

Refusing to Play the Game

An exploration of transnational decolonial feminist resistance
to neoliberal corporate power



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Abstract

This thesis examines the decolonial feminist approach of the transnational feminist collective, *Feminists for a Binding Treaty (FBT)*, as they advocate for the inclusion of a gender perspective in a Binding Treaty to curb corporate power. Drawing on Freedman's ideology theory and Transnational Feminist Theory, this thesis highlights what a decolonial transnational feminist collective should look like. Analysis of three online documents of the FBT Collective and 12 webpages of their founding members, using Hyperlink Network Analysis and Qualitative Content Analysis, first reveals the network, strategies, motivations, and ideological concepts which make up their approach. The FBT Collective's approach is then analysed against three themes of decoloniality as feminist resistance. This research finds that the Collective's decolonial approach is based on an embrace of inclusivity and participation, is driven by concerns for intersectional injustices, and maintains an anti-capitalist positionality. The FBT Collective, as shown in this research project, refuse to accept neoliberal and liberal feminist hegemonic power, and are an example of modern-day decolonial feminist resistance in action.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, development institutions¹ have collaborated with transnational corporations² (TNCs) to promote a neoliberal approach of investment in women to stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty globally (Hickel, 2014). This has allowed corporations to make a “business case” for gender equality, particularly in the Global South³, in which ‘profit-making, economic growth, women’s empowerment and community development’ have become opportunities and commodities for corporate capitalisation (Gregoratti et al., 2018 p.93). This corporate-friendly development approach is rooted in neoliberal and liberal feminist thought, detracts attention from the ways in which corporations are benefitting from gender inequality, and permits corporations to promote politics that glorify ‘market-based solutions to gender inequalities’ (Gregoratti, 2016 p. 922). Corporate-led gender equality development strategies are gaining in popularity at a time when corporate abuse of power, particularly in the Global South, is on the rise⁴.

However, feminist social movements and transnational solidarity collectives are adapting and evolving their resistance strategies to achieve real gender equality ‘in the context of an increasingly corporate-dominated world’ (Grosser & McCarthy, 2019 p.1102). One such coalition (made up of feminist, environmental, human rights, and development activist organisations/NGOs) is the Feminists for a Binding Treaty Collective⁵. Since 2016, the FBT Collective have been seeking to resist neoliberalism and liberal feminism by ensuring that gender equality is at the fore-front of negotiations on a binding treaty to regulate corporate actions and protect human rights (PODER, 2019).

¹ such as the World Bank, USAID, UNDP and IMF (Hickel, 2014)

² such as Goldman Sachs and The Nike Foundation (Hickel, 2014)

³ For the purpose of this research, the terms “Global North” and “Global South” are used where the former represents ‘pathways of transnational capital’ while the latter represents the ‘marginalised poor of the world regardless of geographical distinction’ (Mohanty, 2003 pp.229-230).

⁴ See Grosser & McCarthy, 2019; Fraser, 2013; Roberts 2012

⁵ Feminists for a Binding Treaty will hereby be referred to as the FBT Collective or the Collective

This research seeks to examine the decolonial nature of the Collective, to gain a deeper understanding of feminist resistance to corporate power, using data gathered from various webpages and documents. The network structure of the FBT Collective is revealed through a quantitative Hyperlink Network Analysis (HNA). Meanwhile, a qualitative Content Analysis (CA) examines the ways in which the Collective engages with the public, advocates for gender equality, and is motivated to challenge corporate power, liberal feminism, and neoliberal hegemonic ideology. By examining the research area through the theoretical lens of Freeden's Ideology Theory proposed (1996) and Transnational Feminist Theory (Mohanty, 2003), an example of modern-day decolonial feminist resistance to corporate political influence and human rights abuses is thoroughly explored.

Almost a century ago, in an effort to help achieve greater gender equality in the political and public sphere of the 20th century, Eleanor Roosevelt called for women to 'learn to play the game as men do' (Roosevelt, 1928). This thesis examines how the modern-day struggle for gender equality has become about refusing to play "the game" of neoliberal/liberal feminist development. This research identifies the decolonial feminist nature of the network, strategies, motivations and ideologies of the FBT Collective as they resist corporate development ideology by demanding the inclusion of a gender perspective in the UN Binding Treaty on TNCs and Other Business Enterprises with Respect to Human Rights.

1.1. Research Problem and Question

Corporate actions have long been responsible for human rights abuses, both in the colonial and post-colonial eras of history (Deva, 2011 p.5). These abuses 'occur within a context of power inequalities, patriarchal systems and entrenched discrimination', and therefore are not gender neutral, having a disproportionate impact on the lives of women (Awori et al., 2018 p.285). The rise in globalisation has led to calls for corporate actions, particularly those of TNCs, to be regulated to ensure the protection of human rights (Deva, 2011 p.4).

In 2014, seeking to address corporate human rights abuses, the UN Human Rights Council set out to develop a legally Binding Treaty on TNCs and Other Business Enterprises with Respect to Human Rights⁶ (UNHRC, 2014). Following this, members of the FBT Collective began working together to integrate a gender justice perspective into the Binding Treaty to ensure that those most vulnerable to corporate abuse were put at the forefront of the possible solution (AWID, 2019). Over the past five years, the FBT Collective has grown to become a loose network of more than 40 organisations⁷ spread across the world that work together to meet this end (PODER, 2019). The Collective is a fascinating example of transnational feminism in action.

In response and resistance to the power of neoliberal and liberal feminism's hegemonic entanglement for the last 30 years (Fraser, 2009, Prügl, 2015, Mohanty 2003), the FBT Collective appears to embrace the key tenets of decoloniality: inclusivity and participation, intersectionality and concerns for justice, and an anti-capitalist positionality. The purpose of this research project is to explore and examine how decoloniality has shaped feminist resistance to neoliberal and liberal feminist hegemonic power by examining the network structure, strategies, motivations, and ideology of the FBT Collective. To fulfil this purpose, the research is guided by the following research question:

To what extent has the Feminist for a Binding Treaty Collective adopted a decolonial feminist approach in resistance to liberal feminist and neoliberal hegemonic ideology?

⁶ hereby referred to as the Binding Treaty or the Treaty

⁷ The Collective now includes feminist, activist, grassroots, development, environmental, and non-profit organisations and networks (PODER, 2019)

By examining the extent to which decoloniality has shaped the resistance of the FBT Collective, this thesis aims to:

1. Provide a detailed analysis of an example of transnational feminist resistance to corporate, neoliberal and liberal feminist ideology
2. Determine the ideological foundations of a transnational decolonial feminist collective's activism and resistance efforts
3. Highlight the ways in which decoloniality in transnational feminist activism challenges neoliberalism and liberal feminism

The following sections will briefly outline the Binding Treaty and the Feminist for a Binding Treaty Collective.

1.1.1. The Binding Treaty

In 2014, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) passed a resolution drafted by Ecuador and South Africa to 'establish an open-ended intergovernmental working group on TNCs and other business enterprises with respect to human rights' (UNHRC, 2014). The purpose of this working group is to create a legally Binding Treaty which will 'regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of TNCs and other business enterprises' (UNHRC, 2014). This legally Binding Treaty was discussed and debated in its first meeting which took place in October 2015 (UNHRC, 2014). Meetings have continued annually in which the treaty continues to be discussed and debated before it becomes legally binding. A first draft of the treaty was presented in 2018 and in July 2019, a revised and updated version of the draft treaty was published. Members were encouraged to examine, discuss and 'commence substantive negotiations' on its contents ahead of the fifth intergovernmental working group meeting which took place in Geneva, Switzerland in October 2019 (UNHRC, 2020 p.2).

The Binding Treaty, as of 2019, consists of 22 Articles covering a wide range of issues such as the definitions and rights of victims, mutual legal assistance,

international cooperation, and consistency with international law⁸ (OEIGWG Revised Draft, 2019). The instrument will apply to ‘all business activities, including particularly but not limited to those of a transnational character’ and will encompass all human rights (OEIGWG Revised Draft, 2019 Art.3).

The Treaty processes, discussions and both drafts have been met with much critical analysis and condemnation. Many activist and advocacy organisations have criticised the process of the Binding Treaty negotiations, the participation of corporate actors in the discussions and the wording of the drafts themselves (CETIM, 2019). The FBT Collective has been at the forefront of this criticism over the past five years and, as their demands will be discussed in later sections of this research, we will first briefly examine the founding of the Collective.

1.1.2. The FBT Collective

During the second session of the Binding Treaty negotiations in 2016, development, environmental, human rights, and feminist organisations conversed and founded the FBT Collective (PODER, 2019). This research project will focus exclusively on the 12 founding member organisations of the Collective, which are (in no particular order):

1. The Project on Organizing, Development, Education, and Research (PODER)
2. The Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID)
3. The Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)
4. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
5. Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
6. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

⁸ The purpose of the binding treaty as stated in Article 2 is: a) To strengthen the respect, promotion, protection, and fulfilment of human rights in the context of business activities; b) To prevent the occurrence of such violations and abuses, and to ensure effective access to justice and remedy for victims of human rights violations and abuses in the context of business activities; c) To promote and strengthen international cooperation to prevent human rights violations and abuses in the context of business activities and provide effective access to justice and remedy to victims of such violations and abuses.(OEIGWG Revised Draft, 2019 Art.2).

7. Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN)
8. International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-net)
9. Friends of the Earth International (FOEi)
10. International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP)
11. Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)
12. The Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)

The founding member organisations work both internationally⁹ and in the Global South exclusively¹⁰, and despite some not explicitly being women's rights organisations¹¹, all have committed and contributed to the formation of the Collective. The members have collaborated and participated in negotiations and activism efforts held at the annual conference of the Binding Treaty in Switzerland every year since 2016 (PODER, 2019).

1.2. Justification of the Research Project

This research seeks to add to existing academic knowledge within the fields of gender and development, feminist studies and political science but is also both politically and socially salient at a time when feminism is feared transformed (Fraser, 2009), interrupted (Calkin, 2015), seduced (Eisenstein, 2009) and co-opted (Prügl, 2015) by neoliberalism. Scholars have long debated on the definitions of feminism(s) and this thesis serves as an example of that academic debate in action. By exploring how a transnational feminist collective engages with decoloniality to reject and resist Western liberal feminism and neoliberalism, a real-life example of coalition and solidarity across borders, championed by Mohanty (2003), is presented and analysed.

Within the modern feminist academic landscape, the ever-raging ideological warfare between Western feminism and transnational feminism

⁹ AWID, FIAN, FIDH, WILPF, FOEi, ESCRnet, CIEL

¹⁰ PODER, APWLD, DAWN, CELS, IWRAP

¹¹ CIEL, FOEi, FIAN

(evolving from Third World Feminism) continues to evolve, with scholars from both sides offering their views of how feminism should operate and with which political discourses it should associate (Ferguson, 2017). In this modern era, gender equality means very different things to different people, with feminists such as Facebook Chief Operations Officer (COO) Sheryl Sandberg (2013¹²) calling for women to ‘lean in’ to overcome our individual internalised gender barriers juxtaposed with Nancy Fraser’s manifesto demanding a ‘feminism for the 99%’ that is anti-neoliberal, anti-racist, anti-heterosexist and anti-imperialist (2019¹³).

The tension between Western liberal feminism and Marxist, Black and/or Transnational feminisms is at the forefront of feminist academic debate but also evident among social activist movements, as this research reveals. Some have even suggested that liberal feminism has ascended to a hegemonic status due to the jaded position of non-liberal feminists, as Ferguson argues:

‘We are currently at a moment when there has been a failure of political imagination among many feminists. In some cases, this is because feminists are captured by neoliberal feminism...In other cases, it is because, like Fraser, feminists are captured by a view of neoliberalism as an irresistible agent, and of feminism and feminists as its unwitting victims. They cannot imagine how neoliberalism is to be resisted, and they cannot imagine themselves as possessing agency sufficient to unseat or alter a seemingly hegemonic ideology’

(Ferguson, 2017 p.231)

This research stands in strong opposition to the above statement. Resistance to neoliberalism and liberal feminism is thriving due to transnational feminist collectives such as the FBT Collective. Transnational feminists have full knowledge and use of their agency and are indeed working to “unseat” neoliberal/liberal feminist ideology. In rejecting the individualist market solutions of Western neoliberal gender equality (Prügl, 2015, Ferguson, 2017) and choosing instead a

¹² ‘Lean In’ was co-authored by Nell Scovell

¹³ ‘Feminism for the 99%’ was co-authored by Cinzia Arruzza and Tithi Bhattacharya

decolonial approach which finds solidarity across borders, transnational feminist coalitions are at the forefront of reshaping the definitions of feminism, gender equality, and gender and development (GAD). This research project disproves the idea that feminists ‘cannot imagine how neoliberalism is to be resisted’ (Ferguson, 2017 p.231) by providing an account of the FBT Collective’s decolonial resistance in action.

This research highlights the different approaches stemming from Global North and Global South scholars and activists to gender equality within the field of development, which Grosser & McCarthy (2019 p.1011) posit is necessary for ‘advancing an intersectional feminist research agenda’. The FBT Collective is made up of organisations from both figurative hemispheres. The decolonial nature of their approach (expressed by their struggle to hold Western corporate and neoliberal power to account) highlights not only the unequal impacts of corporate abuses in the Global South but also the solidarity and agency of such collectives in advocating for their rights. The vast difference between Global North and South in terms of impacts felt by corporate abuse of power must not be discounted. By examining the pushback of Global South actors working collectively with those from the Global North, this research gives an insight into the ever-widening global economic and gender inequality gap – and the solutions collectives, such as the FBT Collective, envision.

While much research has been conducted to critique the neoliberalisation of feminism¹⁴ and to establish the ideological underpinnings of (neo)liberal feminism (Ferguson, 2017), there is a significant lack of research on the ideological concepts of decolonial transnational feminist collaborative action. This research project uses Freeden’s Ideology Theory to analyse and thoroughly present the ideology of a transnational feminist collective. In doing so, this thesis provides a deep understanding of how decolonial Transnational Feminist Theory works in practice and seeks to contribute an answer to a key question posed by transnational feminist

¹⁴ See Fraser, 2009, Prüggl, 2015, Eisenstein, 2009

Chandra Mohanty (2013 p.987): ‘What would it mean to be attentive to the politics of activist feminist communities in different sites in the global South and North as they imagine and create cross-border feminist solidarities anchored in struggles on the ground?’.

Neoliberalism has advanced to become the ‘foundational principal of social life’ (Mohanty, 2003 p.183). The power neoliberalism has bestowed upon corporations is a serious cause for concern. Grosser & McCarthy (2019 p.1102) argue that research into the effects of such economic and political power on gender equality is ‘increasingly important with respect to feminist agendas, and increasingly worthy of investigation’. Therefore, it is crucial to identify those organisations and activists who seek to hold ‘capitalist hegemony and culture’ (Mohanty, 2003 p.183) to account. This thesis expands on a ‘much under-researched aspect of scholarship’ (Gregoratti et al., 2018 p.93) as it explores the detailed and difficult process that is required to ensure that corporations are being held to account for their actions, and highlights the ways in which decolonial solidarity is resisting neoliberal/liberal feminist hegemonic views.

2. Contextual Considerations

It is important to highlight the context in which the resistance of the FBT Collective is taking place before continuing. This section will lay out the key points made by the business case for gender equality and the neoliberalisation of feminism critique. By providing a clear examination of the academic background in which this research is situated, the ideological concepts that the Collective both contests and embodies within a decolonial approach is thoroughly established.

2.1. The Business Case for Gender Equality

The business case for gender equality has emerged over the past 30 years, arguably emerging in the 1980s from the Women in Development (WID) approach, and has ‘thrived in corporate discourses, governance and practices in recent years’ (Gregoratti et al., 2018 p.93). The main argument touted by proponents of the

business case is that to bring about more growth - and in so doing, gender equality - women must be encouraged and “empowered” to integrate into the global market and paid labour force (Gregoratti et al., 2018). Gender equality within this context is understood as equal access to both the labour market and the market economy (Eisenstein, 2009; Gregoratti et al., 2018). The business case for gender equality, therefore, draws its central themes from the framework of neoliberalism which has strengthened to become the hegemonic, economic, political, and social explanatory force of the modern era (Larner, 2003). To fully understand the business case, we must first, briefly, examine this modern hegemonic explanatory force.

Neoliberalism, in its most concise definition, is the ‘process of opening up national economies to global actors such as multinational corporations and to global institutions such as the IMF and World Bank’ (Larner, 2003 p.509). According to Prügl (2015 p.617), drawing on the work of both Larner (2000¹⁵) and Ferguson (2009¹⁶), the term ‘neoliberalism’ has three different meanings within academia. Firstly, it is a ‘political project’ stemming from the 1980s era of Regan and Thatcher which promoted structural adjustment, privatisation and deregulation and has now been globalised during the post-Cold War landscape (Prügl, 2015 p.617). Secondly, it is an ‘economic doctrine or ideology’ emerging from the Chicago School of Economics which values private enterprise and market forces while harbouring a deep mistrust of the state (Prügl, 2015 p.617). Thirdly, neoliberalism is a ‘cultural formation’, utilising specific government mechanisms which ‘apply private market forces to public governance while vice versa [are] inserting themselves into the most intimate realms of privacy’ (Prügl, 2015 p.617).

Within development institutions, neoliberalism is defined by policies that put emphasis on ‘trade liberalization, reliance on markets, and minimizing the role of government’ to allow the free market to bring about development for all people

¹⁵ Larner, W. (2000), ‘Neo-liberalism: Policy, Ideology, Governmentality’, *Studies in Political Economy*, 63 (Autumn), pp. 5–25.

¹⁶ Ferguson, J. (2009), ‘The Uses of Neoliberalism’, *Antipode*, 41 (S1), pp. 166–84

over time (Carothers & Gramont, 2013 p.42). This development strategy is clearly shared by proponents of the business case for gender equality who, according to Mohanty (2003 p.9) embrace ‘discourses of consumerism, ownership, profit, and privatization’.

There are various and varying reasons for embracing the business case given by corporate and development actors, and there is no definitive or standard approach taken within this discourse. However, Gregoratti et al. (2018) find three main themes or arguments made to encourage this approach given by proponents of the business case to be as follows:

1. It is good for business. Gender equality within the ‘higher levels of management and corporate governance will be more profitable’ (Gregoratti et al., 2018 p.94)
2. It will benefit the global economy as ‘increasing the representation of women (understood here as a homogenous group) in the labour force will both increase productive capacity overall and encourage innovation’ (Gregoratti et al., 2018 p.95)
3. It will bring about development and progress by ‘increasing women’s empowerment and transforming unequal gender relations across different spheres of social life (Gregoratti et al., 2018 p.95)

These themes of the business case can be seen in many development institutions’ approaches and are known by various names including “Smart Economics” and “The Girl Effect”.

The World Bank argued, in its 2012 Gender and Development report, that investment in women could ‘enhance economic efficiency and improve other development outcomes’ for women by removing barriers to education, economic opportunities and productive inputs; improving the status of women; and ‘levelling the playing field’ for men and women to participate in political and social decisions (World Bank, 2011 p.4). The World Bank coined the term “Smart Economics” to describe their business case development strategy of investment in women (World

Bank, 2011). It has since been embraced by many other development institutions such as the IMF, UNDP, USAID and by many corporate actors such as Nike and Goldman Sachs (Chant, 2016a; Hickel, 2014). Neoliberal and corporate-led gender and development approaches have now become a central theme of development work as part of the Millennium Development Goals, the Dakar Framework for Action, and the Sustainable Development Goals (Colclough, 2014). “Smart Economics” encourages women, quite vaguely, to ‘take control of their own lives’ and argues that by doing so, women can thereby ‘gain political power to effect policy change in ways that might alleviate poverty’ (Bergeron, 2003 p.410).

The concept of “Smart Economics” coincided with a change in corporate approaches to development in the Global South. For example, in 2008, hoping to better their image following allegations of sweatshop labour, The Nike Foundation launched a media campaign called “The Girl Effect” (Chant, 2016b). It aimed to work with development actors to eradicate poverty by empowering adolescent girls (Chant, 2016b). “The Girl Effect” is based on the beliefs that empowering girls in the Global South is of ‘central importance, not only to the beneficiaries themselves, but also to their communities and the next generation’ (Chaaban & Cunningham, 2011 p. 2). It further posits that girls can stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty (Hickel, 2014), and has been embraced by many development institutions.

UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner and UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka published a 2018 opinion piece online in which they argued that there is not only a moral imperative to achieving gender equality but an economic one, stating that ‘the cost of doing nothing is too high for any business - and economies as a whole - to bear... When companies make female empowerment central to their business strategies, growth and equality can be mutually reinforcing’ (Steiner & Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2018). By allowing corporations to take the lead in bringing about gender equality, Steiner and Mlambo-Ngcuka (2018) argue that global wealth would increase by US\$28 trillion in ‘addition to the benefits for individual companies’ (Steiner & Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2018). This article echoes the themes outlined by Gregoratti et al (2018) as they argue that striving for gender

equality is just good business sense which can make companies more ‘innovative, generous and profitable’ (Steiner & Mlambo-Ngucka, 2018).

A corporate-led business case for gender equality is a decidedly Western invention, emerging from the US and UK, described by Larner (2003 p.509) as the ‘ideological heartlands’ of neoliberalism. The further entanglement of corporate-friendly gender equality within the development discourse is a cause for growing concern among some feminist scholars and has been critically dubbed as the ‘Neoliberalisation of Feminism’ (Fraser, 2009, Prügl, 2015, Gregoratti, 2018).

2.2. The Neoliberalisation of Feminism

The neoliberalisation of feminism, as laid out by Prügl (2015 p.617), has occurred through the integration and co-optation of feminism into economic projects; neoliberal ideology; and governmental technologies rationalities and mechanisms. Prügl draws on the work of other critical scholars, such as Fraser (2009) and Roberts (2012), to highlight how, since the 1980s, feminism has been co-opted by neoliberalism. This has occurred in various ways, according to Prügl (2015). She posits that, since the 1980s, the feminist position has turned towards valuing recognition politics and promoting self-determination over state protection/support. These changes have occurred alongside a rise in the number of women entering the workforce who replaced more expensive male workers (Prügl, 2015 p.617). Women’s demands for liberation¹⁷ were appropriated by global elites, which Fraser (2009 p.99) describes as ‘a fine instance in the cunning of history’. These changes in feminist areas of focus helped to legitimise neoliberalism as Prügl explains:

Feminism’s elective affinity with capitalism, including a shared distrust of traditional authority, facilitated its co-optation into capitalist projects. The result

¹⁷ These demands included equal pay, labour rights and ending violence against women (Fraser, 2009; Prügl, 2015)

was an enmeshing of feminist ideas with neoliberal agendas and feminism providing legitimacy to the neoliberal transformation of capitalism.

(Prügl, 2015 pp.617-618)

Fraser (2009) argues that this mutual embrace of liberal feminism and capitalist processes during the 1980s strengthened the newly emerging, global, transnational, neoliberal form of capitalism. By legitimising neoliberalism, liberal feminism has given validity to ‘the same neoliberal macroeconomic framework that has sustained gender-based inequality and oppression’ (Roberts, 2014, p. 209). The ‘naturalization of capitalist values’, according to Mohanty (2003 p.6), has profoundly influenced the neoliberalisation of feminism by focusing on what she argues is a ‘financial “equality” between men and women’ but is solely grounded ‘in the capitalist values of profit, competition, and accumulation’.

According to Ferguson (2017), this form of neoliberalised feminism can be defined by three main beliefs. First, by focusing on the individual, neoliberal feminism views gender equality as a ‘consequence of individual choices’ which ignores and ‘renders invisible any structural analysis of gender’ (Ferguson, 2017 p.230). Secondly, political responses under a neoliberalised feminist lens become privatised, as Ferguson explains:

Since the problems have individual causes, it follows that the solutions must also be individual. There is no need for collective, political action to address inequality; in its place are calls for individuals to alter their beliefs and/or behaviour

(Ferguson, 2017 p.230)

Finally, neoliberalised feminism views liberation as solely achievable through capitalism which is expressed in terms of ‘women’s successful participation in capitalism – whether in terms of women’s capacity to consume freely, or in terms of women’s capacity to compete in the capitalist workplace’ (Ferguson, 2017 p.230). Within this neoliberalised feminist ideology, she argues:

The unbridled free market is the institutional mechanism by which we liberate women and ensure gender equality. The feminist is the entrepreneur, capable of competing alongside of men, and winning or losing in the marketplace according to her individual efforts and the vicissitudes of the economy

(Ferguson, 2017 p.230).

The previously mentioned World Bank's 2012 Gender and Development report, for example, has been criticised for reinforcing 'the neoliberal orthodoxy that corporations, capitalist states and the poor in the global South share a common interest in addressing gender inequality' (Roberts & Soederberg, 2012 p.965). The promotion of gender equality through corporate investment in women is based not on collectivism but individualism (Grosser & McCarthy, 2019) in which social and cultural factors are embraced through a narrowed frame of 'preserving core ideas of neoclassical economics such as methodological individualism and a focus on market efficiency' (Bergeron, 2003 p.402). Griffin (2009 p.103) posits that the inclusion of gender equality discourse in institutions such as the World Bank or UNDP 'simply shifts the focus to an assumed equation between economic growth and social development'. Neoliberalism is criticised therefore as a simple economic solution to gender inequality that fails to address 'complex social problems that are rooted in overlapping structural inequalities' (Roberts, 2014 p.226).

The anxieties portrayed in these texts by contemporary feminist scholars highlight the 'ongoing feminist concerns about the decline and depoliticisation of a previously vigorous and emancipatory collective struggle' (Eschle & Manguashca, 2014). The neoliberalisation of feminism, despite being enthusiastically embraced by development institutions, governments, and corporate actors, has been met with thorough analysis, criticism, and debate from various feminist academics. Roberts (2014 p.209) argues that by embracing liberal feminism 'the same neoliberal macroeconomic framework that has created and sustained gender-based and other forms of oppression' is reproduced. This has occurred and continues to arise due to the 'global feminization of labor, the erosion of support for social reproduction and the splintering of feminist critiques of capitalism' (Roberts, 2014 p.209). Prügl

echoes this argument but is more explicit in her condemnation of the neoliberalisation of feminism, as she explains:

Liberal feminism and individualist solutions to gender oppression are thriving as feminism is walking the halls of corporate and state power. But rather than challenging capitalism, it appears to have gone to bed with capitalism

(Prügl, 2015 p.614)

This critique begs the question: what can be done to counteract and resist the co-optation of feminism and resist neoliberal/liberal feminist ideologies to bring about true gender equality? To answer that question, academics and activists have turned to decolonial feminist approaches. However, as decolonial feminisms have emerged from ‘multi-sited struggles with colonization’, undertaken in various ways by different academics and activists, and so are ‘rich and heterogenous’ (Velez, 2019 p.319), a theoretical framework is first needed to guide the analysis of this research project.

3. Theoretical Considerations

Understanding the background in which this research project is situated is complemented by grounding the research in two main theories: Transnational Feminist Theory and Ideology Theory. These two theoretical frameworks will provide a more thoroughly analysed answer to the research question and are further explored in this chapter along with decoloniality as feminist resistance.

3.1. Transnational Feminist Theory

To fully contextualise the work and interactions of the FBT Collective, this thesis draws on concepts and concerns put forward by Transnational Feminist Theory. Transnational feminism encompasses both academia and action being concerned not only with scholarship within feminism, but also with feminist and social activist movements (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994). It has grown over the last 30 years out of a rejection of white, Western liberal feminisms and the Western feminist notion of a

“global sisterhood” (Mohanty, 2003). Instead, it seeks to promote a solidarity among women through the acknowledgement of historical differences, particularly the ‘gendered and racialized capitalist exploitation and domination of women in the most marginalized communities’ (Sato, 2014 p.44). In this way, Transnational Feminist Theory is ‘attentive to the micropolitics of everyday life as well as to the larger processes that recolonize the culture and identities of people across the globe’ (Mohanty, 2003 p.229).

Both in theory and in practice, transnational feminists draw on decoloniality and are intrigued by the impacts and oppressions caused by both globalisation and capitalism on people across racial, gender, national, class and sexual lines (Mohanty, 2003; Grewal & Kaplan, 1994). Indeed, Transnational Feminist Theory has been shaped and developed from decoloniality with prominent scholar Chandra Mohanty (2003) leading the integration of decolonial and transnational feminist thinking, through her calls for a solidarity across class, race, and national boundaries. This thesis takes its leave from her extensive writings, in particular her book *Feminism without Borders* (2003) and her 2013 article *Transnational Feminist Crossings: On Neoliberalism and Radical Critique*. Mohanty’s seminal article ‘Under Western Eyes’ first published in 1984¹⁸ was her first academic entry point into feminist theory and praxis. Centred around a critique of Western feminists’ colonial representation of Third-World women, the article sent ripples throughout feminist academia that are still being felt today. Mohanty argued that Western feminists produced an image of Third-World women as a homogenous group who are universally defined solely by the oppression they experience and therefore need to be saved by western feminists, which amounts to a colonisation of Third-World women by Western feminists (Mohanty, 1984 and Mohanty 2003).

Mohanty’s (2003) assertions that capitalism has become the new colonial, homogenising power is based on her theoretical standing within historical materialism. She interprets history as being shaped not by concepts, ideas, or

¹⁸ and subsequently published in her 2003 book *Feminism Without Borders*

opinions but by material relations of production and reproduction (Mohanty, 2003; 2013). This Marxist methodology argues that people's lived experiences - or material reality - should be analysed when highlighting inequalities (Mohanty, 2003). Through this methodology she envisions a future where 'economic stability, ecological sustainability, racial equality, and the redistribution of wealth form the *material* basis of people's well-being' (Mohanty, 2003 p.4 *emphasis added*).

From a global capitalist critique perspective, Mohanty posits that true agency is gained by social and political struggle through coalitions formed by alliances of empowered women across class, race, and national boundaries (Mohanty, 2003). It is through her view of coalitions of solidarity that this thesis will interpret the network, strategies, motivations, and ideologies of the FBT Collective.

3.2. Understanding Ideology

Understanding the ideologies of the organisation members of the FBT Collective is not a simple task and must be conceptualised clearly. The term "ideology", in this case, does not seek to merely describe a belief system or a set of ideas but rather embraces the more complex understanding of the concept put forward by prominent political scholar, Michael Freeden.

Freeden argues that ideologies are 'configurations of *decontested* meanings of political concepts' (Freeden, 1996 p.75). These concepts, according to Freeden (1996) can be separated into the categories of core concepts (most important) and peripheral concepts (secondary). These concepts can change over time, rising and falling in importance and can only be understood through their relation to one another. Within the scope of this research, only core concepts will be analysed. Freeden (1996 p.87) stresses 'the absence of absolute boundaries which separate the features of ideological systems', positing that different ideologies can share concepts but may attach different meanings to each concept. He argues that:

Ideologies are modular structures, frequently exhibiting a highly fluid morphology...It is useless to entertain the notion of precise ideological boundaries, or of features exclusive to one ideology or the other.

(Freeden, 1996 p.88)

The study of ideology, therefore, must be concerned with semantics and the use of particular words to bring about a finality in one's argument; to prove that one's viewpoint is not only valid but correct (Freeden, 1996). Within the formation of ideology, it is not enough to have legitimate conceptual arguments, the ideologist must believe that her conceptual arguments are the right ones above all others. We can see this mentality clearly in the arguments put forward by the business case, discussed in the previous chapter, for example. The claim that investment in women is not only good for business but morally right highlights the neoliberal ideological concept of Steiner and Mlambo-Ngcuka (2018).

In its usage within this thesis, this understanding of ideology can help to highlight the tug-of-war at play between neoliberalism/liberal feminism and transnational feminism. Neoliberalism as a political ideology has normalised globalisation and capitalism throughout the world and, has been legitimised by liberal feminism, as shown above. The concepts associated with the ideology (free markets, liberalisation, deregulation) have, within the ideology itself, become decontested. They are no longer questioned or challenged and, are now believed to be the right or best course of action for growth and development.

Transnational feminism seeks to contest these decontested concepts by critiquing and opposing the assumptions and norms of neoliberalism and liberal feminism. Freeden (1996) argues that it is the action of contesting the decontested that ideologies can be fully understood. Through this theoretical lens, the ideologies of the FBT Collective can be better uncovered. By analysing the core concepts used by the FBT members in relation to the corporate neoliberal concepts they seek to contest, a deeper study of the workings of feminist resistance to hegemonic neoliberal corporate power can be produced.

3.3. Decoloniality as Feminist Resistance

Decoloniality has multiple meanings and various sources and has become a much-discussed concept over the past 20 years (McLaren, 2017 p.3). In its most simplified conceptualisation, decoloniality seeks to analyse and understand ‘how colonialism has worked and continues to work to subjugate, commoditize, and otherwise exploit culture, knowledge, and other resources of unenfranchised people, groups, and nations’ (Agboka, 2014 p.302). The power structures and imbalances caused by colonialism continue to reproduce inequalities within cultural, social, environmental, economic, and political landscapes (Quijano, 2000; Agboka, 2014; McLaren, 2017). By adopting a decolonial approach, feminists such as the FBT Collective can reject and resist the neoliberal and liberal feminist hegemony.

For some, the modern discussion of decoloniality began with the *Coloniality of Power* concept, put forward by Anibal Quijano (2000). He contends that the colonial Eurocentric ideal of modernity, and the colonial discriminatory subjugation of colonised peoples, are legacies that are still present in the political and social structure of postcolonial societies today. Quijano (2000) argues that, these legacies take the form of race relations and global capitalism in the modern era. The *Coloniality of Power* concept while seminal in the formation of decoloniality theories has been criticised for failing to include a gender perspective. Maria Lugones (2010) critiqued and expanded on the ideas of Quijano (2000). She argues that there is not only a *Coloniality of Power* but also a *Coloniality of Gender* in which gender is understood as a colonial imposition:

Under the imposed gender framework, the bourgeois white Europeans were civilized; they were fully human [and]also became a normative tool to damn the colonized. The behaviors of the colonized and their personalities/souls were judged as bestial and thus non-gendered, promiscuous, grotesquely sexual, and sinful...the colonized were all understood to be aberrations of male perfection

(Lugones, 2010 p.743)

Other feminist scholars, such as Mohanty (2003 p.147), while acknowledging ‘capitalist mode[s] of recolonisation’, focus on promoting a decolonial approach to gender equality. The decolonial future which Mohanty (2003 p.4) envisions, as previously mentioned, consists of a world where ‘economic stability, ecological sustainability, racial equality, and the redistribution of wealth form the material basis of people’s well-being’. Drawing inspiration from Mohanty’s decolonial vision of collective action and based on the literature of many decolonial feminist texts¹⁹, three main themes of decoloniality in feminist resistance have been envisioned in this research project. These three themes will serve as guiding concepts for the analysis of the Collective. One would expect that, based on the literature, a decolonial transnational collective working in solidarity, such as the FBT Collective, would embody and embrace the following three decolonial themes:

1. Inclusivity and Participation
2. Intersectionality and concerns for justice
3. Anti-Capitalist Positionality

3.3.1. Inclusivity and Participation

The first theme of decoloniality embraced by feminists is related to the ideas of inclusivity and participation. Decolonial feminist approaches fully embrace the importance of the representation of all voices, particularly those of the most marginalised, and strive to recognise the historical macro events that shape the lived experiences of individuals at a micro/local level (Alcoff, 2017; Mohanty, 2003). The inclusion and participation of all, described as ‘a kind of multicultural negotiation’, is used to ensure that colonial/modernity narratives are contested and ‘brought into some measure of alignment.’ (Alcoff, 2017 p.33). To that end, decolonial feminist approaches employ what Alcoff describes as a ‘reflexively

¹⁹ Such as McLaren, 2017, Lugones, 2010, Alcoff, 2017, Mohanty, 2003, McCall, 2005.

attuned scepticism toward the hubris of universal analysis and projects of liberation' (2017 p.33).

To avoid universalities, the way in which social identities are represented must be done delicately to guarantee that those whose lives are still impacted by macro historical events, such as migration, war, slavery and colonisation, are not ignored or forgotten but included equally (Alcoff, 2017 p.31). Mohanty (2003 p.229) argues that to accomplish a decolonial approach to inclusivity and participation, it is crucial to carefully consider the 'local in/of the global and vice versa' to avoid 'falling into colonizing or cultural relativist platitudes about difference'. This sentiment is shared by Alcoff (2017 p.33) who advocates for coalitions which are formed on 'the basis of concrete issues, rather than on the articulation of a thin or artificial collectivity organized around ideas about freedom from gender'.

Within decolonial feminism, importance is placed on understanding and framing narratives of experience in relation to one another by connecting the local lived experiences with the global macro historical events (Mohanty, 2003; Alcoff, 2017). Through this bridging of local and global, a decolonial knowledge across borders and cultures can be determined. Each person's experiences can be viewed historically, as individuals and as a group, in relation to one another (Mohanty, 2003 p.238).

Inclusivity and participation of all voices in a non-hierarchical and relational manner, regardless of economic or social status, is a key theme of decolonial feminist approaches (Mohanty, 2003; Alcoff, 2017). Inclusive, reflexive participation counters the 'biases and limitations of traditional Western feminist approaches and methodologies' (Gallegos, 2017 p.231) and is therefore capable of being 'attentive to small as well as large struggles and processes that lead to radical change' rather than simply 'working (or waiting) for a revolution' (Mohanty, 2003 p.4). From this view, a decolonial feminist collective (such as the FBT Collective) should be structured non-hierarchically, where inclusion and participation of all voices, particularly the most marginalised, is ensured.

3.3.2. *Intersectionality and Concerns for Justice*

Concerns for justice - particularity within analysis of how gender injustice intersects with race and class - and an acknowledgment of multiple sights of oppression underpin the second theme of feminist decolonial approaches. Decolonial feminism has long been understood as concerned for justice as it strives to right the wrongs of the past, and rewrite and challenge normative categories of analysis (McLaren, 2017). To account for all forms of oppression and acknowledge the ‘relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations’, a decolonial feminist approach concerned with justice is driven by intersectionality (McCall, 2005 p.1771). It is through intersectionality that decolonial feminist collectives can understand and fight injustice.

Intersectionality evolved from a need to avoid and atone for the homogenisation of women, particularly women from Global South, in liberal feminist approaches. The critique of the homogenisation of women is a key aspect of Transnational Feminist Theory, as previously mentioned. However, as it relates to decolonial calls for gender justice and intersectionality, Alcoff quite succinctly captures the importance of recognising heterogenous lived realities:

The idea that all those who share a designated gender share a set of understandings or interests or forms of oppression is no more feasible than Beauvoir noted: the mediations of gender make our differences quite real

(Alcoff, 2017 p.33)

Intersectionality as a concept was developed primarily by the work of US-based Black feminist theorists and Third World feminist scholars, emerging from the ‘numerous critiques of how the experiences of women of colour had been neglected in feminist discourse, underscoring the importance of theorizing intersecting identities and sources of oppression’ (Davis, 2020 p.115). Intersectionality has now been embraced not only by feminist scholars but has become somewhat of a “buzzword” used by NGOs, social activists, and corporations wishing to appear more diverse (Davis, 2008). Yet despite its use as a

“buzzword”, intersectionality has become increasingly important to decolonial feminism, as McCall (2005 p.1771) argues: ‘Intersectionality is the most important theoretical contribution that women’s studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far’.

Concerns for justice, understood through an intersectional analysis of oppressions, make up a crucial aspect of decolonial feminist approaches by recognising that ‘gender is constituted by difference all the way down, that there is no core of gender untouched by the co-constituting effects of multiple vectors of oppression and identity formation’ (Alcoff, 2017 p27). A decolonial feminist collective (such as the FBT Collective), therefore, should operate from an intersectional position and be driven by concerns for intersecting injustices.

3.3.3. Anti-Capitalist Positionality

Decolonial feminists argue that as capitalism was the key normalising and homogenising power that influenced both first and second-wave feminism, it must now be countered with an anti-capitalist positionality (Mohanty, 2003, Lugones 2010). The argument that capitalism has become the homogenising power, through which colonial inequalities are reproduced, is reminiscent of Quijano’s stance that global capitalism has reconstructed and (re)concentrated power, thus destroying any advances decoloniality could make towards civil and political rights (Quijano, 2000 pp.573-574). Lugones (2010), building on this point, argues that patriarchal relations and structures have further reinforced the capitalist system.

By its very nature, a decolonial approach must embody a critique of capitalism as decoloniality itself asserts that capitalism has become the new colonial power. This is also true of feminist decoloniality. Capitalism as a colonial power has created gendered dichotomies where constructs such as “the market”, “the global”, “finance capital”, and “consumers”, are masculinised and therefore valued over feminised actors and realities such as the state, the local perspective, manufacturing, social welfare and citizens (Mohanty, 2003 p.147).

However, the way in which decolonial feminists interact or encounter capitalism is fiercely debated. Not all decolonial feminists believe that an anti-capitalist approach is the most appropriate course of action for decolonial gender equality to be achieved. For example, Grosser & McCarthy (2019 p.1112) argue that it is crucial for feminist social movements to engage in ‘neoliberal arenas’ of governance to bring about change. They argue that is not enough to be critical, as Mohanty and her counterparts believe. They posit that decolonial feminists cannot afford to be ‘not engaged’ (Grosser & McCarthy, 2019 p.1112) because neoliberalism and corporations are the new arenas of governance:

Imbalances of power in these arenas mean that corporations have disproportionate influence over decision-making therein...the presence of more critical movements and actors can temper the advancement of corporate agendas and increase the likelihood that accountability processes include the interests of less powerful actors

(Grosser & McCarthy, 2019 p.1105)

To counter the homogenising force of capitalism which is ‘dependent on and exacerbates racist, patriarchal and heterosexist relations of rule’, Mohanty (2003 p.230) (and Lugones, 2010), call for decolonial feminists to create an ‘anti-capitalist transnational practice’. They argue that a feminist collective must be anti-capitalist to highlight the dramatic way women’s lives have been impacted, as citizens, consumers and workers, due to the rise of global capitalism, which Mohanty (2003 p.9) considers ‘seriously incompatible with feminist vision of social and economic justice’. The FBT Collective’s position will be analysed in this research project to reveal the existence of both the critique of capitalism and the possible engagement within neoliberal/corporate arenas.

4. Research Methods

To thoroughly answer the research question of this thesis, analysis of the online content of the FBT Collective and 12 of the founding member organisations was conducted. A mixed method approach is required to examine the decolonial nature of the network, strategies, motivations, and ideology of the Collective. The primary method used in this research is qualitative Content Analysis (CA) and comprises a more substantial portion of the findings and analysis. The secondary method used here, Hyperlink Network Analysis (HNA), while not the central approach is necessary for answering the research question to give a deeper knowledge of the Collective's network structure. In combining these two methods, a thorough exploration of the research problem and a detailed answer to the research question can be ascertained.

The two chosen methods provide a complete examination of how (network and strategies) and why (motivations and ideological concepts) the FBT Collective works towards activism and resistance from a decolonial standpoint. The Findings and Category Analysis chapter clearly presents the various aspects of the network structure, strategies, motivations, and ideologies of the Collective and its founding members. It is this information which is then thoroughly evaluated and presented in the Analysis of Decoloniality as Feminist Resistance chapter, under the headings of these three themes of decoloniality established above:

1. Inclusivity and Participation
2. Intersectionality and concerns for justice
3. Anti-Capitalist Positionality

By using these three themes as guiding decolonial analytical concepts, the research question can be comprehensively answered within a decolonial feminist context. An outline of how each method is used is shown here in Table 1 and will be thoroughly explained in the following sections.

Table 1. Use of Methods

Method Used	Findings Category	Guiding Questions	Decolonial Analysis²⁰
Quantitative Hyperlink Network Analysis Qualitative Content Analysis	Network/Structure of the Collective	Who are the FBT Collective? How do they interact?	To what extent is the network structure of the FBT Collective decolonial in nature?
Qualitative Content Analysis	Strategies of the Collective	How do they work to ensure a gender perspective is included in the Binding Treaty?	To what extent are the strategies of the FBT Collective decolonial in nature?
Qualitative Content Analysis	Motivations of the Collective	Why do they advocate for a gender perspective in the Binding Treaty?	To what extent are the motivations of the FBT Collective decolonial in nature?
Qualitative Content Analysis	Ideological Concepts of the Collective	What do they believe? How do they politicise the issues related to the Binding Treaty?	To what extent are the ideological concepts of the FBT Collective decolonial in nature?

²⁰ Decoloniality was assessed based on the three themes outlined above (Inclusivity and Participation; Intersectionality and concerns for justice; and Anti-Capitalist Positionality).

4.1. Quantitative Hyperlink Network Analysis (HNA)

HNA is a recently emerged methodology of research, is an extension of Social Network Analysis (SNA), and seeks to analyse an online structure based on the hyperlinks²¹ found on websites (Park, 2003). There are two main types of HNA that can be conducted. One is based in network science and is concerned with large scale studies that analyse the global connection structures across the web, while the second comes from a social science perspective and is much more narrow in focus, choosing to highlight the ‘interpretation of a link’ between fewer actors (Adam et al., 2016). This research project will use HNA in the latter sense to analyse the webpages and documents shown in Table 2 (see appendix). HNA will uncover how a small group of actors, the members of the Collective, interact with one another through the sharing of hyperlinks to each other’s websites. According to Ackland and O’Neill (2011 p.2), the use of hyperlinks between actors of a network can highlight ‘a process of online collective identity formation’. The central purpose of this thesis is to uncover the extent to which the Collective adopts a decolonial approach. Thus, by analysing ‘the Collective identity formation’ of the Collective, HNA can help answer this question.

For the purposes of mapping the structure of the FBT Collective, I will use the open-access NodeXL software. NodeXL or Network Overview, Discover and Exploration for Excel is a Microsoft Excel plug-in used for ‘social network graphing and data visualisation’ (Hai-Jew, 2015 p.260). NodeXL enables the representation of the actors involved in the Collective in the form of points or “nodes” and the links or “edges” between them on a map (Smith et al., 2009; Hai-Jew, 2015). A relationship between two nodes is therefore shown by two nodes being connected by one edge (Smith et al., 2009 p.256). NodeXL will help to portray the complex network of actors from the Collective clearly and will highlight

²¹ A hyperlink is a ‘word, phrase or image’ found on a webpage or online document that when clicked on directs the user to another page or online document and can ‘allow people to browse information at hyperspeed’ (Christensson, 2006).

the interconnectedness of some actors over others. This software will also indicate the key actors of the Collective.

HNA has some limitations, however. This method does not show how the Collective's members interact with the public or with any other partner organisations outside of the 12 founding members. The method will not give insight into the daily communications of the Collective's 12 members but will only provide insight into the online presence of each member and their online connection to one another, represented by two network maps. It is important to note here that the maps themselves serve as the main source of findings within the HNA of this project as the intention is to highlight the ways in which the members of the FBT Collective are connected to one another, what Adam et al. (2016 p.233) call the 'interpretation of a link' based on an actor-driven analysis. In this way, my use of HNA is quantitative in creating the maps of the network but qualitative in the interpretation of each map (using CA to guide this qualitative analysis). An issue-driven network analysis would require a larger amount of data taken from other sources such as gathered from web trawler programmes or social media posts (Adam et al., 2016) but is neither relevant nor within the scope of this research project. As this method simply identifies how the members of FBT Collective connect to one another online, a detailed CA of the HNA findings is needed to uncover or "interpret" the elements that bind the actors and their actions within the movement. The network will be analysed qualitatively using the final two steps of the qualitative CA as discussed below.

4.2. Qualitative Content Analysis (CA)

CA is a flexible research method which is 'empirically grounded...exploratory in process, and predictive or inferential in intent' (Krippendorff, 2004 p.xvii). It can be used to uncover and expose the meaning, purpose and motives of particular texts or documents (Weber, 1990 p.72-76). Simply, CA is concerned with the categorisation of data to gain insight into the main themes of particular empirical material (Mayring, 2014; Krippendorff, 2004). There are two main approaches within CA: quantitative or qualitative. It has been argued however, that no such

distinction should be made as ‘all reading of texts is qualitative, even when certain characteristics of a text are later converted into numbers’ (Krippendorff, 2004 p.15) and that what is called qualitative CA is actually a mixed methods approach as it contains ‘qualitative and quantitative steps of analysis’ (Mayring, 2014 p.6).

This flexibility within the method allows for various research designs.²² CA has been described as both extensive as it describes ‘a wide set of different procedures’ and as exact in that it prescribes ‘clear step-by-step models and analytical rules’ (Mayring, 2004 p.124). A potential limitation of this is the possibility of broad contextualisation of the findings. To avoid this, this research project is situated within the parameters of the decolonial feminist resistance context and follows the step-by-step method proposed by Philipp Mayring (2014). An explorative research design was chosen to allow for inductive category formulation to analyse the textual data in search of categories and themes, using a manual coding process.

Using the webpages/articles shown below in Table 2 (see appendix), a qualitative CA of each was carried out. Each document was analysed to uncover the ideological language used to describe corporate power, the motivations for why each organisation is involved with the binding treaty movement and the strategies each organisation uses to gain public support and political agency.

To that end, the steps outlined by Mayring (2014 p.80) shown in Figure 1, were followed to ensure a detailed and analytical study was conducted. After having chosen my research question and grounding it in theory (Step 1) and having chosen my empirical documents²³, the very general categories of ‘strategies’, ‘motivations’ and ‘ideology’ were selected to begin the analysis (Step 2). Following Step 3, as shown here, these categories were then divided into sub-categories, which were reformulated, sometimes combined, or separated from one another. These were then

²² Research designs within qualitative CA include explorative, descriptive, relational, causal or mixed with the choice of design being dependent on the research question and empirical material being analysed (Mayring, 2014 p.12).

²³ as discussed in the next section: Data Collection

refined again as more of the texts were analysed as outlined in Steps 4 and 5. The three main categories (and their sub-categories) of ‘strategies’, ‘motivation’ and ‘ideology’ were now fully and thoroughly established (Step 6). Once these were clearly defined, they were analysed and recoded according to the three main aspects of decoloniality:

1. Inclusivity and participation
2. Intersectionality and concerns for justice
3. Anti-capitalist positionality

This step (Step 7) was strengthened by a contextualisation using Transnational Feminist Theory and Freeden’s Theory of Ideology. It should be noted here that Step 7 was also used when analysing the network data gathered in the HNA as mentioned above. Although quantitative analysis was done in that method, it is important for this research, and indeed for all quantitative Hyperlink Network Analyses, to be contextualised using a qualitative method (Hansen et al., 2011). Therefore, the findings related to the structure of the network were also analysed using the three criteria of decoloniality, listed above, to ensure that a thorough examination of the decolonial approach of the FBT Collective, the network, strategies, motivations and ideology, could be conducted.

For the sake of clarity, I have included an overview of my process using this method, seen below in Figure 2. This is situated next to Mayring’s steps to clearly highlight how exactly the research method was conducted. This explorative research design using inductive category formation is well suited to this research project as it allows for the eventual exclusion of irrelevant material. It further ensures a clearly defined level of reduction - meaning that the categories can be equally and thoroughly analysed and come from the text/material itself. According to Mayring (2014 p.79), this can provide a ‘true description without bias owing to the preconceptions of the researcher, an understanding of the material in terms of the material’.

Figure 1. Steps of Inductive Category Development from Mayring, 2014 p.80

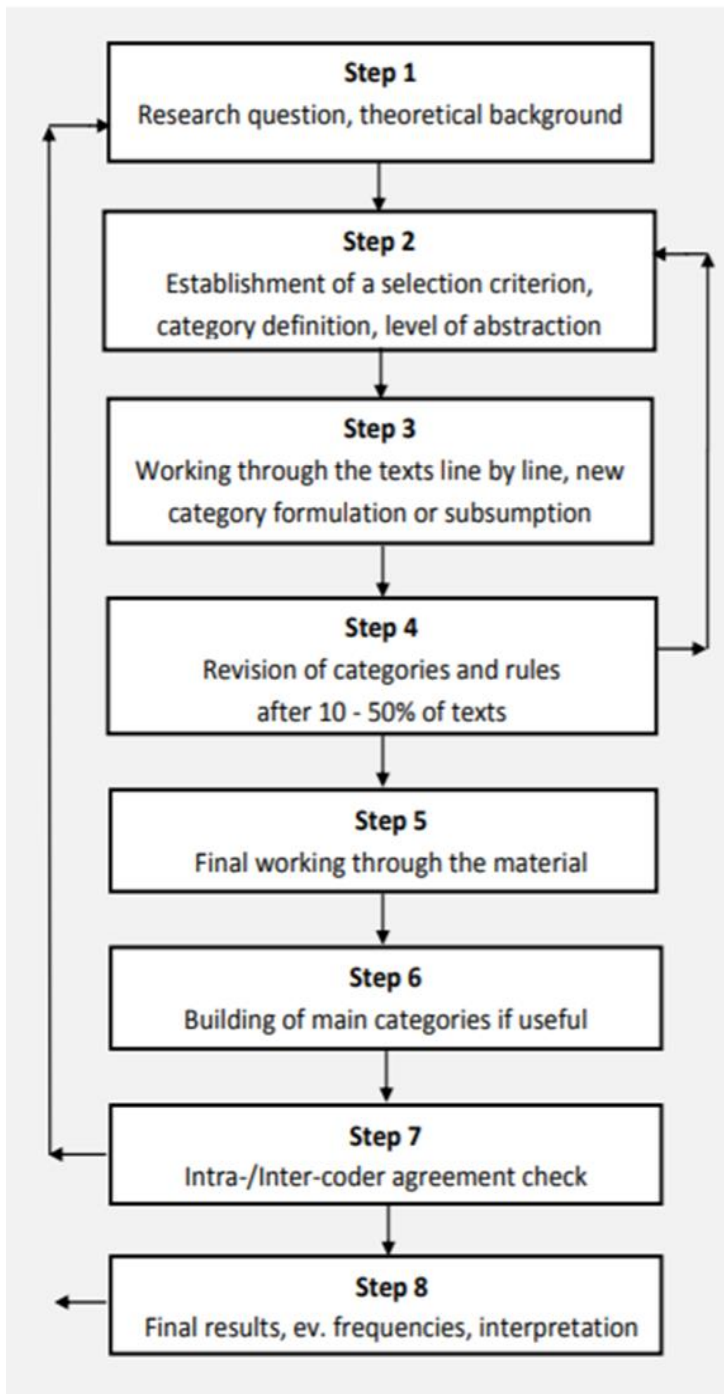
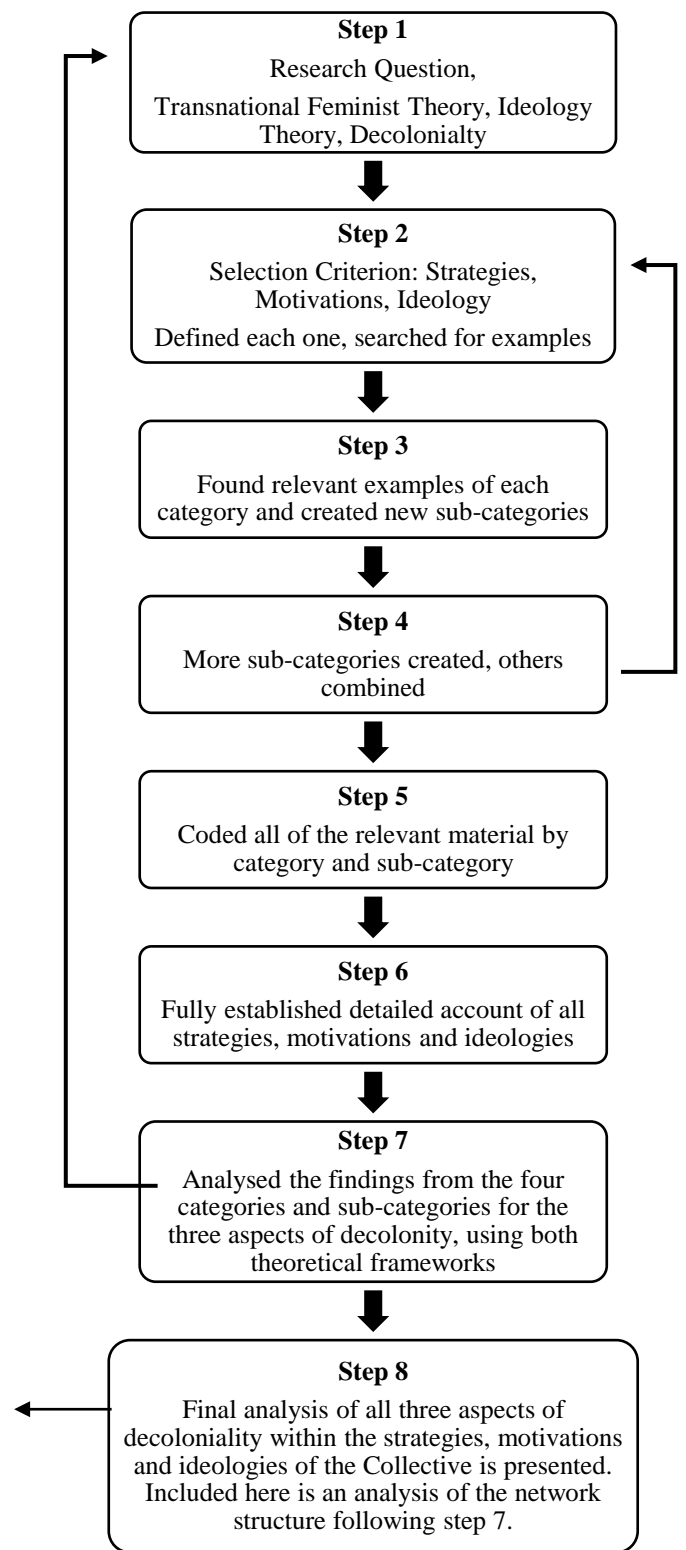


Figure 2. Steps used for this research project, using Mayring's layout (2014)



4.3. Limitations of Online Methods

Online content has become an important aspect of global activism and NGO work in recent years, with many transnational organisations using all areas of new media to communicate key public relation activities (Seo et al., 2009). Online research methods have also gained in frequency among social science researchers and are subject to potential limitations (Bouchard, 2016).

Online methods, according to Ignacio (2012), should be undertaken to contribute to an understanding of the research subject but only if they are the most appropriate methods, and not to replace traditional ones. More traditional methods, such as interviews, could have provided me with some insight and potential clarity into the approach of the Collective. However, the likelihood of not being able to interview all 12 member organisations may have yielded unequal findings in favour of one organisation over another.

For the purposes of my thesis, online methods were the best approach to answer the research question as all 12 organisations could be analysed alongside three FBT Collective documents to gain insight into the decolonial approach of the Collective in a holistic and inclusive manner. Bouchard (2016 p.63) argues that issues of authenticity or misrepresentation of participants is cause for concern. To avoid this, I have communicated, via email, with members of the Collective to ensure that the organisations I have chosen are active founders in the FBT Collective.

4.4. Positionality and Ethical Considerations

As a Western feminist, researching decoloniality, I must acknowledge my own positionality within this thesis. It is crucial, throughout the decolonial research process, to conduct ‘a reflexive questioning of the researcher’s position as (re)presenter of participants and the examination of power relationships’ (Manning, 2018 p,315). To ensure a reflexive questioning of my position, I rely on Mohanty’s feminist solidarity model, which ‘requires one to formulate questions about connection and disconnection between activist women’s movements around the

world' (2003 p.243). Analysis of decoloniality should be done with delicate care and to that end I have ensured that I adhere to the suggestion of Agboka (2014 p.319), that a 'flexible, thoughtful, and reflexive' approach is crucial when researching decoloniality. Following the systematic approach laid out by Mayring (2014) as shown above, I have contextualised my findings within decolonial feminist resistance. I have been careful not to rely on my own assumptions but based my research on the three themes that emerged directly from relevant literature. However, I acknowledge Donna Haraway's assertions that research is never truly objective, nor can it be devoid of bias (1988 p.589).

Similarly, Vanner (2015 p.3) argues that research is 'an inherently hierarchical process'. To counter the implications of this, the researcher should 'explore opportunities to work in collaboration with participants' (Vanner, 2015 p.3). I have sought to avoid an extractive research process by communicating with members of the FBT Collective by email²⁴ to inform them of my intended research project and to seek their consent in continuing. The Collective granted me permission to conduct this research and I intend to share the findings with them as a gesture of collaboration.

5. Data Collection

To gather relevant information on the FBT Collective, I began with an academic search for articles related to the movement. This search provided one relevant academic article written by members of the Collective, published in the *Business and Human Rights Journal*, 2018 and titled: 'A Feminist Approach to the Binding Instrument on TNCs and other Business Enterprises' (Awori et al., 2018). I then corresponded over email with one of the founders of the Collective, who provided

²⁴ I emailed members in December 2019 and was granted permission in March 2020.

me with a list of the 12 organisations who have been part of the Collective from the beginning²⁵:

1. PODER
2. AWID
3. APWLD
4. DAWN
5. WILPF
6. FIDH
7. FIAN
8. ESCR-net
9. FOEi
10. IWRAW
11. CELS
12. CIEL

Using Google search engine, I found each organisation's website. I then manually looked through each website to find any relevant documents published by each of these 12 organisations and by the Collective as a group over the past four years. There are many other organisations who support the FBT Collective or indeed consider themselves a member but for the purposes of clarity and to gain a thorough understanding of the historical journey of the Collective, I will only analyse the founding 12 members.

Having conducted a detailed and thorough search through each organisation's website, I identified various articles, blog posts and webpages that were written about the Binding Treaty or the Collective's work. I only included articles that could be easily identified as authored by each organisation, or a member of that organisation's staff, and in doing so initially uncovered 27 documents. Some organisations had multiple documents with large amounts of relevant information

²⁵ Abbreviations are used here as the full names of each organisation were previously listed (See *The FBT Collective* section on pages 5 and 6 above).

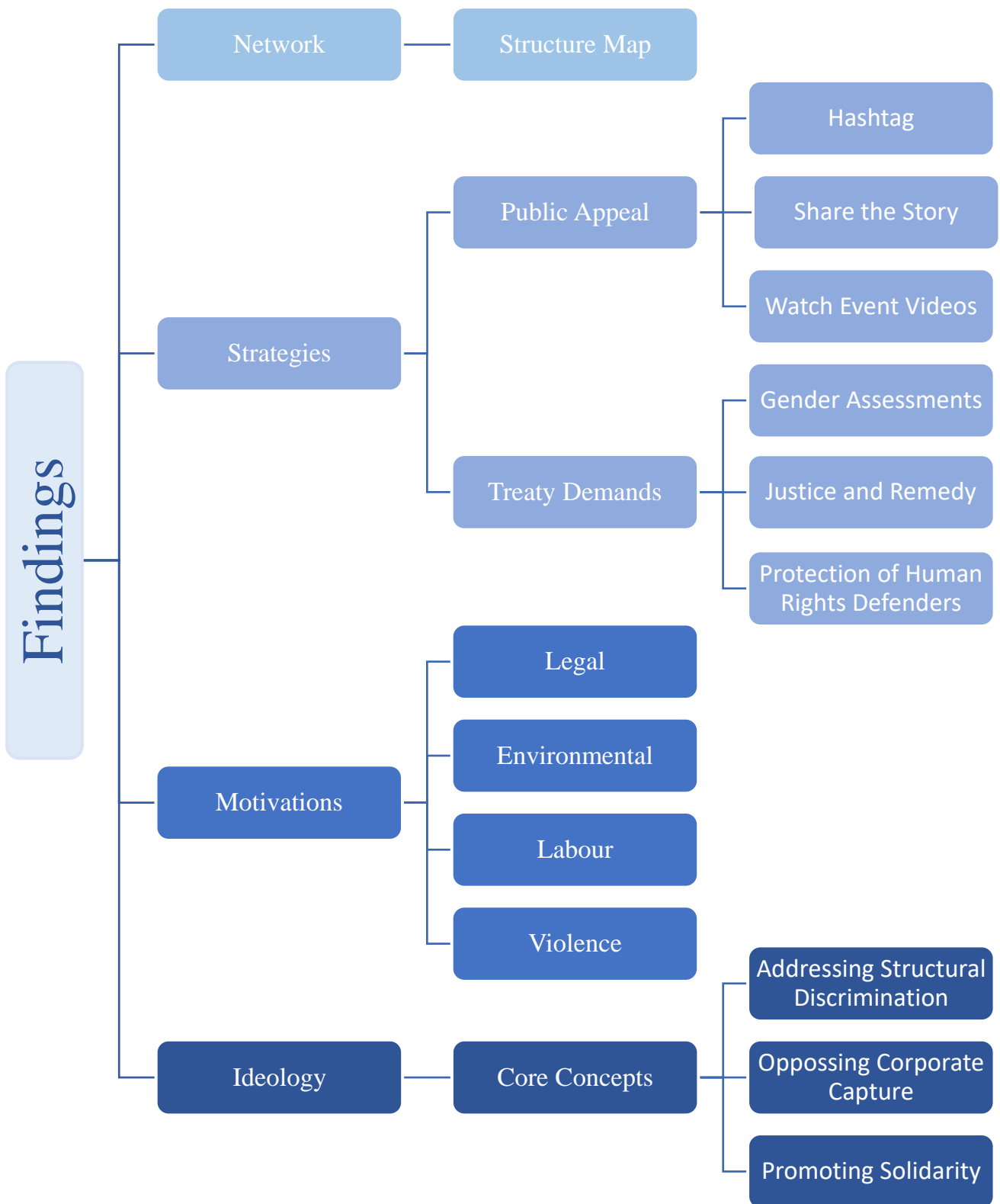
that was somewhat repetitious, while other organisations had only one document with very limited information. As it was not feasible or equally balanced to analyse 27 documents from 12 organisations, I excluded any documents which contained the same information from the same organisation and selected one document per organisation that contained as much information related to the Binding Treaty as possible. Once this was completed, I had selected 12 documents, one from each organisation member which represented their interaction with the Binding Treaty movement.

I also identified three documents written by the FBT Collective and signed by all 12 members and used these to compare the individual member organisations' strategies, motivations, and ideologies with those of the Collective. These documents were published in 2017, 2018 and 2019, and were chosen to ensure a thorough representation of the Collective's activism and advocacy over time. The documents are quite different from one another, which provides more data to aid in the analysis. The 2018 document is written with the general public in mind, the 2017 and 2019 documents are written expressly to the Binding Treaty committee members. This difference in audience means that the information contained in the documents vary from one another. The webpages/documents are shown in Table 2 (see appendix).

6. Findings and Category Analysis

This chapter details the findings of the network, strategies, motivations, and ideological concepts of the FBT Collective. As is it quite detailed and contains many subsections, an outline of the chapter is laid out in Figure 3 below. The findings are presented to first introduce the more concrete categories (network, strategies) followed by the more abstract (motivations, ideology). This is done to ensure a thorough understanding of the Collective is established before the decolonial analysis is presented in the Analysis of Decoloniality as Feminist Resistance chapter below.

Figure 3. Findings



6.1. Network

Gaining an understanding of the structure of the network of the FBT Collective provides a deeper understanding of how the members of the Collective not only interact with one another (which is shown here) but can also highlight the decolonial nature of the network structure itself (which is discussed in the next chapter). As previously mentioned, the HNA for this research project was conducted manually, which allowed for a careful and detailed compilation of 12 relevant webpages and three collective FBT documents.

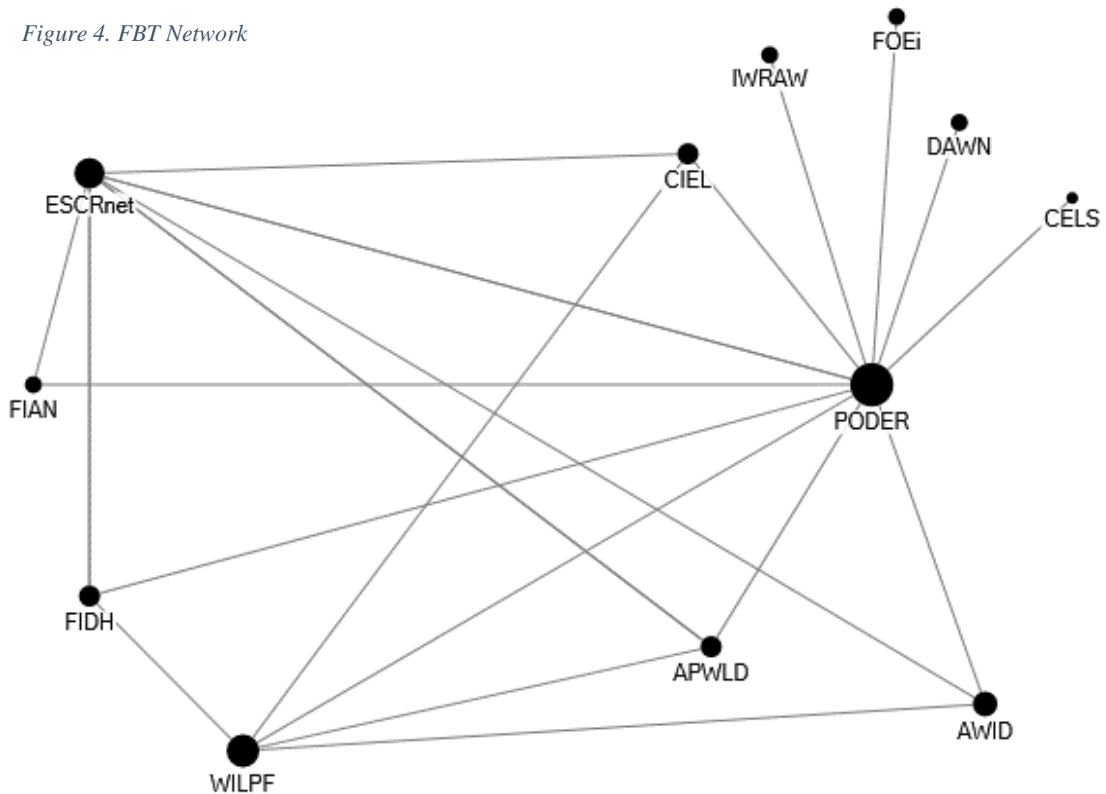
After inputting all the hyperlink data into the NodeXL programme, a map of the links between the members of the Collective was created as seen below in Figure 4, and a map depicting the links between each member and the three FBT documents is shown in Figure 5. The maps are made up of nodes and edges, where each node represents a different organisation, as labelled below, while the edges (or lines connecting nodes) indicate a relationship between organisations²⁶.

There are several interesting findings resulting from the creation of both maps. In both network maps, the FBT Collective network has high connectivity as all actors are linked to at least one other, meaning that no one organisation is outside of the network (Hansen et al., 2011 p.72). The connection between actors in a network is measured by degree, which is ‘a count of the number of unique edges that are connected to it’ (Hansen et al., 2011 p.72).

²⁶ The position of the nodes in relation to one another is of no significance, it was presented in this almost circular layout in both maps based on clarity and visibility.

Interestingly, within the first map, PODER, have a degree of 11 as they are connected to every other organisation. The size of each node is reflective of how socially interactive that organisation has been. The organisation that is most well connected is PODER. This is clear from the network map shown in Figure 4 as PODER is the largest node in the network. Comparatively, we can see that organisations such as DAWN or CELS have the smallest nodes, as they are only connected to one organisation, PODER (and therefore have a degree of 1).

The degree, or connection between actors, is not the only interesting or relevant factor, however. An actor can have a small degree but be vital within the network if information is to be passed from one actor to another. Providing a “bridge” between actors is known as betweenness centrality (Hansen et al., 2011 p.72). Interestingly, the first map also indicates that PODER is vital for the passing of information between other members, and so has high degree and high betweenness centrality (Hansen et al., 2011 p.72). If PODER were removed from this network, IWRAW, FOEi, CELS and DAWN would not be connected to the network as they each have a degree of 1, and a betweenness centrality of 0.



However, other organisations are connected to one another regardless of their connection to PODER. For example, ESCRnet (degree of 6) and WILPF (degree of 5) both have high betweenness centrality and could bridge communication between one another through CIEL, AWID or APWLD without the help of PODER. The absence of IWRAW, FOEi, CELS, and DAWN from the network would not impact communications between the other members as they only interact with PODER. This shows that although PODER is an important actor in the network, there is no hierarchy of members. When we examine the second map, depicting the inclusion of the FBT Collective’s documents in the network, a more dynamic image of the network begins to emerge.

Figure 5. Network Connection to FBT Documents

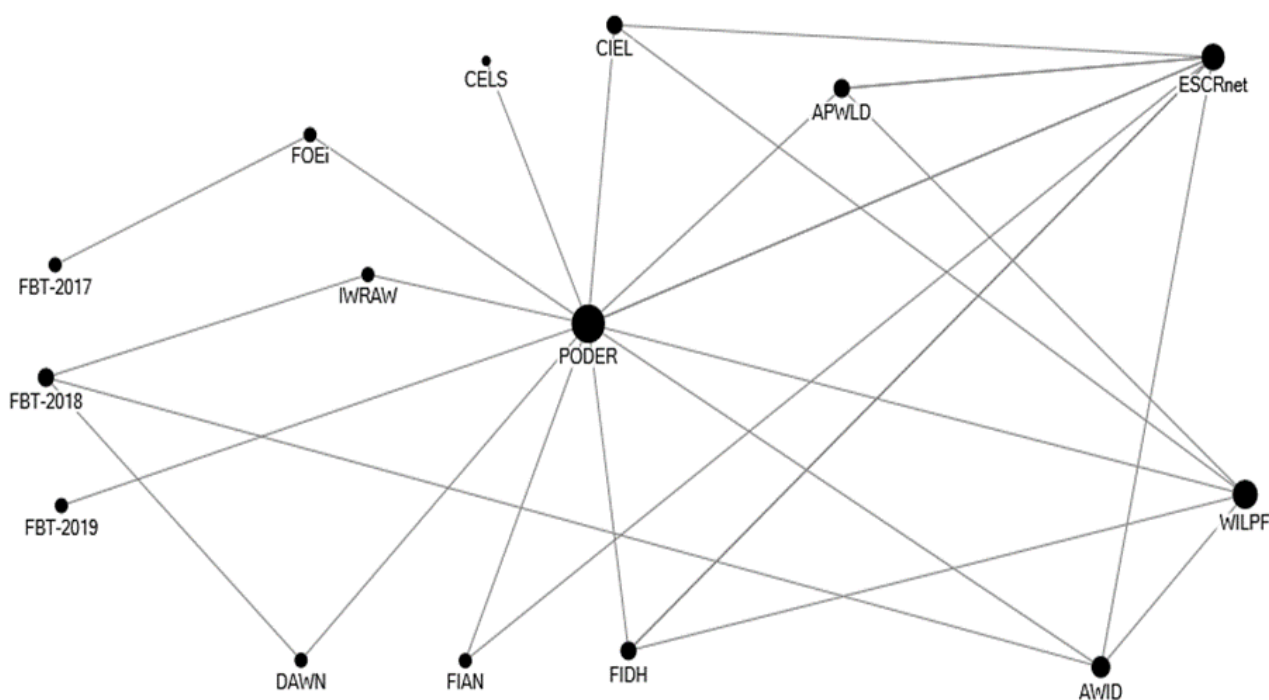


Figure 5 shows the connection of each organisation to one another and to the three FBT Collective documents. It is interesting to note that although all 12 members are founders of the Collective, only five organisations are directly linked to the FBT Collective documents on their webpages. As we can see, those organisations are FOEi, IWRAW, DAWN, AWID and PODER. When observing

the second network map, we can see that PODER's position of importance is lessened. Now, only two organisations, CELS and FOEi are dependent on PODER to be connected to the network (Hansen et al., 2011). If CELS was removed from the graph, all other actors would still be connected. This is no longer the case for FOEi. It now has high betweenness centrality as it connects the network with the FBT 2017 document. However, it is still dependent on PODER to connect to the other members of the Collective within the network.

We can see from these two network maps that PODER is a prominent actor within the network structure of the Collective. However, most of the network members (excluding CELS and FOEi) are not dependent on PODER and have formed their own connections. Although these maps indicate the prominence of some members more than others, the maps also highlight the inclusive participation of all members of the FBT Collective as each organisation is connected. The decolonial implications of the network will be discussed in the Analysis of Decoloniality as Feminist Resistance chapter of this thesis.

6.2. Strategies

Having presented the network of the Collective, we can now begin to analyse how the Collective aims to meet its goals. The analysis of all documents revealed two very different understandings of strategy. The first examines how the members appeal to the public through calls to action on their webpages while the second explores the strategies used by the Collective in appealing to the UN Binding Treaty decision makers.

6.2.1. *Appeals to the Public*

The Collective and its members appeal to the public by three means. As shown in Table 3, eight of the 12 organisations used the hashtag #feminists4bindingtreaty. They call for readers, and fellow civil rights and human rights organisations, to join and follow the movement through the hashtag on social media, specifically Twitter and Facebook. Others ask readers to share the story on their own social media platforms or via email to increase public awareness of the need for a gender

perspective throughout the Binding Treaty negotiations. Lastly, some organisations link to videos of relevant events that took place over the past three years during the treaty negotiations. These videos feature FBT Collective members participating in public presentations, panel discussions and outreach events. These videos are not only a source of information and advocacy for the public but also give further insight into the collaborative efforts of the Collective. While it is important to mention them here, it is equally important to acknowledge that these videos are outside the scope of this research project and so the content of the videos is not included in the research findings.

These calls to action were shared by various member organisations but were not present in the FBT documents as these documents were not written to appeal solely to the public but are more detailed critiques and suggestions written for the purpose of influencing, and demanding of, the Binding Treaty committee to incorporate a gender perspective in the Binding Treaty.

Table 3. Strategies of each member organisation

	Follow the Hashtag	Share the Story	Watch Video
PODER			
AWID			
APWLD			
DAWN			
WILPF			
FIDH			
FIAN			

ESCRnet			
FOEi			
IWRAW			
CELS			
CIEL			

6.2.2. Demands within the Binding Treaty

The FBT Collective first laid out its three key demands, to ensure a gender perspective is found in the Binding Treaty, in its 2017 document. This was done in response to the ‘Chair-Rapport’s open invitation for input’ (FBT, 2017 p.2). The recommended wording of these key demands can be found in all three FBT documents. PODER (2019), AWID (2019) and WILPF (2017) also explicitly reference these three demands on their webpages. Others reference some aspects of these demands which will be discussed below. The Collective urge the inclusion of amendments which would clearly guarantee the following:

1. Mandatory Gender Impact Assessment
2. Gender-sensitive Justice and Remedy Mechanism
3. Ensuring Respect, Protection, and an Enabling Environment for Women Human Rights Defenders

(FBT, 2017 p.1)

These three key demands aim to influence the inclusion of gender perspectives in the Binding treaty by providing three highly important legal protections: response, remedy, and prevention.

Firstly, the Collective call for the Binding Treaty to mandate Mandatory Gender Impact Assessments of ‘all planned and existing operations’ to be conducted by an ‘independent entity chosen by, or agreed upon, the community and

the women from whom information will be gathered, in a process of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC²⁷)’ (FBT, 2017 p.2). According to the Collective these assessments should start with:

...an analysis of the social, cultural and economic context in which the activities are to be undertaken so as to understand the political economy [and] should then inform the assessment of how activities will either cause harm, reinforce the status quo or how they can be used as a vehicle for positive change

(FBT, 2017 p.4)

Secondly, the Collective call for the inclusion of an amendment which ensures gender-sensitive justice and remedy mechanisms. The suggested wording that the Collective recommend for this amendment is as follows:

States shall review their substantive, procedural, and practical barriers to women’s access to justice and remedies in relation to activities by TNCs and other business enterprises, including extra-territorial activities

(FBT, 2017 p.5)

This second suggested inclusion in the Binding Treaty is shared by many of the member organisations. For example, CELS (2018), as an organisation mainly concerned with legal access, are most focused on the importance of ‘effective access to justice and remedy’.

The third and final suggested inclusion in the Binding Treaty stresses the explicit inclusion of amendments which would require states to ‘ensure respect, protection and the work of human rights defenders and whistle-blowers, with specific and enhanced protection mechanisms for women human rights defenders’ (FBT, 2017 p.8). This is demanded to ‘make the environment in which they operate a safer, more enabling and supporting one’ (FBT, 2017 p.8). The Collective’s

²⁷ FPIC is a protected principal concerned with indigenous peoples within international human rights law that states that ‘all peoples have the right to self-determination’ and that ‘all peoples have the right to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development’ (FAO, 2016 p.11).

suggestion here calls for the ‘strong and clear language on the protection of all rights holders adversely affected by business activities or those challenging corporate abuses’ (FBT, 2018 p.5). This demand is shared by PODER (2019), AWID (2019) and WILPF (2017) and will be expanded on in the Analysis of Decoloniality chapter of this research project, along with all other strategies.

The Collective have been somewhat successful in their strategies regarding the Binding Treaty wording. The fourth session of negotiations saw a rise in the number of states who ‘reaffirmed the importance of inclusion of a gender dimension in the process’ and was welcomed by the Collective (FBT, 2019 p.2). However, the demands have not been fully met or embraced and so, the FBT Collective continues to push for the explicit inclusion of the three demands discussed here.

6.3. Motivations

As the Binding Treaty concerns human rights, the FBT Collective, including all 12 member organisations are motivated by the protection of human rights in the face of corporate impunity. It is important to fully understand the various aspects of corporate abuse that motivate each organisation to take part in the Collective. By highlighting the motivational factors of each organisation, this research project avoids homogenising the needs, drives and issues of the activist organisations involved (Mohanty, 2003).

Having analysed the three FBT documents and all 12 webpages, four main motivations were discerned: legal, environmental, labour and violence concerns. Each motivating factor, as found in each document/webpage, is discussed, analysed, and indicated in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Motivating Factors

	Legal	Environment	Labour	Violence
FBT 2017	Light Blue	Light Blue	Medium Blue	Dark Blue
FBT 2018	Light Blue	Light Blue	Medium Blue	Dark Blue
FBT 2019	Light Blue	Light Blue	Medium Blue	Dark Blue
PODER	Light Blue	Light Blue	Medium Blue	Dark Blue
AWID	White	White	Medium Blue	White
APWLD	White	Light Blue	White	Dark Blue
DAWN	Light Blue	Light Blue	White	White
WILPF	Light Blue	White	White	Dark Blue
FIDH	Light Blue	White	White	White
FIAN	Light Blue	Light Blue	Medium Blue	Dark Blue
ESCRnet	Light Blue	White	White	White
FOEi	Light Blue	Light Blue	White	White
IWRAW	Light Blue	White	Medium Blue	Dark Blue
CELS	Light Blue	White	White	White
CIEL	Light Blue	Light Blue	White	Dark Blue

6.3.1. Legal Concerns

As the Binding Treaty is a legal document that aims to secure the legal protection of human rights particularly in light of the ‘unequal gendered power relations that govern the context of corporate abuses’ (FBT, 2017 p.6), one would expect to see some legal concerns listed as motivational factors for many organisation members of the Collective.

The FBT Collective places great importance on justice and access to remedy stating clearly in the 2017 document:

All victims of human rights violations and abuses have a right to an effective remedy and reparation. This right lies at the very core of international human rights law.

(FBT, 2017 p.6).

The importance placed on access to justice and remedy is evident in many of the documents of various members of the Collective. For example, FOEi (2019) clearly state their motivation for involvement as part of a ‘historic process towards ending corporate impunity’ while CIEL (2018) are motivated by a hope that the treaty will ‘advance the rights to information, participation, and justice’ as they are ‘essential access rights for environmental democracy’. This sentiment is shared by FIDH (2017) who state justice as a motivating factor to ensure that the treaty is ‘guided by the principles of inclusion, participation, transparency and legitimacy’. The Collective have also drawn attention to the historic need for ‘internationally agreed and comprehensive legal standards’ especially due to the ‘complicity of businesses in gross human rights violations and abuses and serious violations of international humanitarian law’ (FBT, 2019 p.9). They give the examples of the arms industry and social media companies as areas of growing concern (FBT, 2019 p.9).

It is clear that representation under the law is a guiding motivational factor for many member organisations, with FIDH (2017) advocating for the facilitation of the ‘meaningful engagement of women, indigenous people, persons with disabilities, children, and other sections of society disproportionately or differently

affected by the operations of transnational companies and other enterprises’. CELS (2018) go further and are motivated by a legal concern to ensure the creation of ‘a public office staffed with specialized lawyers to represent victims’ interests’.

This leads to another aspect of legal motivation for some member organisations, that of resistance to corporate capture. CELS (2018) stress the need for the Binding Treaty to not only control TNCs’ activities but their influence on government decision-making. They argue that this ‘is of utmost importance’ (CELS, 2018). The legal pressure from TNCs is a strong motivational factor as lobbying groups who represent business interests have attempted to ‘economically intimidate state allies of the treaty process’ according to ESCRnet (2018). ESCRnet’s concerns are a clear example of a legal motivational factor. Many of the member organisations acknowledge the legal battle that is taking place within the Treaty debate, and their motivations lie in ensuring a legal recourse for victims, fair representation of those involved and affected by the treaty and a sense of justice.

6.3.2. Environmental Concerns

Motivating factors related to land concerns and ‘business-related environmental damage’ (FBT, 2019 p.3) are discussed by the Collective and by several organisation members. The FBT Collective are motivated by the gendered impacts of many environmental abuses caused by corporate activities (FBT, 2017; FBT, 2018). For example, the Collective discuss the disproportionate impacts felt by women and girls due the ‘detrimental socio-economic and environmental changes caused by [the] construction and operation’ of extractive and mining projects (FBT, 2017 p.3). CIEL (2018) highlight their concern regarding ‘environmental harm’ caused by corporate or business activities while environmental organisation FOEi (2019) unsurprisingly argue that ‘companies systematically put profits before the environment’.

PODER is also concerned with environmental degradation and land rights. This is clearly influenced by the fact that PODER is based in Latin America, a region of the world they describe as ‘the most dangerous for human rights defenders that fight to protect the environment and their territorial rights’ (PODER, 2019).

PODER highlight the knock-on effects of corporate environmental damage as TNCs are continuously ‘taking over land and devastating traditional livelihoods, forcing many into migration’ (PODER, 2019).

The issue of forced displacement being conducted by corporations is also a motivating factor for CIEL, DAWN and FIAN. CIEL (2018) argue that environmental democracy is a necessity and that the negative environmental impacts of corporate power such as the ‘loss of access to land and livelihoods [and] water contamination’ affect women far more than men. Similarly, FIAN (2018) argue that ‘corporate projects may entail forced displacements and land grabbing within communities which can lead to higher exposure to gender violence, to malnutrition, as well as to the loss of social support, cultural ties and education opportunities for women’.

DAWN (2019) list ‘land grabs, extractive mining, exploitative wages and environmental destruction of TNCs particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America’ as important motivating factors for their involvement in the Collective. The connection between environmental damage and violence against women is also highlighted by APWLD (2015) in discussing the environmental damage caused by a copper mine in Papua New Guinea, which incited a civil war and led to a substantial rise in gender based violence.

It is clear that all environmental concerns are also connected to the other motivating factors presented. The impacts of corporate-caused environmental damage and climate change has been found to be a key motivating factor for at least six member organisations and the Collective as a whole.

6.3.3. Labour Concerns

The third prominent motivational factor relates to labour rights and workers’ safety. The Collective argue that the protection of female workers’ rights is a key motivation for ensuring a gender perspective is present throughout the Binding Treaty. The precarious nature of work for a disproportionate number of women (and girls) who are ‘trapped into poorly paid exploitative and insecure jobs such as

export oriented manufacturing, often of garments or electronics’ and who often face ‘discrimination in the labour market’ is highlighted (FBT, 2018 p.2). The Collective are concerned by the inequality of the labour market which consistently forces women into more low-paid, vulnerable jobs, which almost always pay women less than their male counterparts despite the fact that they work longer hours sometimes without extra pay (FBT, 2018 p.2).

IWRAW, AWID and FIAN also draw attention to the poor working conditions and low wages received by female workers as a direct consequence of corporate impunity. IWRAW (2018) clearly see labour as a motivating factor, stating that women feel a ‘disproportionate impact of corporate activities as workers, human rights defenders and as communities affected by the actions of corporations’ (IWRAW, 2018).

AWID shares this concern and uses two recent events to highlight inhumane working conditions for women and girls. First, a 2019 strike organised by women working in clothing factories in Bangladesh for corporations such as Walmart and H&M is discussed. They highlight the difficulties faced by women who attempt to resist corporate power and abuse:

‘The protest was marred with violence and repression by the police leading to reports of loss of lives and several others injured. Bangladesh’s USD\$30 billion clothing industry...employs approximately 3.5 million workers and of these, 85 percent are women’

(AWID, 2019)

The concern over threats of violence is also found in the Collectives motivations as they note that the right to join the trade unions and the right to strike is a growing challenge, globally, due to increases in ‘threats, kidnappings and physical violence from state security forces and gangs working on behalf of companies’ (FBT, 2018 p.2). Violence is a key motivational concern for the Collective and many organisation members and is discussed in more detail in the next section

Secondly, AWID (2019) highlight the collapse of the eight-story Rana Plaza garment factory building in Bangladesh in 2013, which resulted in thousands of injuries and the deaths of 1,100 people. This tragic event is also cited as a motivational factor by APWLD (2015) who describe how in the years following the incident survivors and families of victims are ‘still waiting for financial contributions from European and American companies that sourced their clothes from Rana Plaza to cover their medical expenses and mitigate the loss of their livelihoods’.

Gender discrimination in labour is also discussed by FIAN (2018) who argue that ‘women workers still face lower wages and the most precarious working environments, in addition to sexual and gender-based violence’. PODER (2019) argue that ‘precarious jobs and public service cuts are at the centre of these conversations’ and are similarly motivated by labour concerns. PODER (2019) highlight last year’s Women’s Global Strike on March 8th to ‘denounce violence in the workspace, gender pay gaps, and precarious labor conditions’, which further confirms their motivation within labour concerns. Labour rights particularly for women and girls, who are disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of poor working conditions and a precarious labour market, is clearly a key concern for the Collective and many organisation members. The Collective argue that women and girls are disproportionately victimised by ‘privately imposed forced labour’ and work, under the threat of violence, as ‘domestic workers, in clandestine factories, on farms, or in other sectors such as the sex industry’ (FBT, 2018 p.2). Labour discrimination, and intimidation, is strongly connected with the fourth and final motivational factor uncovered through the analysis, concerns over violence against women.

6.3.4. Violence Concerns

The Collective strongly condemn the violence facing women and are motivated to prevent such violence by ensuring a gender perspective is present within the Binding Treaty. As previously mentioned, APWLD highlight garment workers from the Rana Plaza factory in Bangladesh who ‘continue to experience violence

and intimidation for attempting to form unions and claim their right to decent work (APWLD, 2015). Similar intimidation felt by those in the Philippines are also cited by APWLD as a motivating factor. They argue that

‘the government continues to deploy military and paramilitary units long associated with human rights violations as part of an Investment Defence Force that ‘secures’ large-scale development projects—usually against resistance by indigenous peoples whose rights are routinely ignored.’

(APWLD, 2015)

A recurring example given by the Collective is that of the gender-based violence inflicted upon women and girls in connection with mining and extractive industries (FBT, 2017 p.3). They cite the events which took place in Porgera gold mine in Papua New Guinea where ‘more than 100 women living around the...gold mine...were targeted for vicious sexual assaults by employees’ (FBT, 2018 p.2).

The urgency of APWLD’s description of similar events surrounding a copper mine in Papua New Guinea highlights their motivational factor being rooted in prevention of further violence as shown in this passage:

‘the catastrophic environmental damage and social upheaval caused by the Panguna copper mine sparked a decade-long civil war that claimed thousands of lives, unleashed waves of gender-based violence, and tore apart the social fabric of the island. Talks are now underway to re-open that mine.’

(APWLD, 2015)

The devastating human rights abuses inflicted on people, particularly women, are referenced by many member organisations and the prevention of the violence which ensues from such abuses is clearly a motivational factor for the Collective.

The four motivational concerns revealed in this thesis will provide insight into the feminist decolonial approach of the Collective and will be further discussed in the Analysis of Decoloniality as Feminist Resistance chapter below.

6.4. Ideology

To gain a thorough understanding of the ways in which ideology has shaped the FBT Collective, we must return to the ideas of Freeden (1996) and identify core concepts of neoliberalism and liberal feminism, which the Collective contest. Although, Freeden (1996) also acknowledges the influence of peripheral concepts on ideology formation, these will not be analysed in this research for the purpose of clarity. Having carefully read, coded, and analysed each webpage and FBT document, it is clear that the ideology of the Collective and its member organisations, is built on the following three recurring core concepts: Addressing Structural Inequality; Opposing Corporate Capture; and Promoting Solidarity. These three core concepts, as they appear within the analysed materials, are presented here in Table 5.

Table 5. Ideological Core Concepts

	Addressing Structural Inequality	Opposing Corporate Capture	Promoting Solidarity
FBT 2017			
FBT 2018			
FBT 2019			
PODER			
AWID			
APWLD			
DAWN			

WILPF			
FIDH			
FIAN			
ESCRnet			
FOEi			
IWRAW			
CELS			
CIEL			

Freeden (1996) posits that political concepts which are decontested make up an ideology. The Collective contests previously decontested neoliberal concepts and instead are driven by a rejection of neoliberal ideology. It is this interplay between contesting neoliberal's decontested concepts and promoting the opposite ideals, that the ideology of the Collective can be uncovered. This section will present each ideological concept using Freeden's framework before being discussed further in the Analysis of Decoloniality as Feminist Resistance chapter.

6.4.1. Addressing Structural Discrimination

The first core neoliberal concept that the Collective and many of its member organisations contest is the discourse of women's economic empowerment, instead highlighting the structural discrimination which underpins gender inequality. Empowerment within this discourse is a term which, according to the Collective has become a 'buzzword these days for governments, donors, international financial institutions (IFIs), UN bodies and even the private sector' (FBT, 2018 p.1). Empowerment can be understood as a 'process by which women redefine and extend what is possible for them on an individual basis to bring about

transformation’ (Desai & Potter, 2014 p.385). Economic empowerment is described by the Collective as ‘increasing women’s labour force participation as a tool for higher economic growth’ (FBT, 2018 p.1).

While the Collective is critical of economic empowerment, a decidedly neoliberal concept, they are not explicitly critical of political or social empowerment for marginalised groups and women. Rather they focus their critique on the increasingly common approach of corporate ‘investment’ in women stating:

Increasingly, transnational corporations are...presented as key partners by governments and international institutions to ‘invest’ in so called ‘women’s economic empowerment’. Even if this ‘investment’ is real, it is nothing more than providing opportunities to individual women to integrate in the economic markets, at the cost of transforming structural conditions and the terms upon which they are ‘being included

(FBT, 2018 p.1)

The emphasis placed on tackling structural discrimination is also shared by PODER and AWID, both subtly and explicitly. PODER’s stance is an example of the latter:

‘As feminists we shall remain vigilant to the full recognition of the structural systemic issues underlying the abuses this instrument [Binding Treaty] is supposed to be addressing, and continue to push for the inclusion of a gender-responsive approach in addressing business-related human rights abuses and violations’

(PODER, 2019)

AWID take a more subtle stance but also stress the importance of recognising and addressing the ‘historical and structural barriers to women’s access to justice when seeking gender-responsive remedies’ (AWID, 2019).

The Collective display hope of the ‘transformative potential’ (FBT, 2017 p.1) of the Binding Treaty to ‘subvert instead of reinforce pre-existing patterns of

structural discrimination’ (FBT, 2019 p.15). They posit that structural discrimination perpetuates a ‘lack of accountability in relation to business related human rights abuses and violations’ (FBT, 2019 p.2). The Collective’s perspective on the dangers of ignoring structural inequality is present in all three FBT documents and many member documents (including PODER, 2019, IWRAW, 2018, AWID, 2019) and is clearly a core concept that they promote whilst contesting women’s economic empowerment discourse.

6.4.2. Opposing Corporate Capture

The second core concept which defines the ideology of the FBT Collective is a critique of the influence of TNCs and businesses on decision making – known as corporate capture. This concept is written about by the Collective and by nine of the 12 member organisations, significantly more than any other concept. The Collective argue that the ‘pervasive power of TNCs has unprecedented and mostly adverse implications for political decision-making and governance’ (FBT, 2018 p.1). This has led to corporate impunity on a global scale at the expense of women’s rights:

...the power and global reach of TNCs today has far outstripped the ability, and in many cases the willingness, of many governments to hold them accountable and act in the interests of people who have elected them

(FBT, 2018 p.1)

By seeking to hold corporate power to account, the Collective contest the neoliberal ideology of the business case for gender equality.

The growing influence of corporate power is highlighted by a concern that many corporations now have more wealth than the countries in which they operate (IWRAW, 2018; FOEi, 2019; CIEL, 2018). IWRAW (2018) argue that this power imbalance poses ‘a definite risk that women’s human rights will be undermined in the quest for the consolidation of wealth’ (IWRAW, 2018). PODER (2019) also argue that by ‘interfering in the legislative, executive and judicial systems, utilizing diplomacy, lobbying, financing political campaigns, promoting private mechanisms for arbitration and “justice”, manipulating communities, and even being present in

the negotiations of the binding treaty’, large, powerful corporations are ‘co-opting’ many states. FIAN (2018) give a startling example of the economic and political power that corporations have, stating that:

Currently, the revenues of the 3 largest TNCs exceed the gross domestic product of 110 countries. Regulating the activities of these powerful actors is crucial to ensure that profit is not prioritized over the realization of human rights and the needs of the people, including those of women and girls

(FIAN, 2018)

AWID (2019) also voice similar concern over the ‘undue influence’ corporate power has over ‘policy decisions affecting our lives and communities’. CELS (2018) underline the seriousness of corporate capture by highlighting the fact that the Binding Treaty itself ‘allows for corporate impunity’, as article 11.10 permits corporate exemptions from judgements based on vague criteria that are contrary to the state policy of the country in which the corporation operates. CIEL (2018) clearly explain how and why corporate capture occurs:

International investment agreements grant TNCs unprecedented rights [to] expand and strengthen property rights...In the name of protecting investor rights, governments can be forced to pay millions of dollars to foreign corporations for enacting or enforcing laws or regulations that serve vital public interests, such as protecting workers or preventing environmental harm

(CIEL, 2018)

Many members convey the urgency of preventing corporate capture, with APWLD (2015) framing the Binding Treaty as an ‘an opportunity for civil society to challenge the narrative that assumes that corporate actors can be trusted...to act in alignment with the objectives of equitable, sustainable development and human rights’ (APWLD, 2015). ESCRnet, FIAN, PODER, and FOEi (2019) agree, with the latter arguing that ‘businesses are too well protected and rarely held to account for their abuses’ (FOEi, 2019). Opposition to corporate capture as an ideological concept is evident among many members of the Collective, who insist that ‘relying

on businesses to voluntarily regulate themselves simply does not work.’ (FOEi, 2019). The Collective contest the neoliberal and liberal feminist assumption that corporations should be permitted to influence ‘regulation, business practices and popular culture globally, including gender relations’ (Grosser & McCarthy, 2019 p.1102).

6.4.3. *Promoting Solidarity*

The third concept related to the ideology of the FBT Collective concerns the agency and representation of women through solidarity. The Collective and members highlight the importance of acknowledging, and allowing for, the participation of many voices within the Treaty which directly contests the concept of “Third World” women as a homogenous group defined only as victims, experiencing the same forms of oppression, by liberal feminist and neoliberalist development discourses (Mohanty, 2003).

The Collective seek to create solidarity through demands for the ‘meaningful participation of women from all affected communities’ within the Treaty negotiations arguing that the following ‘multiple and/or intersecting forms of discrimination’ be considered:

the impact of operations on gender roles and gender based discrimination, women’s health including prenatal and maternal health, gender-based and sexual violence, gendered division of labour on family and community levels, and access to and control of social and economic resources

(FBT, 2017 p.2; 2019 p.7)

AWID (2019) argue that the Binding Treaty ‘falls short of expectations and still treats gender as an afterthought’. In response to this shared concern, the Collective call for the ‘full and meaningful participation of civil society’ within the Treaty negotiations (FBT, 2018 p.5). Civil society in this regard includes ‘women’s rights organisations, feminist collectives, trade unions and other social movements, women human rights defenders and gender experts, particularly those representing

the most marginalised groups’ (FBT, 2018 p.5). FIDH (2018) also emphasise the importance of representation, calling for the ‘meaningful engagement of women, indigenous people, persons with disabilities, children, and other sections of society disproportionately or differently affected by the operations of transnational company and other enterprises’ within the Treaty negotiations (FIDH, 2017).

The Collective argue that the ‘strength’ of a gender perspective in the Binding Treaty lies in highlighting and promoting ‘lived experiences and perspectives, with an emphasis on women and gender issues as well as on marginalised voices generally’ (FBT, 2019 p.2). Many member organisations share this belief and support the equal representation of marginalised voices within the Binding Treaty process²⁸. Solidarity, through the acknowledgement of representation, participation, and agency, is clearly a core concept of the ideology of the FBT Collective, and one which contests Western liberal feminist and neoliberal victim representations of women in the Global South (Mohanty, 2003). Through their promotion and embrace of solidarity, the Collective and member organisations, contest the neoliberal ideology of individualism and individual based solutions to gender equality, development, and justice (Grosser & McCarthy, 2019).

The core ideological concepts of the FBT Collective overlap somewhat with a decolonial approach. To examine this suggestion further, the following chapter will present each decolonial theme and identify the ways in which the ideological concepts and the other categorical findings (network, strategies, motivations) presented in this chapter are indicative of a decolonial feminist approach.

²⁸ AWID, 2019; FIAN, 2018; PODER, 2019; FIDH, 2017; DAWN, 2019; IWRAW, 2018; CELS, 2018

7. Analysis of Decoloniality as Feminist Resistance

Having established the ways in which the Collective are organised (Network); work to achieve their goals (Strategies); are driven to fight for a gender perspective in the Binding Treaty (Motivations); and the beliefs that ground their collective action (Ideology); we can now turn to the decolonial feminist nature of these findings. The decolonial themes, and the categories in which they are present, are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Decolonial Analysis by Category

	Inclusivity and Participation	Intersectionality and concerns for justice	Anti-Capitalist Positionality
Network			
Strategies			
Motivations			
Ideology			

7.1. Theme 1: Inclusivity and participation

The first decolonial theme of inclusivity and participation can be observed in every category of analysis conducted above and is clearly an important aspect of the Collective's decolonial approach. The structure map of **the network**, gathered using quantitative HNA, when analysed qualitatively indicates that the Collective has adopted an inclusive epistemology in line with Transnational Feminist Theory and decoloniality. As all 12 members from the Collective are included in the network and connected to at least one other member, one can reasonably assume

that all members contribute to knowledge production within the formation of ideologies, motivations, and strategies of the Collective.

Transnational Feminist Theory and by extension decoloniality does not call for equality in knowledge production, per se but advocates for the inclusion of all knowledge (Mohanty, 2003). Each member organisation has different and unique knowledge regarding the gendered impacts of corporate projects, power, and impunity. The oppression and suppression of human rights, specifically of women's rights, by corporate actors is not universal or global (Mohanty, 2003). The network map shows that the Collective is representative of transnational knowledge production. The network, by including the participation of all members, shows that solidarity, a decolonial ideal, is present. Therefore, the network is indicative of 'communities of people who have chosen to work and fight together' whose 'diversity and difference are...acknowledged and respected, not erased in the building of alliances' (Mohanty, 2003 p.7).

The strategies undertaken by the Collective and the organisation members are also in keeping with inclusivity and participation as they seek to challenge the notions of Western liberal feminism and neoliberalism while seeking to promote inclusive participation and solidarity across national lines. The public appeals, while not overtly decolonial in nature, allow marginalised voices to tell their own stories through the content of videos and through social media which are shared by various member organisations, and are in keeping with the first theme presented here. These calls to action help to promote a realistic and decolonial representation of marginalised groups, particularly women, and the various organisations who advocate for their rights without succumbing to a homogenisation of women in the Global South as described by Mohanty (2003).

The strategies of the Collective represent the historical decolonial work of women from the Global South, who according to Mohanty (2003 p.237) have 'always organized against the devastations of globalized capital, just as they have always historically organized anticolonial and antiracist movements'. The strategies of the Collective and its founder members are therefore rooted in a long

historical decolonial process, one which seeks to challenge not only Western liberal notions of feminism but also of Western liberal notions of capitalism and by extension globalisation.

The demands given regarding the Binding Treaty are more explicit examples of the theme of inclusivity and participation in action. Each one draws on decolonial feminist thinking by rejecting both liberal feminism and neoliberalism's influence on the Binding Treaty negotiations. For example, an important aspect highlighted by the Collective is 'the meaningful participation of women from affected communities, including in the design and definition of the scope of impact assessments, and [that the assessments] should be made public and accessible' (FBT, 2018 p.5). PODER (2019 [online]) also stress the importance of participation and inclusion as they call for 'meaningful due diligence that can really highlight and address how business activities have different, disproportionate, or unanticipated impacts on women and other identities, as a result of different gendered social, legal, and cultural roles'. All three demands emphasize the importance of the participation and inclusion of all those affected by human rights abuses or violations, caused by business activities.

The macro, global issues posed by neoliberalism and liberal feminism are examined by the Collective through the lens of the micro, local realities of those affected which shapes the way the Collective's **motivations** are presented. In so doing, the Collective and the founding members challenge the discursive constructions of identity placed upon marginalised peoples by hegemonic neoliberal culture and instead promote the formation of collective identities that are based on lived realities (Alcoff, 2017). It is through the formation of these collective identities, that are based on real social negotiations, that marginalised peoples can fully and honestly participate in society, and seek to change the society itself by engaging in a 'process of discursive negotiations through which new meanings and practices might actually emerge' (Alcoff, 2017 p.32). Through questioning the formation of identity and demonstrating the power of sharing women's lived

realities as a process through which to analyse global power structures, the FBT Collective embraces decoloniality as feminist resistance.

The Collective's **ideological** core concept of solidarity is also in keeping with the first theme of inclusivity and participation. The full recognition of the various viewpoints of different actors who are impacted by the Binding Treaty is championed by the Collective. This stands in stark contrast to what Mohanty (2003 p.23) argues is the Western liberal feminist construction of "Third World Women" as a 'homogeneous "powerless" group, often located as implicit victims of particular socioeconomic systems'. In line with the creation of what Mohanty (2003) calls 'feminist liberatory knowledge', the Collective and the member organisations consistently call for the viewpoints, visions, and experiences of women to be at the center of negotiations for the Binding Treaty (FBT, 2018; AWID, 2019; IWRAW, 2015; PODER, 2019; FIDH, 2018; CELS, 2018).

The representation of all marginalised groups is a key aspect of the Collective's ideological belief to combat the 'gender impacts of corporate abuse' which are 'still largely overlooked' (PODER, 2019). By advocating for the inclusion of many voices particularly the most marginalised, the Collective rejects neoliberal/liberal feminism's focus on individuality and individual solutions to gender inequality (Grosser & McCarthy, 2019). The Collective accounts for the various ways in which marginalised peoples each experience discrimination, rejecting the homogenous view of women as a 'vulnerable group' who experience the same oppression as propagated by Western liberal feminism. (Mohanty, 2003; 2013). This act of decolonial feminist resistance is perfectly in line with Mohanty's argument that 'it is precisely the power of decolonizing feminist thought, grounded in women-of-color epistemology and engaging in systemic analysis, that global coloniality seeks to suppress' (Mohanty, 2013 p.986). All four categorical findings (network, strategies, motivations and ideology) project the Collective's embrace of inclusivity and participation as a form of decolonial feminist resistance.

7.2. Theme 2: Intersectionality and Concerns for Justice

The FBT Collective and its members have clearly embraced the second theme presented here: intersectionality and concerns for justice. This theme was seen throughout the findings of the strategies, motivations, and ideology categories. As the Collective seeks to ensure the protection of human rights from corporate abuse, through the advocacy of a fully integrated gender perspective within the Treaty, it stands to reason that justice as a decolonial theme would make up an important aspect of their work.

Within the **strategies** presented above, the Collective evokes intersectionality within all three demands of the Treaty. By calling for the explicit inclusion of all marginalised voices within the negotiations, the FBT Collective and its founding members champion an intersectional approach, which stands in stark contrast to a neoliberal/liberal feminist approach that ‘separates ideas from their genealogy or location’ (Alcoff, 2017 p.21). Both the calls to action and demands of the treaty present concerns for justice. For example, AWID (2019) argue that it is ‘essential’ that the Binding Treaty consider the ‘historical and structural barriers to women’s access to justice when seeking gender-responsive remedies’. This is a decolonial feminist stance as AWID acknowledge intersecting and historical forms of oppression (McCall, 2005; Davis, 2020). CIEL clearly state their concerns for justice when discussing the demands made of the Treaty:

We must voice once again our disagreement with the limited scope of the draft treaty...it is fundamental to create a public office staffed with specialized lawyers to represent victims’ interests’

(CELS, 2018)

CIEL and other members call for clearer and more broad language to ensure effective courses of remedy for victims of human rights abuses or violations due to business activities. WILPF have called for ‘specific language in the international instrument that addresses the risks and challenges faced by defenders on the ground, including the specific ones faced by women human rights defenders.’ (WILPF,

2017). The Collective's strategies are both intersectional and seek to rectify injustice by acknowledging that there are 'multiple vectors of oppression' (Alcoff, 2017 p.27).

Within the findings related to **motivational factors**, we can see the most detailed example of the second theme of decoloniality analysed in this research project. FIAN (2018) highlight the legal concern of unequal access to justice felt by women stating that 'women face greater obstacles in accessing redress and justice'. This is a similar concern for IWRAW (2018) who argue that gender inequalities are often exacerbated by corporate activities 'due to entrenched discriminatory and patriarchal laws, practices and systems' and so see legal protection as a main motivation for their involvement in the FBT Collective. This mirrors the language used by the Collective in describing the violations of women's human rights by TNCs which 'continue to be far from adequately prevented and remedied' (FBT, 2018 p.3). The Collective are concerned by the 'often insurmountable legal, procedural and financial barriers to justice' facing many survivors of corporate-caused human rights abuses (FBT, 2018 p.3).

For example, WILPF (2017) are concerned for the struggles of 'Indonesian women fighting against the privatisation of water' and these concerns are mirrored by the Collective who state that:

Women are disproportionately affected both by fossil fuel extraction and by the impacts of climate change... Extreme weather events...disproportionately impact on women and girls, who are much more likely than men to be killed during disasters, take on caring roles for the vulnerable, and also face an increased risk of gender-based violence

(FBT, 2018 p.2)

The above excerpt highlights the way the Collective understand the injustices and oppressions that exacerbate gender inequality, and proves itself to be an intersectional feminist stance (Mohanty, 2013 p.986).

In more specific terms, PODER (2019) call attention to the rights of indigenous peoples in Latin America and are motivated by what they perceive to be a corporate ‘violation of the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)’. They also highlight the, often insurmountable, legal battles facing activists related to the mining industry, giving the example of a mining disaster in Sonora, Mexico:

...five years after the major toxic mining spill, the company, Grupo México, has not been held accountable and has failed to deliver on its promises to affected communities to remedy the damage...

(PODER, 2019)

The Collective, building on this position, posit that thousands of men are forced to migrate in and out of the extractive construction sites, which ‘completely changes the lives of women and girls’ around the world. To further confound this problem, they highlight that women often experience violence related to the mining industry (FBT, 2017 p.3). They argue that:

[Many women] often have little say over the expropriation of land by extractive industries, but then suffer the consequences when their unpaid labour increases as a result of depletion of natural resources and when they can no longer grow food to feed their families and generate income

(FBT, 2018 p.2)

Concerns for environmental and gender justice (and the intersection between the two) is indicative of an intersectional decolonial approach, especially in the case of PODER (a Latin American organisation), as it calls back to Mohanty’s assertion that:

In numerous cases of environmental racism...it is no coincidence that poor black, Native American, and Latina women provide the leadership in the fight against corporate pollution...it is precisely their critical reflections on their everyday lives

as poor women of color that allow the kind of analysis of the power structure that has led to the many victories in environmental racism struggles

(Mohanty, 2003 p.232)

The Collective further evoke decolonial concerns for justice through a passionate description of how the violence faced by activists intersects with gender inequality. By examining the issue of violence and the ‘gender-specific risks’ activists face, the Collective are centring marginalised experiences, and highlighting the intersectional barriers to justice faced by those who seek to hold corporate power accountable (Mohanty, 2013 p.969). The following excerpt highlights the Collective’s intersectional concern for justice:

Women human rights defenders are exposed to the same types of risks as all other defenders. However, as women, they experience these violations in gender-specific ways, and they are exposed to or targeted for additional gender-based and sexual violence and gender-specific risks...because by acting in the public sphere, women challenge gender norms and stereotypes. The gendered nature of crimes against women human rights defenders further deepens gender inequality and the exclusion of women from public life.

(FBT, 2017 p.9 & 10)

The Collective argue that it is not just the women themselves who face threats and violence, but their children and communities can experience discrimination and harassment as a result of their activism (FBT, 2018 p. 2). They give a clear example of the importance of access to remedy and justice in describing the unfair treatment of over 100 women, both victims and survivors of sexual assault by employees of the Porgera gold mine in Papua New Guinea:

After much external pressure, in 2012 the Canadian owned company designed a remedy mechanism, where survivors were required to waive their legal rights to sue the company to potentially receive a remedy package, which many felt failed to reflect the severity of the harms suffered

(FBT, 2018 p.2)

Similarly, CIEL (2018) are concerned with the ‘gender-specific forms of violence and threats’ that women human rights defenders face when resisting corporate power and abuse. FIAN (2018) share these concerns and argue that women are actually ‘disregarded as human rights defenders’ despite the fact that they ‘profoundly suffer the impact of corporate abuse and capture of policy spaces’ (FIAN, 2018). PODER (2019) explore this further by detailing how activism, gender and race intersect and refer to the prevention of violence as a motivating factor by drawing attention to the ‘growing violence’ experienced by indigenous and afro-descendant peoples’ within corporate accountability and human rights activism. Legal, environmental, labour and violence concerns, particularly those of protecting the rights of indigenous peoples, are grounded in decolonial thought (McLaren, 2017). By ‘according epistemic privilege to the most marginalized communities of women’ the Collective’s motivations highlight their embrace of the second theme of decoloniality (Mohanty, 2013 p.9).

In its embrace of intersectionality as an **ideological concept**, the FBT Collective are clear in their decolonial calls for justice. The Collective stress the importance of an intersectional approach. PODER (2019) argue that a gender perspective within the Binding Treaty should not simply consist of ‘treating women as a “vulnerable group” or taking the approach of “adding women and stirring”’. IWRAW (2018) share this view and explicitly explain their use of intersectional solidarity to ensure that ‘local experiences’ are guiding the Binding Treaty negotiations:

We use an intersectional human-rights-based framework to demonstrate the gender-specific impact of corporate abuses and work to strengthen understanding on gender-sensitive approaches to business and human rights so that women’s experiences are not rendered invisible... with emphasis on marginalised groups.

(IWRAW, 2018)

The use of an intersectional approach, described as ‘essential’ (AWID, 2019) and ‘crucial’ (CELS, 2018), demonstrates that the Collective embrace the second theme

of decoloniality through what Mohanty (2013 p.969) calls a ‘systematic analysis of institutionalized power and of decolonizing methodologies that center marginalized experience...in struggles for justice’.

7.3. Theme 3: Anti-Capitalist Positionality

The third and final decolonial theme analysed within this research project examines the existence of an anti-capitalist positionality within the Collective. The strategies, motivations, and ideological concepts of the FBT Collective are explicitly critical of capitalism. This section will explore whether these criticisms amount to an Anti-Capitalist Positionality.

The strategies of the Collective, particularly the demands they make of the Treaty, are decolonial in their critique of global capitalism and TNCs. In attempting to control and resist corporate impunity the Collective’s strategies come from a decolonial vantage point, as they seek to give voice to the voiceless and power to the powerless (McLaren, 2017). The demands of the Collective, if met, would allow all peoples to have a say over their lives, fighting what Mohanty (2003 p.229) describes as the ‘hegemony of neoliberalism, alongside the naturalization of capitalist values’.

The Collective’s demands for Gender Impact Assessments to be carried out suggest that they are willing to engage with the corporate and neoliberal arenas of governance, which Grosser and McCarthy (2019 p.1112) consider crucial for achieving decolonial feminist goals. As previously discussed, Grosser & McCarthy argue that it is not enough to simply be critical and ‘not engaged’, because neoliberalism and corporations are the new arenas of governance (2019 p.1112). Therefore, this demand, at first glance, would suggest an ongoing engagement with corporations by feminist movements, human rights activists, and marginalised communities:

The treaty should require that any preventive measures such as due diligence procedures, should be completed by a human rights-based gender impact assessment. Impact assessments should be conducted with the meaningful

participation of women from affected communities, including in the design and definition of the scope of impact assessments, and should be made public and accessible.

(FBT, 2018 p.5)

Presumably, the ‘meaningful participation of women’ would then influence the decolonial restructuring of corporations by highlighting gendered impacts of corporate power. However, on closer reading of the Gender Impact Assessment demanded by the Collective, it is clear that the intention is for an *independent* mechanism which *controls* corporate action and does not work with it. The FBT Collective call for the Treaty to:

Explicitly state that gender impact assessments shall be conducted by an independent entity chosen by, or agreed upon, the communities and the women from whom information will be gathered, in a process of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

(FBT, 2018 p.5)

The strategies of the Collective, therefore, represent a more nuanced approach to anti-capitalism.

Grosser & McCarthy (2019) present a binary choice in terms of decolonial feminist resistance. One is either “simply critical but not engaged” or “critical and engaged”, with the latter presented as the optimal approach (Grosser & McCarthy, 2019). However, the Collective’s approach is somewhere in the middle of these two options. They are deeply *critical* of corporations, and, to a certain extent are *engaged* in seeking to hold them accountable through Gender Impact Assessments. However, these assessments are to be carried out completely independently of corporate influence, which requires minimal engagement with corporate actors (mainly presenting the independent findings to the corporation involved). The Collective are therefore capable of doing more than being “simply critical”, and are somewhat, but are not fully, “engaged” in neoliberal or corporate arenas. Through

strong criticism, and demands to curb the power of corporations, the Collective's strategies are, therefore, situated within an anti-capitalist positionality.

Further critiques of capitalism can be seen in **the motivations** of the Collective. The four motivations presented in this thesis acknowledge the history of the exploitation of women as being a key part of capitalist patriarchies (Mohanty, 2003 p.147). For example, AWID (2019) are specifically concerned with the 'inhumane conditions including low wages for sweatshop workers who are often young women and girls between the aged of 15 - 25 years' and see these inhumane conditions as a key reason to join the FBT Collective. This can be seen very clearly in their statement:

Patriarchy intersects with the current dominant oppressive economic system to leverage and exploit women's low status in society for profit, exacerbating existing structural inequalities. These inequalities are enabled and reinforced by the activities of TNCs and other business enterprises. Women are affected by corporate abuses in gender-specific ways...

(AWID, 2019)

By framing their motivations through the lens of local lived experiences rather than global generalities, a decolonial anti-capital critique is established.

The Collective are motivated by legal concerns related to the influence corporations have in decision-making. This legal motivational factor is expressed in anti-capitalist terms most explicitly by ESCRnet (2018) who criticise the imbalance created by capitalism which has allowed corporations to 'economically intimidate state allies of the treaty process'. These concerns related to corporate power are more explicitly expressed within the ideological findings.

The political concepts which make up **the ideology** of the FBT Collective are strongly identifiable as decolonial and anti-capitalist in approach. These concepts contest political ideological beliefs of neoliberal and Western liberal feminist thought. The rejection of prioritising individual freedom, in the form of economic empowerment, can be understood as a critique of deeply imbedded Western,

colonial values. This concept is based on the idea of what Bondi (2005) calls neoliberal subjectivity and is the notion that self-starting individuals are at the core of decision making. The Collective reject this concept of individualism, which is deeply capitalist, and instead embrace collectivism and solidarity (Grosser & McCarthy, 2018).

Corporate capture is a clear example of a Western, ‘capitalist mode of recolonisation’ (Mohanty, 2003 p.147). The Collective and its founding members are strong in their condemnation of corporate capture, described by Mohanty (2003 p.171) as, ‘the real shifts and consolidation of power around the world’, which have been felt in the wake of globalised capitalism. The Collective acknowledge that the power imbalances capitalism creates allow corporations to act with impunity. They challenge the ‘narrative that assumes that corporate actors can be trusted’ (APWLD, 2015). In so doing, the Collective share Mohanty’s (2003 p.183) view of the ‘capitalist hegemony and culture’, which has now become a ‘foundational principal of social life’. The Collective further criticise the business case strategy of “investment” in women as good business, which highlights their decolonial feminist approach (FBT, 2018). This rejection of the business case for gender equality is best illustrated by PODER who argue that:

The key is not to see the upcoming negotiations as a question of good or bad business. It is not a question of financial risks or how to educate consumers choices. This is a question of life or death.

(PODER, 2019)

Contesting the business case, the Collective instead focus on the structural causes of oppression and discrimination. The ways in which structural discrimination is intensified by corporate actions is clearly called into focus by IWRAW who state the gravity of the situation thus:

Due to entrenched discriminatory and patriarchal laws, practices and systems, business activities often exacerbate gender inequalities, with women bearing a

disproportionate impact of corporate activities as workers, human rights defenders and as communities affected by the actions of corporations...

(IWRAW, 2018)

The Collective argue that the inclusion of a gender perspective in the Binding Treaty is ‘an agenda in its own right’ (FBT, 2018 p.1). They criticise and reject the corporate-led business case for gender equality as it is used merely as a resource to propagate what Acker (2006 p.443) describes as ‘systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources and outcomes’. By criticising the unfortunate prevalence of “profit over people” within neoliberal ideology, and the growing instances of corporate capture, the Collective are taking an anti-capitalist positionality.

8. Conclusion

This research has provided a detailed analysis of an example of transnational feminist resistance to corporate, neoliberal and liberal feminist ideology, has determined the ideological foundations of a transnational decolonial feminist collective’s activism and resistance efforts, and has highlighted the ways in which decoloniality in transnational feminist activism challenges neoliberalism and liberal feminism.

The purpose of this thesis was to explore and examine how decoloniality has shaped feminist resistance to neoliberal and liberal feminist hegemonic power by examining the network structure, strategies, motivations, and ideology of the FBT Collective. Decolonial feminism is evident in all four categories of their approach. The Collective is made up of an inclusive network of members who all participate to bring about intersectional gender justice for all, particularly for the most marginalised. They are driven to demand this justice by the overlapping negative impacts of corporate action and argue that global macro events must be understood in local micro contexts. Furthermore, the Collective advocate for solidarity across

class, race, and national boundaries, to hold corporations accountable and address structural discrimination. The FBT Collective, therefore, fully embrace Mohanty's (2003) call for decolonial feminist solidarity across borders.

In answering the research question, this thesis revealed that the Collective have adopted a decolonial feminist approach. Whilst advocating for the inclusion of gender justice within a human rights treaty, the Collective have embraced inclusivity and participation, examined justice concerns through an intersectional lens, and assumed an anti-capitalist stance. Despite the fears of many scholars, the FBT Collective are an example that not all feminists have been co-opted by neoliberalism and liberal feminism. There are transnational collaborative networks, thriving in decolonial solidarity, that are challenging and resisting the hegemonic ideology of neoliberalism and liberal feminism. The Collective have criticised corporate-led gender equality and highlight the injustice of corporate capture within neoliberal and liberal feminist governance arenas. Rather than calling on women to accept the hegemony of these arenas, the Collective refuses to play the "game" of neoliberals and liberal feminists, and instead call for an intersectional, inclusive solidarity which can ensure gender equality and uphold human rights in the face of corporate abuses.

8.1. Suggestions for Further Research

There are several avenues available to researchers willing to expand on this research project. To gain a deeper understanding of the decision-making process of the FBT Collective, observation of their work during the annual Binding Treaty negotiations combined with focus groups or interviews of all founding member organisations may be beneficial. A deeper knowledge of the Collective's approach could also be attained by examining the success of their advocacy in integrating a gender perspective into the Binding Treaty, within the coming years.

Many decolonial scholars and activists²⁹ have questioned and criticised the colonial nature of human rights themselves and call for ‘a radical reconceptualization of the human rights paradigm’ (Mignolo, 2003 p.82). This critique of human rights as a colonial legacy, which could ‘be used to justify further intervention by the West in the Third World’ (Anghie, 2006 p.749), is not explicitly evident within the Collective’s approach. Further research could examine to what extent, if any, the demands the Collective make of the Binding Treaty could amount to a decoloniality of International Human Rights.

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²⁹ See Mignolo, 2003; Anghie, 2006; Barreto, 2012; Shetty, 2018

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Appendix

Table 2. Empirical Materials

	Title of Webpage	Member Org	Date	Webpage & Date Last Accessed
1.	Corporate Abuse is a Feminist Issue	The Project on Organizing, Development, Education, and Research (PODER)	2019	https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/corporate-abuse-feminist-issue/ (5 th July 2020)
2.	The Feminists for a Binding Treaty	The Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID)	2019	https://www.cidse.org/2019/01/24/the-feminists-for-a-binding-treaty/ (3 rd May 2020)

3.	Shaping the treaty on business and human rights: views from Asia and the Pacific	The Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)	2015	https://apwld.org/shaping-the-treaty-on-business-and-human-rights-views-from-asia-and-the-pacific/ (6 th May 2020)
4.	UN Binding Treaty on Human Rights and TNCs	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)	2019	https://dawnnet.org/un-binding-treaty-on-human-rights-and-transnational-corporations/ (5 th July 2020)
5.	Mobilising for a Gender-Sensitive Treaty on Business and Human Rights	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)	2017	https://www.wilpf.org/mobilising-for-a-gender-sensitive-treaty-on-business-and-human-rights/ (3 rd May 2020)
6.	FIDH advocates for the adoption of an international legally binding instrument to regulate the activities of corporations in relation to human rights	International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)	2017	https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/globalisation-human-rights/fidh-advocates-for-the-adoption-of-an-international-legally-binding (30 th July 2020)
7.	Press Release: Slamming	Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN)	2018	https://www.fian.org/en/press-release/article/slamming

	Corporate Abuse of Women's Rights.			-corporate-abuse-of-womens-rights-2081 (29 th July 2020)
8.	Advocating for binding treaty on business and human rights	International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-net)	2018	https://www.escr-net.org/news/2018/advocating-binding-treaty-business-and-human-rights (2 nd August 2020)
9.	UN Treaty on TNCs and Human Rights	Friends of the Earth International (FOEi)	2019	https://www.foei.org/un-treaty-tncs-human-rights (5 th May 2020)
10.	Business and Women's Human Rights	International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP)	2018	https://www.iwraw-ap.org/ourwork/business-and-womens-human-rights/ (1 August 2020)
11.	A toothless tool?	Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)	2018	https://www.cels.org.ar/web/en/opiniones/a-toothless-tool/ (29 th July 2020)
12.	Protecting Rights through a Transnational Corporate Accountability Treaty	Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)	2018	https://www.ciel.org/protecting-rights-transnational-corporate-accountability-treaty/ (29 th July 2020)
13.	Integrating a gender perspective into the legally binding	Feminists for a Binding Treaty (FBT) Collective	2017	http://wilpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Jt-statement-gender-

	instrument on TNCs and other business enterprises			into-the-treaty-October-2017.pdf (4 th August 2020)
14	Women's Rights Beyond the Business Case Ensuring Corporate Accountability	Feminists for a Binding Treaty (FBT) Collective	2018	https://actionaid.org/sites/default/files/fem4bt_2018 - _womens_rights_beyond the business case.pdf (4 th August 2020)
15	Position paper on the revised draft dated 16.07.2019 of the legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of TNCs and other business enterprises.	Feminists for a Binding Treaty (FBT) Collective	2019	https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/f4bt_legal_position_p aper_9.10.2019.pdf?utm _source=social&utm_me dium=twitter&utm_cam paign=f4bt-position- paper- 2019&utm_term=5th- IGWG&utm_content=Si de%20event (30 th July 2020)