. Although indigenous groups and small communities are frequently mentioned, their participation in the forum primarily represents institutionalized organizations, as is the case of the Foro Internacional de Mujeres Indígenas (FIMI), leaving outside of the forum different collectives from the periphery that are not institutionalized.

The above leads me to ask the question of how the status of these decision-makers and donors relates to the coloniality of power and how it creates a paradox between the goal of achieving GE and the discourse to achieve it. According to (Quijano, 1992), the coloniality of power is the social conceptualization of a group of people on the basis of race and culture that was installed since colonization through the domination of their natural resources and their bodies. In order for these categorizations to occur, a dominant group must determine and establish a distinction between themselves and another group, creating a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority (Bhabha, 2004; Fanon et al., 2008). With colonization, a new world order was formed between the modern and the colonized, where the modern is the figure of power. Today this is still reproduced, where there is a center that makes decisions (the modern) and a periphery (the colonized).

How does the above connect with the GEF discourse? We can perceive the same discourse of the periphery and the center by analyzing the following quote regarding the conformation of the coalition makers: *“Applications from feminist, women’s rights, youth-led and other civil society groups were reviewed through a process established by the Youth Task Force and Civil Society Advisory Group, which involved civil society representatives from other governance mechanisms established for the Generation Equality Forum. The process aimed to ensure diverse leadership from civil society and youth-led organizations working at various levels from the grassroots to global, with different areas of expertise, and representing historically marginalized communities, including groups led by LGBTQ+ people, women and girls with disabilities, and indigenous women and girls, among others.”* (Generation Equality, 2021b).

From this paragraph, we can gather a few key points. Firstly, there is a specific group of people that have a concern, and secondly, this group holds enough power or legitimacy to make a

call and address the issue. The quote emphasizes the significance of feminist groups, youth groups, indigenous communities, and the LGBTQ+ community in the forum. However, there is a marked power relationship in which feminist and youth groups were in charge of selecting the committee members with the special intention of integrating indigenous women and members of the LGBTQ+ community. We can take this asymmetry as a manifestation of the coloniality of power, where indigenous women are only considered as the ones to *integrate*, and the otherness. In this context, the word *integrate* alludes to the dichotomies of the coloniality of power, where there is the center, which integrates, and the periphery, which is integrated. Coming back to Fairclough's categorizations of the discourse, the apparent message is integration as a unit without hierarchies, however, the way they are doing it and representing indigenous women denotes that a group of people still hold power, and they are neither the LGBTQ+ community nor indigenous women.

Another aspect to highlight in the previous quote is that the GEF uses the same term "woman" in different ways: on the one hand, as the subject of power (feminist expert groups with knowledge), and on the other, as a subordinate subject that needs to be integrated (indigenous women). This pattern is also present in the reiterated discourse to include people from the global south. At this point, the question arises; when we talk about integrating the global south, where exactly are we integrating them? And when we talk about integrating indigenous women, whom are they being integrated with? We can see the first paradox where the discourse talks about *working together* with marginalized communities, making a distinction between the center and the other, and even between women in power and women as victims.

The concept of intersectionality comes in handy to see how gender is not the only category to be aware of, as indigenous women are not placed on the same level as the women "experts." In this sense, Lugones asserts to point out that during colonialism, the racialized female was not considered a woman, in contrast with European women. The two different uses of women in the previous quote keep reproducing the coloniality of gender and power in the sense that indigenous women are on the periphery as other classifications of women because of the conditions of race, ethnicity, and class. Generating a dynamic in which women have to be assisted by educated, privileged women. The coloniality of gender and power becomes visible at the moment in which GEF continues to legitimize these women as the ones who have the power of decision over the others.

Another important fact regarding the coalition makers is that organizations must pass through a selection process. In this sense, intersectionality is one of the main transformative principles in the GEF narrative, where anyone can be a commitment maker regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, or language: *“To enable both diversity and flexibility, there will be approximately ten leaders for each Action Coalition. This will include representation from both the Global South and North, alongside partners in decision-making: youth leaders, young feminists, and frontline advocates impacted by the theme.”* (Generation Equality, 2020).

However, it is also worth asking once again, who are those who are available to apply to be part of the action coalition leaders, I want to bring once again the famous text written by Spivak can the subaltern speak? (Spivak et al., 2011). The word diversity in the previous quote is limited to global north and global south, without realizing that including people from the global south does not necessarily imply including the subaltern. We can see the second paradox here where they are talking about bringing people from all backgrounds together but establishing processes that already speak to a population with privileges such as internet access, a certain level of education, and an established organization that is already working on these problems. This gives space to a practice where the only way for people who do not meet these requirements to be part of the forum is through programs and support from organizations, governments, and established companies. Such is the case of the organization “Incluye y Desarrolla” (Include and develop) located in Mexico, where one of its objectives is To train 2000 rural and urban women to enhance their autonomy and economic entrepreneurship in a comprehensive manner through the design of a development plan with a gender approach, economic, social and environmental sustainability, as well as the development for the consolidation of their businesses and self-employment without gender stereotypes<sup>7</sup>. As a result, we can see the coloniality of power in different layers, 1) as the global south must be integrated into the agenda of the global north 2) as the selection of organizations from the global south are in a position of power and 3) with the creation of practices that allow private interests.

Finally, the third paradox is that the GEF discourse seeks to address violence, climate change, people's health, and even the economic systems in which we live: *“Gender equality is not*

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<sup>7</sup> Phrase directly taken from the commitment made by the organization "incluye y desarrolla" in the Commitments Dashboard in Spanish and translated by myself into English.  
<https://dashboard.commitments.generationequality.org/map/>

*just a goal: it is critical to the survival of the planet, realizing the rights of all girls and women, and building new economic and social systems that include, and work for, everyone.”* (Generation Equality, 2021a). However, the discourse and the actions taken to achieve these goals are oxymoronic, as many of the private companies involved in the GEF pose a threat to the environment and provide poor working conditions and low salaries for their employees, including women, which shows that no systematic change is taking place. This is the case of the Philanthropy H&M Foundation, which has faced multiple lawsuits and public scrutiny for its poor working conditions, low wages, and use of child labor in impoverished countries (Ählström, 2010). However, due to the increase of organizations demanding social and environmental responsibility from large corporations, H&M has been making efforts to portray its company as green and fair, which requires them to follow specific regulations and fulfill certain responsibilities without really having true social responsibility (Ählström, 2010). H&M remains a major clothing retailer that relies on low-cost labor in countries located in the global south, moreover, it is part of the fast fashion industry, which is known to be unsustainable (Niinimäki et al., 2020). At first sight, we could understand H&M's participation in the GEF as a way of being socially responsible by making explicit their commitments in areas like labor rights and environmental sustainability; and influencing consumer perceptions. However, the coloniality of gender-nature continues to be perceived as they continue to use cheap labor and plunder natural resources, prioritizing the economic accumulation of a few over the contamination of a common good such as natural resources. This is also constitutive of the coloniality of power where racialized people, mostly from the global south (but not only from there), are the labor force for the benefit of a company from the global north.

*The fallacy of gender equality: why is women's well-being just a piece of the puzzle?*

As mentioned previously, the GEF's main goal is to achieve GE through an intersectional approach putting into work different actions and financial mechanisms. This main motivation can be seen throughout all the documents accompanying the launch of the forum in phrases like the following; *“Action Coalitions seek to incorporate an intersectional lens to their work, shedding light on the multidimensionality of people's lived experiences in which multiple axes of identity and oppression intersect.”* (Generation Equality, 2021a). However, when talking about the reasons why GE is

needed, they tend to display statistics regarding girls and women without specifying which women they are talking about and with few mentions regarding other gender identities: *“The Action Coalitions can deliver concrete progress on gender equality across generations to come for girls and women in all of their diversity.”* (Generation Equality, 2021b, p.9) As can be seen in the previous quote, when the concept of GE is mentioned, it is immediately followed by the categories of women and girls. This pattern can be observed throughout the four documents analyzed. The use of this phrasing implies that GE in the GEF is a concept that can’t be separated from the notions of women; suggesting that the term intersectional is specifically curated for women and their intersectionalities and not explicitly for other gender identities.

The same can be observed in different phrases that do not necessarily use the concept GE, but that still make a synonymous between equality and women’s matters, as in the following quote: *“Each of the action coalitions address issues that are among the most intractable barriers to equality—from violence, to climate change, and economic systems that leave women and girls behind.”* (Generation Equality, 2021a). In this quote, the phrasing changes, as it speaks only of equality and gives several examples of this. Thus, the quote tries to depict the GEF as inclusive by the act of addressing the categories of violence, climate change, and economic systems; however, the conceptualization of equality focuses on women one more time, and it fails to mention other gender diversities. It is important to discuss the abovementioned, as indeed, according to researchers, women have been neglected and affected in the current economic system in higher numbers than men. Therefore, one could think that to solve this pattern, it is important to put more attention on women. However, the GEF fails to see that in accordance with the concept of coloniality of gender coined by Lugones, the current capitalist and globalized system cannot be understood without the dehumanization and subordination of the people that she described with the category of non-women. *“Females were judged from the normative understanding of “women,” the human inversion of men. From this point of view, colonized people became males and females. Males became nothuman-as-not-men, and colonized females became not-human-as-not-women”* (Lugones, 2010, p747).

Ethnicity and race are pivotal to understanding the concept of women; moreover, the work of racialized women and men is a pillar to understanding the world we live in today. Capitalism and globalization would not have been possible without the subordination of the non-men and non-women. Recalling the previous section, discursively, the GEF speaks of two categories of women,



which are separated by race, class, and ethnicity; by referring to “*women in all of their diversity*,” the GEF fails to describe what they mean by diversity (as mentioned in the previous section) and to specify what is the understanding of gender matters and women. Without actively acknowledging what they mean by gender, women, and girls, the GEF reproduces the coloniality of gender, as it continues to view the category of women from a normative, European-imposed perspective; the same perspective that favored the current system with their oppression. Using the category of women in a homogeneous way makes racialized women and their struggles invisible, making the repression they have suffered due to coloniality invisible and undermining their historical and political actions (Mohanty 1938 in Castillo, 2008).

Overall, in the 5 documents reviewed, there were only 9 mentions found about gender diversities other than women and girls: “*But gender equality is not just good for women and girls: it is the foundation for building just and equitable societies, It underpins economic and social systems that include, and work for, all people, and it is essential for the survival of the planet*”(Generation Equality, 2021b, p.14). This quote is an example of this, the forum acknowledges that addressing gender issues will do good for everyone, however, they fail to explicitly state what they mean by everyone and in what way. Without acknowledging the historical context and origins of gender and race categories, any attempts at achieving gender equality will fall short. The impact of colonialism on the formation of gender categories must be examined in order to fully understand the issue at hand and to effectively address gender inequality. We must question the concepts that have perpetuated oppression and also question how this utilization of gender and women indistinctly could serve any proposed to the forum. This leads me to question the use of ambiguous terms like "diversity" and "gender." It is unclear whether these terms refer to gender diversity, class diversity, ethnic diversity, or something else entirely. This lack of specificity allows for interpretation that can fall into any group, creating confusion and uncertainty.

The way the GEF addresses the problems of GE as women and girls problems have undertones of a mainstream liberal feminist discourse (Rottenberg, 2018). This discourse fits very well to make countless institutions and corporations look inclusive and responsible. By maintaining a broad discourse of GE and as a synonym for girls and women, the actors involved in the forum can portray themselves as responsible and just institutions, which may even serve to

increase consumption of their goods and services, fueling the market economy and a neoliberal logic, and reproducing the coloniality of power as well as the coloniality of gender-nature.

Finally, the above analysis describes the GEF discourse, however, it cannot be extrapolated to all organizations. This is a complex issue since many of the civil organizations and activist groups participating in the forum do have projects that question gender categories, as well as injustices based on race, class, culture, religion, and ethnicity. The issue becomes more complicated when corporations and activists participate together, as several civil society actors are collaborating with corporations that are the perfect example of what they are fighting against.

*The fallacy of neoliberal feminism: Gender Equality as economic empowerment.*

The GEF starts with a strong statement about the inaction and little change regarding GE since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, “*Too little has changed,*” they state in their Global Acceleration Plan, 2021, where the lack of financing and the non-compliance of public policies are the two principal reasons to blame. Under this scenario, the GEF promises “*progress for women and girls in all their diversity.*” However, it is necessary to grasp the understanding of *progress* for the forum and how it is linked to GE. At the GAP, the forum cites that two-thirds of women are not part of the workforce and that more than 120 years will be needed for women to have the same pay and leadership as men (World Economic Forum, 2021); under this context, progress alludes to the insertion of women into the labor markets and their economic empowerment under the current economic model.

The aforementioned statistic about labor inequality gives the idea that overall, men are in a better position than women and, therefore, they need to make progress in order to overcome the patriarchal system: an idea we have to be careful with. Recalling Guatemalan Mayan-Kaqchikel researcher Aura Cumes's work where she exposes in a very eloquent way how colonization and coloniality have left a system of hierarchies in which, although indigenous women are at the bottom of this chain of power compared to indigenous men, this does not mean that all white women are in a less privileged position than men, speaking of a pact between women and white men brought by colonization (Cumes, 2012). In this sense men from indigenous community are not the owners of the means of production, they are not the ones who are part of the progress. Decolonial feminism, as well as communitarian feminist, make a call for a deep analysis of the

intersection of categories of class, race, ethnicity, and gender as a starting point of globalization, capitalism, and patriarchy. The inequalities in the job market and the economic sector the GEF speaks about could not have existed without the allocation of certain jobs due to the categories of race and ethnicity.

Following the previous idea, decolonial feminists also demystify the idea that women are not part of the labor force; since the moment when the non-women were oppressed by their colonizers, they have been an integral part of the workforce, as labor force in plantations or for their reproductive capacities. Therefore, the idea of the private sphere, where women are uniquely taking care of the domestic work, and the necessity to include them in the workforce, only applied to a specific type of women, and this has been the case since colonialism; *“In the past, plantations were the public world. Similarly, informal work is also considered part of the public world. Therefore, the idea that women belong in the private sphere and men in the public sphere is not applicable to racialized women. This sexual division of labor does not make sense in their case”*(Ochy Curiel at CICODE, 2017).

In Latin America, it is not abnormal to see impoverished women (mostly racialized) being part of the informal economy as their main means of subsistence. It is important to talk openly about this situation. The GEF seems to be aware of this, as one of the main goals for the “Economic Justice and Rights” coalition is the following: *“Create an inclusive and enabling legal and policy environment and engage women to expand decent work in the formal and informal economy to reduce the number of working women living in poverty by 2026 by a recommended 17 million and decrease the gap in labour force participation between prime-age women and men with small children by half, resulting in an additional 84 million women joining the labour force.”*(*Generation Equality, 2021b, p.19*).

This quote denotes that even though the forum is aware of the informal economy, the idea behind this goal is still abstract as “decent work” could mean many things, is it to increase salary, labor rights and regulations, working conditions, or the type of work they do? This type of statement denies the actual participation of a certain sector of women in the economy and generates an idea that the solution to *women's inequalities* is to make them the leaders of the current economic system, ignoring intersectional issues. In the same way, promising a number of women who will benefit still does not make it clear what kind of women they are talking about.

When citing statistics about economic leadership regarding gender, we must be careful not to overlook the fact that they do not indicate who holds power. What happens to white women in power or racialized and exploited men? The discourse of the GEF to eliminate women's subordination by incorporating them into the economic system is an oxymoronic act because it fails to recognize that the economic system could not exist without patriarchy and the division of labor based on race and ethnicity, failing in the objectives of the forum to achieve root and systemic change. The forum's urgency for a catalytic impulse for women to be more present in the labor market as a way to address systematic inequalities is not calling for truly transformative action and gives a sense of pursuing specific types of work favored by neoliberalism that are suitable for a specific part of the population. As Nancy Fraser points out, this is a way of neoliberal feminism that is targeted to put white women in the same spaces of power as white men, with a model of "emancipatory charisma," using terms such as empowerment and diversity as a magic wand that will put *women* at the top of the power chain (Fraser, 2016b).

To conclude this section, I would also like to go deep into the idea of women's economic empowerment and care work. The GEF calls for women to be an equal part of the labor market to keep up with the current economic system. However, the current economic system requires care work in order to thrive. Proposing to add women to the labor system without making changes to it only gives rise to international labor care chains, maintaining once again the coloniality of power and the coloniality of gender, where people from the global south migrates to the global north in order to take care of the children and elderly (Isaksen et al., 2008). The GEF is well aware of the importance of care work, and that is why they created the Global Alliance for Care.<sup>8</sup>

The idea of solving GE by only adding women does not make much sense; according to decolonial theory, the capitalist system and market economy are intertwined with power relations of gender, race, and class (Dussel, 1994; Grosfoguel, 2011; Quijano, 2000). The history of labor and extraction of natural resources involved the enslavement of people from Africa and their mobilization to America to work on sugar cane plantations. These actions created inter-spatial relationships that led to a system where racialized individuals provided forced labor for others to accumulate wealth; the current system continues to benefit from the cheap and inhumane labor of

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<sup>8</sup> <https://alianzadecuידados.forogeneracionigualdad.mx/>

racialized and impoverished people located in both the global north and the global south (Alvarado, 2016; Curiel et al., 2017; FLACSO, 2009).

In continuation with this idea, it is important to pay special attention to the fundamental role of care work, where women have been understood as those mainly responsible for domestic and care work. If the proposal is to bring women into the labor system, we are left with the question of who is going to do the work that these women have been doing. These proposals create a cycle where impoverished women are the ones doing care work for the *working* women. We can see this with the phenomenon of women from the global south migrating to the north to provide domestic and care services for women in the global north (Isaksen et al., 2008; Parreñas, 2021). This is an example of neoliberal feminism, which benefits from the image of powerful women endorsing a trendy feminist discourse while certain groups remain subordinate.

As long as the capitalist logic remains unchanged, underpaid care work will always be necessary. Despite the good intentions of the GEF and the Global Alliance for Care to promote the idea that both men and women should perform care work, the economic system in which we operate does not allow for it, resulting in a care crisis; *“on one hand social reproduction is a condition of possibility for sustained capital accumulation; on the other, capitalism’s orientation to unlimited accumulation tends to destabilize the very processes of social reproduction on which it relies.”* (Fraser, 2016a, p.100).

The Global Alliance for Care is a great effort that seeks to vindicate and dignify care work; the main objective can be seen in the following idea, taken directly from their website; The COVID-19 pandemic has further revealed the fragility and inadequacy of prevailing care work arrangements, societies’ dependence on unpaid care, and the precarious labor conditions of care workers. Thus, in the wake of the Generation Equality Forum and Action Coalitions, the Global Alliance for Care issues an urgent call to governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, philanthropic organizations, and other strategic partners to take concerted action to reduce inequalities and promote a cultural transformation by guaranteeing the recognition, reduction, remuneration, and redistribution of domestic and care work among every co-responsible actor.<sup>9</sup> This idea does a great job of recognizing that the normalization of unpaid care work has

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<sup>9</sup> General idea of the Global Alliance for Care, found on its web site.  
<https://alianzadecuidados.forogeneracionigualdad.mx/acerca/>

played a key role in upholding the existing economic system. Sadly, this seems like a dead end, as some of the groups that finance them are corporations, as mentioned before, operating under a scheme of exploitation of countries in the global south.

Throughout this chapter, I repeated on several occasions the phrase "integrating women in all their diversity into the labor market" in order to dissect in different parts how the language was being used and what discursive meaning it had in the GEF. Integrating women in all their diversity into the labor market to guarantee their progress becomes an empty discourse in which the center and the otherness are still present, where a gender approach is only guaranteed to women, in which racialized women are the object of help, and from a logic of neoliberal feminism reinforcing the same system that gives rise to these inequalities. A neoliberal system that cannot be understood without the coloniality of power and the coloniality of gender-nature.

## **CHAPTER 2. Feminist Action for Climate Justice: beyond the coloniality of gender and coloniality of nature and toward a unified vision.**

In the previous chapter, I analyzed how the GEF is constitutive of power relations inherited from coloniality, leading to affirmations and actions corresponding to the coloniality of power and the coloniality of gender. After understanding the general picture of the forum, the purpose of this chapter is to add the coloniality of nature more explicitly to the equation and to build the argument on how this is intrinsic to the coloniality of gender. I will discuss the specificities of the Feminist Action for Climate Justice Coalition (FACJ), exploring the ideas of the coloniality of nature. I will use decolonial feminism and Latin American communitarian feminisms to discuss the interconnectedness of gender and nature rather than viewing them as separate entities. I will use textual quotes from the FACJ in order to analyze the prevailing discourse. Finally, as part of this analysis, I will carry out an analysis of the FACJ commitment dashboard, focusing specifically on the Latin American region; in doing so, I will demonstrate that the commitments dashboard is predominantly represented by countries in the global north. This dictates the direction of the coalition without the genuine participation of people from the margins.

As mentioned in previous sections, from a decolonial perspective, the current economic system and globalization of the world could not be possible without colonialism. In this sense, the civility of Europe cannot be conceived without the natural resources extracted from Latin America, without the labor of indigenous peoples, and without the use of female bodies to reproduce

themselves and create more labor force (Curiel et al., 2017). The current environmental and gender crisis calls for a halt to the exploitation of land, as well as discrimination based on gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class. The FACJ recognizes how climate change and gender inequality are systematic problems that need to be addressed from a class and racial analysis and, more importantly, that they have to be addressed together. However, there are particularities in the coalition plan that are important to analyze in a deeper manner to see how they are understanding and addressing this systematic problem. I will start analyzing the FACJ general goal with the next quote: “By 2026, the Coalition on Feminist Action for Climate Justice will have initiated a transition to an inclusive and regenerative green economy that recognizes the interconnectedness of climate change with issues of gender justice and protects and amplifies the voices of grassroots and indigenous communities, including frontline defenders, across social and political arenas.” (Generation Equality, 2021a).

In the previous quote, the word *amplifies* recalls the word *integrate*, analyzed in the previous chapter, where there is the center that integrates and the periphery that is integrated. Amplifies have a similar meaning; however, this has been a word carefully used in several NGOs and activist groups as a way not to claim other people's words but to give a *space* and a platform for *those* voices to be heard. In this sense, the FACJ phrasing still reminds us of a center that can give space and the otherness that needs the space; reproducing the coloniality of power as they seek to amplify the voices of people from the periphery of a Eurocentric institution such as the UN Women. On the other hand, the word *protects* in the quote also presents a complex issue. What does protect mean? That there is someone in pain, suffering, or in danger, and therefore, there is someone inflicting this pain and damage. In the context of the FACJ, they are assuming that there is a center of the GEF that must safeguard the endangered otherness due to climate change. However, recognizing that indigenous communities have suffered denigration, violation, and discrimination without explicitly saying who have been the inflictors of such violations leaves a void of information that must be filled; Recalling the previous chapter, the organizations in positions of power on the GEF (because they have the economic resources or are considered to have the knowledge to address the problem), are reproducing the coloniality of power and gender-nature, as many of these corporations could not exist if they had not benefited from the system that has allowed the plundering of natural resources and cheap labor in the global south. The ones in

charge of the GEF are the center, the same center that is now positioning itself as a protector of the otherness.

Recalling ones more the words of Aura Cumes; Because of our historical realities, there are subjects who can speak from the comfort of a single place, but there are others who cannot, and this is the case of indigenous, Afro-descendant, lesbian, and poor women (Cumes, 2012). With this phrase, Aura is talking about the importance of the complexity of life histories, stating that we cannot see gender, race, and sexuality as a single struggle but as a way to think differently about the lived experiences of black, indigenous, and poor feminists, without simplifying neither the interaction of these categories (Cumes, 2012). The above phrase also seems relevant in a different way for me; within the context of FACJ; where people in charge of the NGOs can speak from the comfort of the same spatial place, whereas the people directly affected by floods, droughts, or lack of food cannot. Both the ones fighting in their territories the adversities of climate change and those of us who do it from a desk in a country that is not experiencing the crisis firsthand have a different story behind us.

The question remains whether a person who is privileged, white, and from the global north can contribute to addressing the intersection of gender and climate change; they can and should get involved, but not from the same position of power that has caused nature and marginalized communities to suffer the greatest consequences of climate change. To prevent replicating forms of domination, it is important to question the structure from the margins rather than the center, as they are the ones with different ways of understanding and living in the world in accordance with what has been imposed from the center. (Cumes, 2012). Although the FACJ advocates for amplifying the voice of the most marginalized communities, they are still doing so from the center within the same system. Here lies the coloniality of nature-gender, where people from the center of the global north have benefited from the historical plundering of bodies and natural resources in the global south; accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2004), and ironically offering ideas on how to improve the environmental catastrophe, proposing as a solution a green economy.

An interesting element to analyze regarding the quote provided previously is the idea of a green economy; a central concept for the FACJ with a total of nine mentions in the “*Action Coalitions: A Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality*.” What is a green economy, and how can it help to systematically change the way of production that is deteriorating natural resources? The concept of a green economy took its place on the international agenda at the Rio +20 Summit,



with this concept being the guiding principle in terms of national policies. According to the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), it is possible to have economic growth and a sustainable and fair world with investments oriented towards green, low-carbon, and socially inclusive innovations (Lander, 2011). However, it should be pointed out that the green economy depends directly on investments by corporations and governments to generate "clean" technologies under the dogmas of the free market economy, therefore for companies to invest, this has to bring them economic benefits, following the same logic of capital accumulation (Lander, 2011). The green economy is a continuation of the coloniality of nature since it sees natural resources as a means to generate more economic profits and the accumulation of capital. Giving a price and a value to nature invisibilizes other ways of relating to nature other than for economic interest; a Eurocentric view of nature that has spread throughout the world. A green economy is a capitalist approach that aims to overcome environmental matters without compromising economic growth, instrumentalizing natural resources and turning the environmental crisis into a profitable venture (Leonardi, 2017). In this sense is important to discuss the idea of the FACJ of achieving climate justice through the green economy; *The definition of Climate Justice recognizes that the drive for environmental sustainability is inextricably linked with social justice. Climate justice centralizes the needs of people who are the most marginalized: those who rely on natural resources to ensure their livelihoods, take care of their families, and are most impacted by environmental degradation and natural disasters.* (Generation Equality, 2021a).

The above quote makes very good points regarding the indisputable need to change the focus and start thinking about social justice with respect to the people who have been and continue to be marginalized and are the first line of the battle against climate change. However in the second part of the quote we can see the dissociation of reality when referring to *"people who depend on natural resources for survival,"* where one subject is being placed depending on this, and others are not. This kind of thinking can be observed to this day. We can take as an example the racist statements of one of the representatives of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission when he stated that "Europe is a garden, we have built a garden, everything Works. Is the best example of political freedom, economic prosperity, and social cohesion [...] the rest of the world is not a garden is a jungle that could invade the garden [...] the gardeners must go to the jungle" Many things can be criticized in this argument, from the fact that he is ignoring that Europe has been built on the basis of looting and the

plundering of nature and labor force, to the neocolonialist call that he makes to go to the jungle to make it a garden.

I want to take the previous notion of garden and jungle as both are a conceptualization of nature; although these statements were not made at all thinking in the conceptualization of nature, it shows two ways of thinking about it. On the one hand, *the civilized modernity of Europe; the garden; human control over nature*; on the other hand, the uncivilization; the chaos; the jungle; *the disgrace of not maintaining nature under control*. It claims that Europe has control over the natural resources while the global south does not. The FACJ is nowhere near of making such racist comments, on the contrary, they advocate for social justice, however, the simile I want to make here is that underneath, there is still the idea that there are those who have surpassed the need for natural resources, while others *rely on natural resources to ensure their livelihoods*. The coloniality of nature in this type of discourse is visible in the sense that there is a de-naturalization of life. Where we are only aware of the immediate products in front of our eyes, be it broccoli; the refrigerator with which we keep the broccoli fresh; or the energy we need to keep that refrigerator running. The lack of clarity in our understanding of reality is hindering our ability to address the climate crisis effectively. This confusion is related to the idea of development and economic growth, which has led to the denaturalization of things. Unfortunately, the green economy has become a means of maintaining this denaturalization while corporations grow their pockets with green money, ignoring the fact that in order to accumulate money it is necessary to exploit nature and the labor force of people; coloniality of gender-nature.

Returning to the conversation about the interlinkages between gender and climate justice, the following quote from the FACJ requires further analysis as it contains significant and relevant information that deserves to be analyzed: *Women and girls are more vulnerable to climate impacts yet are already creating and leading solutions at all levels. Their unique knowledge and skills can help make the response to climate change more effective and sustainable, which is why advocating for women's and girls' rights should be at the center of our climate activism*(*Generation Equality, 2021a*). I would like to discuss the concepts of women as both vulnerable and knowledge holders. The notion that women are more susceptible to the effects of climate change and, therefore, should have more representation in decision-making can give the impression that women possess an inherent quality that amplifies these impacts. In this sense, numerous studies have been conducted on the vulnerabilities faced by women, highlighting the fact that even when women work on the

land, they have limited access to land ownership and that women in the peripheries of the global south are more susceptible to natural disasters (Castañeda Carney et al., 2020).

The different effects of climate change on people are due to the overlapping of the categories of race, class, sex, and gender. In this sense, racialized men in the global south, or in the peripheries of the global north have also been affected by climate change, however, it is interesting how the discourse has been constructed around women. One example of this is the research on how, during catastrophic climate events, migration patterns among women, men, and non-binary people are differential (Chindarkar, 2012; Lama et al., 2021) where women often stay behind to care for children and the elderly, while men migrate in search of economic opportunities due to sociocultural reasons (Castañeda Carney et al., 2020); However, it's important also to acknowledge the vulnerability of men who migrate to new places and face social adversities as they are displaced from their homes. With all this, I do not mean to say that the effects on men and women are comparable or that we should stop paying attention to this problem.

I want to show that the idea of vulnerability has been constructed in a very specific way, leading to the fact that when we talk about gender and climate change, it immediately translates to women. Not all women are affected by climate change in the same way, just as not all men are. However, we do need to recognize the specificities of these impacts even within the same community, what it means for women to stay and for men to migrate, and how we can address the issue from a holistic perspective. Women are not vulnerable because they are women; it is a result of life experiences shaped by societal structures based on the oppression of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, class, and disability, oppression that is the reflection of colonization and that unfolded in the gender-nature coloniality.

Decolonial feminism is important in revealing how women of color are made vulnerable by oppressive social conditions. They also recognize the role of the coloniality of gender, where indigenous and black women are also oppressed by the patriarchal system; however, they make clear that this could have never been understood without colonialism (Cumes, 2012). This theory also exposes how the expected gender roles of men and women have been shaped under the idea of natural order, another way coloniality of gender-nature, for example; there is an expectation that women possess certain knowledge or expertise regarding nature that is different from the knowledge of men (Espinosa Miñoso, 2022). An idea that we can see in the second part of the

above quote of the FACJ regarding the importance of women as holders of unique knowledge about nature.

Framing women as holders of knowledge suggests an instrumentalist vision of them. Where this knowledge plays an important role in wanting to involve women because of what they can contribute to solving the problem and not because of the intrinsic fact that they have been marginalized and suffering the consequences of the environmental catastrophe. It is important, in fact, not to deny that indigenous people have important knowledge and ways of relating to nature, and that should be central to the search for solutions to the injustices experienced by marginalized groups and nature, but these solutions cannot come from a central format.

In conclusion, the relationship between gender and nature goes beyond women as vulnerable or women or as holders of knowledge. This is a discussion of the subordination experienced by both nature and gender and the connection between this subordination due to colonialism and the ongoing coloniality of nature-gender. It is incorrect to perceive women as vulnerable solely based on their gender, rather, societal norms and traditional knowledge have led to this perception. Additionally, knowledge about nature is not exclusive to women due to their gender; men, women, and other gender identities have shaped their relationship with nature as an intrinsic part of their lived story. The solution to the climate crisis is not to put women in positions of power or not, as this leaves out all the variety of factors discussed previously.

### *FACJ commitment dashboard*

The FACJ is included in the commitment dashboard of the GEF. By analyzing the structure and participants of these commitments, we can identify the power dynamics between the north and south at the FACJ, highlighting colonial tendencies in two ways:

**Countries of the global north have a bigger presence in the FACJ.** This is evident in the number of commitments and organizations within the coalition. The FACJ has made a total of 211 commitments from 53 different countries; 35 of them have been made by the United States and 17 by the United Kingdom. However, this is not the case for any country in the periphery; most of these countries have only 1 to 4 commitments, with Mexico having the highest number of commitments at 9 (it would be interesting to conduct a thorough analysis in the future of the relationship between Mexico and its northern neighbor to see how this could or not influence the

commitments made in Mexico). Despite the involvement of 53 countries from all around the world, the organizations from the global north are the ones guiding and conceptualizing the intersection between gender and climate change, concentrating 117 commitments in organizations in 16 countries alone while the other 94 commitments are spread between 37 countries from the global south<sup>10</sup>. This is a way of coloniality of power as it does not allow the full decision-making of countries from the south with little room for action. We need to ask why countries in the global north have a bigger presence while countries in the global south are hardly there. The reason for this is that international relations have traditionally been Eurocentric and have not taken into account factors such as race, class, ethnicity, and gender; Although these issues are now being addressed in politics, the global economic power structure remains unchanged (Tucker, 2018). The same is happening at the GEF and the FACJ even though the intention is to *integrate* and *amplify* the voices of the *other*, they are still using the same platform and the same structure that has been running since the beginning.

**The idea of global as a solution for all.** As mentioned before, organizations from the global north are a majority in the FACJ, raising the question of how much impact a single organization in Tanzania (for example) can have in comparison with 35 organizations in the United States. However, this does not mean that these 35 commitments are implemented in the USA; many countries in Europe and the USA are fulfilling their commitments around the world, particularly in the global south. Each commitment made in the FACJ must outline the specific action and country of implementation for accountability purposes. Upon reviewing these commitments, 59 out of the 211 are classified as 'global,' indicating their impact will be felt worldwide. This concept is significant to explore under decolonial theory: What does global mean? If the idea of globalization comes from the process of colonization and the displacement and relocation of people and natural resources, does a global commitment suggest helping to advance GE in all locations, or does it not have a specific way of location because of its particularity? This will depend on each commitment; however, it is important to mention that although many of the global commitments have the intention to address the difficulties lived by the marginalized, their

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<sup>10</sup> Information collected from the commitments dashboard database  
<https://dashboard.commitments.generationequality.org/map/>

solutions are abstract regarding the implementation or impact in a short or medium period of time as I will describe in the following paragraphs.

Fridays For Future, an international organization, has set a commendable example of global commitments, particularly the MAPA (Most Affected People and Areas) commitment. The commitment aims to give a voice to the marginalized communities and activists affected by the climate crisis, connecting the fight for gender equality and climate justice. The movement led by Greta Thunberg has been remarkable in raising awareness of the climate crisis and calling for citizens to strike, predominantly through the social media of young women. It is essential to recognize and applaud the movement's impressive force; nevertheless, not everyone has access to social media, and the mobilization has mainly been in large cities among people of a mid-high socioeconomic level (König, 2022)<sup>11</sup>; A social class that definitely has to be aware of the environmental problem, however, we must remember that in the countries of the periphery, there have been hundreds of environmental activists, who failed to have the same impact as this movement generated from the center, and that sadly many of them have been murdered for defending their territory and natural resources (Borrás, 2013; Tran, 2021). Under this context, I would like to pose a question, can we talk about a *coloniality of activism* or a *coloniality of fights*? Future research must investigate this coloniality of social struggles to assess which activists we pay attention to and which ones we overlook. However, we can speak of a coloniality of power and gender-nature, in which racialized activists and women are the most murdered for defending the territory.

Another example of global commitment within the coalition is made by Mary Kay, *"a multibillion-dollar entrepreneurship beauty company with millions of independent sales force members in nearly 40 countries. Mary Kay is committed to empowering women and their families by focusing on social impact while partnering with purpose-driven global organizations."* (Generation Equality, 2021)<sup>12</sup>. They selected five women entrepreneurs to fund their projects, one of which was a women's reforestation project in northern Mexico, having, as a result, a documental about the process. We can observe that both Fridays For Future commitments and May Kay have

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<sup>11</sup> Map of cities where Fridays for Future strikes have taken place. <https://fridaysforfuture.org/action-map/map/>

<sup>12</sup> This description can be found in the downloadable database on the commitment dashboard web page. <https://dashboard.commitments.generationequality.org/directory/>

very different backgrounds, however, both organizations have power in the global north and intend to address the problem within women from the global south and while they recognize the importance of highlighting women's role in climate and gender, their approach falls short in addressing the systematic subordination of these two issues.

Currently, the coalition has the lowest number of commitments among all coalitions, with only 147 all over the world, representing 7.03% of all commitments. This raises the question of why the coalition for environmental issues has the least visibility. The GEF and the coalition recognize that gender equality cannot be achieved without climate justice; “*By 2026, FACJ will have initiated a transition to an inclusive and regenerative green economy that recognizes the interconnectedness of climate change with issues of gender justice and protects and amplifies the voices of grassroots and indigenous communities, including frontline defenders, across social and political arenas*” (*Generation Equality, 2021c, p.3*). Therefore it is crucial that the FACJ receives more attention and support from these organizations. The FACJ should be a central focus for the GEF and all organizations involved in environmental issues. In this sense, it is clear that the GEF is overlooking the root connection between gender and climate justice. By taking a superficial look at the relationship between gender and climate change, such as women as vulnerable or women as instruments, the forum puts actions that can affect systemic change on the back burner. The recognition that the subordination of gender and nature comes from colonialism and coloniality is crucial to propose truly transformative solutions from the margins. At the moment, the FACJ has 10 commitments from private sector philanthropy and 0 from Autonomous Communities. This results in little congruence since almost all of its commitments seek to improve and address the living conditions of indigenous and autonomous communities. This pattern can also be observed in the commitments generated within the American continent.

#### *FACJ commitment dashboard structure: an analysis of the American continent*

The commitments outlined in the FACJ can take many forms in terms of their location. Some commitments are made and implemented in the same country, while others originate from one country and are implemented in another. The question is how these commitments are distributed within the Americas and what is the conceptualization of a feminist action for climate justice. According to the FACJ database, there are 31 commitments implemented in the continent, with 16

being commitments made by Latin American countries and 14 by organizations in the United States, Belgium, Canada, or France, however when considering the "global" commitment category, the total commitments concerning Latin America amount to 79.

Latin American countries prioritize commitments within their region, while organizations from the global north focus on implementing commitments in the global south. It is important for economically powerful countries to acknowledge their historical debt to the global south due to the plundering of natural resources. However, this debt cannot be repaid by imposing actions from positions of power without questioning the logic they are following. In this sense, there have been criticisms of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), particularly in the global north, for not effectively utilizing funds to benefit the intended *recipients* (Hope, 2022; Segato, 2014). It is uncertain whether the proposed economic resources at the FACJ will successfully reach their intended destination until the project is completed in 2026, and if the change they are seeking to achieve will be truly transformative. However, we can analyze their conceptualization of gender equality, climate change, and sustainability in order to see the gender-nature coloniality logic.

When analyzing the specific position of Mexico, the country with the highest number of commitments made in Latin America (9), we realize that 5 of them are made by Fridays For Future in Mexico, where their main approach (as mentioned in the previous section) is to Amplify the voices of activists most affected by climate change in an intersectional and decolonial way through the platforms, such as a webpage and Instagram. They make the explicit mention of involving “*Trans women and non-binary people, racialized women, LGBTQIAP+ women, and women and girls from other marginalized communities.*”(Fridays for Future on the Generation Equality, 2021)<sup>13</sup>. Throughout this thesis, I have emphasized how the GEF is constitutive of the coloniality of power because of the actors involved and their spatial ubication; in this example, we can see an international organization located in the global south that seeks to highlight and address the voices of those traditionally marginalized. However, special attention must be paid to the fact that they speak of gender diversity but always make sure to highlight women in order to give special attention to involving women in the climate justice fight, falling again into the fallacy of involving only women in this issue without addressing that the gender-nature coloniality goes beyond female

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<sup>13</sup> This description can be found in the downloadable database on the commitment dashboard web page. <https://dashboard.commitments.generationequality.org/directory/>



bodies, as it is interlinked to racialized bodies and how they have been exploited for the accumulation of natural resources.

In continuation with the analysis in Latin America, I want to clarify that although during this research I have focused on the power dynamics in relation to the global north and the global south, I consider as relevant to mention the power relations of the center and peripheries in a country of the global south such as Mexico, where the four initiatives in addition to the initiatives made by Fridays For Future are made by organizations created by people who have been benefited by the current capitalist system. This is the case of Fempower, which is part of FACJ proposing the following; *"I have been developing an open social innovation technology [an humanitarian innovation technology] to enhance the talent of 10,000 thousand rural women living in Mexico. We are going to start from 2022 to 2026. Our dual solution is an open free app and platform to potentialize our blended learning E.S.T.E.M Model, tailor-made for rural women and girls, to teach them with non-traditional approaches how to solve the socio-environmental problems of their community applying science, technology, innovation, and transformative entrepreneurship to become them into innovative products and sustainable entrepreneurship."*(Fempower at Generation Equality, 2021)<sup>14</sup>

This group of Mexican women and men aims to empower women by helping them establish their own entrepreneurial ventures. Unfortunately, their website is only partially operational, with a notice indicating that the full site won't be available until February 20th, 2022. This means that they are one year and four months behind schedule, however, their women's entrepreneurship course is still accessible. It is priced at 18,000 Mexican pesos, an exorbitant amount of money for the economic situation of the country; according to the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL), in 2022, 40% of the population had a monthly income of only \$2,807.49 per person (CONEVAL, 2022). Demonstrating, on the one hand, the lack of sensitivity of this initiative and, on the other hand, that it is aimed at middle and high-income women who have the capital to start a business. The company offers 10 scholarships of up to 70% due to the partnership it has with other organizations. Furthermore, the branding of the website, "I run my own business," is entirely in English. Their merchandise includes mugs, key chains, and purses featuring the brand's slogans, which are all pink and adorned with images

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<sup>14</sup> This description can be found in the downloadable database on the commitment dashboard web page. <https://dashboard.commitments.generationequality.org/directory/>

of perfumes. This perpetuates a stereotypical feminine image while also showcasing images of women in suits, portraying them as boss girls. Such proposals lack social sensitivity and are disconnected from Mexican reality. Finally, neither their webpage nor their Facebook page mentions anything about rural women.

The presence of organizations like the one mentioned above in Mexico highlights the power imbalance between the center and the periphery in the global south. It also suggests that the organizing and selecting committee of the GEF may not be genuinely committed to addressing the issue of gender inequality and *involving* marginalized groups. These neoliberal organizations located in the global south serve the role of demonstrating that the GEF has organizations in the south without paying attention to what these organizations do. Sadly the coloniality of power within the dynamics in the Americas is very clear; on the one hand, we have mostly organizations from the global north that seek to implement solutions for people affected by climate change from digital platforms such as Fridays For Future; Female empowerment projects such as the case of reforestation in Mexico funded by Mary key Foundations, and highly privileged people who only seek economic income with an empty feminist discourse. There are two main reasons why this occurs: firstly, it is important to remember that communitarian groups are not in leadership positions within the GEF or FACJ. Secondly, each commitment must align with the coalition's specific categories, which prioritize sustainable development through the green economy in order to achieve economic growth, as outlined in the institutional analysis.

## Conclusions

The relationships between gender and climate change are varied, and it is essential to begin addressing them as a single complex issue rather than viewing them as separate problems. I argued in this thesis that we cannot think of solutions for climate change without a gender perspective, and achieving gender equality is impossible in a deteriorating environment without recognizing and addressing climate change. This alone, however, is insufficient. As my thesis showed, we cannot address these problems without addressing the prominent role of coloniality as the root of the problem, in which nature and racialized people were conceptualized as the otherness, generating a division that resulted in the oppression and use of racialized people and nature for the functioning of the capitalist system.

During the last decades, the relationship between gender and nature has been conceptualized as a problem between women and nature in an instrumentalist way and in which women have been depicted as intrinsically vulnerable; following the ideas of decolonial theory, we can see that this connection goes beyond that. I support the view that the root of the problem is colonialism which unfolded in the colonality system. In my conceptualization of the problem, the colonality of gender and the colonality of nature cannot be conceived separately (coloniality of gender-nature); as mentioned by several authors, both of them have been conceived as non-human and therefore as if they do not have intrinsic value. In this sense, the connection between gender and nature is not that women and nature are interconnected because women have more knowledge about nature or because they are intrinsically more vulnerable to climate change but because of the repression and dehumanization that nature and racialized bodies have had and their use as the basis of the capitalist system and the globalized world in which we live today. In this sense, the FACJ is overlooking the problem by continuing perceiving women as an instrument to gather more information to solve climate change and by arguing that women are the most affected by climate change without addressing in-depth categories such as race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, class, disability, etc.

The GEF and the FACJ are constitutive of a colonality discourse as the language and structure used in the forum keep replicating a pattern in which there is a center with knowledge and money to execute actions regarding gender inequality and climate change, while there is a periphery that passively receives the solutions proposed by the center. This is ironic because the forum's primary goal is to address marginalized communities, yet there's no autonomous communities or indigenous groups in the GEF. Moreover, terms used in the forum, such as *integrate*, are a clear example that there are established power figures in the forum, something that can be analyzed not only in its discourse but in its configuration. If we recall the (institutional) structures of the dashboard commitments in the American continent, we see firstly that the organizations that are part of the forum are mostly from the global north, secondly that the organizations that are based in the south are organizations that are part of the center of the global south, and that there is not a single group led by indigenous communities or autonomous communities.

Another interesting result of this project is that the forum does not explicitly say what they mean when they talk about gender equality. In analyzing the discourse of the forum, we can see

that their main focus is women and girls and that while they often use the term "women and girls in all their diversity", they fail to truly understand where gender categories come from, where their oppressions come from and therefore how the problem can be addressed. In many ways, the forum perpetuates a neoliberal feminism that seeks to empower women within the current economic model, without realizing that it is not just about putting women in positions of power. The use of the word gender as synonymous of women denies other sex-gender diversities that are not women and that are marginalized by sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, race, and more.

Decolonial and communitarian feminists have long argued that the UN cannot bring systematic changes, as it continues to follow a pattern where marginalized communities are only seen as recipients of aid from NGOs and international institutions. Decolonial and communitarian feminisms, therefore, suggest that change should be sought through activist practices and theorizing within the community from the margins. Attempting to solve issues by disrupting the current system would require a complete overhaul of the capitalist economic model, which could cause significant upheaval for those who are financially invested in the forum. Discussions about gender equality involve examining the historical factors, patterns, and actions which have led to the current unequal state. This includes analyzing colonialism, coloniality, and exploitation in terms of race, ethnicity, sex, and nature. The fact that the FACJ is the coalition with fewer commitments puts into evidence that even in a highly regulated and controlled space, there is still a lack of effort to address the roots the gender-nature coloniality. These theses used feminist decolonial theories to understand why mechanisms such as the GEF continue to be part of the problem. This work makes explicit how the subordination of gender and nature comes from the same place, something that is not recognized in the forum, and that if they continue to be handled as two separate issues they will continue to fail to address the problem in a remotely close way.

Finally, it is important to say that the GEF has received a significant amount of funding, leading to high expectations for impactful results. However, this research has many limitations, firstly because the forum is still operating and it is not possible to measure its impacts yet. Secondly, because of the time constraints for conducting the research; In order to have a complete idea of the people involved in the forum, it is necessary to conduct interviews with the groups participating in the forum, as well as with the organizers, and make a deeper analysis of the 2,000 commitments. In the same way, it is important to perform a complete analysis of the money flows within the forum and the results of the commitments generated. Undoubtedly, this mechanism is

important to understand what is being done at the global level to address gender inequalities and environmental catastrophes. Nonetheless, the present analysis has made clear that the forum's structure perpetuates power imbalances perpetuating the coloniality of power and the coloniality of gender-nature. Despite some individuals and groups having good intentions, they are ultimately limited by the same system that has caused the inequalities they seek to stop.

## **Abbreviations**

**(CBD)** Convention on Biological Diversity.

**(CEDAW)** Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

**(COP)** Conference of the Parties.

**(FACJ)** Feminist Action for Climate Justice.

**(GAP)** Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality.

**(GE)** Gender Equality.

**(GEF)** Generation Equality Forum.

**(IPCC)** Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

**(NAP)** National Adaptation Plan.

**(NGO)** Non-governmental organizations.

**(UNCCD)** United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

**(UNFCCC)** United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

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