

A person wearing a vibrant red dress and a dark jacket is lying on their back on a large, moss-covered rock. The rock is covered in bright green moss, and the surrounding environment is dark and shadowy, creating a dramatic and somewhat ethereal atmosphere. The person's arms are outstretched, and they appear to be in a state of rest or contemplation.

# PLURIVERSAL FASHION-TEXTILES

Re-Directing toward  
Holistic, Autonomous, Place-Based  
& Relational Fashion-Textiles Worlds

ANIA ZOLTKOWSKI - DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY – DESIGN 2024  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

## **Certificate of Authorship**

I, Ania Zoltkowski declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology Sydney. This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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## Gratitude

We do not do anything alone, and as such, this project has been a co-creation between the many vast, dynamic, visible and invisible relations that I am so grateful to be a part of. There is not enough space or words to thank these all, and some special acknowledgments must be made.

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This work is dedicated to the Great Mother and my Mother, Grazyna Zofia Stanilewicz, the eternal visionaries of All possibilities.



## **Positionality**

As a first-generation immigrant living on the lands of modern-day Australia, I bring multiple worldviews and experiences that directly shape and inform this research. Born to parents who escaped the Soviet Union from Poland in the mid-1980s, I acknowledge that my family found refuge here through the forced dispossession of First Nations peoples over 200 years ago. This hybrid identity—being Australian-Polish, not fully Australian in Australia, nor fully Polish in Poland—offers both complexity and richness in perspective. It has taught me to navigate between worlds, informing my approach to pluriversality as well as my capacity to envision alternative possibilities.

My Eastern European heritage connects me to ancestral practices of textile-making that predate Christianity and colonisation. Throughout my childhood, my grandmother's embroidery practices deeply influenced my own creative development, as explored later in this thesis. Recently, these practices have reconnected me to ways of knowing that patriarchal and modern/colonial systems systematically suppressed. My family's textile traditions have offered me a personal gateway into this research while demonstrating how generations can preserve and transmit knowledge despite attempts to erase it.

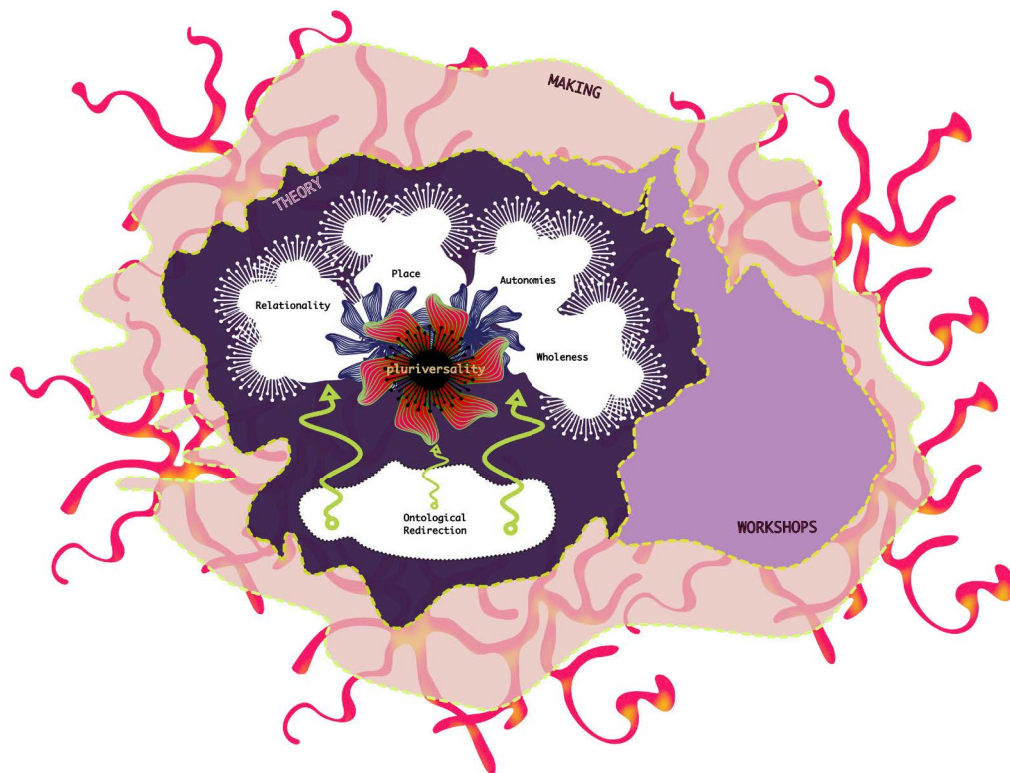
I have been privileged to experience different facets of the fashion-textile industry and academia over the past 18 years in Sydney, Byron Bay, London, Paris, Brussels, and Amsterdam. These experiences have afforded me unique opportunities to observe and participate in various fashion systems, educational models, and sustainability approaches across different global contexts. My education and career path have granted me access to fashion weeks, design studios, educational institutions, and sustainability initiatives that many do not have the opportunity to engage with. This international perspective has deepened my understanding of both the global nature of fashion-textile systems and the importance of local, contextual knowledge—a tension that runs throughout this research.

I recognise the Western constructs I have grown up within and been educated within—from fashion design school to university—which have both afforded me particular opportunities. This privilege has granted me access to spaces and resources that shape this work, while also embedding certain biases and blindspots that I am continuously working to address. While acknowledging privilege is vital for liberation work at this point in time, my hope is that we can eventually move beyond these discussions of privilege and live in societies where equitable access to resources, education, and opportunities is the norm. I have been fortunate to receive funding, mentorship, and institutional support to pursue this research, which has made this work possible. My professional background in fashion design, sustainability and education further positions me within the field I seek to transform, giving me insider knowledge and the responsibility to question established practices.

Over the past decade, I have been on an ongoing journey of personal development and healing work, learning to sense into the world anew—what I now understand as a continuous act of decolonising my relationship to myself, my practice, and the broader fashion-textile ecosystem. Daily rituals, mindfulness, contemplative and embodiment practices have supported this journey and strengthened my internal capacity to relate to, embody, and create with the complex concepts I explore in this thesis, particularly wholeness, autonomies, place, and relationality.

I approach this research driven by my deep concern for our socio-ecological crises, coupled with my belief that we can transform society by redirecting our underlying paradigms. I bring to this work gifts of attunement, creative visualisation, expansive visioning, and a commitment to building bridges between different ways of being. I acknowledge that my understanding is partial, evolving, and shaped by my specific positionality in time and place. I offer this work not as a definitive statement on pluriversal fashion-textiles, but as one contribution to an emerging field that inherently calls for diverse voices and perspectives.

## How to Read the Thesis



**Figure 1.** Visual diagram of all research components.

This thesis is structured to guide readers through my research journey, weaving together three main sections: theory, workshops and making practices.

### ***Structure and Navigation***

The thesis unfolds across five chapters

- Chapter 1, 'Foundations', establishes the research context, questions, aims, and objectives.
- Chapter 2, 'Contextual Groundings', provides theoretical foundations and situates this work within existing scholarship.
- The Glossary hereafter defines key theoretical terms and emerging concepts central to this research. While glossaries typically appear at the beginning of a thesis, it is placed after Chapter 2 to allow readers to firstly understand these concept within their theoretical context.
- Chapter 3, 'Workshops', unpacks the primary research workshop findings and analysis
- Chapter 4, 'Enquiry Through Making', details the correlating making practices.

- Chapter 5, 'Conclusions', synthesises findings and highlight contributions to the field and future research possibilities.

Each chapter begins with an overview and ends with a discussion and summary. Each chapter builds upon previous ones with cross-references, though readers can study them independently. Additionally, diagrams and photos appear throughout as figures, that help to visualise the practice and research.

This PDF document is interactive, meaning you can click on the top navigation to take you to specific chapters, the contents page on the top left, as well as the glossary (bottom left) which begins after page 129. The contents page is linked to each chapter and section, too. A few links in Chapter 4 take the reader to an external video viewing platform. This document is best viewed on Adobe Acrobat.

### ***Voice and Approach***

Throughout this thesis, you will encounter questions in *italics* that emerge from my research journey. These questions serve multiple purposes - they are both personal inquiries that I, as a researcher-designer, contemplate and invitations for you, the reader, to explore alongside me. Rather than seeking definitive answers, these questions are opportunities for deeper inquiry and emergence. They reflect the dynamic, iterative nature of my research methodology and mirror the emergent qualities of fashion-textile design practice itself.

In parts of this thesis, I write in the first person. This deliberate choice aligns with my research methodology and acknowledges my position as both researcher and practitioner within this work. Writing in first person lets me directly convey my lived experience, decision-making processes, and personal reflections as they emerge through the research journey. It makes my role in shaping the research transparent while honouring the subjective and experiential nature of the practice-led fashion-textile inquiry. This approach redirects away from the traditional Western-distanced academic voice, embracing a more intimate and reflexive style that better captures the embodied knowledge generated through this research.

### ***Interdisciplinary Navigation***

This research weaves together multiple disciplines and ways of knowing, moving between pluriversal studies, fashion-textile design practice and sustainability. The thesis integrates practical fashion-textile design knowledge with theoretical frameworks from holistic, autonomous, place-

based and relational ontologies. This interdisciplinary approach reflects the complex nature of designing for sustainability, which requires working across traditional Western boundaries toward embracing multiple perspectives. These connections emerge through written analysis, social learning workshops with others, and practice-led explorations.

Design practitioners may wish to focus initially on the practice-led elements and textile experiments explored in Chapter 4 while gradually exploring how theoretical frameworks can enrich and deepen design practice. The theoretical frameworks presented here for a fashion-textile context may be unfamiliar, as well as their application through fashion-textile practices. As such, I encourage theoretical scholars to first explore the theory and then how this theory may offer novel insights into how abstract concepts manifest in material form. The practical elements demonstrate how theory can be enacted and explored through making.

### ***Notes on Perspective***

This thesis presents one perspective within a much larger pluriverse of knowledge and practice. While parts of the writing may convey certainty, these represent my current understanding within my specific context and moment. Vanessa Machado de Oliveira (2021) reminds us that human knowledge has inherent limits, which we must always view within context and ambiguity. This insight holds particular significance in the modern Western world, where people tend to apply universal theories, often treat reality as an object, and assume absolute "truths" exist (Escobar, 2016, p. 29). My research actively diverges from these universalising tendencies. Despite efforts to introduce more-than-human perspectives and move beyond human-centric conceptualisations, I recognise that due to deep-seated conditioning, elements of human-centrism may persist throughout this work. Acknowledging this, I offer this work not as a universal truth, prescribed solution, or rigid framework toward sustainability but as a source of inspiration.



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## Abstract

Current fashion-textile practices have wide-ranging adverse effects on ecological systems, human communities, and more-than-humans, exemplifying a broader crisis in our relationship with the world and ourselves. Despite numerous sustainability initiatives, the industry's detrimental global impact continues to grow, primarily due to approaches rooted in mechanistic, modern/colonial ontologies that fail to address underlying paradigms. This study explores how a pluriverse may manifest through fashion-textiles, fostering the emergence and coexistence of diverse ways of being and knowing (Escobar, 2018a) and redirecting the field toward more holistic approaches inspired by *Earth Logic* (Fletcher & Tham, 2019). In the context of this research and guided by Escobar (2020b; 2018a, 2007), pluriversality encompasses the acknowledgment and acceptance of varied worldviews, knowledge systems, and modes of existence, rejecting the notion of a singular or all-encompassing truth in favour of embracing a rich tapestry of ontological paradigms. Adopting a post-qualitative performative research paradigm (Haseman, 2006), this study employs a multidimensional methodology triangulating theoretical exploration, practice-led making, and social learning workshops. It investigates four key ontological redirections—Wholeness, Autonomies, Place, and Relationality—essential for cultivating pluriversal fashion-textile worlds.

Through workshops with fashion-textile stakeholders and practice-led experiments, the research examines what emerges when introducing pluriversal methods in communal environments. It provides an embodied understanding of complex theoretical concepts. This process resulted in a creative output of an Earth-cloth, a modular fashion-textile garment that represents one contextual manifestation among countless possibilities in a fashion-textile pluriverse. This research further contributes to an integrated approach to knowledge generation in fashion-textiles that is autonomous, place-based, and relational, emphasising the equal importance of Spirit, Heart, Mind, and Body as collaborative sources of insight.

By synthesising these diverse aspects, the study aims to cultivate a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of fashion-textiles, creating new knowledge in the field. It offers pathways for fashion-textile practitioners, researchers and educators to embrace pluriversal approaches as invitations toward intentional and integrated possibilities.

By illuminating toward hidden and devalued pluriversal worlds, this research expands the scope for what sustainable transitions in fashion-textiles could be (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018). The study's significance lies in its novel exploration of pluriversal approaches for fashion-textiles, which presents a holistic pathway toward reimagining and redirecting the field towards more sustainable practices. This research addresses a critical gap in current academic discourse and practice, establishing foundations for future scholars and practitioners to explore and develop pluriversal approaches to fashion-textiles across diverse contexts.

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## Chapter 1. Foundations

“Voyager, there are no bridges, one builds them as one walks.”  
—Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 1987

### 1.1. Introduction

Today’s global fashion-textile industry sits at the epicentre of an interconnected sustainability crisis, which contributes significantly to environmental degradation, human exploitation, and a profound disconnection from the natural world and all living systems. This crisis reflects a broader issue in human consciousness, rooted in modernity, coloniality, capitalism, industrialisation, and patriarchy, and that has severed many cultures’ connections to relational, embodied, and experiential ontologies. As a result, a pervasive consciousness of separation, prioritising profits and growth over holistic well-being, continues to perpetuate reductionist worldviews and human-centric solutions, which is evident both in the current fashion-textile industry and in academia. There is a growing number of sustainability initiatives, however, current approaches often fail to address root causes, while the industry continues on an unsustainable growth trajectory.

The challenge lies in moving beyond merely addressing the symptoms and transforming the underlying paradigms and logic systems that shape the industry. This research proposes that creating holistic fashion-textiles necessitates interventions from the paradigm phase of change. Pluriversality, which embraces diverse perspectives and ways of being, could offer a pathway to reimagine fashion-textiles in such a way. This approach requires an ontological redirection, enacted through examining what is, delinking from destructive paradigms, and co-creating alternative futures.

This research, inspired by Fletcher and Tham’s *Earth Logic: Fashion Action Research Plan* (2019), addresses the central question: *How can a pluriverse manifest through fashion-textiles theory, doing practices, and learning-sharing with others?* Utilising a multidimensional methodology that weaves together theoretical, practical, and social learning components, the study explores three supporting sub-questions:

*What unfolds when sharing pluriversal onto-epistemologies and methods with others? What ontological redirection is needed for a pluriverse to emerge in fashion-textiles inquiry, practice, and social learning workshops? And, what emerges when creating fashion-textiles in pluriversal ways?*

Building upon the work of Arturo Escobar (2021; 2020a; 2020b; 2018a; 2018b; 2016; 2007), *pluriversality* refers to the coexistence and recognition of multiple ways of knowing, being, and understanding the world, and challenges the idea of a single, universal perspective by embracing diverse ontologies. Cameron Tonkinwise further explored these ideas when leading a University of Technology Sydney (UTS) postgraduate seminar (2021), where he unpacked pluriversal themes in depth. My research proposes a guiding framework for transitioning towards regenerative and flourishing fashion-textile pluriversal worlds. By delving into this under-explored concept, this study aims to contribute to fashion-textiles by illuminating divergent, holistic pathways more compatible with sustainability (Escobar, 2007, p. 205. Creating a fashion-textile pluriverse also elicits a reconnection to the worldviews hidden and erased through modern Western logic and systems. While not exhaustive in scope, this research seeks to provide a foundation for implementing pluriversal approaches for fashion-textile design, learning systems, and doing practices. Ultimately, it contributes to the ongoing transformation towards more sustainable ways of being in the fashion-textile industry and education.

More concretely, *Earth Logic* manifests throughout this research, aligning closely with the six landscape layers outlined by Fletcher and Tham (2019, pp. 48–52. The study embodies *Earth Logic*'s "Plural" layer by prioritising diverse, pluriversal perspectives in fashion-textiles. This approach challenges growth-centric paradigms by exploring ontologies centred on wholeness, autonomies, place, and relationality. Furthermore, it emphasises the importance of diverse making practices and values various forms of knowledge in production. The "Local" layer is evident in the holistic approach that recognises the interconnectedness of fashion texts with all, including natural systems, mainly through a recognition of First Nations and pluriversal perspectives that view humans as part of nature and highlight the importance of context. The "Learning" aspect manifests in the commitment to transformative, embodied learning experiences, aligning with *Earth Logic*'s (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p.52) emphasis on transformative learning. The research introduces pluriversal concepts that expand the sustainability discourse in fashion-textiles. By integrating



these principles, this research demonstrates a practical application of *Earth Logic*, moving beyond theoretical discourse to active engagement with pluriversal practices that can contribute to sustainability. Finally, this project aligns with *Earth Logic*'s (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p. 18) call for “whole system thinking” by offering a holistic perspective on sustainability that encompasses social, cultural, and ecological dimensions in fashion-textiles. In essence, this research embodies *Earth Logic*'s principles by presenting a pluriversal, holistic approach to fashion-textiles that prioritises diverse perspectives, challenges dominant paradigms, and fosters transformative learning experiences, thereby demonstrating how *Earth Logic* can be practically applied to create more holistic practices in the field.

In pursuit of a deeper alignment with pluriversality and its pioneering of knowledge creation through divergent, relational, experiential, and embodied pathways, this research adopts a post-qualitative paradigm of performative research (Haseman, 2006, p. 98; Bolt, 2016, p. 132. This challenges conventional notions of research by accentuating the embodied, relational, and performative dimensions of knowledge production (Østern et al., 2023, p. 272. Aligned with Escobar's (2018a, p. 144 concept of pluriversality, the methodology is characterised by five key aspects: ontological redirection, relationality, situatedness, inactiveness, and emergence. The study employs a multidimensional approach to doing research, triangulating theoretical exploration, practice-led making, and social learning workshops. Theoretical methods include critical reading, writing, and conceptual mapping. Its practice-led component utilises various creative-making techniques, such as hand stitching and drawing, supported by contemplative practices, such as mindfulness and visioning. Social learning is facilitated through workshops, employing visualisation, collaborative making, and reflective discussions. Data generation encompasses film recordings, photographs, questionnaires, and interviews, analysed through a diffractive reading approach (Barad, 2007, p. 235.

This methodology embraces complexity and multiplicity through the context of a pluriverse (Østern et al., 2023, p. 285, generating experiential, embodied, and situated knowledges. By integrating diverse epistemologies through spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical ways of knowing, this approach contributes to ongoing efforts to redirect, decolonise, and reimagine fashion-textile studies (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p. 53; Rissanen, 2017a, pp. 528–546, p. 2; Payne, 2021, p. 4.

This research is as much a method as it is a piece of enquiry as the methodology informs the investigation and contributes to knowledge generation through its dual nature, which allows for a rich exploration into pluriversal approaches in fashion-textiles, offering insights into the subject matter, and contributing to innovative methodologies for the field.

Given the novelty of pluriversality in academic fashion-textile discourse, a thorough framing and situating of the topic have been essential in order to ground the project's theme and its possible applications for fashion-textiles. The contextual review (Chapter 2) has two aims: to transgress the ontologies that no longer serve fashion-textiles in moving towards a holistic kind of sustainability, and secondly, to point to the ontologies needed to nourish different possibilities. This creates the soil (conditions for divergent and transformative options to sprout from, which are explored in creative practices and workshops with others and discussed in greater depth in Chapters 3 and 4.

The review begins by examining the root of unsustainability issues in fashion-textiles, particularly the modern/colonial ontologies of separation deeply ingrained in contemporary understandings and practices. It then moves to a comprehensive exploration of pluriversality as the needed ontological redirection. As Fry (2009, p. 102) suggests, a redirective practice encompasses reimagining and remaking current design systems and paradigms toward sustainable alternatives.

Pluriversality deliberately shifts away from universal modes of engaging with garments and materials, nourishing an environment where diverse forms of fashion-textiles can emerge, exist, and thrive (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p. 53). Challenging the notion of a single universal reality, the approach embraces diverse worldviews, belief systems, values, and contextual practices rooted in place and existing in a constant state of emergence and becoming. By engaging with diverse perspectives from critical scholars in broader pluriversal domains and from the design and fashion-textile fields, the theoretical and contextual foundation establishes a comprehensive understanding of pluriversality's philosophical and conceptual underpinnings. This, in turn, grounds and supports the subsequent practical explorations through embodied making practices and social learning journeys via participatory workshops.

The theoretical exploration in this research delves into four critical ontological redirections essential for cultivating pluriversal fashion-textile worlds: Wholeness, Autonomies, Place, and Relationality. These values diverge from modern/colonial logics of separation, universality, and fragmentation, instead centring on interdependence, contextuality,

self-determination, and the integration of intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions for fashion-textile creation and inquiry (Escobar, 2018a, p. 144; Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p. 53)

Wholeness integrates the intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions, challenging the fragmentation in contemporary fashion-textile practices and enquiries. This holistic approach encourages a more comprehensive understanding and creation of fashion-textiles that honours the complexities of human experiences and the world around us. Autonomies allow for a deep delinking from one-world world practices, fostering authentic expressions rooted in decolonial imaginings. Such an approach creates a non-hierarchical reimagining of diverse possibilities emerging from communal and individual experiences contextual to place. Autonomies cultivate a reverence for all beings and matter, acknowledging their sovereignty and interconnectedness without trying to assimilate or control them (Graham, 2014, p. 3. Place plays a pivotal role, recognising that all things exist in connection with specific environments and that all research is contextually located. Place imprints “physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual” significance on our lives and creations through everyday encounters (Styres et al., 2013, p. 37; Johnson, 2010, p. 830. Throughout this research, various locations have become crucial co-creative forces for fashion-textile knowledge-making, with layers of intricate connections developed through relational inquiry and practices. Relationality, at the core of numerous pluriversal realities, echoes the ancestral wisdom of many First and Native cultures who embrace radical interdependence. This ontology emphasises reorienting towards an interconnected worldview, grounding fashion-textile actions and creations in this relational way of being. It posits that the prevailing worldview of separation underlies current sustainability crises in the industry.

The social learning component of this research addressed the sub-question, *What emerges when introducing others to pluriversal ways of enquiring about and doing fashion-textiles?* I conducted four workshops over one year: three in-person sessions and one virtual session. These workshops introduced fashion-textile practitioners, educators, students, and researchers to a series of experiential, embodied, relational, and contemplative material practices. Grounded in a post-qualitative performative research paradigm (Bolt, 2016, p. 130, the workshops fostered an environment of ambiguity, encouraging participants to engage with unfamiliar and divergent concepts and approaches for fashion-textiles and sustainability. This aligns with the understanding that a

pluriverse is as much about the interconnections between diverse worlds as it is about the worlds created themselves. The workshops created fashion-textile community environments that facilitated learning and knowledge sharing.

Although time restrictions limited the depth of exploration, post-workshop analyses validated that pluriversal fashion-textile processes can instigate divergent approaches towards holistic sustainability. The emergent outcomes revealed several energetic forces in the spaces in between, such as the relations occurring between participants, materials, and processes; their intra-actions; and their subsequent reflections. The workshops highlighted the potency of gathering *fashion-textile communities* and nurturing the ability to envision possibilities outside the modern/colonial worldviews through community and various intentional and making practices. The analysis mapped the differences that emerged from relating to sustainable fashion-textiles in transgressive ways, providing valuable insights into the practical applications of pluriversal concepts within fashion-textiles. This workshop component complements the theoretical exploration and practice-led research by offering a holistic approach to understanding and embodying pluriversal fashion-textiles. By demonstrating how these concepts can be practically applied and experienced in communal settings, the research contributes to the broader aim of reimagining fashion-textile practices through a pluriversal lens.

Fashion-textiles are inherently a creative and embodied practice, bringing form to life through, for, and with bodies. As a maker, I deemed it crucial to include a practice-led making component to complement and enrich the theoretical exploration of pluriversal fashion-textiles in practice. This approach allowed me to investigate how pluriversal concepts could manifest tangibly, filtered through my unique creative lens, context, and worldviews explored as part of the theoretical component of this research. Throughout the research, which spanned four years, I conducted various fashion-textile making experiments. These enabled an embodied understanding of complex theoretical concepts to emerge, extending the research beyond the intellectual realm. By attuning to the intricate relationships between my body, materials, processes, concepts, and places, new knowledge for pluriversal fashion-textiles emerged.

My practice-led inquiry evolved, beginning with a series of fashion ritual experiments conducted with and on places, then progressing to intuitive, embroidered cloths, culminating in a final fashion-textile garment piece. This process became a form of worldmaking, intertwining new realms, visions of sustainability, ancestral connections, place narratives,

stories, rituals, experiences, and relationships into the cloth through stitching. Such a practice embodies a timeless quality wherever textiles are created within a community of making and has happened for many generations. Emergence played a pivotal role in this process, as there were no preordained practical outcomes for most of the making journey. This approach emphasised the non-linearity and intuitive nature of the research process, where outcomes and knowledge evolved organically through engagement with the making practice. As Bolt (2016, p. 130) suggests, practice-led research allowed for embodying pluriversal making through diverse and immersive artistic expressions. This making component focused on exploring holistic, autonomous, relational, and place-oriented approaches to fashion-textiles, and how these pluriversal essences can contribute to sustainability. The insights, understandings, and pathways that emerged from this practice-led exploration offer potential avenues for fashion-textile practitioners to engage with pluriversal concepts in their making practices. The final garment—the Earth-cloth jacket, like all artifacts and processes in this research, represents just one contextual manifestation among countless possibilities in a fashion-textile pluriverse and is not an attempt to universalise or encapsulate pluriversality into a single form. In Chapter 4, I unpack this inquiry through making, demonstrating how tacit knowledge can uncover aspects not easily articulated through traditional theoretical methods. As such, it became essential to explore the research through the body and the physical act of creation, contributing to a more holistic understanding of fashion-textiles.

This research illuminates how pluriversal fashion-textile ontologies, practices, and pedagogies can contribute to reimagining the field, decolonising unsustainable paradigms, and seeding radical transformations needed for life-honouring, place-based, interconnected worlds to flourish. The emergent insights offer pathways for fashion-textile designers, researchers, educators, and students to embrace pluriversal approaches, not as prescriptive methods but as invitations for autonomous, intentional, and integrated possibilities to unfold. Central to this exploration is the recognition that multiple co-existing realities, worldviews, and knowledge systems—that is, a pluriverse—necessitate comprehensive, radical, ground-up transformative changes in dominant paradigms, perspectives, and frameworks (Escobar, 2016, p. 29). The project contributes to holistic knowledge generation that is autonomous, place-based, and relational, both in what I have inquired about and how I have conducted the inquiry. Importantly, I do not intend this work as a dogmatic, step-by-step guide, but



as an exploration of options that may inspire, guide, and ignite autonomous, embodied, and heart-centred possibilities. As Fry (2009, p. 11) and St. Pierre (2020, p. 15) emphasise, shifts in materials, processes, and systems are not enough; fashion-textile designers must also be willing to transform their ways of being from the inside out. Ultimately, this research aims to deconstruct Eurocentric ideas of what fashion-textile design and inquiry could be by illuminating diverse onto-epistemologies and practices more congruent with holistic transitions. It celebrates learning other ways to be in the world and how they can co-creatively contribute toward sustainable fashion-textiles.

## **1.2. Problem Scope: Background & Rationale**

We are currently living in a crisis of separation from our interconnected nature with all life on this planet (Eisenstein, 2007; Orr, 2011; Vaughan-Lee, 2013). The global issues we face today—armed conflicts, environmental degradation, mental health issues, biodiversity loss, mass homelessness, domestic violence, exploitative labour practices, waste, and pollution—are not isolated problems but interrelated parts of a connected unsustainability crisis. Many argue that this crisis is rooted in a consciousness of separation that prioritises profits, progress, efficiency, and exponential growth over the well-being of all life on this planet (Bai, 2012; Eisenstein, 2007; St. Pierre, 2020; Merchant, 1989; Orr, 2011; Payne, 2021; Vaughan-Lee, 2013; Wahl, 2020).

The fashion-textile industry's environmental impact is staggering and multifaceted. It produces approximately 8–10% of annual global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and consumes 79 trillion litres of water annually, accounting for 20% of water contamination caused by industrial textiles (Niinimäki et al., 2020, p. 189). This industry generates about 35% of oceanic microplastic pollution and 92 million tonnes of textile waste annually (p. 189). Despite these alarming statistics, the industry continues to grow. Worldwide fibre production has nearly doubled in the last twenty years, reaching 116 million tonnes in 2022, with projections of 147 million tonnes by 2030 (Syrett & Lammas, 2023). Even more concerning are petrochemical-derived fibres, known for their significant environmental impact, which comprise around 60% of overall fibre production and are expected to continue expanding (Textile Exchange, 2020). This global trend is mirrored in the Australian context, where the industry stands out as a leader in raw material consumption. According to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCEW, 2021) each Australian purchases approximately 27 kilograms of new fashion and textiles annually, making

Australians the second-largest clothing consumers worldwide, surpassed only by the United States (Boulton et al., 2022). The reliance on imports is stark: during 2018–2019, 97% of Australia’s clothing requirements came from overseas, with only 3% of retailers providing domestically produced clothing, according to research by the Australian Fashion Council (AFC, 2021).

The human cost of the fashion-textile industry is even more troubling, with approximately 300 million individuals, three quarters of whom are women, engaged in its various stages worldwide (Syrett & Lammas, 2023). This workforce faces severe economic exploitation, with more than half receiving below-minimum wages, typically amounting to only half of a living wage in most producing nations (The Industry We Want, 2023). This exploitation is further compounded by persistent issues of sweatshop labour, slavery, human trafficking, and forced and underage labour in both the Global North and Global South (Mazzarella & Williams, 2022). The United Nations International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2022) estimates that around 27.6 million people are forced into labour at any time. The 2013 Rana Plaza collapse in Dhaka, Bangladesh, starkly highlighted these hazardous working conditions, yet despite increased awareness, industry driven labour standards have failed to significantly improve conditions over the past three decades (Mazzarella & Williams, 2022; Kuruvilla, 2021). In response, countries like Australia have introduced legislation such as the Modern Slavery Act (2018), mandating due diligence in addressing human rights and slavery (Sinclair & Nolan, 2020, p. 164). Despite this, the Act’s effectiveness is questionable, as it lacks consequences for businesses uncovering incidents of modern slavery or penalties for failing to report such occurrences (Goldworthy, 2021). This underscores the deficiency of current initiatives to address labour issues.

The industry’s impact further extends beyond production to disposal. Many items entering the international second-hand market are discarded or incinerated within fragile ecosystems, a phenomenon Ricketts & Skinner (2023) aptly term “waste colonialism.” This is vividly illustrated in the Atacama Desert, Chile, where 56,000 tons of worn-out apparel create hazardous mountains of waste (Sánchez De Jaegher, 2024, p. 67), and in Ghana, where Accra’s coastline is swamped with tangled textiles breeding mosquitoes and impacting marine life and local livelihoods (Ricketts & Skinner, 2023). The adverse effects on society and the environment are unevenly distributed

across the globe, with regions with less economic and political clout—typically distant from Western nations—bearing the brunt of these consequences. This has created a significant divide between those who enjoy the benefits of rapidly changing fashion trends and the communities that suffer severe repercussions of the industry’s model (Fletcher & Maki, 2022, p. 510).

Fashion-textile design education, adopting a European educational model that now extends beyond the West, is primarily aimed at training hyper-individualistic designers that are out of touch with more extensive systemic and paradigmatic sensitivities. As Tony Fry (1999) examines, designers today are conditioned to design in a way that *defutures*, a term he uses to describe the destroying and taking away of futures. Little space is given to questioning these paradigms and exploring other possibilities in modern fashion-textiles education (Busch, 2020).

### **1.2.1. Shortcomings: Current Sustainability Measures Do Not Suffice**

Despite numerous sustainability initiatives and long-standing investments, issues in the fashion-textile industry persist (Sharpe et al., 2022). The Union of Concerned Researchers in Fashion (UCRF, 2019) critiques current responses as “over-simplified, fragmented and obstructed by growth.” Though well-intentioned, many sustainability efforts continue to operate from a reductionist worldview that maintains the inherent logic responsible for fashion’s devastating socio-ecological consequences.

Contemporary understandings of sustainability often remain superficial, grounded in rational, techno-centric, and solution-driven “band-aid fixes” that fail to address root causes (Blühdorn, 2017, p. 45). Fry (2009, p. 26) and others (Law, 2015, p. 3; Payne, 2021) argue that sustainability initiatives over the past few decades have primarily contributed to the persistence of unsustainable practices, as they emerge from the same worldviews that led to the current crisis. This is corroborated by the Global Fashion Agenda report (Lehmann et al., 2019), which noted a 33% decline in positive improvements despite the rise of sustainability practices, while the clothing and footwear industry grew in value by 4–5%.

At the same time, fashion scholars Odabasi, von Busch, Moon,

Sansone, and Rissanen (2023, p. 363) boldly assert that many proposed solutions to the complex challenges within the fashion industry often rely on familiar strategies advocating for minor interventions within the existing system, such as adjustments to material flows, but many of the major issues are fundamentally systemic and paradigmatic (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p. 20). Bai (2001, p. 2) suggests that alienation, rooted in the disconnection from community and self, propels the desire for dominance over others. In this context, the world is reduced to a realm where hyperconsumption and the false notion of continual material accumulation are pursued as avenues to attain happiness (Macy, 1991). According to Fletcher (2014), this excessive consumption is linked to a cycle of self-justification as our society predominantly values things that can be bought and sold. As a result, we seek to fulfill our desires for pleasure, new experiences, status, and identity formation through the purchase of goods, many of which are clothing (Fletcher, 2014). This severing from our relational nature explains the lack of resistance towards increasingly polluting, extractive, and degrading fashion practices in recent decades (Jansen, 2020, p. 826).

Furthermore, many sustainability efforts are human-centric and instead need to account for the vast web of life of which humans are just one part. North American scholars Marchand et al. (2020) contend that Western frameworks of dealing with global issues merely address surface-level symptoms of the problems rather than their underlying root causes. As Bayo Akomolafe (2020) notes, “To reduce today’s urgent events to carbon emissions would be to overlook the conditions that made those emissions possible.” A deeper approach is required. Peruvian decolonial scholar Aníbal Quijano (2000, p. 553) notes that it is impossible to achieve ideological change and social justice from within the epistemology of Western modernism as it is inherently based on an exploitative logic. Similarly, Audre Lorde (1978) famously told us that “the master’s tools will not dismantle the master’s house.” Jain and Akomolafe (2016, p. 117) go on to question whether “the way we respond to the crisis is part of the crisis” itself, arguing that language frameworks advocating for systemic changes often neglect “the erratic, queer, ironical, and entangled nature of the world.” Milgin et al. (2020, p. 2) posit that sustainability challenges are fundamentally crises of relationships, while design studies professor Cameron Tonkinwise (2023, p. 271) notes that recognising a problem is distinct from understanding its underlying causes, which requires sensing into how an issue reached

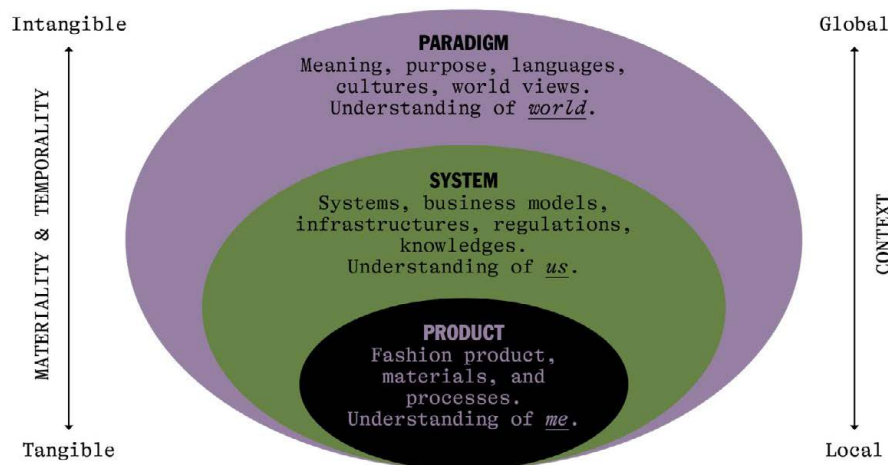
a critical point. Mignolo (2018) asserts that although Western ontologies have contributed some positive ideas toward sustainability, they are still deeply entrenched in what he calls the “colonial matrix of power,” which cannot help but perpetuate unsustainability.

The onto-epistemological root causes of unsustainability are rarely addressed in the broader context, let alone within fashion-textiles and sustainability. This necessitates a shift towards paradigm changes to create lasting transformation. As Thomas Kuhn (1962) suggested, significant progress occurs through revolutionary bursts marked by paradigmatic shifts. Donella Meadows (1999) further emphasised that although paradigms are the most difficult points of intervention in a system, shifting them has the greatest potential for long-term transformative change.

To create meaningful change in fashion-textiles, designers must move beyond addressing solely sustainable production and consumption to confront how extractive and disconnected paradigms perpetuate unsustainable practices (Odabasi et al., 2023, p. 350). This shift requires re-examining knowledge structures and practices through ecological, decolonial, feminist, and relational ontologies (Payne, 2021) while cultivating expansive visions balanced with everyday actions rooted in diverse, holistic knowledge systems. This research contributes to a growing community engaged in radical systemic shifts towards holistic fashion-textiles, building upon *Earth Logic* (Fletcher & Tham, 2019). While alternatives diverging from the prevailing paradigm may initially appear counterintuitive or nonsensical, mainly when originating from domains of nurturance, reverence, and rejuvenation (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p. 12), this study explores worldviews valuable for facilitating paradigmatic transitions, including spiritual, animist, experiential, contemplative, and relational elements. As St. Pierre (2020, p. 20) notes, design often mirrors humanity’s delusions of a “separate self” disconnected from the planet’s vital functioning, and suggests contemplative traditions can awaken individuals to their inherent interconnectedness with all existence. By embracing these alternative perspectives and practices, this research aims to challenge the dominant paradigm in fashion-textiles and contribute to a more holistic, interconnected approach to sustainability for the industry and education.

Multiple academics, industry practitioners, publications, and initiatives are currently addressing issues surrounding fashion-textiles through a more holistic lens. While the work in this space is exciting

and promising, the vast scale of the industry and the slow pace of change indicate that deeper efforts are needed. In Australia, notable contributions come from researchers and practitioners such as Gwilt and Rissanen (2010), who have explored sustainable fashion design strategies, and Hethorn and Ulasewicz (2008), who have examined the social and environmental aspects of sustainable fashion, as well as Payne (2020), who has also made significant contributions to understanding the historical and cultural contexts of sustainable fashion in Australia. Globally, the field has seen influential work from scholars and practitioners like Black (2008, 2012), who has written extensively on eco-fashion and sustainable design practices. Fletcher (2013; 2008) and Fletcher and Grose (2012) have also been instrumental in shaping the discourse around sustainability in fashion, exploring systems thinking and design for sustainability. More recently, Fletcher and Tham (2019, 2023) have proposed the *Earth Logic* framework, offering a radical reimagining of the fashion system, which this research is inspired by. While these efforts represent significant progress, they remain a small fraction of the overall industry. This research aims to build upon and contribute to this growing body of work, guiding toward more comprehensive approaches for sustainability in fashion-textiles.



**Figure 2.** Mathilda Tham's (2020) metadesign model, visualising the three levels of change making.



### **1.2.2. Toward a More Comprehensive Approach to Sustainable Fashion-Textiles**

As discussed above, the prevailing mindset in the contemporary fashion-textile design space is deeply rooted in reductionism, modernity/coloniality, capitalism, separation, and excessive growth; this shapes our thoughts, behaviours, and perspectives on what fashion-textiles are today. To work toward sustainability in fashion-textile systems, embracing transformations that create paradigmatic change is necessary. The worldviews that have shaped modern fashion-textiles as both an industry and an educational model require an upgrade, as they no longer align with the unfolding dynamics of present and future worlds so many want to create. This process necessitates a re-evaluation of current onto-epistemologies, reflecting upon what needs to be brought forth and left behind, as collective and individual action are required in order to move toward an alternative path if so desired. This project posits that it is time to delink, envision, and collaboratively bring into creation more beautiful fashion-textile worlds rooted in relationality, place, autonomy, and wholeness for all beings on this planet.

This thesis proposes a potential pathway toward addressing the multifaceted challenges plaguing the current fashion-textile industry and education, grounded in the concept of the *pluriverse*. As I have come to experience it, a pluriverse embraces diverse perspectives, knowledge systems, and ways of being, enabling multiple fashion-textile worlds, systems, landscapes, and expressions to emerge, manifest, and thrive alongside one another. In exploring the potential of what a pluriverse may bring to the context of fashion-textiles, this research contributes to the growing body of work that seeks to challenge dominant ontologies and propose alternative, holistic approaches toward sustainability. As pluriversality explores diverse narratives and ways of being, it reimagines the entire fashion-textile ecosystem so that something different can emerge. Through embracing a pluriverse, pathways become illuminated toward what philosopher Charles Eisenstein (2013) envisions as “the more beautiful world(s) our hearts know is possible,” allowing diverse, sustainable fashion-textile futures to be envisioned and brought into being. With this framework established, I now delve into the specific research questions and aims that guide this research.

### 1.3. Research Questions & Aims

This study explores how a fashion-textiles pluriverse can manifest through theory, practice, and relational learning settings with others. The research investigates how the notion of a pluriverse and its ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies can support more holistic fashion-textile understandings, embodiments, and transitions for the field. In particular, this work seeks to explain the ontologies to redirect toward pluriversal fashion-textiles and how this manifests through making practices. It examines how this, in turn, affects fashion-textile practitioners, educators, students, and researchers within social learning and sharing contexts. Additionally, the study explores emergent methods for enquiring about, making, and learning fashion-textiles in a pluriversal way and how these can contribute to divergent understandings and practices for fashion-textiles going forward.

The main research question the research is asking is:

*How can a pluriverse manifest through fashion-textiles theory, making practices, and learning-sharing with others?*

Supporting the main question are three sub-questions:

- 1. What unfolds when sharing pluriversal onto-epistemologies and methods with others?*
- 2. What ontological redirection is needed for a pluriverse to emerge in fashion-textiles enquiry, practice, and social learning workshops?*
- 3. What emerges when creating fashion-textiles in pluriversal ways?*

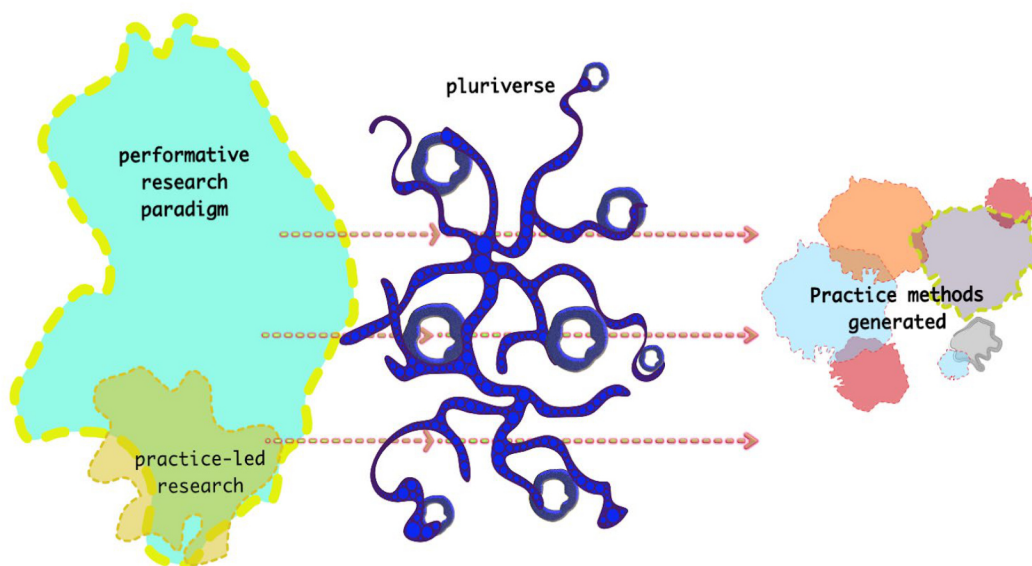
While this research aims to explore the broad concept of pluriversality for a fashion-textiles context, it is essential to note its possible limitations as well as the scope of the research. The study focuses on theoretical exploration and small-scale practical applications rather than large-scale industry implementation. I conducted the research within a specific



context, which may limit its immediate applicability to other contexts, regions, or cultures. The study's timeframe also constrains the long-term observation of the impacts of pluriversal practices. The research primarily engages with a select group of participants, which may not represent the diversity of the fashion-textile industry. And while the study aims to challenge dominant paradigms, it also acknowledges the fact that it is situated within existing academic and industry structures. These limitations provide opportunities for future research that can build upon this work in different contexts and scales.

A further objective of this research is to initiate the process of opening up to and sensing into the various knowledge streams of Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body. This integration is crucial for creating sustainable fashion-textile worlds, shifting away from the modern/colonial, patriarchal, and industrial overemphasis on the mind alone.

#### 1.4. Methodology & Theoretical Approach



**Figure3.** Diagram showing the research methodology, made up of a performative research paradigm that, considered through a pluriversal lens, generates the research outcome on the right-hand side: pluriversal practice methods that were then tested through the research.

This research serves a dual purpose: exploring the manifestations of pluriversal fashion-textiles while developing methodologies for conducting fashion-textile research, practice, and learning through a pluriversal lens. It investigates the “what” of pluriversal fashion-textiles and contributes to the “how” of engaging with fashion-textiles in ways that embrace pluriversal ontologies. The research sits within an overarching performative research paradigm supporting this dual focus. This paradigm, together with the pluriversal themes, which are discussed in more detail below, creates the methodology and methods for this study. A pluriverse and a performative research paradigm align with a rhizomatic approach to knowledge creation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980). The approach is grounded in values of relationality, non-hierarchies, diversity, non-linearity, multifacetedness, and regenerative conceptualisations, which point toward alternative knowledge structures. Such an approach challenges traditional, linear modes of inquiry and embraces a more holistic, interconnected understanding of fashion-textiles and sustainability.

A performative research paradigm sits outside of dominant ways of doing quantitative and qualitative research as it offers a distinctive approach specifically for creative research (Boyd & Barry, 2024, p. 2). Creative industries researcher and educator Brad Haseman (2006, pp. 98–106) proposed a manifesto for a shift away from qualitative to post-qualitative research, what he named a performative paradigm in order to challenge and reframe traditional approaches toward research and knowledge generation, better suited for the complexities of contemporary artistic and creative enquiries. Arts theorist Barbara Bolt (2016, p. 132) shares that a performative research paradigm provides “a radical new vision and a way of distinguishing its research from dominant knowledge models.” Within this framework, researchers understand creative research through the performative forces it elicits and their ability to create effects beyond what is physically tangible (Bolt, 2008, p. 10).

It is crucial to differentiate between a performative research paradigm and performance art. Butler’s (2011) work on performativity highlights this distinction: while performance art assumes a pre-existing subject, performativity focuses on how repetitive acts construct the subject and result in realities. This paradigm shifts the research focus from *defining* something to examining its *effects* on the world (Østern et al., 2021, p. 6), aligning with this research’s goal of reconfiguring what fashion-textiles can be.

I chose a performative research paradigm because it emphasises the

ontological, iterative, relational, enacted, experiential, and emergent aspects within doing artistic research (Østern et al., 2023, p. 272), all of which emerge in pluriversal ontologies. In this context, a performative research paradigm informs how the theory, making practice, and workshops were conducted and analysed. Performative research is also grounded in practice-led research, which emphasises process (Haseman, 2006, p. 103) and has been a significant component of this methodology since the beginning of this project. There are multiple definitions and tensions in what practice research entails. In the context of this project, practice-led research refers to research that generates new knowledge through creative pursuits. Therefore, it is process-driven, whilst practice-based research relies on its outputs as its main contribution to knowledge (Candy, 2006, p. 1).

This research began with curiosity about what pluriversal fashion-textiles could be within my context, and the research developed over time through experiential, embodied, contemplative, place-based, and material enquiries. Being process-driven allowed me to let go of outcomes and instead focus on the research engagements and unfoldings within each present moment. This way of working with creative research required a delinking from how I had been traditionally trained in fashion-textiles, which usually emphasises finished outputs and aesthetics from the beginning of creative processes. I pursue a decolonial agenda in conducting fashion-textile research, decentring and challenging the dominance of traditional Western research methodologies and have taken myself through this delinking process and all research components, as highlighted in the writing and reflections.

Drawing from Escobar's *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds* (2018), this research embraces five critical aspects of pluriverses—ontology, relationality, situatedness, enaction, and emergence—which closely align with the core values of a performative research paradigm. Importantly, this study does not merely investigate these pluriversal concepts but actively embodies them within its methodological structure and research components. This dual approach of exploring and embodying pluriversality has influenced the overarching methodological framework, the methods employed, and the findings, which are detailed below.

### *Ontology*

In contrast with current approaches that emphasise universal modes of existence, pluriversal ways of being in the world require a redirective

agenda. This shift requires us to fundamentally change our ontology—transforming how we perceive what is real and what we value in the world. It challenges us to reconsider our basic assumptions about existence and reality, opening up possibilities for multiple ways of being and knowing in the world.

Bolt (2016, p. 140) tells us that “performativity is not first and foremost about meaning. It is about force and effect.” Researchers using a performative research paradigm focus on more than just defining or describing these forces. Instead, it emphasises what these forces do in the world, which catalyses effects in the world (p. 137). Art theorist Dorothea von Hantelmann (2014) argues that all art produces realities and, as such, is “ontologically performative” (Bolt, 2016, p. 130). Accordingly, the theoretical component of this research predominantly emphasises the unsustainable practices and paradigms that modern fashion-textiles emerge from and which this research aims to decentre. Therefore, making enquiries and conducting social learning workshops point to the divergent pluriversal values the project seeks to redirect toward.

The social learning-sharing workshops aim to explore what emerges when introducing others to divergent and transgressive methods toward pluriversality for fashion-textiles. The workshops were performances that produced forces between participants, methods, materials, tools, and places, some of which were tangible and many beyond translation. What emerged were multiple relations and forces that contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of pluriversality, mapped through their differences within the data analysis. The making practice involved embroidering cloths for over two years through repetitive stitching. Through a practice-led approach, I focused on more than just what the physical objects produced, though these objects were valid and generated interesting and dynamic outcomes. Throughout the years of making, the focus predominantly lay on what it was that these acts of stitching and communing with threads, materials, and tools allowed me to sense.

This research adopted an approach that prioritises processes and emergence toward fashion-textile knowledge creation, a contrast to my traditional fashion-textile training that had emphasised outcomes and aesthetics. This shift allowed for a dynamic interplay with the core research ontologies: wholeness, autonomies, place, and relationality. As Østern et al. (2023, p. 277) observe, this process facilitates a transformation from a static state of being to a fluid state of becoming. These concepts not only form the research subject but also guide its

priorities regarding its research impact as they embody the pluriversal principles they seek to explore. Samira Jamouchi's (2023) doctoral research on wool felting deserves mention here as it parallels this study's approach. Her work explores felting as a dynamic and relational process, emphasising the collaborative interplay between artists, materials, and tools rather than focusing solely on finished outcomes (p. 87). Through triangulating practice and theory alongside philosophy, Jamouchi's research generates new knowledge that contributes to a deeper understanding of artistic processes, aligning with this study's performative paradigm and pluriversal methodologies.

### *Relationality*

As highlighted above, performative research generates knowledge through the ongoing process of relating to the world rather than observing it (Østern et al., 2021, p. 7). As a result, a significant component of this methodological framework is a relational approach to research that further aligns with its overall pluriversal agenda.

Barad's (2007, p. 235) thoughts on performativity are helpful here as she centres the concept of *intra-action*, how entities come into existence through their entanglements. Such an approach highlights the relational premise of the research as what was investigated were the manifestations that unfold between relations when doing theoretical, practical, and social research that explores how a pluriverse may emerge for fashion-textiles.

I came into a relational, reverential, reciprocal exchange with each research component—theory, workshops and making practices—which required learning to listen, co-create, let go of control, surrender to emergence, and more. My approach has been inspired by scholars and makers who engage with research through situated, reverent, and embodied ways of co-creating knowledge. These methods transgress traditional Western research paradigms that overvalue rational, empirical, and linear ways of thinking. Important to note is that First Nations scholars and practitioners have well-established traditions of alternative holistic approaches to doing research, which diverge from conventional academic methodologies. Lauren Tynan (2020, p. 163), a Trawlulwuy woman, initially inspired my enquiry into relational research dynamics by viewing her doctoral thesis as a living entity, referring to it as *kin* and *sis*. Tynan emphasises that a research framework based on ethics, care, and reciprocity necessitates a relational approach that acknowledges the vital contributions of more-than-human entities in Western academic knowledge production (p. 168).

Further guidance came from Shawn Wilson's 2008 book *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, which integrates First Nations relational worldviews into academic research. Wilson, from the Opaskwayak Cree in northern Manitoba, poignantly states, "I think that the thing I most want you to remember is that research is a ceremony. And so is life. Everything that we do shares in the ongoing creation of our universe" (Wilson, 2008, p. 138). Infusing sacredness, responsibility, care, intentionality, and interconnectedness into research from a relational standpoint offers an alternative to conventional research methodologies.

A relational research approach notably centres more-than-human relations, which significantly informs this study's methodology. Each research component formed relations with ideas, materials, processes, tools, places, humans, atmospheres, histories, elementals, plants, microbes, fungi, ancestors, objects, and more, contributing to the study in diverse ways. Relationality and animism are foundational concepts for pluriversality. As such, social aspects, materiality, and discursivity are interwoven and mutually influence one another in an ongoing performance through research and data (Østern et al., 2023, p. 273). Given that a pluriverse is inherently relational and grounded in the communal (Escobar, 2018a; 2020b), I considered exploring how others engage with pluriversal methods vital. Consequently, I conducted four workshops in the second stage of research, creating social learning-sharing environments where fashion communities formed among participants. These workshops generated performative forces from participant interactions, methods, spaces, materials, and more. Outcomes from the workshops highlight the importance of collective engagement in exploring and embodying pluriversal concepts through the dynamic and interconnected nature of knowledge creation grounded within a pluriversal and performative research framework.

### *Situatedness*

A pluriverse is inherently contextual, situated, and place-oriented, recognising that all aspects of existence emerge within specific places, landscapes, and environments. In this research, place and context are significant co-creative forces in generating fashion-textile knowledge. Throughout the theoretical exploration, making practices, and workshops, the unique characteristics of each location have been integral in shaping the knowledge produced, reflecting the pluriversal understanding that our creation and understanding of fashion-textiles are deeply rooted in their



specific environments

Tuck and McKenzie (2015) emphasise that place is not a coincidental element in research but a dynamic and constantly evolving factor, mirroring the nature of a pluriverse. Johnson and Larsen (2017) further this concept, describing place as the bedrock for research, the foundational point where all relationships and human and non-human communities intersect through communal landscapes. A performative paradigm complements this place-based approach by challenging traditional Western research conventions that strive for a singular “truth” (Østern et al., 2023, p. 285). Instead, performative research maintains its credibility and reliability precisely because it embraces rather than reduces complexities and multiplicities (Østern et al., 2023, p. 285). Such an orientation aligns closely with a pluriverse and is crucial for understanding and interpreting the research. By acknowledging the dynamic interplay between place, performativity, and pluriversality, this research offers a more nuanced and contextual exploration of fashion-textile knowledge creation.

This research employed a situated methodology, grounding itself in place and context throughout each component. Fashion knowledge across theory, making, and learning environments was created with place positioned as an active collaborator, with documentation, methods, and analysis being based on the relations that unfolded within each specific context and place. Place-based methods were engaged with by participants in the workshops, with the unique characteristics of each context being recognised. The situated understandings were used to map the resultant data. For the making practice, each context directly informed the work as I physically created upon and with varied places and environments. This has resulted in a connection to embodied knowledges that emerge from intentional making and being with places, bringing to light the multifaceted and situated nature of knowledge creation.

Similarly, Emma Lynas’s (2019) doctoral research responds to the material and embodied qualities of place. She examines how conventional design approaches often contribute to textile waste by disregarding the many relations within local contexts (p. 5). Through “textile intelligence,” Lynas introduces practice-led projects that embrace considered design philosophies, emphasising the interconnectedness of people, materials, and places within an Australian context (p. 5).

### *Enaction*

In this context, the term *enactive* indicates that performative projects are inherently experiential, dynamic, embodied, physical, exploratory, and come to life through actions (Murphy, 2023, p. 636). Inspired by Escobar (2018a), I centered other forms of knowledge-making that move beyond what Barad (2003, p. 802) calls "intellectual patterns" that overvalue language, exploring different modes of representation in shaping ontological perspectives. A pluriverse aims to revalue the worldviews that have been othered and erased through modernity/coloniality, including enactive knowledges.

Previous researchers have exemplified this approach. For instance, Emma Shercliff's (2014, pp. 3–4) practice-led research exemplifies integrating embodied knowledge in methodology, blending autoethnographic and ethnographic approaches to explore hand stitching in individual and group settings. Her research reveals the intricate interconnections present between physical engagement and knowledge formation through the social activity of crafting textiles (p. 5). Diverse enacted knowledges further support the research methodology, including the spiritual, emotional, cognitive, and corporeal dimensions of creative research for fashion-textiles. Such an examination highlights the theory centered on *wholeness* (Section 2.3), integrating spirituality, heart, mind, and body as foundational pluriversal ontologies for fashion-textiles. Additionally, this guides the research methodology, as each of the three research components creates new knowledge from all four strands (spirit + heart + mind + body). This is compatible with a performative research paradigm that encourages experimental new modalities and embodied practices to capture some of the complexity, diversity, and aliveness of creative research experiences (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2018). Performative research produces fluid, experiential knowledge that is frequently felt or sensed rather than explicitly understood (Boyd & Barry, 2024, p. 1).

Julia Valle-Noronha's research (2019, p. 17) similarly demonstrates this approach, employing practice-led methods to expand fashion beyond conventional paradigms. Through her "wardrobe interventions," Valle-Noronha explores material engagements that shift focus from aesthetics to the experiential aspects of clothing. Similarly, my work extends beyond the act of wearing to fundamentally redirect the ontological foundations of fashion-textile practice and enquiry, which opens up pluriversal possibilities within the field.



As Groth et al. (2015, p. 58) posit, practice-led research emphasises the experiential tacit knowledge embodied by the practitioner through making. This research emerged from a combination of intuitive insights, unplanned occurrences, and dynamic external factors through a cyclical process of creation and repetition (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 382) across writing, making, and workshops. The making practice, requiring deep states of presence with tools, materials, and processes, yielded insights surrounding ancestry, ancient sacred textile practices, healing, and connection to place. Although I produced physical works, many insights eluded articulation or representation, with the practical outcomes translating only a tiny portion of what remained ineffable and enacted (Bolt, 2008, p. 10). Although the project culminated in a final creative output—a unified, modular Earth-cloth garment—its primary focus was on process and experimentation. This practical outcome does not encapsulate the entirety of my research findings (Boyd & Barry, 2024, p. 2) as its impact extends further to the conceptual, embodied, and experiential domains of this work (Bolt, 2008, p. 10). The aim was never to create a universal representation of pluriversality, but to explore how pluriversal concepts might manifest through my specific context and making practices. As Bolt (2016, p. 130) highlights, a performative approach to creative research can catalyse shifts in cognitive, discursive, and behavioural dimensions, flowing through the shared sensory experiences of individuals and communities involved. The workshops additionally employed contemplative, reflexive, experiential, and embodied methods. These factors created environments that embraced ambiguity rather than presenting prescriptive trajectories or solutions toward sustainability, as participants engaged with diverse epistemologies, incorporating spiritual, heart-based, intellectual, and bodily ways of knowing.

### *Emergence*

This research is grounded in a pluriverse, which is situated, relational, and in a continual state of unfolding and emergence with life (Escobar, 2018a). Drawing from Margaret Somerville's (2007) methodology of postmodern emergence, this study emphasises the irrational, chaotic, and evolving nature of the self, always becoming alongside the research process. As Bolt (2016) argues, a performative paradigm aims to identify and chart the disruptions and dynamics generated by artistic research rather than establish direct correlations. This openness to in-between spaces allowed for sensing research relations on a subtle level, emerging through the reciprocal relationship between crafting textiles, engaging with literature, facilitating workshops, and the interplay between

meaning-making, practical action, and analysis (Somerville, 2007). Aligning with several practice-led inquiries (Mäkelä, 2006; Nimkulrat, 2009), I commenced this research within the pluriversal theoretical field without preconceived ideas about potential outcomes. Thrift (2008, p. 18) suggests that active listening to what emerges is imperative for the researcher. According to Haseman (2006), researchers in this paradigm construct experimental starting points, throwing themselves in to see what emerges. This approach has allowed all components of this research to evolve organically over time, particularly the practice, defying any predetermined ideas or hypotheses.

Additionally, the research questions evolved as the creative process progressed in direct engagement with ideas, materials, processes, and places (Boyd & Barry, 2024). Even though the workshops were pre-planned, they aimed to explore what wanted to emerge within each unique context. I also draw on Donald Schön's (1983) reflective practice and have documented emergent, open-ended, and complex questions that arose during the research process throughout this thesis.

This methodology further aligns with Gaugele and Titton's (2022, pp. 2–3) articulation of “critical fashion research practice,” which seeks to deepen and broaden fashion knowledges through integrating diverse epistemologies. Accordingly, my research also aims to contribute to ongoing efforts to redirect, decolonise, and reimagine fashion-textile studies, advancing work by scholars including Fletcher and Tham (2019), Rissanen (2017a), Niessen (2020), von Busch (2018), Payne (2021), Jansen (2020), and others.

### **1.5. Methods**

I have utilised and experimented with various research methods in alignment with the multidimensional nature of pluriversality and performative research. Each research component—theoretical, practical, and social learning—employed diverse methods to investigate how a pluriverse may manifest through these ways of acquiring fashion-textile knowledge. These methods formed the basis for conducting the research. Additionally, a distinct set of methods has emerged as part of the research outcome, providing practices for practitioners, researchers, and educators to create and inquire about fashion-textiles through pluriversal approaches. I define these methods in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

The methods evolved organically throughout the research. Initially focused on exploring a pluriverse through theory and making, I experimented with various methods while embodying literature through practice. In the second stage, recognising that pluriversality is inherently relational, I expanded to include others in the research. This triangulation allowed me to move between these three spaces—sometimes focusing on one component, sometimes working across multiple areas simultaneously—following the natural rhythm of the research process.

The theoretical component employed reading, writing, contemplating, reflecting, and sketching mind maps. The practical component unfolded in three stages: initial design experiments, hand and digitally-drawn embroidered cloths, and seven colored embroidered cloths culminating in a multifunctional unisex leather jacket that folds into an Earth-cloth. This making utilised methods including stitching, weaving, sketching, sewing, pattern-cutting, digital drawing, photographing, and filming, supported by walking, listening, meditating, visualising, and reflecting. Social learning emerged through workshops supported by pre-and post-workshop interviews and questionnaires. Workshop methods included meditation, contemplation, visualisation, stitching, connecting, sharing, listening, and walking. Data collection encompassed film recordings, photographs, questionnaires, and interviews, which I analysed through a diffractive reading of the emergent information. Figure 4 details the making activities and workshop activities that happened in each of the stages.

RESEARCH STAGE	THEORY	PRACTICE	WORKSHOPS
1	Reading, writing, contemplating, reflecting, and sketching mind maps.	Stitching, weaving, sitting in place, observing, sketching, contemplating, walking, meditating, listening, filming, photographing, visualising.	
2	Reading, writing, contemplating, reflecting, and sketching mind maps.	Stitching, weaving, sitting in place, observing, sketching, contemplating, walking, digitally drawing, printing, meditating, listening, filming, photographing, visualising.	Workshop methods: Connecting to place and each other, meditating, listening to materials, relationality exercise, letting go exercise, visualising ideal fashion futures, making.  Post-workshop methods: Interviewing, listening, analysing the data.
3	Reading, writing, contemplating, reflecting, editing, synthesising.	Stitching, sitting in place, observing, drawing, contemplating, walking, digitally drawing, printing, meditating, connecting, cutting, patternmaking, sewing, filming, photographing.	Workshop methods: Connecting to place and each other, meditating, listening to materials, relationality exercise, letting go exercise, visualising ideal fashion futures, making.  Post-workshop methods: Interviewing, listening, analysing the data.

**Figure 4.** This table details the individual making activities and participatory activities that occurred in each of the stages.

In conclusion, Chapter 1 outlines the pressing need for transformative change in fashion-textiles, highlighting how current industry practices contribute to widespread environmental degradation, human exploitation, and profound disconnection from natural systems. This chapter establishes the rationale for moving beyond symptomatic approaches to sustainability toward addressing the ontological roots of unsustainability in fashion-textiles. By articulating the research questions, aims, and methodological framework, I create a foundation for exploring how a pluriverse manifests through fashion-textiles theory, making practices, and learning-sharing with others. The performative research paradigm I adopt in this study, characterised by ontological redirection, relationality, situatedness, enactiveness, and emergence, provides a structure for investigating pluriversal approaches. Building on this foundation, Chapter 2 presents the theoretical underpinnings that ground this exploration of pluriversal fashion-textiles. The chapter unfolds in six interconnected sections, beginning with an examination of the need for ontological redirection in fashion-textiles, followed by a comprehensive exploration of the concept of a pluriverse. I then unpack the four key ontological foundations—Wholeness, Autonomies, Place, and Relationality—in detail, revealing how these foundational concepts can redirect fashion-textile practices away from unsustainable paradigms toward more holistic approaches. This contextual groundwork serves a dual purpose: it critically questions ontologies that no longer serve sustainable fashion-textiles while simultaneously illuminating alternative pathways that nurture diverse possibilities. The theoretical foundation established in Chapter 2 supports the subsequent exploration of how these concepts materialise through social learning environments (Chapter 3) and through practice (Chapter 4), ultimately contributing to our understanding of how a pluriverse transforms fashion-textile theory, practice, and education.

## Chapter 2. Contextual Groundings



**Figure 5.** Visualisation map of all of the contextual grounding ontologies, themes and key authors.

In order to explore the primary research aim of how a pluriverse can manifest through fashion-textiles, a comprehensive contextual review has been undertaken as a way to situate this research within the larger scope of a pluriverse, as well as to hone into the pluriversal themes that are helpful to bring into a fashion-textiles context, of which little research has been undertaken to date. This chapter provides a thorough contextual review to situate this study within current pluriversal literature, its correlating themes and key scholars. The theoretical exploration surrounding pluriversality began with reading Escobar's (2018a) *Design's for the Pluriverse* and shortly after participating in Cameron Tonkinwise's UTS postgraduate seminar (2021), which unpacked the book and its prevailing themes in depth. This is reinforced through *Earth Logic* (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, pp. 53–56), the underlying sustainability framework that this research sprouted from, which highlights the importance of plurality toward creating “new centres for fashion” for

creating holistic knowledge and practices.

This contextual review is broken into six linear sections, allowing easier readability and comprehension of critical themes. Despite this linearity and separation of concepts, I point toward their intrinsic interconnectedness and how they interweave and support one another throughout as much as possible. Section 2.1, “Ontological Redirection,” builds upon the preliminary background into the necessity toward paradigmatic shifts for fashion-textiles. To do this, I argue for the need for an ontological redirection. *Ontology* refers to the nature of being and the understanding of being or existence in the world (Willis, 2006, p. 70), whilst the adjective *ontological* deals with the depth of the problem. This philosophical field also interrogates the very nature of existence in the world, as well as the meanings and values that are ascribed to it. *Redirective* draws from Tony Fry’s (2007) work in calling for designers to redirect world destructive practices toward more sustainable ones that tackle problems at the deeper ontological level of designing (Willis, 2006, p. 83). Combined, *ontological redirection* in the context of this research questions the modern world’s nature of being, its associated ontologies and the impact these have had on modern ways of being and doing fashion-textiles.

As discussed in the introduction’s background review, this research posits that most efforts toward sustainable fashion-textiles attempt to create change at the product-material or systems level, whilst a more comprehensive approach is needed that deals with the ontological roots of fashion’s unsustainability. The issues the fashion-textile industry faces are ontological and, as influenced by Escobar (2020b; 2018a), require a more comprehensive approach to dealing with transformations. Designers create worlds through their designing, and as such, designing from an ontological approach, otherwise known as ontological design (unpacked further in Subsection 2.1.7), can result in redirective practices that not only acknowledge contemporary unsustainability but further work toward other possibilities (Fry, 2007). This section highlights in detail the ontologies that fashion-textiles redirect away from, creating space for the pluriversal ontologies to redirect toward.

Recognising the importance and imperativeness of an ontological redirection for fashion-textiles, the next section introduces the reader to a comprehensive overview of the notion of a pluriverse through critical themes and scholars contributing to this emergent field. I then zoom in



into the context of fashion-textiles, how sustainability transformations may benefit from a pluriversal option, and the current research and practices already active in the space. A pluriverse, “a world of many worlds” (Escobar, 2018a), is the predominant ontological redirection that this research advocates, as it is rooted in many ways of being in a world that is more compatible with sustainability transitions. Notably, a pluriverse decentres modern/colonial ways of being that dictate universalisms so that multiple cosmologies, beliefs, and practices grounded in context can unfold and exist, all valid and igniting divergent holistic possibilities toward something otherwise. Pluriversality is a multifaceted approach that emphasises multiple grounding ontologies as highlighted by pluriversal scholars (Escobar, 2018a; de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018; Hutchings, 2019, p. 117). Guided by these, this research has chosen to focus on the four prevailing ontologies of Wholeness, Autonomies, Place and Relationality, which I deem vital toward creating a fashion-textile pluriverse, discussed in the following sections.

Each section thoroughly explores the prevailing pluriversal ontologies, critical scholars, current practices, their relation to fashion-textiles, and how they can guide toward more holistic ways of enquiring about and making garments and materials. What these ontologies aim to do in this research is to reveal how fashion-textiles done ontologically differently through these diverse modes of existence, can situate one within the world differently. This can lead to different worldviews, behaviours, thoughts, and actions when creating and enquiring about fashion-textiles, which is needed to break out of contemporary material practices that are inherently unsustainable. The contextual review concludes with a summary and discussion of the key ideas introduced. This is segmented through a glossary that outlines the main concepts that arose in the contextual review and that are needed to understand the theory, followed by a glossary of the key anchoring pluriversal concepts that emerged as a result of undertaking the theoretical research.

This structure thoroughly explores how fashion-textiles, approached through diverse modes of existence, can lead to different worldviews, behaviours, and actions necessary for breaking out of unsustainable contemporary practices. As Barrett (2007, p. 1) argues, practice-led creative research revitalises the connection between conceptual frameworks and practical applications. This contextual review highlights the fields interconnections with other disciplines and

demonstrates how these relations impact, support, and negotiate with one another.

The review concludes with a summary of key ideas, including a glossary of central concepts and anchoring pluriversal concepts that emerged from the theoretical research. Ultimately, this review serves two aims: to transgress ontologies that no longer serve fashion-textiles towards sustainability and to identify ontologies needed to nourish different possibilities. This creates the conditions for divergent and transformative options, which are explored in creative practices and workshops discussed later in Chapters 3 and 4.

## 2.1. Ontological Redirection

The concept of a pluriverse challenges the dominant universalising ontology that is prevalent in the Western world. Unlike this one-world worldview, a pluriverse acknowledges and embraces the existence of multiple, coexisting ontologies. In the context of this research, *worldview* refers to a distinct way of perceiving, interpreting, and orienting oneself towards reality, which shapes how one interacts with the world and fashion-textiles, without necessarily altering the fundamental nature of what is being perceived. *Ontology*, which concerns the nature of reality, examines how our understanding of reality shapes approaches to sustainability and design in fashion-textiles. These challenging dominant Western views separate humans from the rest of existence. For a living system to be *ontological* rather than just a worldview means experiencing its livingness relationally rather than merely interpreting what is experienced as if it were living. This seeks to loosen the constraints of a single, all-encompassing perspective and instead opens up possibilities for diverse ways of understanding and interacting with the world.

This project applies the concept of a pluriverse to the realm of fashion-textiles. By redirecting ontologies within this field toward pluriversal values, as will be discussed throughout this contextual review, the aim is to expand the possibilities for how fashion-textiles are enquired about and created beyond the confines of the dominant paradigm. This redirection brings forward possibilities for more diverse, holistic, and sustainable approaches for fashion-textiles that align with *Earth Logic* (Fletcher & Tham, 2019). The central focus of this research is exploring



a pluriverse and its implications and manifestations through fashion-textiles. In the following sections of this section and throughout the study, I delve deeper into how this ontological redirection can transform fashion-textile understandings and practices.

Before delving into these alternative value systems, it is crucial to understand what this research aims to redirect away from and why. As introduced earlier, the prevailing global challenges of our time stem from a crisis in consciousness rooted in a mechanistic worldview (Capra & Luisi, 2014; Merchant, 1989). This worldview overemphasises the value in profits, efficiency, excessive growth, speed, linearity, rationality, and empiricism whilst devaluing elements that do not fit into this framework. This can be equated to what some name a crisis in meaning or a crisis in ontologies (Bai, 2001, p. 2; Orr, 1992). This crisis profoundly influences how we perceive and interact with the world around us, with one another, and ourselves, and in a more focused context, how we approach, design, think about and create fashion-textiles.

This section lays the groundwork for the critical investigation and needs for alternative pluriversal ontologies that offer more holistic pathways for fashion-textiles. These alternatives are explored in detail in Sections 2.2–2.6. To begin, I unpack the predominant ontological states in which much of the modern world operates, including their brief histories and the ways of being, assumptions, as well as beliefs that stem from these and continue to permeate today. These root ontologies of unsustainability are what this project suggests is diverged away from toward a pluriverse.

Recognising these prevailing paradigms that modern Western fashion-textiles are rooted in enables an ontological design approach toward redirection. Identifying and understanding these dominant paradigms highlights the need for and potential for alternative, pluriversal approaches to fashion-textile design and enquiry. I bring to light some of the values this project invites redirection toward, establishing the foundation for the subsequent work and informing the exploration of what I propose to redirect toward: a pluriverse.

### **2.1.1. Modernity/Coloniality**

To understand the ontological foundations of unsustainability and identify the paradigms from which it is needed to redirect away, I begin this section by unpacking the intertwining concepts of modernity and

coloniality. These concepts are deeply interconnected, shaping our world and fashion-textiles. Recognising their interdependence, I use the term *modernity/coloniality*, following the practice of other decolonial scholars (Escobar, 2007, pp. 179–205; Maldonado-Torres, 2017, pp. 547–554; Mignolo, 2008, pp. 12–52, 2007, pp. 449–514; Vázquez, 2009, pp. 109–115).

Decolonial scholar Rolando Vázquez (2018, p. 185) traces the roots of modernity to the invasion of the Americas in 1492, marking the beginning of Europe's colonial enterprise and its domination over other continents (Jansen, 2020, p. 820). Both coloniality and modernity share a fundamental flaw: they fail to recognise the full humanity of others (Jansen, 2020, p. 821). Coloniality is characterised by exploitation, extermination, enslavement, extraction, and dispossession, whilst modernity operates through devaluation, denial, and erasure (Vázquez, 2018, p. 186). As Vázquez points out, progress and civilisation are inextricably linked with stories of enslavement, plantations, and extraction (p. 188). Argentine philosopher Walter Mignolo (2011a) argues that the colonial matrix has been instrumental in the success of modernity, establishing and promoting Eurocentric ways of existence under the guise of universality. Mignolo, along with Tlostanova (2009, p. 11), further unpacks modernity as a constructed narrative serving the imperial objectives of Western powers, tracing its origins to the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, Greece and Rome (Mignolo, 2011b, p. 273). Despite the gradual emergence of autonomous nations from former colonies, Mignolo (2011a) emphasises their continued subordination. This relational dynamic was established during the colonial period, which underscores the need to critically examine modern/colonial paradigms and how fashion-textiles and sustainability are approached.

Modernity/coloniality subtly creates and assigns identities, systematically eliminating, devaluing, and rejecting specific individuals, thought patterns, lifestyles, and behaviours within the global context (Mignolo, 2011a, p. 11). This imperial agenda extends to those who attempt to deviate from these established identifications, perpetuating a cycle of dominance and marginalisation (p. 11). In the realm of fashion-textiles, many examples illustrate this dynamic. M. Angela Jansen (2020, p. 821), an independent fashion anthropologist, observes that Western fashion aligns perspectives with those who define it, reinforcing its perceived superiority within the global fashion landscape and othering all that do not fit into its Eurocentric worldviews.

The enlightenment's emphasis on speed, change, and progress led to a definition of fashion as that which is current. At the same time, non-Western dress became associated with the past, as colonised countries were viewed as static and backward (Niessen, 2003, p. 244). This perspective was exemplified by German sociologist and philosopher Georg Simmel (1858–1918), who defined fashion as a symbol of European supremacy, contrasting it with other types of clothing that did not conform to European styles (Niessen, 2020, p. 862). Whilst Simmel's construction of fashion through the lens of modernity/coloniality othered all that did not fit this mould, relegating it to categories such as tribal dress, traditional, ethnic, or world dress (Jansen, 2020, p. 824). Consequently, fashion became an exclusively Western concept based on modern/colonial power dynamics (Niessen, 2003, p. 244). This perspective has local impacts explored by First Nations Kokatha and Wirangu woman Treena Clark (2024, p. 6), as she notes that when British colonisers arrived in Australia, they labelled Indigenous people's dress as insufficient, primitive, and static. This universal notion of what constitutes fashion is grounded in Western dualistic ideals that continue to influence modern industry dynamics and fashion education in higher institutions today (Niessen, 2020, p. 862).

Racism, a further modern/colonial categorisation, emerged during the sixteenth century as part of Western identity construction (Mignolo, 2011b, p. 275). Its onto-epistemological purpose was to establish a hierarchy of knowledge systems, where only Greek, Latin, English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian were deemed superior. At the same time, all other languages were classified as inferior (p. 277). These systematic classifications served to uphold the dominant position of European institutions, individuals, and modes of thought during the renaissance and enlightenment eras, a dominance that continues to persist even today (p. 274). Languages perceived as unsuitable for "logical discussions" were marginalised, devalued, and branded as inferior by those in positions of power (p. 274). Mignolo terms this classification system *sociogenesis*, a concept that suggests that racial categorisation based on skin colour is beyond an individual's control and offers no room for reconsideration, alternative perspectives, or resistance beyond the assigned label (p. 277). Sociogenesis thus reinforces the rigid, hierarchical structure of modern/colonial thought, leaving little space for challenging or reimagining these deeply ingrained categorisations.

Modernity/coloniality is further linked to the historical lineage of environmental degradation, genocidal acts, and extensive exploitation (Vázquez, 2017, p. 79). This influence extends beyond physical land acquisition to procuring “subjectivity, knowledge, bodies, gender, sexuality, cultural practices, and spirituality” (Mareis & Paim, 2021, p. 12). In contexts marked by unequal power dynamics, First Nations communities were forced to detach from their intrinsic connection to the world and compelled to conform to the Eurocentric, patriarchal division that segregates humans from non-humans (Kothari et al., 2019). Cuauhtemoc Mexica (2015, p. 22) delineates distinct foundational structures of coloniality, which include the classification of Indigenous and mixed bodies according to racial criteria, the restructuring of environments to fulfil the aims of the privileged class, the authorisation of establishments to support the privileged class, and the purposeful devaluing and erasure of Indigenous and holistic knowledge systems. Often used to justify actions toward subaltern groups, the concept of salvation serves as another fundamental pillar of modernity/coloniality. Mexica (2015, p. 23) argues that this salvatory notion initially stemmed from religious conversion, particularly to Christianity, which imposed Eurocentric norms onto other cultures. In contemporary contexts, this manifests through the promotion of hyper-efficiency, relentless development, and excessive growth, often at the expense of ethics and values. This salvatory approach extends to modern humanitarian and sustainability efforts disguised through aid, development, and climate initiatives, particularly in the Global South. These endeavours, often led by Western institutions, perpetuate unequal power dynamics between so-called developed and developing nations. Historically, the notion of development concealed that developing countries could not achieve modernisation under imperial conditions (Mignolo, 2011b, p. 274). The concept of development is a Western construct that reinforces modern/colonial values (p. 276).

The influence of modernity/coloniality on fashion-textiles extends beyond physical garments, shaping our senses, perceptions, and aesthetic values (Mignolo & Vázquez, 2013, p. 4). In contemporary fashion, global trends and influencer culture dictate what to wear and how to be in the world, creating a dichotomy between those who conform to mainstream visual representations and those who do not. The latter group often faces othering, labelled as uncool, old-fashioned, ethnic or traditional (Jansen, 2020, p. 824). This dynamic reflects the

broader, profound, and destructive ontological impact of modernity/coloniality, which extends beyond the explicit genocidal consequences of colonialism (Hutchings, 2019, p. 117). These modern/colonial politics are inseparably linked to certain ontological presuppositions that persist if left unchallenged, despite not being universally valid but specific to particular regions (Mignolo, 2011, p. 279). To counter this, Mignolo and Vázquez (2013, p. 5) propose *decolonial aestheSis*, a resistance movement and healing process that rejects a single, universal aesthetic standard in favour of celebrating diverse tastes and sensory experiences, paving the way for a pluriversal approach to fashion-textiles that embraces multiple ways of being and expression.

### **2.1.2. The Coloniality of Gender: Patriarchy and the Suppression of the Feminine**

The intricate relationship between modernity/coloniality and patriarchy is crucial to understand in the context of fashion-textiles. Colonial and patriarchal systems have systematically suppressed worldviews and, as a result, clothing expressions and fashion-textile practices are traditionally associated with the feminine, which continue to influence the fashion industry today.

The systemic structure of patriarchy intersects and closely collaborates with modernity/coloniality, shaping the dynamics of power, identity, and social structures within the modern world. Patriarchy, while encompassing various aspects such as the social, economic, cultural, and political dimensions, is an underlying belief system that is predicated upon concepts of division, hierarchy, ownership, separation, authority, aggression and conflict (Maturana & Verden-Zöllner 2008). Lugones (2008, p. 85) contends that integral to the patriarchal imposition of power is the prevailing binary gender framework that was enforced through European colonisation. While the exact origins of patriarchy remain debated, there are alternative perspectives that challenge its certainty. Lithuanian archaeologist Marija Gimbutas (1921–1994) proposed that early European societies were not inherently male-dominated. Her *Kurgan Theory* suggests patriarchy emerged from a “collision of cultures,” where nomadic pastoralists disrupted established matrilineal and horticultural societies in southeastern Europe (Gimbutas, 1960). This theory invites us to consider that patriarchal dominance may not be an immutable aspect of human history (Murdock, 2016, p. 10) and that alternative social

structures are possible (Escobar, 2018a).

The witch hunts of fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe marked a critical point in the evolution of patriarchal societies, intensified social divisions and consolidated power structures (Federici, 2004a). This period saw a dramatic escalation in suppressing women's autonomy and knowledge systems, particularly in areas traditionally associated with feminine expertise, such as natural healing services, herbal medicine and textile production (Ehrenreich & English, 2010, p. 35). In her book *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (2004a), feminist scholar Silvia Federici contextualises these witch hunts within the broader societal shift from feudalism to capitalism. Federici argues that the persecution of witches, alongside other forms of hegemonic control, such as colonisation and slavery, played a pivotal role in forming the power dynamics of emerging capitalist societies. Exact numbers are contested; however, estimates suggest that tens of thousands to possibly millions of individuals, predominantly women, perished in these hunts (Federici, 2004a). The victims were often deeply connected to nature, spirituality, and sexuality, serving as healers, doulas, priestesses, and medicine women for their communities (Navickaitė, 2023, p. 164). This systematic persecution not only decimated traditional knowledge systems but also reinforced control over women's bodies, labour, and social roles. Agnieszka Golda (2015, pp. 405–406) shares that this period aimed to “eliminate ancestral magic transitions,” including ritual practices surrounding textile and garment making. In the context of my lineage from Poland, Western Slavic culture pre-Christianity, garments and textiles were mediators between ancestral and future worlds, as they were made in ritual environments and infused with magic, prayers and intentions for the healthy functioning of individuals and the community (p. 405). I explore this further through my textile-making practices, discussed in Chapter 4. This persecution dismantled ritual domains incompatible with capitalism's labour framework (Federici, 2004a) and devalued practices associated with the feminine inherent in us all.

The impact of these historical processes persists in Western societies through disconnection to nature, a disregard of spirituality outside of controlled religious institutes, natural healing practices, alternative educational approaches, and the hyper-toxic-sexualisation and puritanical culture over women's bodies, sexuality and more. Patriarchal structures have also negatively affected men, fostering emotional disconnection that has led to isolation and high suicide rates



(Crass, 2013).

The witch hunts served as a mechanism to assert authority over individuals, making them vulnerable to external influences such as religious institutions, governments, and media—an agenda of control that persists today (Federici, 2004a). This historical context is crucial for understanding the path towards pluriversality for fashion-textiles, which requires reconnecting with the diverse ways of being that have been marginalised: the spiritual, ecological, sensual, experiential, and intuitive aspects of human existence. In her work, fashion scholar Hazel Clark (2019, p. 313) articulates this as “women’s wisdom,” emphasising its potential toward advancing slow and sustainable fashion practices. This wisdom acknowledges diverse beliefs and practices beyond patriarchy, capitalism, and modernity/coloniality, rooted in everyday values, care, and historical practices predating patriarchy, with the power to create paradigmatic change in fashion-textiles (p. 326). The Feminist Needlework Party’s manifesto (n.d.) further exemplifies a practical application of these ideas. This political feminist artist movement creates stitching experiences that comment on the suppressed histories of women in textile production. Feminist Needlework Party workshops, which combine darning practice with lectures such as “On the History of Needlework: Wool-spinning Witches and Creabea’s,” reassert the witch archetype through a feminist lens, highlighting their subversive potential as a textile creator, healer, and rebel (Metaxa, 2023, p. 54).

While women comprise approximately 77% of the fashion-textile workforce in Australia (AFC, 2021), they still face disproportionate challenges globally, including unequal wages, lack of maternity leave, and various forms of gender-based violence (Kothari et al., 2019). These issues are inseparable from fashion-textile communities, particularly affecting women in lower income brackets or those from marginalised communities.

Escobar (2021, p. 11) asserts that to establish alternative modes of living, we must pinpoint, critique, and confront the entrenched patriarchal presumptions that permeate our world. An inspiring example for this is evident through the Zapatistas, as they have placed gender justice at the core of their movement, revaluing women’s work within their communities (Gahman et al., 2022). Their approach, which is encapsulated in the phrase “When a woman advances, no man is left behind” (quoted in Gahman et al., 2022), demonstrates how pluriversal, intersectional, and queer feminist perspectives can challenge binary conceptions and move

beyond gender-based violence.

### **2.1.3. The One-World World**

The concept of a “one-world world” emerges in fashion-textiles through the historically Eurocentric documentation and recognition of clothing practices. Elisa Jane Carmichael (2017, p. 34), a Ngugi artist from the Quandamooka people, highlights how Australian fashion history has predominantly been viewed through a non-Indigenous lens, prioritising European dress over traditional First Nations attire. This bias has led to a narrative that often overlooks the cultural significance and diversity of Indigenous fashion (Carmichael, 2017, p. 31; Clark, 2024, pp. 16–17). For instance, in the 1980s, non-Indigenous designers claimed to have initiated Australian fashion design, disregarding thousands of years of pre-existing traditional dress (Maynard, 2001, p. 163; Carmichael, 2017, p. 34). Historian Giorgio Riello (2019, p. 58) challenges this limited perspective, arguing that fashion is essential to all world cultures, not just Western ones. Scholars like Gaugele and Tilton (2019) and M. Angela Jansen (2020) propose revising fashion history to decentre Western narratives and adopt a postcolonial perspective, highlighting the links between coloniality, modernity, and fashion. This shift in perspective is crucial for recognising the multidimensional forces of fashion in varied contexts and moving towards a more pluriversal understanding of fashion-textiles.

As described by sociologist John Law, the one-world world refers to the modern/colonial domination of territories into a single way of being (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018, p. 3). This concept, also known as *universalisation*, establishes an ontology that influences modern existence by asserting its authority and absorbing other worlds, thereby eradicating alternative possibilities. It creates power structures that obscure and eliminate alternative realities, transforming non-Western perspectives into mere beliefs while elevating Western values, rationality, science, and economic profit as legitimate sources of knowledge (Escobar, 2020b). This dismissal renders worldviews founded in the experiential, sensual, and relational invisible, labelling the past as outdated (Vázquez, 2010, p. 2). The one-world world exhibits a “heterogeneity that negotiates for symmetry,” excluding all it cannot comprehend (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018, p. 4). Mario Blaser (2009a, p. 890) contends that Western theory and practice are rooted in an ontology



defined by the nature-culture divide, linear temporality, and the hierarchical evaluation of differences. An example of this is evident through the legal concept of *terra nullius*, which facilitated the physical expansion and extractive practices of the one-world world (Law, 2015, p. 126). This notion categorised certain landscapes as vacant, denying the existence of First Nations people's worlds in what is now called Australia (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018, p. 3). Law contrasts this with First Nation perspectives:

In a European way of thinking the world carries on by itself... But this is not the case for Aboriginal people. The idea of a reified reality out there, detached from the work and the rituals that constantly re-enact it, makes no sense. Land does not belong to people. Perhaps it would be better to say that people belong to the land. Or, perhaps even better still, we might say that processes of continuous creation redo land, people, life, and the spiritual world altogether, and in specific locations (Law, 2015, pp. 126–127).

As described by de la Cadena and Blaser (2018), the one-world framework constrains our ability to imagine alternatives beyond its defined boundaries, trapping us in an excessively realist mindset. Fredric Jameson's (2003) observation exemplifies this limitation: "It's easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism." Donna Haraway (2016) argues that the global ecological crisis stems not from inherent human nature but from a specific universalising ontology.

Simultaneously, some Indigenous perspectives challenge the very idea of sustainability (Torretta, 2022, p.66), arguing that its concept emerged within the framework of modern/colonial thinking as a response to an inherently unsustainable culture rooted in Western homogenising values (Krenak, 2020; Moran et al., 2018). This critique is particularly relevant when examining universal "sustainability solutions" that often lack connection to local places, contexts, communities, histories and desires. Escobar (2018a; 2018b; 2020b) critiques design for sustainability's tendency to promote mainstream behaviours rooted in Eurocentric perspectives. Akomolafe (2020) argues that simply condemning this one-world world approach is ineffective, instead advocating for "alternative sites of power" in unconventional spaces overlooked by modernity.

Operating within the one-world framework, contemporary design embodies a Eurocentric, modern/colonial understanding of processes and designer behaviour (Tunstall, 2013; Tlostanova, 2017; Vázquez, 2017), functioning as a monoculture through standardisations in processes, materials, values, and outputs (Gutiérrez, 2021, p. 58). Design has played a significant role in upholding and disseminating Eurocentric modernity, shaping our daily experiences and world connections (Vázquez, 2017). Mareis and Paim (2020, p. 12) argue that design is fundamentally shaped by socio-material practices linked to disparity, capitalism, and environmental degradation structures. While larger organisational systems bear responsibility, designers becoming conscious of their role in perpetuating modernity/coloniality also share accountability (Torretta, 2022, p. 115). Ontological redirection involves articulating alternative ideas and examining accepted norms (Jain & Akomolafe, 2016, p.118), with the goal not to diminish Western Eurocentric modes but to decentre them as universal truths. This shift in perspective challenges the erasure of diverse realms of meaning (Vázquez, 2017, p. 89) and opens up possibilities for a pluriverse to emerge (Escobar, 2018a).

#### **2.1.4. Rationality, Science & Notions of the Real**

Constructing what is considered real within a particular worldview involves a nuanced interplay encompassing the enactment of objectivity and subjectivity as well as moral and political aspects (Blaser, 2009a, p. 874). In the realm of modern fashion-textiles, the construction of reality is deeply influenced by modern/colonial ontologies. This is evident through design aesthetics, production methods, and garment expressions, often prioritising Western fashion paradigms as the standard of what fashion is. Consequently, specific ways of doing fashion-textiles are valued more highly than others, reflecting and reinforcing the hierarchical worldview inherited from colonial structures (Niessen, 2020, p. 862).

Modernity's emphasis on rationalisation assumes that no other ways of knowing are possible beyond Western rationalisation, science, and notions of reality (Vazquez, 2010, p. 1). Law (2015, p. 134) argues that reality is rooted in relational entanglements, negotiations, and rituals within specific local contexts. However, contemporary Western society's concept of the real is interconnected with power dynamics that reinforce Western ontologies as universal worldviews, relegating others to cultural

differences (Blaser, 2009a, p. 892). Escobar (2018a) contends that modernity/coloniality's real is based on rational, Cartesian, objectivist, and positivist approaches, which have had detrimental consequences in design and beyond. His "Four Fundamental Beliefs in the Modern Onto-Epistemic Order" (2018a, pp. 83–91) emphasises the individual, a single universe, reliance on scientific solutions, and entanglement with economic growth. As modernity/coloniality gained traction, it promoted rational, instrumental, and anthropocentric ways of being (Bai, 2001, p. 6). This shift promoted a mechanistic worldview, which separated nature and culture, mind and matter, as well as relegated nature to dead matter (p. 5), resulting in the alienation of humans from the natural world (p. 2). Bruno Latour (1986, p. 3) argues that modern science has transitioned from direct world observation to prioritising data generation that reinforces its universalising authority over other knowledge systems.

#### **2.1.5. Economics, Capitalism & Fashion-Textiles**

The vast majority of humanity wears clothes and comes into contact with textiles. As such, fashion-textiles, as products, systems, and paradigms, affect most people. To transform this space, the prevailing economic growth mindset driving the industry must be understood (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p. 3). Fashion professor Alice Payne (2021) notes that fashion-textiles as an industry is one of the largest global economies, valued at \$3 trillion, and driven by the foundational forces of continuous economic growth. The Global Fashion Agenda monitor report (Syrett & Lammas, 2023) outlines that the global fashion sector employs approximately 300 million individuals, significantly contributing to the global economy. Despite this, the fashion industry bears severe social and ecological ramifications, imperilling workers' livelihoods, the Earth and all other life forms (Payne, 2021). The modern fashion-textile paradigm is intrinsically linked with capitalism and globalisation, marked by commodity manufacturing, private ownership, and the separation of free labour from production means (Mann, 2012; Gabriel, 2023, p. 30). Neoliberal progress amplifies short-term gains prevalent in capitalist logic, contrasting with nature's rhythms (Martinez-Alier, 2002, p. 215). The 1980s saw neoliberalism emerge as a central ideology in global economic systems, promoting free trade and enterprise, which led to offshore and cheaper manufacturing options (Payne, 2021). In Australia, this gradually lowered protective tariffs for local garment industries,

leading to massive offshore relocations for textile and garment production (Payne, 2021).

Environmental activist and scholar Vandana Shiva (2019, p. 6) argues that modern capitalist patriarchal economies are fundamentally rooted in war and violence, which manifest through exploiting, extracting, and desecrating nature and human systems. This has led to substituting material processes with economic abstractions, such as “the logic” of competitive markets. Modernity/coloniality has enabled market capitalism and the fashion industry, necessitating ongoing territorial expansion for manufacturing (Entwistle, 2000, p. 31). Economist Ernst F. Schumacher, in his seminal work *Small Is Beautiful* (1973), linked the ecological crisis to excessive resource use for industrial production, noting that while capitalism raised living standards, it came at the cost of cultural and ecological degradation. Shiva (2019, p. 7) emphasises this point, stating that mismanagement of the Earth stems from failing to recognise nature as the “real capital” and source of all derivative value. Overvaluing economic profits has promoted hyperactivity, hyper-production, and hyper-consumption, resulting in ecological, sociocultural, and spiritual harm (Bai, 2001, p. 3). This “growth economy” (Shiva, 2019, p. 8) affects everyone, as modern economics fosters scarcity and competition, which has created a culture of rivalry, distrust in others and anxiety (Eisenstein, 2013), all rampant within the fashion-textile system. The prevailing economic system incentivises production methods and consumer choices that contribute to this continuous extraction, scarcity and competition, perpetuated by models of fashion entrepreneurship that favour some at the expense of others (Odabasi et al., 2023, p. 358).

A fundamental aspect of modernity involves colonising time and space (Mignolo, 2011b, p. 273). The Renaissance played a significant role in bringing this temporal narrative through, positioning itself as a defining historical moment and establishing Europe as the central locus of civilisation (p. 21). Willis (2021, p. 74) states that this perspective has evolved into the concept of abstract, quantified clock time that has enabled a “globalised economy” where “time is money.” In the fashion-textile industry, particularly fast fashion, this commodification of time manifests through rapid production cycles and short garment lifespans. These various hidden timeframes can conceal fast fashion’s working conditions and environmental impacts (p. 76). This disregard for varied timeframes contributes to what Tony Fry (1999) calls *defuturing*, which is the ongoing process of depriving human and non-human communities of a viable, continuing and sustainable existence. The rapid turnover in

fashion-textiles impacts environmental sustainability and adversely affects the social fabric of life (Thorpe, 2014, p. 67). Fashion's incessant connection with change and culture has resulted in the continual need for new collections and products, masked as trends and profits (Payne, 2021). Ann Thorpe (2014, p. 69) continues that consumerism has fostered a social language centred around individual consumption habits, which define social status and construct particular identities. The Western economic system, based on universalising specific values and logic, makes questioning or deviating from these norms quite challenging.

However, many are working towards alternative economic worlds. One example is by J. K. Gibson-Graham (2019, p. 127–128), who proposes a “community economy” that recognises devalued economic practices and promotes ethically responsible methods for fulfilling needs and fair distribution of surplus. Kate Raworth’s *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think like a 21st-Century Economist* (2017) outlines a regenerative framework as she challenges traditional economic thinking and prioritises limitless growth. Her model balances minimum social standards with an ecological ceiling (Clark, 2019, p. 314). In the context of fashion, Rissanen (2021, p. 3) argues for curbing the industry’s economic expansion by restricting land use for fibre production, advocating for a shift from growth to degrowth, a steady state, and, ultimately, regenerative practices. These alternative approaches aim to foster the flourishing of all life on our planet within economic activities (Odabasi et al., 2023, p. 358).

#### **2.1.6. Separation, Duality and Othering**

Understanding the separation, duality and othering that has emerged from modernity/coloniality is crucial for addressing the unsustainable practices prevalent in today’s fashion-textile paradigm. Dualistic ways of being in the world have reduced nature to “dead matter,” and this has enabled the fashion industry to treat natural resources and ecosystems as mere inputs for production, disregarding their intrinsic value and interconnectedness with all living systems.

The prevalent separationist worldview today emerged from dualistic thinking, which established splits such as “man/woman, culture/nature, mind/body, active/passive, human/non-human, and civilisation/savagery” with the advent of modernity and coloniality (Rose, 2004). In her landmark

work *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1980), ecofeminist philosopher Carolyn Merchant explicates how Cartesian logic, primarily championed by Ren Descartes (1596–1650), posited the existence of two mutually exclusive and fundamentally distinct types of substances in the universe: mind and matter. Blaser (2009a, p. 887) characterises this conceptual move as establishing the “Internal Great Divide” between the realms of nature and culture.

These dualist hierarchical oppositions have been tools for violence within our world (Rose, 2004), as this binary pole presents one side as powerful and present, whilst the other is passive and absent (Plumwood, 2001, p. 4). Australian ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood shares that Western power structures depend on sustaining these dualisms as their power is reliant on withholding the independence of the other (p. 5). This reduces nature to dead matter, seen as devoid of intelligence and inferior to humans (Plumwood, 2009, p. 5). Similarly, these polarised worldviews that created divisions between culture and nature, mind and body, human and non-human, have also profoundly shaped our perceptions, production, and consumption of clothing and textiles. Dualism further values the intellectual remit of the mind and rejects the body and spirit as a source of intrinsic wisdom.

This separation manifests in various ways in the fashion world, such as through the disconnect between makers and users or the perceived separation between clothing and its environmental, social and spiritual impacts. Escobar (2021, p. 26) reminds us that constructing worlds within a dualist ontology will continue to create unethical implications. Having already highlighted this in the previous section, these include divisional hierarchies and the marginalisation of certain groups, categorising who is modern and who is not (Blaser, 2009a, p. 887). These hierarchical classifications of humans based on race, language, territory, and spiritual beliefs have been formulated through the onto-epistemologies of modern/colonial imperialism (Mignolo, 2011b, p. 276).

This duality places the binary opposite as the other, which further segments separation, alienation and unequal power structure. Otherness is a product of Western origins, stemming from these separationist ontologies that serve as a fundamental notion within the one-world world (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009, p. 11). The other is shaped by colonial distinctions that accentuate this otherness (p. 15), often perceived as having a darker, less evolved, and negative connotation, while the



coloniser is reinforced as the active norm (p. 13). Such a paradigm grants the coloniser authority to dictate how the other is perceived, classified, or marginalised, as the other becomes silenced with a diminished self-view through these processes (p. 15). Continuing today, othering has further evolved into xenophilia, which fetishises, tokenises, commodifies and appropriates diverse cultures' rituals, practices and worldviews (p. 15).

Plumwood (2009, p. 118) shares that this dualist perspective further requires a separation from seeing oneself as interconnected with and a part of nature. This perspective restrictively and definitively separates the self, and consciousness becomes predominantly confined to an isolated, atomistic self, usually coinciding with the physical body, demarcating the boundary between self and other (Bai, 2001, p. 9). Within this ontological paradigm, the world is perceived as devoid of life, indifferent, inconsequential, or, at best, as instrumental material to be employed in whatever profitable way (Bai, 2001, p. 4; Plumwood, 2009, p. 124). The concept of nature as dead matter, which requires an external force to provide life, organisation, intelligence, and design, is the dualistic mode of separation that allows for so much destruction to occur toward the Earth and other beings (Plumwood, 2009, p. 118). Furthermore, this duality also applies to the separation between the internal and external realms. According to Bai (2012, p. 10), an underlying assumption within sustainability spaces is that changing the external world is enough, negating the necessity for inner transformation. This perpetuates existing unsustainable behaviours rooted in dualistic thinking when what is holistically required is a shift in both external actions and within the inner realms of our consciousness (Bai, 2012, p. 7; Falcon, 2021, p. 157).

### ***2.1.7. Ontological Design***

Ontological design represents a paradigm shift in how we conceive, create, and interact with designing in the world. For a fashion-textiles context, ontological design recognises that garments, materials, and other fashion-textile expressions are not merely passive objects but active agents that shape identities, cultures, and societies.

Willis (2006), Fry (1999), Tonkinwise (2014), Lopes (2017), and Escobar (2018a) emphasise the political significance of the design process and its interconnectedness with socio-cultural-ecological paradigms. One of the first figures credited with discussing ontological



design, Anne-Marie Willis (2006, p. 70), highlighted that matter such as clothing, buildings, products, and systems are not just designed but also act as agents in designing and shaping us, our cultures, and our societies. This represents a departure from conventional design practices toward recognising that design is an intrinsic part of our everyday human experience (p. 86). Building on this foundation, Willis argues that there must be numerous potential ways of being and many pluriversal design pathways in a world characterised by diverse cultures (p. 69). This perspective challenges simplistic interpretations of human existence, which instead moves to uncover the fundamental essence of particular phenomena and how these shape realities, leading to the exploration of alternative design approaches (p. 81).

Expanding on these ideas, Joshua Falcon (2020) suggests that our everyday forms of consciousness have been constructed based on the Eurocentric canon of power, which precepts how we design and be in the world. This links ontological design closely with decolonial design, as both focus on redirecting socio-ecological, human and material relations away from modern/colonial genealogies toward “flourishing new ontologies of interrelatedness” (Falcon, 2020, p. 143). De la Cadena and Escobar (2024, p. 44) further challenge conventional design thinking by proposing a radical shift in perspective. They advocate for a pluriversal design philosophy that moves away from prioritising efficiency, control, and object-centricity. Such an approach toward design practices could serve as an “ontological detox,” dismantling the notion of a singular world and fostering diverse ways of being and creating (p. 44).

Crucial for fashion-textiles is what design philosopher Ahmed Ansari (2019, p. 3) highlights in that ontologies are “cosmologically specific,” meaning they are contextual to communities and places. Escobar (2018a) points out that many cosmo-ontologies have been desecrated, devalued, and pushed aside due to modernity/coloniality, necessitating that all worlds find ways to reefabricate themselves from their unique contexts and viewpoints.

As ontological design gains prominence, it is crucial to avoid perpetuating imperialistic knowledge creation approaches. Dr. Zoe Todd, a Red River Métis anthropologist, highlights the limitations in contemporary academic discussions on ontological concepts, emphasising that recent discourse has been predominantly driven by white, Western male voices (Todd, 2016, p. 8; Tynan, 2020, p. 166). This underscores the need for diverse voices to be centred in ontological

design discussions, particularly for fashion-textiles contexts.

As Fry (2009, p. 11) asserts, the implementation of ontological design requires more than just a change in perspective; design practitioners must radically redirect their entire being to tackle the socio-ecological crises confronting our planet. This redirective path, according to both Fry (2009) and St. Pierre (2020, p. 15), occurs at both the societal level and within the individual.

An ontological approach can guide us to reconsider fashion-textiles' role in our lives, which moves beyond mere creation or consumption toward a deeper understanding of how these creations construct our realities and influence our relationships with each other and the world.

#### ***2.1.8. Ontological Fashion & Textile Design: Imagining Other Possibilities***

Fashion-textiles possess a significant ontological power as they shape and reshape worlds through their ideation, creation and use (Fry, 2017, p. 4). However, contemporary fashion-textiles often engage in defuturing (Fry, 2011, p. 21), grounded in extraction, pollution, and desecration practices, as the industry's current sustainability efforts fall short of addressing these fundamental issues. Meadows (1997, p. 78) argues that paradigm-level interventions while challenging, offer the most profound system transformations. For fashion-textiles, this involves acknowledging onto-epistemologies beyond modernity/coloniality, decentring current fashion-textile knowledge production (Jansen, 2020, p. 816).

An ontological shift cannot be achieved through isolated efforts and requires consistent actions. Instead, as scholar John Ehrenfeld (2009, p. 53) notes, it requires engaging with "the practical truths that each of us discovers in our daily life and that contribute to the collective activities of our culture." Rooted in modernity/coloniality's separationist nature, fashion design educator Jennifer Whitty (2021, p. 355) contends that the current fashion paradigm is outdated and requires a revitalised perspective more compatible with contemporary needs and contexts.

In adopting an ontological design approach to this fashion-textile project, I have examined the larger systems at play, questioning the ontological framework within which contemporary fashion-textiles operate. This research delves deeper into the current foundational values

of fashion-textile design, exploring what fuels unethical practices and considering how these worldviews impact other aspects of fashion-textiles. Crucially, this reflection extends to how these ontologies, in turn, shape us as fashion-textile practitioners, researchers and educators. The project seeks to envision alternative approaches to fashion-textile research and creation rooted in worldviews that can form the foundation for sustainable, regenerative, and thriving fashion-textile paradigms. Ultimately, it questions how fashion-textile creation and enquiry can move away from what Escobar (2021, p. 32) calls “modernist unsustainable and defuturing practices” and redirect towards “collective world-making projects that celebrate life’s entire diversity.” This ontological exploration emphasises not just the current state of fashion-textiles, but further imagines, designs and guides toward divergent potentialities.

Reflecting on these ontological enquiries, I have developed two lists that collaboratively frame the project’s direction. The first identifies conventional fashion-textile approaches rooted in the one-world paradigm from which this project seeks to diverge. Inspired by the bio-civilisational values of Kothari et al. (2019), the second outlines alternative onto-epistemologies and practices that represent aspirational pathways for transforming fashion-textiles. This redirection towards new fashion-textile worlds is guided by Vázquez’s (2017, p. 89) profound question: “Can we think of a design that is capable of healing, of enabling relationality, of recovering the possibilities of listening to the communal, to the ancestral, of caring and nurturing earth, of enabling the formation and dignification of other worlds of meaning?”

*In terms of this research, this means an emphasis on diverging away from...*

Extractive practices that disregard material origins and local communities.

Colonisation of systems, bodies, beliefs, and practices associated with holistic ontologies.

Devaluation of body, sensuality, and sexuality as knowledge sources.

Prioritising technological efficiency at the expense of ecological well-being.

Narrow focus on speed, urgency, productivity, and profits as sole measures of success.

Exploitative globalisation practices perpetuating inequalities.

Imposition of Eurocentric aesthetic standards and fashion history.

Economically driven seasonality demanding constant production and sales.

Perception of exclusive fashion epicentres (Paris, London, Milan, New York).

Promotion of specific body types as the ideal.

Replication of European fashion education models globally.

Limited exploration beyond current fashion paradigms in design education.

*And redirecting toward...*

Caring for Land, all inhabitants, and surrounding communities.

Honouring local fashion-textile knowledge and histories.

Encouraging unrestricted, liberated fashion-textile practices.

Embracing diversity in aesthetics, processes, and worldviews.

Celebrating diverse bodies and promoting bodily autonomies.

Fostering community-centric fashion-textile activities.

Prioritising regeneration, sustainability, and non-extractive practices.

Building relational webs within fashion-textile supply chains.

Shifting from hyper-individualism to collaborative practices.

Engaging with fashion-textiles as a source of joy, vitality, and healing.

Developing pluriversal ways of fashioning and body adornment.

Creating fashion commons and non-hierarchical systems.

Respecting all beings (human and more-than-human) in the fashion-textile ecosystem.

Promoting fair work and wages throughout the industry.

Encouraging diverse, place-based fashion-textile expressions.

Decentring the human and acknowledging more-than-human agencies.

### **2.1.9. Discussion**

Transforming the unsustainability that permeates our modern world requires a fundamental shift in our perception and relationship with the world—it requires a transformation of our ontologies (Bai, 2001, p. 2; Orr, 2011, p. 254). This section unpacked the necessity for an ontological redirection by highlighting modern/colonial, patriarchal, one-world, capitalist, and separationist values that shape contemporary life and the fashion-textiles industry. These worldviews permeate how people, be, act, communicate, think and create in the world, much of which I argue is not congruent with holistic transitions toward sustainable fashion-textiles. As discussed, the prevailing universalising ideologies within the Western world and much sustainability rhetoric are insufficient for the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of life on Earth (Kothari et al., 2019).

Embracing other possibilities necessitates more than mere reconsideration. It calls for a transformation in how we perceive and navigate within the world (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009, p. 167) as both designers and part of the larger Earth community. Design and, more specifically, fashion-textiles are a part of this reorientation that requires internal and external collective transformations imperative for a pluriverse to emerge (Escobar, 2018a). By emphasising the importance of diverging from unsustainable practices and redirecting toward pluriversal pathways, this research contributes to a growing body of literature that decentres dominant paradigms in the fashion-textile industry and promotes more sustainable transitions and how these may manifest in the world. I argue that adopting an ontological approach allows us to see the root causes of issues and create other possibilities grounded in deeper logic, values and, as a result, transformations for change. This research emphasises that transformative change can emerge through a pluriverse, a cosmological option for being in the world and doing fashion-textiles grounded in divergent values of care, reverence, reciprocity, community, and responsibility. Building on this discussion, the next section delves thoroughly into the concept of a pluriverse.

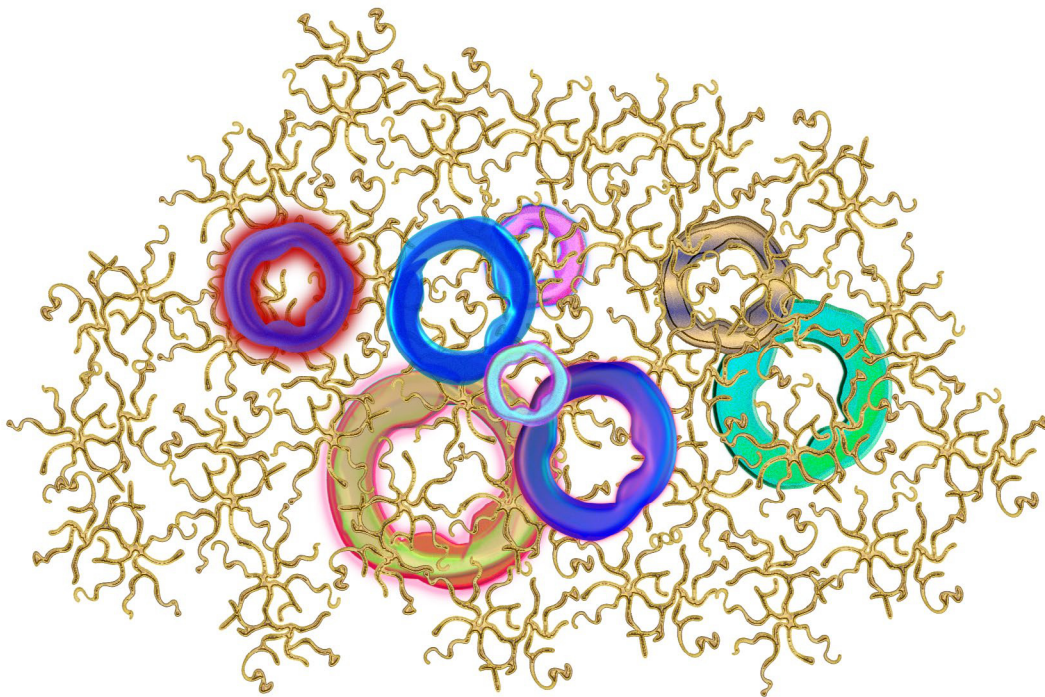
## 2.2. A Fashion-Textile Pluriverse

Building upon the context established in the previous section and the necessity for ontological redirection within fashion-textiles, this section delves into the main theoretical underpinning of a pluriverse. Recognising the novelty of this concept in the fashion-textile domain, key pluriversal concepts, articulations, and practices are unpacked to contextualise the research. This exploration introduces critical scholars from pluriversal, decolonial, anthropological, political, design, and fashion-textile fields, situating the project within the broader pluriversality space while focusing on fashion-textile design.

A pluriverse recognises the limitations of a singular, dominant worldview and embraces the richness and diversity of multiple ontologies, where alternative perspectives can coexist and thrive alongside and with one another. This section begins by grounding the research by defining a pluriverse, presenting its historical premises and critical scholars. Through the lens of political ontology, the political nature of a pluriverse is explored, highlighting how diverse pluriversal worlds interact and navigate the complex process of coexistence (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018, pp. 4–6). This is followed by an introduction to decoloniality and its relationship with pluriversality, exposing the underpinnings of modernity/coloniality while envisioning a world where diverse realities coexist. Building on decoloniality, the next sub-theme explored is delinking away from modern/colonial narratives toward pluriversal imaginings, which Escobar (2007, pp. 179–201) names “Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise.” This leads to a discussion on the borderlands, the decolonial places where knowledge systems and worldviews that have been marginalised or deemed subaltern by dominant onto-epistemologies gain visibility through the creation of alternative worlds that delink from the one-world world (Hutchings, 2019, p. 116; Mignolo, 2018; Mignolo, 2007, p. 453). The difference between the notions of pluriversality and plurality are distinguished, as the former encompasses multiple ontologies, and the latter stems from the one-world world, mostly explored through contemporary diversity and inclusivity initiatives. This section unpacks the importance of moving away from universality toward heterogeneous ways of being, prioritising context, diverse aesthetics, and multiple “reals” (Escobar, 2018a; Hutchings, 2019, p. 117).



The focus is then narrowed down to fashion-textiles, investigating how transitions toward a pluriverse necessitate new imaginings that diverge away from the Western canon and draw parallels with transition design. Recognising the importance of learning for this project's context, an overview of current fashion-textile education and learning is shared, highlighting modern issues and ongoing decolonial and pluriversal efforts. The section concludes by showcasing current fashion-textile projects, brands, and initiatives that explore creative pluriversal methods through relational, place-based, autonomous, or holistic practices operating beyond the onto-epistemological confines of the dominant system. This theoretical exploration sets the stage for understanding a pluriversal approach to fashion-textiles and its potential to create transformative and holistic change in the field



**Figure 6.** Visualisation of a pluriverse - 'a world of many worlds'.



### **2.2.1. Pluriversality: What is it, and Why is it Important?**

Contrary to the idea of a single world with a unifying vision brought about by the one-world world, a *pluriverse* recognises the multiplicity of existence, promoting and respecting ontological differences rather than attempting to override them through similarities (Escobar, 2018a).

Through this, a pluriverse advocates for a rainbow of ontological tones, colours and all gradients in between for how to exist in the world, all of which are valid (Hutchings, 2019, p. 117). Mignolo (2018) highlights that as beliefs and understandings of the world beyond universalisms are transformed through a pluriverse, divergent knowledges and practices according to specific contexts, places, cultures, histories, needs, and desires begin to unfold. A pluriverse further operates on both local and global scales, internal and external, encompassing a multitude of narratives and interwoven complexities that overlap and interact (Albarrán González, 2020, p. 44; Escobar, 2018a). Within a pluriverse, the Western worldview is merely one option amongst others, rather than the dominant perspective. There is an emphasis on the cosmologies that have been marginalised through the Western canon, specifically relational, spiritual, ecological, animist, sensual, and intuitive ways of being (Escobar, 2018a), which this research explores for fashion-textiles.

The concept of pluriversality has been famously brought forth through the Zapatistas, an Indigenous resistance movement in Chiapas, Mexico, as they envisioned “a world in which many worlds co-exist” (Escobar, 2018a). The Zapatistas defied the Mexican government’s oppression in the 1990s by gaining control of their lands and achieving autonomous rule, which they have held today (Escobar, 2018a). Numerous other socio-political movements have further reflected this notion in Latin America and other world areas, defying modernity, coloniality and globalisation (Albarrán González, 2020, p. 7). From a Western scholarly context, American philosopher and psychologist William James (1842–1910) adopted the notion of a pluriverse or what he referred to as the *multiverse*, to demonstrate a pluralist rather than a monist worldview prevalent at the time, advocating for differences arising not only internally but extending externally and contextually (Hutchings, 2019, p. 115). James was interested in exploring how one might navigate and balance multiple and divergent worldviews, such as the rational and scientific, with the natural and esoteric (p. 116)

The term pluriverse itself is contemporary, yet its roots extend far back into human history, well before the advent of patriarchy, modernity and coloniality and can be traced back to many Indigenous, pre-colonial, and non-Western cultures that have long recognised and respected a multiplicity of ways of being and knowing. Kombumerri and Wakka Wakka elder Mary Graham (2014, pp. 3–4) shares that First Nation groups in Australia “developed a social system of clan multi-polarity” and were self-governed through principles of autonomy and multiple truths; “Individuals, families, Clans are all unique, all perspectives are valid and reasonable, and all localities (Places) have their unique voice.” The Chinese philosophical text written around the sixth century BCE by Lao Tzu, the *Tao Te Ching*, further encompasses many truths and pathways toward living harmoniously with all of life (Cua, 1981, p. 123). Reflecting on this ancient text, Filipino-Chinese philosopher Antonio S. Cua writes that the Tao offers a perspective that views contrasts and differences as complementary elements contributing to a “harmonious whole”: “there is no universal knowledge of Tao, no truth that can be stated to be learned in the way in which one acquires knowledge” (p. 129). Ancient worldviews offer numerous examples of pluriversal comprehensions of reality.

Pluriversality is further illustrated in practice through the relations cultivated between the Yolŋu of north-eastern Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory of Australia and the Macassans of the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, which lasted for over two hundred years between the 1700s and 1900s (Bilous, 2015, p. 905). In addition to exchanging languages, technologies, and cultural practices, the interactions between the Macassans and Yolŋu communities forged enduring bonds, which continue to live on today through Yolŋu storytelling, art, and songs (Bilous, 2015, p. 906). The Yolŋu and Macassans held distinct spiritual beliefs and practices, and instead of trying to submerge the other into their approaches, they listened, shared knowledges and collaborated in sovereign ways (p. 909).

As pluriversality garners increasing attention in academic and industry contexts, it must not be conflated with another trendy, quick-fix solution toward sustainability or subject to tokenistic and superficial commodifications. In explaining the aims of his doctoral thesis, “Moving Decolonially in Design for Sustainabilities: Spaces, Rhythms, Rituals, Celebrations, Conflicts,” Brazilian multimodal artist Nicholas B. Torretta (2022, p. 39) presents that the aim of pluriversal design is not

to establish a new universal framework for design practice but instead to provide spaces of inspiration and guidance toward how we can progress towards pluralistic design approaches and communities. In investigating the evolution from contemporary design practices toward integrating pluriversal approaches for design, Torretta draws attention to the qualities of flow and motion present within pluriversal transitions (p. 39). Decolonial feminist activist-researcher Marta Musi (2023, p. 149) underscores this, saying that it is this constant movement of a pluriverse that makes it difficult to define, describing it as “a radical, continuous concrete political praxis.”

Pluriversality should not be confused with globalisation, which homogenises individuals under the Western universal worldview (Álvarez Barberena, 2020, p. 14). The common perception of fashion globalisation is based upon the worldwide spread of Western fashion-textiles, coupled with the dominance of Eurocentric fashion discourse over other fashion knowledge, systems and practices (Cheang et al., 2021, p. 1). Sarah Cheang, Erica de Greef and Yoko Takagi's *Rethinking Fashion Globalisation* (2021) invites readers to examine a variety of fashion topics originating from diverse cultural contexts through less Eurocentric frameworks, some of which are pluriversal (p. 4). They highlight the inherent power dynamics in cultural interconnectedness, the transnational evolution of fashion objects, and challenging Eurocentric influences of power within fashion academia (p. 4).

Postcolonial feminist scholar Madina Tlostanova (2017, p. 4) takes this discourse further by advocating for a pluriverse that deviates away from universality altogether, moving beyond specific focal intersections of race, gender, and class. Escobar (2018a) advocates for inter-epistemic, inter-cultural, and inter-ontological design studies that move beyond “intra-European conversations,” calling for pluriversal designs that foster open-hearted listening, acknowledgment of diverse contexts and lineages and mutual care that critically examine current socio-political landscapes. Additionally, he points toward the modern incomplete processes of knowledge and transformation that these frameworks create (Escobar, 2018a). In the context of this project, pluriversality relates to recentring and revaluing pluriversal ontologies for fashion-textiles that are more compatible with sustainability transitions, as well as how research is done and how knowledge is created.

### 2.2.2. Political Ontology

In fashion-textiles, *political ontology* provides a critical lens for examining how diverse worldviews and realities shape the field. Anthropologists de la Cadena and Blaser (2018, p. 6) characterise a pluriverse as a "power-charged terrain of entangled worldings and their dynamics," highlighting its inherently political nature. Fashion-textiles, deeply embedded in cultural-socio-ecological-economic contexts, serve as material manifestations of these ontological perspectives and methods.

Within a pluriverse, diverse worlds converge and engage in the challenging process of coexisting with their differences, fostering inquiry and alternative compositions (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018, pp. 4–6; Hutchings, 2019, p. 122). Political ontology encompasses the continual exploration, critique, and reflection upon relations, entanglements, tensions, and potentialities (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018, p. 6). Scholars such as Blaser (2009a; 2013), de la Cadena (2010; 2015), and Escobar (2018a; 2020b) have developed this field to illuminate what becomes visible through a pluriverse (Hutchings, 2019, p. 117), particularly emphasising the power dynamics between different worldviews and realities (p. 121).

This approach examines world-creating practices, the conditions necessary for their flourishing, and the conflicts that arise as diverse worlds assert their co-existence (Escobar, 2020b). Chaves et al. (2017, p. 5) emphasise the importance of recognising ontological politics rooted in multifaceted realities and their inherent power dynamics. Escobar (2018a; 2020b) extends this understanding, arguing that environmental and sociocultural conflicts stem from fundamentally different ways of existing and world-shaping. Consequently, political ontology seeks to preserve the interconnected, communal, and non-binary aspects of these realities by illuminating their underlying ontological foundations.

De la Cadena and Blaser (2018, p. 5) assert that a pluriverse demands meticulous care, attention, and ethics. FitzGerald (2022, p. 3) builds upon this by proposing that pluriversal ethics necessitates consideration of the consequences of our relational decisions involving diverse dispositions, capacities, and tools to address varying vulnerabilities.

Blaser's three-tiered framework for political ontology (cited in Escobar, 2020b) can be applied to sustainable fashion-textiles to reveal:

firstly, the modern assumption that sustainability requires a technocratic, one-size-fits-all approach; secondly, the belief that growth, efficiency, and technology will create sustainability; and thirdly, the underlying separation myths and alienation from nature and community.

This illuminates a critical question for fashion-textiles in a pluriverse: *How can fashion-textile worlds engage in meaningful negotiation and develop relational resources and innovative methods for co-existence without attempting to dominate or assimilate one another?*

### **2.2.3. Pluriversality & Decoloniality**

The concept of pluriversality is deeply intertwined with decoloniality, as it challenges the prevailing power structures of modernity/coloniality by emphasising the coexistence and interrelationships of diverse worldviews. Pluriversality negotiates this by revealing and highlighting elements of existence that have been concealed, erased, and obscured for centuries, constituting a process of decolonisation (Tlostanova, 2020, p. 17). As Argentinian decolonial theorist Walter D. Mignolo argues in *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (2011a), decoloniality is an analytical function of exposing the underpinnings of coloniality and a forward-looking role in constructing a world where diverse realities coexist. In order to emphasise alternative modes of thought and action that diverge from Western cosmology, a decolonial effort is required to reclaim various ontological perspectives that shed light on a pluriverse (Reiter, 2018). Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano shares his thoughts:

First of all, epistemological decolonisation, as decoloniality, is needed to clear the way for new intercultural communication, for an interchange of experiences and meanings, as the basis of another rationality which may legitimately pretend to some universality. Nothing is less rational, finally, than the pretension that the specific cosmic vision of a particular ethnies (ethnicity) should be taken as universal rationality, even if such an ethnies (ethnicity) is called Western Europe because this is actually pretending to impose a provincialism as universalism. (Quijano, 2007, p. 177)

The concept of decoloniality emerged from the 1955 Bandung Conference, where Asian and African nations challenged Western powers' ongoing colonial practices and exclusion from global decision-making (Mignolo, 2011b, pp. 273–274). Seeking alternatives beyond the Cold War's communist-capitalist binary, these nations proposed a third, decolonial path, one that, while it did not entirely reject Western economic models, marked a shift away from the era's hegemonic worldviews (p. 273).

Pluriversality and decoloniality offer essential perspectives for reimagining the field of fashion-textiles beyond Western-centric paradigms. Pluriversality emphasises the coexistence of diverse worldviews and ways of being, challenging the dominance of any universal ontology (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009, p. 157). As an analytical and constructive project, decoloniality seeks to expose and transform the colonial power structures that have erased and devalued non-Western knowledge systems (Mignolo, 2011b, p. 274). Like pluriversality, decoloniality does not aim to entirely reject Western concepts, especially non-hegemonic ones like “the idea of emancipation and freedom of conscience” (Mexica, 2015, p. 25). Instead, it entails decentring these narratives as universal ontologies, facilitating the development of contextually grounded ways of being rooted in specific contexts, places and communities (Mignolo, 2020, p. 616). In fashion-textiles, a decolonial and pluriversal approach would involve recognising the rich diversity of textile traditions, aesthetics, and philosophies that exist globally, beyond just Western fashion systems (Álvarez Barberena, 2020, p. 33). This means being open to learning from and valuing First Nations and non-Western ways of creating and relating to materials and garments.

Moreover, decolonising fashion requires examining how coloniality has shaped the global fashion industry, from exploitative labour practices to cultural appropriation to the imposition of idealised Western beauty standards. Transforming these unjust power dynamics means recentring the voices, agency and creativity of communities whose fashion-textile practices have been marginalised or erased through modern/colonial systems (Cushman et al., 2021, pp. 8–9). A pluriversal fashion ecosystem makes space for diverse localised histories, identities and ways of making.

This decolonial work also necessitates reimagining fashion education to decentre Western-centric curricula and pedagogies (Mignolo, 2011a). Engaging with decolonial and Indigenous thought, cultivating intercultural dialogue, nurturing context-specific learning, and creating can help fashion-textiles move toward more inclusive and holistic approaches (Mexica, 2015, p. 14).

Crucially, decoloniality in fashion should not simply invert old hierarchies or create new universal models (Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 5). Instead, the aim is to support an open, evolving dialogue between diverse knowledge systems so that the field can be enriched by multiple coexisting possibilities (Quijano, 2007, p. 177). Fashion-textiles, as embodied, material, meaning-making practices, have immense potential to help us imagine and enact more just, sustainable, and diversely vibrant world(s). This resonates with Yoruba philosopher Bayo Akomolafe's (2020; 2022) view of decoloniality as a profound departure from modernity's static, colonial mindset toward a dynamic, joyful, and ever-evolving approach to existence that recognises the inherent interconnectedness and indebtedness of all things. However, realising this will require decolonial work to decentre dominant ontologies and create pathways and opportunities for pluriversal ways of being, knowing and creating.

#### **2.2.4. Delinking**

For the fashion and textile industries to progress toward sustainable and thriving futures, they must re-evaluate their core logic and redefine how they exist and create in the world. As explored throughout this research through the lens of a pluriverse, a shift towards envisioning fashion-textiles differently is needed.

The concept of "fashion as otherwise" draws from Escobar's "Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise: The Latin American Modernity/Coloniality Research Program" (2007, pp. 179–210), which posits the existence and evolution of diverse onto-epistemologies beyond modern/colonial confines. Decolonial approaches can emerge within these borderlands, challenging universal knowledge-making claims and enabling alternative modes of existence (Escobar, 2007, p. 186). "Border thinking" transcends Western-imposed divisions (p. 205), interconnecting with Mignolo's (2007) concept of *delinking*, which explores alternatives



to universality by expanding knowledge beyond Eurocentric boundaries (Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 4). Aligning with *Earth Logic* (Fletcher & Tham, 2019), I argue for redirecting fashion-textiles towards pluriversal, relational, and place-based ontologies rooted in epistemologies of care, reverence, reciprocity, collaboration, and radical responsibility.

Pluriversality encourages a shift away from the dominance and conditioning imposed by universal modern/colonial modes of existence, enabling the emergence and coexistence of various alternative ways of being. The process of delinking, integral to decolonising, involves not merely disengaging but attuning to alternative modes of existence that have been disregarded by Western logic from the Greek and Roman eras through the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Cartesian thought (Mignolo, 2011b, p. 274). Delinking encompasses reorienting, deconditioning, unlearning, and disengaging from the one-world ontology ingrained in modern Western narratives, which perpetuate the belief in a single way of existing (p. 274). Unless we are raised in unconventional environments detached from modern influences, the narratives of modernity/coloniality are deeply ingrained in our collective psyche, shaping our way of being from birth. Breaking free from these patterns demands profound unlearning and reorientation across all aspects of life, a challenging lifelong endeavour that involves complex, nuanced actions and efforts to see, listen, and reconfigure relationships and worldviews anew (Davis, 2022, p. 107). This work requires time, energy, and resources to which only some have equal access. Delinking involves practising epistemic disobedience by integrating holistic approaches and philosophies and unlearning and deconstructing Western ways of doing fashion-textiles. Ultimately, this process entails rejecting the limited alternatives offered by the modern mindset (Mignolo, 2011b, p. 276) and opening ourselves up to other possibilities beyond the confines of Western thought.

Delinking requires re-establishing intimacy with the Earth, and people's everyday lived experiences (Escobar, 2018a), embracing intellectual examination, sensory understandings, intuition, reflexivity, and emotional insight (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 542). This research has been a journey of unlearning modern/colonial epistemologies and letting go of entrenched ideas about expertise and fashion disciplinary boundaries. This project embraces alternative decolonial pathways (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012, pp. 19–22) in theoretical and practical fashion-textile research, exploring pluriversal and decolonial theory through making practices and social learning workshops. These practical components have allowed me as the researcher-designer to nurture alternative

approaches relating to fashion-textiles by advocating for, exploring, sensing, and actively creating other modes of knowledge and practices (Siegenthaler & Allain Bonilla, 2019, p. 6).

A pluriverse provides a decolonial option for reshaping thought processes and behaviours in fashion-textiles, directing us towards diverse ways of creating that restore and revalue worlds marginalised, concealed, and erased under the dominance of modern/colonial, patriarchal, and industrialised paradigms. Delinking is integral to this process, as it enables the emergence and coexistence of various alternative ways of being, aligning with the premise of *Earth Logic* (Fletcher & Tham, 2019) and redirecting fashion-textiles towards pluriversal, relational, and place-based ontologies rooted in epistemologies of care, reverence, reciprocity, collaboration, and radical responsibility. This research seeks to open up new horizons more compatible with sustainability by disengaging from the deep-rooted logic of Western knowledge systems and illuminating toward perspectives and pathways that have been obscured, ultimately contributing to the creation of diverse, decolonial futures for fashion-textiles.

### **2.2.5. Borderlands as Places of Transformation**

Closely interconnected with delinking is the notion of borderlands, what Mexican decolonial feminist scholar Rosalba Icaza Garza (2017, p. 2) shares as the decolonial option where knowledge systems and worldviews that have been marginalised or deemed subaltern by dominant paradigms gain visibility.

Introduced by Anzalda (1987), the concept of *borderlands* represents physical, cultural, and psychological spaces where diverse identities converge. This aligns with decolonial thinking as borderlands foster alternative realities that challenge the dominant one-world paradigm (Hutchings, 2019, p. 116; Mignolo, 2018, 2007). Mignolo (2013) and Escobar (2007, p. 179) further develop this idea through “epistemic disobedience” and the concept of otherwise, emphasising local perspectives and autonomous thought (Mexica, 2015, p. 22; Mignolo, 2011b, p. 277, 282).

Borderland narratives highlight the coexistence of multiple onto epistemologies (Mexica, 2015, p. 2, 13), framed by Tlostanova and Mignolo (2020, pp. 163–164) as “trans-modernity.” Anzaldú a (2002, p. 541, 560) describes this as “living in nepantla,” a space for new

possibilities beyond traditional categories. De la Cadena and Escobar (2024, pp. 30–33) extend this concept with “excess” to describe interactions between diverse groups that exceed one’s onto-epistemic understanding. This concept relates to Mary Louise Pratt’s (1992) “contact zones,” where disparate groups interact, often in conflict. The authors propose “pluriversal contact zones” as intersections of different worlds imbued with excess, which challenge the one-world worldview (de la Cadena & Escobar, 2024, p. 33).

Borderlands as a concept and lived practice provides an understanding for creating spaces where diverse worldviews can coexist and interact, challenging traditional notions of identity, knowledge, and reality. An example of this is evident in fashion-textiles in *Art Pluriverse: A Community Science Series* (Ziku et al., 2021), which uplifts local textile knowledge in the Balkans. This publication outlines programs that foster interactions between diverse textile traditions and the public, creating research-based art and community archives. By bridging historical and contemporary practices, it exemplifies a pluriversal contact zone that promotes inclusive, collaborative onto-epistemologies in fashion-textiles.

The concept of borderlands in fashion-textiles offers a powerful lens for examining and validating marginalised knowledge systems and practices. In the fashion-textile context, borderlands can be understood as spaces where traditional, Indigenous, and non-Western fashion-textile practices intersect with dominant industry paradigms, much of which is explored relationally with others through workshops (Chapter 3) and doing practices (Chapter 4). Sandra Niessen (2020, p. 862) argues that these borderland spaces in fashion challenge the Eurocentric notion of fashion as a Western phenomenon and are often dismissed and othered, whilst they represent rich, dynamic traditions that offer alternative perspectives on style, production, and consumption. Alison Gwilt et al. (2019, p. 5) discuss how Indigenous textile practices often exist at the borderlands of mainstream fashion, showcasing sustainable approaches to design and production. Similarly, Angela Jansen (2020, p. 824) explores how non-Western fashion systems operate within the borderland space as they challenge Eurocentric notions of fashion and bring forth diverse perspectives on style, design, production, and consumption. In *Earth Logic*, Fletcher and Tham (2019, pp. 53–56) argue that these borderland spaces in fashion-textiles can be sites of innovation and resistance, where alternative practices and knowledge systems can flourish and potentially transform the industry. The borderlands allow for recognising and elevating historically marginalised fashion-textile

knowledge and practices, a decolonial approach toward comprehending and reshaping the global fashion-textile landscape.

This research continually questions how epistemic disobedience might manifest in Western fashion-textile systems and everyday actions, seeking to open up new possibilities for pluriversal fashion-textile practices. The ongoing enquiry underpins this research: *What could epistemic disobedience from the contemporary Western fashion-textile system and rhetoric look like? How does it look in everyday fashion-textile actions?*

### **2.2.6. Pluriversality vs Plurality**

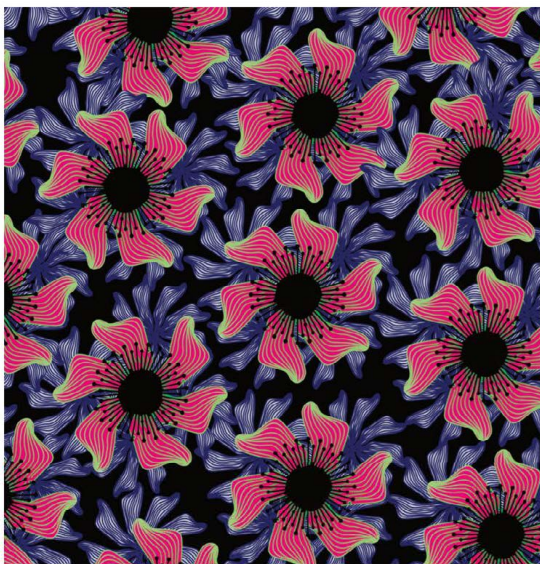
It is imperative to distinguish between pluriversality and plurality for a fashion-textile context. According to Ansari (2021), plurality focuses on inclusivity and common ground, whilst pluriversality emphasises ontological differences and the coexistence of diverse worlds. Tonkinwise (2021) has further differentiated between designing for liberal pluralism and pluriversality, as the latter accommodates multiple ontologies without subsuming one into another. This distinction is particularly relevant given the increasing number of diversity initiatives in the fashion industry. Whilst many initiatives aim to foster heterogeneity, they often operate within Western modern/colonial logic systems, primarily aimed at addressing diversity through race, sex, and gender without encompassing diverse worldviews. While representation across race, gender, identity, and sexuality is critical, it represents only one layer of what diversity is. This project promotes diversity through the lens of pluriversality, which sees a diversity of voices represented through diversity in worldviews.

The concept of *making space* is interrelated here, which emerges from modern/colonial power dynamics that fail to recognise heterogeneous and autonomous ways of being (Jansen, 2020, p. 816). This raises the question of who holds the power to create space for diverse voices to exist. Considering this, it is clear that the modern discourse on diversity and inclusivity sustains unequal power dynamics. The concept of making space suggests that one group has the authority to create opportunities for another, implying that the other cannot establish these spaces independently due to historical and perpetuating marginalisation. This reinforces the other status within the dominant one-world world predicated on modern/colonial imperial dynamics (Eisenstein, 2020). When space is created for those excluded or silenced



within Western paradigms yet arises from the same systems, it continues to reinforce universalisms. For something different to emerge, this project advocates for integrating diverse and varied worldviews. This diversity should not be based on making space toward differences but on establishing and nurturing paradigms that organically foster heterogeneity across fashion-textiles.

The concept of *inclusivity*, employed in conjunction with diversity, also requires further examination. Through a pluriversal lens that values context, inclusivity does not imply that everything is for everyone. Instead, it suggests creating conditions where multiple worldviews can emerge, coexist and thrive without domination or assimilation (Escobar, 2018a). Escobar outlines that pluriversality inherently challenges traditional notions of inclusivity that seek to merely “include” marginalised groups or perspectives within the predominant existing structures. Instead, he presents a more radical recognition of differences and autonomies (Escobar, 2018a). This project advocates integrating diverse ways of being, not by making space within existing paradigms but by establishing and nurturing systems that organically foster diverse worldviews across for fashion-textiles.



Universality



Pluriversality

**Figure 7.** This illustration contrasts universality with pluriversality to aid in understanding the latter concept. It is important to note that this comparison is not intended to create an oppositional or binary perspective. Rather, pluriversality is presented as an alternative approach, not as a direct opposite to universality. The goal is to broaden our understanding of different worldviews, not to position them against each other.

### **2.2.7. From Universality to Diversity**

A holistic type of diversity emerges when various ontologies and their ethical and political impacts on the world are appreciated for their distinctiveness rather than seeking sameness (Hutchings, 2019, p. 117). This ability to embrace multiple ontologies is what fosters equality. The concept of a pluriverse aims to shift away from the dominance of universalising approaches to creating and enquiring about fashion-textiles, allowing for the emergence, reconnection, and nurturance of diverse viewpoints and practices. Despite the modern/colonial agenda's efforts to eradicate anything outside its framework, diverse realities have existed in various manifestations and locations and will continue to do so in varying capacities (Law, 2015, p. 134). A key emphasis lies in re-establishing connections with context and drawing inspiration from the unique knowledges specific to places where creations arise, yet still being connected to global communities and perspectives, what scholars (Manzini, 2009; Sachs, 1999) and transition design efforts name a "cosmopolitan localism" (Irwin et al., 2015, p. 8).

In contrast, universality promotes uniformity in aesthetics, process and experience. This homogeneity fails to acknowledge the distinct values, methods, and aesthetics inherent to each community, individual, and locale. Just as nature thrives on diversity, so do human communities. While global connectivity has been valuable for modern development and technology, losing sight of context and the distinctive qualities of each landscape and community results in neglecting diverse philosophies, worldviews, and their associated populations. Nurturing diversity requires engagement with and cultivation of relationships grounded in multiple ontologies. Adopting or agreeing with each of them is not required. Instead, moving beyond the rigid constructs of universal worldviews is needed to ignite a sense of openness, curiosity and wonder about multiple ways of being and possibilities in and for fashion-textiles.

Unlike binary oppositions to universality, pluriversality offers an alternative that does not attempt to establish a new universalising force. To address what Law (2015, p. 135) calls the "repression of difference," this research proposes embracing pluriversality that transforms the one-world paradigm into a diverse mosaic of multiple modes and epistemologies (Escobar, 2020b). This nuanced approach contrasts with prevalent polarised thinking, often reducing complex ideas to reductive categories. What pluriversality teaches us is that everything, including concepts and issues, can simultaneously embody multiple, even

contrasting or contradictory aspects. Such a perspective allows for a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of the complex realities we exist within, moving beyond the limitations of binary thinking. This fosters a richer, more diverse tapestry of worldviews and, as a result, practices.

Rather than promoting true diversity, the concept of *culture* or *multiculturalism* often reinforces the one-world perspective by classifying diverse worldviews within hegemonic modern/colonial power structures (Blaser, 2009a, p. 881). Tlostanova and Mignolo (2009, p. 13) trace the term *culture* to its incorporation into European imperial linguistic repertoires in the eighteenth century, coinciding with the global expansion of a universal concept of knowledge inherited from Christian theology. This positioned European civilisation as “the” culture instead of one culture amongst many. This hierarchical classification system elevated a particular knowledge and value system at that time and continues to permeate modern societies that perpetuate Eurocentric dominance in the global domain (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009, p. 13).

Scholars Leitão (2023, p. 24), Escobar (2018a), and Freire (1996) collectively offer some ideas for understanding and addressing the challenges of pluriversality in a fashion-textiles context. Escobar’s (2018a) inquiry into the coexistence of radically different ontologies prompts a deeper consideration of how diverse realities can emerge and thrive within existing fashion-textile systems. This aligns with Leitão’s (2023, p. 24) call toward bringing forth diverse and new possibilities that move beyond outdated binary constructs toward revaluing all Earth communities. The concept of “cultural synthesis” as articulated by Freire (1996), further offers a practical approach to realising the pluriversal vision outlined by Leitão (2023) and Escobar (2018a). By emphasising collaborative learning and mutual enrichment, cultural synthesis (Freire, 1996) provides a pathway for fashion-textiles to embrace multiple realities.

In enquiring about this, I am curious about the following:

*How can multiple reals emerge within fashion-textiles?*

*How do multiple reals thrive within fashion-textile design systems?*

*What needs to be negotiated?*

*What power dynamics need to shift for this to occur?*

An example in fashion-textiles can be seen through Mazzarella and Radziunaite’s Reality, Reciprocity, Resilience project (2023) which



explores “designing for cultural sustainability with refugee communities” through a decolonial methodology. As global displacement escalates, Mazzarella and Radziunaite call for the urgent need to decolonise how designers work with marginalised communities, moving away from the designer as an expert toward the designer as a collaborator in deep listening to the communities’ unique needs and desires (p. 4). Working with London-based refugees and asylum seekers, their participatory action research approach included storytelling, co-creative workshops, and ethnographic research centred on building cultural sustainability and community resilience (p. 9). Their overarching aim is to safeguard the cultural heritage of refugee communities, advance social inclusion, bolster local economies, and cultivate environmental stewardship through their fashion and textile projects managed by the Centre of Sustainable Fashion at the University of the Arts London (p. 6).

### **2.2.8. Fashion-Textile Transitions**

Pluriversality can be a creative pathway toward change in which new alternative realities can be imagined and enacted (Escobar, 2020b). As advocated for by Escobar, other possibilities are possible through a pluriverse, which this project aims to guide toward fashion-textiles. The real, the possible, and the political are intimately interconnected (Escobar, 2020b), as some possibilities have been rendered impossible within the dominant Eurocentric American worldview, making it challenging to conceive of alternative realities (Escobar, 2020b). Drawing on the work of Escobar (2020b; 2018a), how do we “make the unthinkable, thinkable, and the thinkable believable and possible?” I propose this go even further to how we can bring the invisible into visibility and make the visible not only believable and possible but also embodied and integrated. Within this project, the social learning workshops and the making practice are vehicles for exploring the embodiment and integration of pluriversal concepts in fashion-textiles. These practical components demonstrate how abstract pluriversal ideas can be translated into concrete, experiential realities within the field. A pluriversal worldview begins this sensing and working toward bringing these other possibilities into being. Many contemporary designers design from within the current modern/colonial hegemonic worldview and have lost the practice of imagining holistic futures outside of this (Tonkinwise, 2023, p. 282). Mignolo’s (2011b, p. 276) “world-sensing” offers a valuable perspective as it

diverges from “world-visioning,” which tends to privilege visual perception over other senses. Through world-sensing we can start to perceive the world as it is; from that place, we can delink and start envisioning and enacting other pathways.

*Transition design* provides a valuable guide toward confronting the unsustainable paradigm currently dominating design (Irwin et al., 2015, p. 351), which can also be synergistically applied to fashion-textiles (Odabasi et al., 2023, p. 350). Terry Irwin, Gideon Kossoff, and Came on Tonkinwise (2015, p. 351) envisioned the design discipline as a way to uncover and establish new avenues for change while working within the confines of existing structures and moving beyond conventional linear models of change to address societal issues. Transition Design embodies an ongoing transformational process, marked by its ability to navigate extended temporal scopes and address intricate issues embedded within socio-economic and politically disputed systems and societies (Odabasi et al., 2023, p. 351). Advocates of transition design stress the significance of sustained, iterative endeavours conducted over prolonged durations and encompassing diverse dimensions of change (Irwin et al., 2015, p. 237), most notably aligning with pluriversal ontologies, is its emphasis on visioning, alternative theories of change, “self-reflection and new ways of being in the world,” and new ways of designing informed by alternative value systems (p. 9). Informed by this and akin to pluriversality, transition design is flexible, emergent, and evolving. It does not intend to provide a dogmatic blueprint but instead serves to inspire and guide designers beyond their current practices (Tonkinwise, 2023, p. 284). As design is characterised as a distinctively Eurocentric practice, derived from Greco-Latin rationality and spread worldwide through imperial languages, mainly English, Colombian design theorist Alfredo Gutierrez (2021, p. 57) warns against limiting design to its Western origins and calls for addressing the colonial dominance it perpetuates.

In “Transition Design and Fashion,” fashion scholars Sanem Odabasi, Otto von Busch, Christina Moon, Laura Sansone and Timo Rissanen (2023, p. 350) explore how fashion and fashion education can adopt a transition design approach toward more profound transformations. They stress that fashion designers can no longer ignore the pressing need for systemic shifts and must expand their boundaries toward change in fashion that moves beyond current production methods, consumerism, and practices (p. 364) toward disrupting the paradigm level (p. 350). Additionally, fashion education must undergo significant transitions as this is the learning foundation undertaken by

many fashion designers and profoundly influences their role in creating sustainably or not (p. 350). In this manner, Rissanen (2017a, p. 543) advocates for fashion as well as other design disciplines to reimagine “design itself while concurrently designing the world at large.”

This dissemination process has led to the replacement, usurpation, subjugation, distortion, and neglect of various pre-existing practices, often dismissed as primitive or superstitious and not fitting into modern design (Gutiérrez, 2021, p. 57). This marginalisation has resulted in the loss of diverse design traditions and knowledges (p. 57). These include learning design from Country, as outlined in “On Country Learning” by Bundjalung elders Uncle Charles Moran and Uncle Greg Harrington, with Wiradjuri man Norm Sheehan (2018, p. 77). Diverse design traditions are further often subsumed under the Western classification of “crafts” (Gutiérrez, 2021, p. 57), evident in the fashion-textile space as garments made through capitalist industrialisation are often celebrated as the pinnacle of fashion, overshadowing diverse and First Nations practices (Gaugele & Tilton, 2019).

There is no set, linear path toward a pluriverse. The road is windy, varied, multifaceted, and coloured through various experiences and contexts. Transitions entail adopting a variety of pathways and shifts across all aspects of living and being in the world and doing fashion-textiles. These transitions may be subtle and ambiguous and may not constitute a complete overhaul, but they still hold massive potential for change. An array of creative concepts and visions is already being enacted worldwide, and knowing how to foster collaboration between them is an ongoing enquiry (Kothari et al., 2019).

### **2.2.9. Fashion-Textile Design Learnings**

While not explicitly situated within higher fashion education, the research aims to facilitate (re)learning alternative ways of perceiving and engaging with fashion-textiles. Chapter 3 delves deeper into social learning through the primary research conducted via workshops in the second stage of the study. The insights gained from these workshop experiments and methodologies offer valuable resources for various stakeholders in the fashion-textile field, including design practitioners, students, researchers, and educators. The project’s emphasis on pluriversal learning moves beyond traditional educational contexts toward offering a broader perspective on how we can reimagine sustainability approaches for

fashion-textiles. By examining the intersections of fashion-textiles, learning education, and pluriversality, this subsection briefly outlines current relationships among these elements.

Pluriversal approaches to fashion-textile education are crucial for decolonising and embracing diverse ontologies. For the most part, the contemporary fashion-textile realm claims universal ways of doing and coming into fashion, which often arises from higher fashion education, as has been trickled down from Europe. The Decolonizing Design Collective begins its decolonising discourse within the Western university, as that is where pluriversal knowledge creation can be explored beyond universal transitions (Schultz, 2018, p. 85). Education needs a redirection toward including other onto-epistemic traditions, including those of the Global South (Ansari, 2018, p. 88), that take seriously other perspectives outside the Western lens (Abdulla, 2018). Escobar (2018a) notes that industrialisation has impeded our capacity for things being otherwise, and as a result, more changes toward decolonising the university have been made (Schultz, 2018, pp. 94–95). Tlostanova (2020, p. 165) argues that contemporary design education instrumentalises imagination, creativity, and innovation, asserting that our unprecedented times demand a novel approach to learning, distinct from what is prevalent in most Western educational institutions. She advocates for rewriting ontological frameworks that transcend “narrow sub-disciplinary divisions” and address sustainability holistically (p. 167). As Fletcher and Tham (2019) suggest, this comprehensive approach should encompass the transformation of individual habitual, cognitive, and psychological aspects, moving beyond conventional educational paradigms to foster more integrated design practices.

Much of contemporary fashion education is founded upon Western modern/colonial logic systems that maintain this status quo of what fashion is and how it is done. Trend forecaster Li Edelkoort (2014) has famously contended that fashion education is focused on producing “star designers,” and little room is left to explore systemic and sustainable change and what fashion could be beyond traditional modes of production and consumption (von Busch, 2020). Ben Barry (2021, p. 124), the Dean of Fashion at Parsons School of Design, argues that “fashion education is in a state of emergency,” introducing a manifesto that defines actions for fashion educators to forge learning environments that centre justice, inclusivity and decolonisation toward radical change. In “Decolonising a Fashion School: A Critical Reflection on Fashion Education in Australia through an Indigenous Perspective,” Wiradjuri

woman Charlotte Bedford (2020) sheds insight into being part of a traditional Western fashion education as a First Nations woman. She notes financial and logistical barriers to entry for Indigenous students and shares that their stories, communities and cultures are rarely explored or centred within the institution (p. 948).

Nonetheless, much work is already emerging toward a more pluriversal approach to design education, with several institutes, courses, and educators exploring and implementing pluriversal and decolonial fashion pedagogies. Recently, Li Edelkoort co-created a new program in collaboration with Polimoda in Florence, Italy: a two-year Master's in Textiles from Farm to Fabric to Fashion (Polimoda, 2022). This radical new syllabus connects students with “experimental knowledge regarding the whole process of making a garment, from the origin of fibre to industrial and artisanal textile production, through to design and fashion creation” (Polimoda, 2022). In a similar spirit, ArtEZ University of the Arts in Arnhem, the Netherlands, envision alternative fashion-textile futures that explore experiential teaching and learning methodologies through their undergrad and Master's programmes. Their courses and research centres explore alternative fashion-textile theories and embodied knowledge such as solidarity, non-human agency, empathy, well-being, ego and more (ArtEZ, 2024), deviating away from entrenched production-consumption patterns and limitations set by the conventional fashion industry (ArtEZ, 2024).

Timo Rissanen's “Possibility in Fashion Design Education—A Manifesto” (2017a) beckons fashion educators to radically and expansively imagine what fashion pedagogy could be toward being “interconnected with the natural world” (532). This is demonstrated in action through Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), and their BA Fashion Design core first-year subject Fashion, textiles, Place and Story, which introduces students to other ways of being through local and Indigenous perspectives and practices that focus upon place, belonging and creating shared fashion futures (RMIT University, 2024). This further aligns with the educational work by Dilys Williams (2013; 2014; 2017; 2018) and the Centre for Sustainable Fashion in London, where place-based, participatory learning, futuring, critical decision-making, and systems thinking have been embedded into the Master's in Fashion Futures, as well as other industry and educational projects in diverse capacities (Williams & Toth-Fejel, 2017), (UAL, 2022).

At the Royal College of Art within the MA History of Design

program, fashion decolonial scholars Sarah Cheang and Shehnaz Suterwalla (2020, p. 880) facilitate experimental pedagogical spaces to dismember Eurocentric knowledges through critiquing fashion historiographies. Additionally, fashion educator Tanveer Ahmed utilises her cultural garment of the sari as a counter-hegemonic starting point within the ideation process in the classroom, a process she says sparks discourse and reflection into how fashion reproduces cultural and knowledge hierarchies (Ahmed, 2021, p. 27). Ahmed's recent doctoral thesis, "Pluriversal Fashions: Towards an Anti-Racist Fashion Design Pedagogy" (2023) advocates integrating fashion design processes that are informed by decolonial feminist perspectives into higher education to combat racism in the fashion industry (p. 2). Ahmed underscores the significance of foregrounding counter-hegemonic, non-universalist, and non-linear modes of acquiring fashion-related knowledge (p. 2). This can be achieved she notes by investigating alternative pedagogical decolonial feminist approaches, ultimately culminating in the development of a novel, pluralistic framework for fashion-textile design education and praxis (p. 2). Anthropologist Sandra Niessen (2020, pp. 859–877) supports these redirective fashion pedagogies by asserting that the industry can only achieve sustainability if it addresses its historical racial biases. She calls for a "radical rewriting of fashion history" that centres on a more inclusive world history of dress, broadening its scope and revaluing subaltern voices (p. 860).

There are closely related decolonial fashion initiatives and platforms that critique unequal modern/colonial power relations within the industry through independent platforms. Some of these include Kimberly Jenkins's *Fashion and Race Database* (2020–2023), a comprehensive online platform designed to enrich the understanding of fashion history and tackle issues of misrepresentation within the industry. This membership resource offers vast tools and content to diversify and decolonise fashion narratives, supporting critical conversations about race, identity, and representation in fashion (Fashion and Race Database, 2020–2023). The *Research Collective for Decoloniality & Fashion* (RCD Fashion, 2024) likewise provides online education, resources and community engagement toward understanding and moving beyond modern/colonial fashion ontologies. *Possible Futures* (n.d.) is another independently run educational platform run by and facilitated by women from the Global South from various disciplines, which offers online courses for professionals focused on examining the oppressive and



systemic dynamics between the Global North and the Global South within industrial practices. Although their focus is not fashion-textiles specific and relates to all fields, they hold an underlying pluriversal agenda that recognises that current “sustainability” and “regeneration” narratives are rooted in modern/colonial frameworks and that something else is needed and possible (Possible Futures, n.d).

Furthermore, the *Pivot 2020* design conference saw researcher-designer Lesley-Ann Noel (2020) gather design educators to challenge the existing design education paradigms and create a new twenty-first century pluriversal design curriculum. According to Noel (2020, p. 76), nine interconnected and comprehensive themes emerged, several of which are woven into this project. These themes include spiritual design, pluriversality, decoloniality and liberation, critical history, critical making, social design, metacognition, principles of practice, and social sciences (p. 76). Going forth, I envision fashion learnings that are not only focused on producing new garments and fashion-textiles things but further expanding the onto-epistemologies of listening, seeing, sensing and being in the world, what Noel (p. 77) says begins (fashion-textiles) from learning within new places and from different points of view.

#### **2.2.10. Pluriversal Fashion-Textile Design**

There are brands, practitioners, research projects and communities that operate beyond the confines of the dominant system and are inherently more connected to relational, place-based, autonomous and holistic worldviews. Some coexist within the prevailing system, albeit with inherent challenges, while others operate on the fringes of the contemporary fashion-textile industry. This calls for further decentring hierarchical structures toward paradigms that support other possibilities so that diverse and autonomous forms of fashion-textiles can emerge and exist. This subsection details just some of these pluriversal voices currently in space, and further examples are interwoven throughout the entire thesis. This is not an exhaustive list but a brief introduction to how some express themselves through fashion-textiles in pluriversal ways. Pluriversality unfolds in fashion-textiles through a diverse range of multifaceted ontologies and embodiments.

Based upon this contextual review and guided by pluriversal scholars (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018; Escobar, 2020b; Hutchings,



2019), I define pluriversal fashion-textiles as having an ontological grounding within wholeness, autonomies, place and relationality. Within the examples I present, some voices are situated within the borderlands of modern fashion-textile practices, others within the industry and are choosing to redirect their ontologies, and others are located entirely outside modern Western fashion-textiles. With vast differences, what they all have in common is their goals in authentic and autonomous fashion-textile expressions. Many still exist within the modern/colonial canon, predicated on economic growth, speed and outputs, which poses significant challenges and constraints for those seeking to implement alternative approaches. I view pluriversal fashion-textiles as a vast spectrum, emergent within the current paradigm, within the borderlands, and outside of current systems.

Several research projects have explored pluriversal approaches through fashion-textiles, demonstrating the practical application of these concepts. Diana Albarm Gonzalez's (2020) thesis project, "Towards a Buen Vivir-centric Design," investigates the ancient Mexican textile tradition of *jolobil* as a metaphor and methodological framework. Through co-creative workshops with Mayan weavers, Albarm Gonzalez recognises Indigenous artisanal design practices as powerful tools for challenging modern/colonial paradigms (p. 8).

Anas M. Parada's (2020) doctoral thesis further examines Puruh fashion in Ecuador as a form of cultural resistance and aesthetic sovereignty. Her research highlights how Indigenous dress designers use their cultural heritage to create a disruptive local market, selling their garments to create economic autonomy and social capital (Parada, 2020, p. 116). In a similar vein, Esteban Andrés Ivarez Barberena's (2020, p. 1) dissertation, "A Latin American Decolonial Fashion Option," explores the fashion landscape through the lens of the decolonial option, investigating fashion's role within colonial contexts. They propose an onto-epistemological decolonisation to reform fashion that, in turn, supports diversity and serves life and culture rather than merely academic and economic pursuits (p. 55).

Amy Twigger Holroyd's (2019) "Fashion Fictions" project reimagines possibilities for fashion design through collaborative workshops. Participants envision, prototype, and analyse alternative fashion-textile cultures, challenging the status quo and expanding the field's possibilities (Fashion Fictions, n.d.). Ben Barry's and Philippa Nesbitt's (2023, p. 100) project is another example centred around

“fashion hacking,” a politically driven methodology allowing marginalised individuals to reclaim and reshape fashion artefacts. Participants deconstructed and recreated garments with fashion researchers to fit their bodies better and express their gender identities thereby inserting themselves into the fashion industry and society on their terms (Barry & Nesbitt, 2023, p. 100). The workshops aimed to cultivate “crip-centric liberated zones” cultivated through love so that those disabled can fully engage in experiences as themselves, encompassing a variety of identities (p. 102).

Lastly, the edited volume *Design and Nature: A Partnership* (Fletcher, St. Pierre & Tham, 2019) presents various fashion, textile, and design projects engaging with diverse onto-epistemologies and research methods. These projects, rooted in embodied, experiential, animist, and contemplative worldviews, have inspired methods used in design experiments and social learning workshops in subsequent research chapters.

These examples illustrate the expanding field of pluriversal fashion-textile research, offering tangible pathways for implementing diverse, decolonial, and alternative approaches in design enquiry and practice. They demonstrate how theoretical concepts can be translated into tangible methods toward sustainable fashion-textile futures.

Although a new field, further examples present varied engagements with pluriversal notions for a fashion-textile context either directly or in subtle ways. The Royal Academy of Art, The Hague (KABK) engaged first-year students in a collaborative exhibition, *Making Histories: Pluriverse Perspectives on Fashion & Textile Design Studies* (2021/2022), encouraging them to create diverse, practice-based responses to fashion-textile design histories through a constructivist lens (Soh et al., 2021/2022). Additionally, Alfredo Ledesma Quintana’s (2021) project *Walking in a Pluriverse* at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna explored the potential of art to reflect our relationships with our surroundings and expand our community to include non-human entities. His work utilised traditional textile knowledge to reconnect with and reimagine multiple cosmologies from his Peruvian heritage (Art & Science, 2024). *The Lissome*, a Berlin-based fashion publication, represents another pluriversal initiative. Their collaborative print and digital platform features alternative visions for sustainable fashion-textiles, bringing together global visionaries to weave new narratives and imageries. Their recent issue, “Love Ethics: New Visions,” exemplifies their commitment to exploring the multifaceted potential of love through fashion and textiles

(de Jesus, 2024, p. 3).

Numerous fashion-textile brands embrace pluriversal approaches, incorporating wholeness, autonomies, place-based design, and relationality into their practices. The following brands are not a comprehensive list but give a sense of the richness of fashion-textile brands aligned with pluriversality. These brands actively diverge from modern/colonial worldviews, instead pursuing more authentic and autonomous creative expressions. This shift represents a growing trend in the industry towards more diverse fashion-textile practices that align with pluriversality.

*Lunarc Studio*, an Australian brand, creates garments infused with nature through ancient botanical dyeing processes that are coloured with the moon's cycles (Lunarc Studio, 2020). Created in ritual, plants are foraged locally or sourced from food or floristry waste, where each piece emerges in its "own unique creation journey" (Lunarc Studio, 2020). *No! Collective* integrates Palestinian artisanal practices into modern womenswear, preserving cultural heritage while providing economic opportunities for local craftspeople (Haidari, 2023). *TG Botanical* further exemplifies place-based, relational approaches to fashion-textiles by incorporating traditional Ukrainian embroidery techniques and local plant dyes into their fashion designs (TG Botanical, n.d.). *Stem Copenhagen* emphasises slow, mindful production using biodegradable materials inspired by the Nordic climate (Stem Copenhagen, 2023). *Australian First Nations Fashion* exemplifies pluriversal approaches by centring Indigenous knowledge, connection to Country, and cultural storytelling in fashion-textiles. As part of this collective, brands like *Maara Collective* collaborate with Indigenous artists from Yuendumu to create textiles featuring Warlpiri art, bridging ancient storytelling with modern fashion (Maara Collective, n.d.).

Other notable examples include *Grace Lillian Lee's* practice, which incorporates traditional Torres Strait Islander weaving techniques into contemporary accessories (Lee, 2021), and *Lyn-Al Young's* hand-painted silk garments that tell stories of her Gunnai, Wiradjuri, Gunditjmara and Yorta Yorta heritage (Vogue Australia, 2020). *Farfarm*, a Brazilian textile start-up, exemplifies pluriversal fashion-textile principles through its commitment to local, sustainable production throughout the Amazon (Farfarm, n.d.). Their focus on creating materials using natural fibres grown and processed through agroforestry methods within a 100km radius of their studio emphasises place-based design and local autonomies. Their partnership with Veja, the sustainable sneaker brand, involved developing a local, regenerative textile supply chain in Brazil

that supported local farmers and promoted biodiversity and soil health in the region (Farfarm, n.d.). These examples demonstrate the growing integration of pluriversal approaches within fashion-textiles, through diverse practices that prioritise place, ancestry, relationality and autonomies.

### **2.2.11. Discussion**

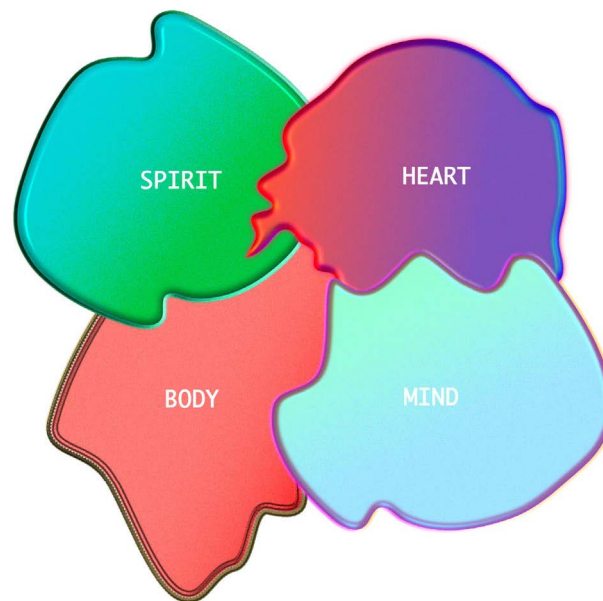
A pluriverse encompasses a fractiverse of worldviews and realities, offering multiple possibilities for existence that redirect away from destructive modern/colonial ways of being toward divergent fashion-textile imaginings (Escobar, 2018a). This chapter has explored the theoretical context of a pluriverse, its genealogy, critical scholars, themes, and current manifestations within the fashion-textile industry and education. As multiple worlds interact and negotiate, various political and ethical implications arise due to their power dynamics (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018, p. 6).

Pluriversality, deeply entwined with decolonising efforts, aims to decentre modern/colonial power structures and promote diverse onto-epistemologies (Mignolo, 2011a). It creates space for deconditioning, delinking, and (re)learning towards more sustainable fashion-textile transitions. The concept of borderlands emerges as crucial spaces where new narratives between worlds can lead to togetherness through difference, what de la Cadena and Escobar (2024, p. 33) term “pluriversal contact zones.” In this light, pluriversality offers a different and more holistic perspective on diversity that moves beyond modern surface-level claims of plurality and inclusivity.

For fashion-textiles, pluriversality challenges the predominant Western narrative, calling for fashion-textile transitions more compatible with holistic ways of being in the world (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p. 21). This necessitates rethinking traditional design norms and educational frameworks (Ahmed, 2023, pp. 330–331; Rissanen, 2017a, p. 543) that promote heterogeneous fashion-textile onto-epistemologies to unfold contextually (Jansen, 2020, p. 824). In essence, pluriversality is introduced as an option for redirecting fashion-textiles toward a holistic kind of sustainability aligned with *Earth Logic*’s values (Fletcher & Tham, 2019). A fashion-textile pluriverse emerges as ontologies become liberated from the narrow constructs of universalisation, serving as a tool toward liberation. With this understanding established, I now discuss the

foundational ontologies of a pluriverse, historically marginalised by modern fashion-textile practices, beginning with the ontology of wholeness in the next section.

### 2.3. Pluriversal Worldview: Ontological Redirection toward Wholeness



**Figure8.** The integration of the four wisdom centres: Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body.

This section introduces the first pluriversal ontology of wholeness that contributes to this research’s foundational theoretical precedents. This research advocates for a holistic approach to fashion-textiles and sustainability and creative research that integrates spirit, heart, mind, and body, all equally valuable knowledge pathways. It begins by highlighting the necessity to move beyond the over-valuing of intellectual and rational aspects, arguing that integrating all four elements is crucial for moving beyond separationist ontologies, which underlies unsustainability in fashion-textiles. The four knowledge centres—spirit, heart, mind and body—are subsequently unpacked in detail, drawing on various scholars and practitioners that ground the concepts.

### **2.3.1. A Holistic Approach to Fashion-Textiles Research & Knowledge Creation**

This research adopts a holistic approach to fashion-textiles, sustainability, and creative research. The term wholeness is used interchangeably with whole, holistic and integrated throughout this section and thesis. By wholeness, I refer to the integration of spirit, heart, mind and body as the full spectrum for living in this world. Additionally, this research argues that all of these elements of human existence—the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and corporeal—are equally valuable and necessary for creating knowledge in the world and an essential ontology toward a pluriverse (Escobar, 2018a). Most fashion investigations have been centred on intellectual discussions, with some on the corporeal and emotional and less on the spiritual, some of which are shared in the following sections. Whilst several fashion-textile and design scholars point toward the necessity for connecting all these facets for a holistic approach (Albarm Gonzalez, 2020; Fletcher and Tham, 2019; 2023; St. Pierre, 2020; 2024; von Busch, 2021 and Walker, 2011), little extensive investigation has been made toward integrating them for this field, a gap this research aims to begin to fill.

Integrating Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body as equal and valued knowledge pathways for fashion-textile research and practice allows alternative cosmologies and perspectives to emerge that further appreciate and celebrate diverse approaches to acquiring wisdom (Ivarez Barberena, 2020, p. 17). As highlighted throughout this thesis, each component of research present within this project (theory, practice, workshops) engages with each of these four knowledge streams in varied ways, moving the work beyond the confines of the intellectual realm alone toward an ontology of wholeness for a fashion-textile pluriverse.

This is not a novel concept as pre-colonial, pre-patriarchal, and pre-Christian societies and First Nations cultures have historically embraced this way of being. However, in the contemporary Western world, which includes fashion-textiles and academia, modernity/coloniality has over-prioritised the intellectual, rational, and empirical facets of knowledge-making that have seen the others sidelined (Álvarez Barberena, 2020, p. 2). This research argues that a crucial component in moving beyond separationist ontologies that underline unsustainability in the world and the fashion-textile space, as introduced in Section 2.1, is a reorientation toward wholeness. Marchand et al. (2020, p. 7), a group of mostly First Nation scholars working through holistic approaches for ecological and



First Nations emancipation, echo the necessity for holistic knowledge frameworks to be integrated toward sustainability:

the most common framework and scientific methods used to form knowledge needs to be completely restructured and envisioned. Current tools are not solving the problems emerging in today's environment, and certainly won't solve tomorrow's problems... Another important issue is that knowledge in the Western world is not holistic. It is fragmented and decontextualised from the emerging problem and compartmentalised by disciplinary fields. (Marchand et al., 2020, p. ii)

They explain that holistic approaches to knowledge-making are more effective in addressing the root causes of issues as they contrast with the reductionist Western worldview, which tends to focus merely on the symptoms of problems rather than their underlying causes (Marchand et al., 2020, p. 7). I align with this discussion and aim to explore alongside other ontologies, how wholeness may manifest through fashion-textile theory, doing practices and in social learning contexts toward deeper understandings of sustainability.

Apalech First Nations scholar Tyson Yunkaporta and Gandugari Elder of the Murrawarri Nation Doris Shillingsworth support this holistic approach to knowledge creation, known as “knowledge transmissions” rooted in their First Nations worldview. In “Relationally Responsive Standpoint” (2020, pp. 1–14), they delineate this flexible learning cycle that can be applied to various contexts, beginning with Spirit-Valuing (Axiology), Heart-Being (Ontology), Brain-Knowing (Epistemology), and lastly Feet/Hands-Directing (Action). They share that spirit influences what is valued and how it is valued, the heart shapes one's relationship with the world, the Brain informs knowing and thinking, and Feet/Hands are the means through which all of this is manifested in practical actions (p. 2). This sequence contrasts with the Western worldview, which often approaches elements in reverse order and cultivates a deeper comprehension toward doing research that has been inspiring for this project. Yunkaporta and Shillingsworth further emphasise that these elements are intrinsically interlinked as they relate and interweave (p. 2). This is key to understanding them and not falling into Western categorisation tendencies that separate and fail to acknowledge relations. For the sake of readability, the following subsections—”Spirit,” “Heart,” “Mind” and “Body”—unpack each knowledge centre separately; however,



in practice, they interweave, co-create and be with and alongside each other, which is essential to remember. The subsequent parts unpack the four knowledge centres in detail as I have come to relate to them, both within my own life and in a fashion-textile context. This has emerged from many years of inner and communal explorations, transformations, learnings, experiences, creative work, and more. In the spirit of pluriversality, I invite the reader to make their own connections.

### **2.3.2. Spirit**

Spirit is the animating force that weaves itself through all of life. Spirit signifies an affiliation with the sacred, an acknowledgment of dimensions in this world beyond those physically apparent and a reverence for the sacred insights that emerge from these connections (Delgadillo, 2011, p. 4). In the context of this project, spirit is more than a notion; it is embodied through perspectives on relationality, animism, and aliveness, which are discussed in this subsection and throughout the research. Despite close associations for some, spirit, is distinct from religious connotations.

Sufi mystic and scholar Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee refers to spirit as the sacred, the omnipresent in every form, constituting the fundamental essence of all that is (Vaughan-Lee, 2016, p. 295). Vaughan-Lee argues that at the core of the current ecological crisis lies the neglect of the sacred essence inherent in all of creation, which is what allows the Earth to be perceived as a mere resource to be exploited that serves capitalist, hyper-materialistic values (p. 295). Throughout *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth*, Vaughan-Lee calls for remembering the sacredness of the Earth, all of life, and the interconnecting thread that joins us all (p. 295). Systems theorist Joanna Macy (2013) adds that living from this embodied interconnected knowing allows us to change how we experience the self, and as our identity shifts to encompass more than just our physical bodies, we can embrace the entire web of life, seen and unseen. When we widen our sense of self to include the Earth and all living beings (human and more-than-human), we can recognise that any harm carried out on the Earth is also done to ourselves (Macy, 2013). I enjoy Thomas Berry's (2016, p. 22) framing of the sacred through the lens of wonder:

We have forgotten that the revelation in the natural world and the more expansive universe around us is the primary divine

revelation. We need to regain the sense of wonder that comes from being deeply interconnected in a sacred way.

Spirit is not static nor fixed; instead, just like the universe, it is active, dynamic, emergent, subtle, ambiguous and relational. Latinx and Indigenous decolonial studies scholar Felicity Amaya Schaeffer (2018, p. 1006) argues that as one engages and communes with other entities of the Earth (land, animals, matter), their very nature and essence undergo an alchemical transformation as the surrounding forces and materials are influenced through these moving relations. Drawing on Mayan cosmology, Anzaldúa ([1987] 2007, p. 58) illustrates how a simple gust of wind can trigger ancient wisdom, as the myriad entities within the Earth are always in relation with multidimensional beings across the ever-unfolding space-time continuum. In this way, and as Plumwood (2002, p. 222) suggests, meaning-making is created by being in the world and interacting with life, which moves beyond human-centred definitions of spirit that see knowledge as only being able to arise from the remit of the human. Querejazu (2024, pp. 12–13) refers to this as the “(re)enchantment” that brings attention to these “other worlds.” These “other worlds” already recognise spirituality and spiritual beings as valued members of pluriversal realities worldwide, challenging modernity/coloniality’s binary classifications (Que ejazu, 2024, pp. 3–4).

Broadening this discussion, Deborah Bird Rose (2017, p. 53) introduces shimmer, her description of the Yolŋunotion of *bir’yun*, “the actual capacity to perceive and experience ancestral power.” She says that this shimmer, this brilliance, is always there and that it connects the past to the present and into the future, drawing attention to the pulsating nature of life, with all of its beauty as well as all of its destruction (p. 71). Spirit or shimmer encompasses the entire spectrum of life:

We are called to live within faith that there are patterns beyond our known patterns and that, in the midst of all that we do not know, we also gain knowledge. We are called to acknowledge that in the midst of all we cannot choose, we also make choices. And we are called into recognition: of the shimmer of life’s pulses and the great patterns within which the power of life expresses itself. We are therefore called into gratitude for the fact that in the midst of terrible destruction, life finds ways to flourish, and that the shimmer of life does indeed include us. (Rose, 2017, p. 71)

I further draw on biologist Andreas Weber's *Enlivenment: Toward a Poetics for the Anthropocene* (2019) here for a definition of spirit, as he envisions the world as a living system striving for thriving and reinforces the idea that wholeness is synonymous with vitality. Weber (2019) argues that the term *sustainability* falls short in addressing the profound changes needed, calling for a deeper comprehension of aliveness and recognising that fashion is not just an industry but also a larger conduit for social existence within material culture. Von Busch (2021, pp. 16–17) expands this in his provocation that design represents the tangible expression of human intentions in shaping the world, which needs both industrial and spiritual guidance in pressing ecological challenges. His *Vistas of Vitality: Metabolisms, Circularity, Fashion-Abilities* is a flexible guide in viewing and creating fashion beyond surface-level pursuits toward one imbued with spirit, which he names *aliveness* (p. 7). Philosopher and rabbi Marc Gafni and anthropologist Kristina Kincaid (2017) refer to this aliveness through the lens of *eros*, the essence of vitality they say permeates through all of life beyond just the sexual, which it is usually conflated with. They claim that “eros is the very nature of reality itself” and that the absence of eros causes the breakdown of individual and collective systems (Gafni & Kincaid, 2017).

Modernity has taught us to separate and devalue all that cannot be seen or measured through Western science, whilst in pre-patriarchal cultures, our ancestors lived in a relational existence with the Earth and the entire cosmos without separating the physical and spiritual realms (Maurana & Verden-Zöller, 2008). Colombian scholar Amaya Querejazu (2024, p. 7) shares that the modern world has further colonised spirituality through its Christian indoctrinations that impose colonial modes of existence and interpretations through specific definitions of what is real and deemed acceptable (Chakrabarty, 2000). Querejazu (2024, p. 3) further argues that non-Western ontologies of spirituality have been devalued and erased through their connotations with religion and secularisation, which have both attributed to the repression of spiritual orientations for living. The project of secularism has been part of this “discourse of power” (Anidjar, 2006, p. 62).

Understanding the significance of the spiritual dimensions of life is crucial, as it reflects the reality of numerous pluriversal societies around the world, where the spiritual, ecological, and human realms are interwoven and shaping socio-political structures (Querejazu, 2024, p. 4). Indian historian Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) notes that spiritual ideas contextual to particular groups and traditions do not fit into the secular

one-world world, as they reside within the domain of differences, and as a result, have been hidden and erased. Moreover, spirituality can also encompass spiritual activism, geared towards reshaping the individual and the world. In the 1980s, Anzaldúa conceived of a form of spiritual activism that connected personal, inner work with public, outward action, thereby bridging private concerns with larger social issues (Keating, 2008, p. 57).

As fashion-textiles is a material practice, Plumwood's (2002) materialist spirituality is interesting to unpack. She introduced the idea that spirit is not the opposite of matter, a prevalent notion within many spiritual circles and religious dogmas, but instead that we need to move toward a richer concept of materiality that is integrated with spirituality (p. 222). Inspired by Australian First Nations concepts of belonging and having spent significant time learning from elders, Plumwood's materialist spirituality teaches us that all beings and matter can support and enhance our lives (Rose, 2013, p. 42). Bai (2012, p. 317) further develops this assertion by arguing that the distinction between the physical and spiritual domains and the division between internal and external worlds cultivates a passive stance in dealing with global challenges. By externalising problems and treating them as distinct from the self, neglecting the interconnectedness with these issues, essential internal transformations are relegated to the periphery (p. 312).

Many scholars and practitioners have overlooked and undervalued the political dimension of spirituality, as modern scholarly and industrial fields rely heavily on rationalism, empiricism, and Western logical frameworks, which do not account for that which cannot be neatly categorised, measured, or validated within these constructs. Even within creative fields, such as fashion-textiles, notions of spirit are rarely discussed, and references made to the sacred, spirit, soul, life force, and other spiritually oriented topics are still looked down upon or relegated to so-called primitive or tribal discussions and not taken as seriously as other putatively intellectual discourses (Schaeffer, 2018, p. 1006). Some relevant explorations are emerging that connect spirituality with fashion-textiles, for example, Tickner & Querejazu (2021), Kaiser & Green (2022, pp. 95–116), von Busch & Viau (2022), Wilson (2019, pp. 356–362), and others. Nevertheless, a gap remains for a more extensive investigation into how a holistic approach encompassing the spiritual can redirect toward more sustainable fashion-textile worlds and practices. Sharing her experiences as both a Buddhist and design educator, Louise St. Pierre (2020, p. 16) offers her perspective that spirituality provides an alternative

comprehension of what truly matters:

As I have noted on my own journey, spiritual views have to be holistically integrated with all of our work, and not set aside as an “extra” interest on the side. This is integrative. Fragmentation is a key problem. The fragmentation of the spiritual from the professional has allowed all manner of injustices to the Earth.

Embracing diverse forms of consciousness and ways of sense-making, which the spiritual allows one to do, can open up possibilities beyond the socio-cultural norms of modernity that keep one bound to a particular way of being in the world (Falcon, 2020, p. 157). Without recognising and integrating the spiritual facets of existence into everyday living as well as creating and enquiring about fashion-textiles, through however that manifests for each individual and community, there is a vital component missing for living well in the world and creating pluriversal communities (Querejazu, 2024, p. 8).

### **2.3.3. Heart**

Heart-centeredness encompasses both the emotional realm and the physical heart, which embodies the concept of love in its broadest sense. Love extends beyond romantic partnerships toward embracing the Earth, all beings, and all matter. Love is a universal force present in every breath and movement throughout the cosmos. While society often practices conditional love—giving only when something is expected in return—the love referred to here is unconditional. It flows openly and freely, independent of reciprocation. This unconditional love forms the core of heart-centred approaches, guiding actions and perspectives with compassion and interconnectedness at their foundation.

From a scientific perspective, the Institute of HeartMath in California is pioneering studies in the emerging field of neuro-cardiology, where a growing number of empirical research studies underscores the intrinsic role that the heart plays in the synergistic interplay between the brain and the body, which results in consciousness (McCraty et al., 2005, p. 15). Research reveals that the heart functions as a sensory organ and is an intricate hub for receiving and analysing information (p.16). Notably, the magnetic aspect of the heart is approximately five thousand times more potent than that of the brain, allowing emotional states to connect

to the body via the heart's electromagnetic field (p. 16)

Concurrently, through their seminal text *The Origin of Humanness in the Biology of Love* (1996), biologists Maturana and Verden-Zöller draw attention to the heart. They introduce that human evolution is inherently guided through love as the fundamental aspect of cooperation, expressed through emotions such as care, respect, trust, and reciprocity. They present a grounded ethics in biology, suggesting that an intentional concern for the well-being of all life on this Earth naturally emerges from an ontology rooted in the biology of love (Maturana & Verden-Zöller, 1996). “We have only the world that we bring forth with others, and only Love helps us bring it forth” (Maturana & Verden-Zöller, 1996). Such a worldview gravely contrasts with other evolutionary scientific ontologies based upon competition, separation and aggression as part of the prevalent Western culture of dominance (Maturana & Verden-Zöller, 1996). A biology of love and intimacy as the bedrock (within fashion-textiles) can bring about profound transformations (Maturana & Verden-Zöller, 1996).

bell hooks (2002) famously taught us that “Love is a practice” as we are continually being put into situations and environments where we can lean further into love and remain open, as difficult as it may be at times, or instead turn away in fear. To love despite the chaos and destruction is a choice that has to be made consciously in each waking moment. To bring forth more sustainable, flourishing futures, there has to be a shift in how we relate to all of life, in which hooks (2002) encourages us to consider how the practice of love may help contribute to a greater understanding of the world. When discussing the current global crises, Buddhist Monk Thich Nhất Hạnh (2013) shares the following:

Real change will only happen when we fall in love with our planet.  
Only love can show us how to live in harmony with nature and  
with each other and save us from the devastating effects of  
environmental destruction and climate change.

Love is about revering the Earth as sacred, honouring the inherent dignity of all humans, and recognising the sacredness of every being and every material thing in this universe. It is woven into the very fabric of existence, present in each breath, every stone, every object, every garment, every stitch and seam. Vaughn-Lee (2019) teaches us that in “the oneness of Love, everything is included, and everything is sacred.” This dissolves the separation between humans and nature, nature and culture, and physical and spiritual realms.

Love is embodied in practice through the communities that live by the concept of *sentipensar*, meaning acting with the heart while engaging the mind, which derives from the Colombian Caribbean (Gomez, 2019). Sentipensar represents a profound worldview and approach to life that challenges the rigid divisions constructed between the mind, heart, body, and spirit imposed by modernity/coloniality (Gomez, 2019). Albarran Gonzalez (2020, p. 172) further explores this concept in her research, which introduces “epistemologies from the heart” as part of her critical research methodology, a core cosmology of the Mayan weavers with which her project collaborates. The Mayan weavers believe that thought does not reside within the mind but within the heart and that everything on this planet is alive and, therefore, has a heart (p. 173).

Notably, writer and civil rights activist James Baldwin brought forth “decolonial love” through his writings as a praxis of divulging the hierarchical power dynamics of modernity/coloniality and reorientating to alternative visions and ways of being in the world (Drexler-Dreis, 2015, p. 255). Inspired by this, if we choose love as the foundation of all liberatory practices toward ending “dominance and oppression” (hooks, 2000), what diverse practices can emerge for fashion-textiles? Ahmed (2018) explores some potential answers as she brings into the fashion classroom pedagogies based on love. Utilising hook’s (2000) notion of love as the starting point for fashion enquiry and practice, Ahmed (2018, pp. 7–8) guided students to design for those they loved.

This sparked a range of critical enquiries into the plurality of bodies, conversations about grief, relating, disability, illness, aging and more, and methods that signified the potential of love as a foundation for redirective and decolonial approaches for fashion curricula. Barry and Nesbitt’s (2023, p. 116) fashion hacking workshops further exemplify love at the core of fashion research and practice. Their workshops cultivated liberatory spaces based on love, as they brought together participants of intersectional identities and bodies to create fashion garments and artefacts alongside one another and celebrate their diversity (p. 116). The workshops allowed them to engage in practices and spaces autonomously that they are usually excluded from or find challenging, rooted in love (Barry & Nesbitt, 2023, p. 116).

Reflecting on this, I wonder, *If love was the underlying force and starting point for all, what could fashion-textiles in practice, enquiry and learning be like?*



#### **2.3.4. Mind**

The mind, encompassing our cognitive and intellectual capacities, is a powerful ally in decision-making, problem-solving, and ensuring our safety when in harmony with Spirit, Heart, and Body. However, prevailing Western ontologies have disproportionately emphasised cognitive functions, creating an imbalance that elevates rationality above other dimensions of human experience and knowledge creation. As Bai (2012, p. 312) notes, this perspective has placed the intellectual realm above matter, spirit, and nature on a pedestal. Such cognitive dominance has had far-reaching consequences, ultimately contributing to the exploitative treatment of the Earth and its inhabitants. Recognising and rectifying this imbalance is crucial for fostering a more holistic approach to our existence and interactions with the world around us.

Elder Mary Graham (2014, p. 3) unpacks that this Cartesian notion of the self, which sees itself as separate and at the centre of an immense mechanical universe, sees itself at the top of the hierarchy because it is the great possessor of mind and reason. In this philosophical framework, the universe and its inhabitants, which are more-than-human, are perceived as absolute other, as they do not possess mind and reason (p. 3). This intellectual hierarchy has segmented disconnection and alienation as the primary human experience that is very much alive today (p. 3). Graham further contends that confining consciousness solely to the domain of the mind is restrictive and represents only a fraction of the knowledge available to us (p. 3). A performative research paradigm, a vital component of the methodology for this project, further critiques the excessive dominance of language as the marker of reality derived from the mind (Barad, 2003, p. 802). Østern et al. (2023, p. 273) advocate against these modern tendencies that transform matter and bodies into linguistic constructs toward opening up possibilities for researchers to explore alternative and creative ways of conveying knowledge.

Additionally, the Western mindset has been conditioned towards hyper-individualism, competition, suspicion and scarcity, which permeate fashion-textile practices, which will be explored more thoroughly in Section 2.6. From a metadesign perspective, Giaccardi and Fischer (2008, p. 23) call for “transcending the single mind,” which entails moving beyond modern separationist tendencies that overvalue the role of the lone designer toward creating change. They instead envision diverse knowledges, capabilities and perspectives coming together (a pluriverse) and, through their multiplicity, co-creating toward more transformative

sustainability transitions (p. 23).

I bring attention to the fact that my research does not support the diminishment of mind-based knowledge, as it is undeniably vital for our existence and fashion-textile research and practice. Instead, I point toward adopting an integrated approach to knowledge creation where the mind is equally balanced with spirit, heart, and body, and not the overarching force, which has been the case until now. This balanced integration allows for a more holistic approach to understanding and engaging with the world, fostering creativity, intuition, and embodied wisdom that can lead to more nuanced, sustainable, and compassionate solutions to complex challenges. This calls for an “open mind,” which Escobar (2020b) supports as crucial in exploring alternative worlds and other realities toward a pluriverse.

### **2.3.5. Body**

The body is an active, agential and vital physical vessel that holds our emotions and thoughts, the conduit for how we experience the world in relation to other things, beings and places (Abram, 2012). Fashion-textiles are worn on bodies and created by bodies. The corporeal, sensorial, and tacit dimensions of our physical existence can provide immense and invaluable knowledge and potency within our lives and in creating.

Critical to fashion’s understandings of the corporeal has been the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945), who argued for the embodied nature of our experience with the world, where the body is not merely static matter but the connective tissue that links us to all of life: “it is the horizon latent in all our experiences and itself ever-present and anterior to every determining thought.” Merleau-Ponty’s research advanced Edmund Husserl’s theories, which, frustrated with the mechanistic ontologies prevalent in the early 1900s, began the philosophical discipline of phenomenology (Abram, 2012). Both figures instigated a push toward experiential, sensorial and subjective experiences being viewed as valid knowledge in the Western world (Abram, 2012). Divergently, Escobar (2018a) contends that Western phenomenology still departs from the same logic and practices responsible for cartesian thinking and tends to reinforce the duality it aims to transcend. Escobar (2018a) suggests that pathways toward societal transitions must incorporate non-Western traditions of embodied contemplation on lived experiences. I wholeheartedly agree with this, and

in response, I draw on, once again, Anzalda's (2015, p. 5) work toward an intersectional reading of the corporeal. She shares, "My feminism is grounded not on incorporeal abstraction but on corporal realities. The material body is centre and central. The body is the ground of thought. The body is a text." As a queer Chicana (American woman of Mexican descent) feminist, she viewed her body as a site of epistemological insight (Anzalda, 2015). In pursuing an integrated way of being in the world, Anzaldúa (as cited in Schaeffer, 2018, p. 1008) rejected the separation of body and spirit, as she envisioned the body within a larger cosmic context. This ontology further guides us toward more relational ways of living (Schaeffer, 2018, p. 1008).

Through a feminist lens, Ahmed and Stacey (2001, p. 3) consider the body as both the subject and object of knowledge creation. In the context of my research, my body is a knowledge creator, the vessel that does research, that contemplates and is intimately connected with emotions, energies, and physical and intangible elements (p. 3). On this note, scholars Tuck and McKenzie (2015) share that the body grounds and connects us with places, as experiences with landscapes are only possible through the bodily senses, which will be unpacked further in Section 2.5. Sensual perceptibility influences how one relates to a place, how one relates to oneself based upon that environment, and the many relations (human and more-than-human) that are alive there (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015).

Leading into fashion-textiles, Entwistle (2000) highlights that "clothing cannot be understood without reference to the body." Moreover, she stresses the contextual, cultural and physical emplacement of bodies. As bodies wear clothing, the larger systems that those bodies exist within, as well as these relations and complexities, must also be acknowledged (Entwistle, 2000). I think underlyingly, Entwistle (2000) is leaning towards what I articulate as a relational ontology (Section 2.6) that cannot separate garments nor the bodies they clothe from their genealogies, histories, landscapes, materials, life force and more. Ingold (2011, p. 11) tells us that our existence depends on our bodily presence in the world, what he names as 'dwelling', where we actively engage with and inhabit our surroundings rather than merely observing them, and clothes are a part of this dwelling.

Federici's (2004b, p. 16) work further advocates for a reclamation of the body's wisdom as a source of power, autonomy and health, particularly against modern patriarchal and capitalist values. Activist adrienne marie brown (2019) asks, "How do we learn to harness the power and wisdom of pleasure, rather than trying to erase the body,

the erotic, the connective tissue from society?” In answering this, Chilean artist Natalie Contesse Bamón’s (2022) thesis summary, “Rites of Menstruation—A Pathway to Knowledge, Health, and Creativity,” articulates the importance of reawakening our ability to sense into the world through the body, what she defines as *aesthetic education*:

The senses have often been seen as secondary, less relevant, categorically inferior to ideas and thoughts...The senses offer wisdom for self-discovery and understanding the visible and invisible aspects of our existence.

Bamón (2022) has spent over twenty years working with Chief Carmen Vicente, an Indigenous artist and Ecuadorian Shaman. Vicente runs a mystery school that reintroduces urban women to age-old practices, such as embroidery, that cultivates a heightened aesthetic sensibility and, in turn, facilitates their reconnection with the Earth, the cosmos, and their bodies (Bamón, 2022).

The diverse perspectives on embodiment and the body’s role in creating knowledge emphasise the importance of corporeal wisdom for fashion-textiles. By recognising the body as a site of epistemological insight and a conduit for connecting with the world and material practices, we can move toward sustainable approaches that cultivate the embodied nature of our existence and fashion-textiles.

### **2.3.6. Discussion**

This research advocates for a holistic approach to fashion-textiles, sustainability, and creative research by integrating spirit, heart, mind, and body as equally valuable knowledge pathways. By recognising the sacred essence in all creation and the interconnectedness of all life, emphasising love as a practice and foundation for transformative approaches, critiquing the overemphasis on rationality while advocating for balance, and highlighting the importance of embodied knowledge and sensory experiences, this approach challenges modern Western tendencies that prioritise intellectual aspects alone. This holistic view is a foundational ontology of a fashion-textile pluriverse, aligning with pre-colonial, First Nations, and divergent perspectives. This aims to fill a gap in current research by exploring how a holistic approach may manifest in fashion-textile theory, practice, and social learning contexts, as will be more thoroughly explored in subsequent chapters. Kulundu-Bolus (2023, p. 12)

proposes that by welcoming diverse aspects of our humanness, we can cultivate fresh perspectives on the world, potentially catalysing profound shifts in our foundational beliefs, worldviews, and behaviours in subtle yet necessary ways. Ultimately, an ontology of wholeness seeks to create more balanced, sustainable, and relationally aware fashion-textile realms that honour the interconnectedness of all aspects of existence. The following section unpacks the following pluriversal foundational ontology of autonomies.

## 2.4. Pluriversal Worldview: Ontological Redirection toward Autonomies

The previous section signalled the importance of an ontology of wholeness—spirit, heart, mind and body—toward bringing forth a holistic approach to fashion-textiles research and practice. This section builds on this by introducing the second redirective ontology for a pluriverse: *autonomies*. Autonomies are vital for a pluriverse to emerge as modernity/coloniality has instilled the one-world world that dictates how one should be and do fashion-textiles. For authentic fashion-textile expressions rooted in places and context to unfold, a reorientation toward autonomies at both the individual and communal levels is required. This section aims to unpack how a worldview of autonomies can help redirect fashion-textile practices and research toward more holistic pathways.

Autonomies are founded on the principles of critical inquiry and contextual expressions that embrace various perspectives and practices rooted in diverse contexts, knowledge systems, and experiences (Escobar, 2016, p. 29). *Buen Vivir*, a holistic notion of living well, is grounded in the guiding principles of sovereignty, autonomy and safeguarding the community's dignity (Albarram Gonzalez & Campbell, 2022, p. 3) and presents active examples of autonomies in practice. I then unpack how autonomous design nurtures the ability of all communities and individuals to actively design their own environments, technologies, and developmental projects (Escobar, 2018b, p. 143). Building upon Escobar's (2018a) elements for designing autonomously, I expand on these for a fashion-textile design context that can inspire and softly guide toward fashion-textile autonomies.

### **2.4.1. Autonomies**

Connecting into pluriversal worlds and diverse ways of creating and enquiring about fashion-textiles requires decentring modern Western ontologies that dictate particular ways of being. Within each individual, community, context, place, richness, potency, and magic lie in ontological and methodological differences. Instead, differences should be able to coexist without one being more of value or trying to submerge the other. As an industry and learning system, fashion-textiles require an opening toward more authentic expressions grounded in varied contexts, relations, places, needs, and desires, which an ontology of autonomies nurtures.

Autonomies refers to the ability of individuals and communities to govern themselves, make decisions about their affairs, and resist external control or domination (Escobar, 2021, p. 10). Philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) stated that autonomy manifests at the individual level as personal autonomy, where individuals have control over their own lives, as well as at the communal level, such as in the context of autonomous regions or nations seeking self-rule (Sensen, 2012). In the spirit of pluriversality and as expressed throughout this thesis, autonomies are plural, as multiple options guided by context, desires, needs, histories and visions exist (Esteva, 2019, p. 99).

In Escobar's research, autonomies are explored within the context of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and peasant communities and their struggles for self-determination. Escobar (2018b) criticises traditional development approaches that impose external models of progress on others, mainly subaltern groups, often resulting in cultural homogenisation, environmental degradation, and social disintegration. He articulates that autonomies have to involve the sovereignty of these communities to define their developmental pathways, drawing on their traditional knowledge, practices, and cosmologies (Escobar, 2021, p. 11). Mexican post-developmental thinker and activist Gustavo Esteva (2019, p. 99) extends the notion of autonomies as encompassing a wide range of beliefs, actions, and stances that span viewpoints surrounding sovereignty, liberation, self-determination and social movements, which all share a common thread in their quest for freedom and independence. Key anti-colonial liberation figure Frantz Fanon (1961; 1952) famously articulated in his work that freedom is at the core of being human, which all change-makers are essentially working toward. In addition, the Zapatistas, as quoted in Gahman et al. (2022), expressed that; "Freedom isn't just the

ability to decide what to do and do it. It's also taking responsibility for what you do and for the decisions you make.”

In this context, autonomies are a form of resistance to the oppressive and universal forces of extractive globalisation, modernity/coloniality, industrialisation and patriarchal orders (Escobar, 2020b; Esteva, 2019, p. 99), toward the protection of the Earth, seeds, and the commons (Escobar, 2018a). Ansari (2018, p. 2) shares that liberation cannot originate from the coloniser, as this perpetuates the colonial mindset of emancipation as it derives from the universal system and is therefore limited in imagining and enacting otherwise and instead calls for liberation movements to be rooted at the grassroots level (p. 2). Escobar (2021, p. 12) highlights the Indigenous people of Nasa in Northern Cauca in Colombia's south-west, who further centre the emancipation of Mother Earth as an integral component of their cosmology. They articulate that all living entities on the planet are currently entrapped, calling for a connection between territories grounded in the liberation of the Earth and the promotion of a pluriverse (p. 12); what they say is to “weave life in liberty” (Escobar, 2020b).

Australian First Nations Elder Mary Graham (2014, p. 3) from the Kombumerri and Wakka Wakka people shares that autonomous regard is a foundational ontology within their worldview that respects each group and individual as autonomous entities. Graham and Brigg (2023, p. 593) further add that an autonomy grounded in relationality advocates for an interconnected existence with others, which recognises the autonomy of all others whilst simultaneously protecting one's own. Scholar Lawrence Gross (2003, p. 129) (Anishinaabe), part of the Minnesota Chippewa tribe, asserts that from a Native American perspective, individuals experience significant autonomy through individual expression and acknowledgment of the community's broader needs. Such values guide relations through animosity, discord and challenges to maintain self-respect and engagement with others, resulting in political stability for the community (Graham & Brigg, 2023, p. 593).

Extending this, autonomy creates the conditions for diverse relational feedback loops to emerge that are intricate, responsive, and dynamic yet cannot unfold through a centralised or enforced point of authority (Rose, 2000). This is demonstrated through biologists Maturana and Varela's (1987) *autopoiesis*, the notion of a living systems' self-creating and self-maintaining nature. Their research outlines that autopoietic systems are characterised by their ability to produce and regenerate their components and processes from within, maintaining



their organisational and autonomous structures despite changes in their environment, and choosing when to interact and at what capacity with their environments (Maturana & Varela, 1987). In recognising that cognition is an inherent fundamental function in all living entities, relations and actions are centred rather than static representations of them (Escobar, 2018a). As autopoietic entities uphold their autonomy, this nurtures pluriversal interactions as one world does not try to engulf the other, resulting in diverse shared developments (Escobar, 2018a). This theory can be applied to the creation of redirective fashion-textile worlds.

According to Escobar (2018a), autonomies is more about creating new worlds and new social and everyday actions than changing current worlds. A well-known example of this lies in the autonomous state and community of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. In prioritising the well-being of all of life, women, and the environment, they exemplify autonomous practices that permeate their daily lives, such as organising their democratic processes collectively by pursuing hope and human dignity rather than being solely driven by economics (Esteva, 2019, p. 101). They have famously said, “La tierra manda, el pueblo ordena, y el gobierno obedece. Construyendo autonoma,” which translates as “The earth commands, the people order, and the government obeys. Constructing autonomy” (Zapatista slogan, cited in Escobar, 2018a). As part of their autonomous community, they have instilled their schooling system, an “emancipatory education” that acknowledges that education is inherently political (Gahman et al., 2022). These autonomous schools embody Zapatista freedoms, as the curriculum brings to light oppressive power dynamics and steers toward local and cultural knowledges and practices toward liberation that reject “capitalist profit logics and neoliberal ideals” (Gahman et al., 2022).

#### **2.4.2. Self-Sovereignty**

Looking at autonomies at the communal level additionally necessitates the cultivation of individual *self-sovereignty*. Self-sovereignty diverges from hyper-individualism or neoliberal notions of self grounded in competition and scarcity. Instead, it acknowledges the interconnected nature of existence while emphasising the importance of becoming one’s most entire self and taking charge of one’s place in the world. This process requires decolonial work, recognising how colonial ways of being have infiltrated external systems and individual psyches, necessitating both delinking and visioning.

Transgressive fashion-textiles can only manifest when communities and individuals are firmly grounded in themselves and their place in the world and recognise that alternative possibilities exist. This demands courage, resilience, and a sense of safety for individuals and communities to explore divergent pathways. Kulundu-Bolus (2023) argues for individual sovereignty's critical role in fostering collective transformation. She suggests that we can strengthen our ability to collaboratively create transgressive pathways by cultivating inner autonomy. This approach is critical to developing regenerative futures that break free from the constraints of modernity (p. 15). Kulundu-Bolus further posits that the erosion of individual sovereignty may hinder our collective liberation, as personal growth and self-actualisation are integral to broader societal change (p. 15). This underscores the vital relationship between individual empowerment and collective autonomy, suggesting that transformative action requires a balance of personal development and communal effort

This perspective raises crucial questions for the field of fashion-textiles:

*How can we create different possibilities if, at the individual level, modernity/coloniality still dominates the psyche? How do we become less enmeshed in modern/colonial ways of being so that autonomous ways of being can emerge?* These questions underscore the intricate relationship between individual sovereignty and collective transformation toward pluriversal fashion-textiles.

### **2.4.3. Buen Vivir**

The concept of *Buen Vivir*, “good living” or “living well,” offers a perspective on collective well-being that diverges significantly from modern Western notions. The concept of *Buen Vivir*, originating from Indigenous South American traditions, embodies a comprehensive life philosophy that prioritises individual and communal welfare, advocates for a balanced relationship between people and the environment, celebrates diversity, nurtures spiritual growth, and promotes inclusive democratic processes (Escobar, 2020b; 2021, p. 2).

*Buen Vivir* stands in opposition to contemporary and colonial models of development, specifically critiquing their obsession with expanding economies, promoting consumerist lifestyles, and treating nature as a marketable resource (Escobar, 2021, p. 2). This concept has gained such significance that it has been enshrined in the constitutions of several South American countries, including Ecuador and Bolivia,

as a guiding principle for national development (Albarrán González & Campbell, 2022, p. 3).

Furthermore, Buen Vivir confronts the prevailing idea that humans alone hold political representation and constitute the sole source of value in the world. This perspective triggers ethical and political shifts toward recognising more-than-human entities' intrinsic worth and agency (Escobar, 2021, p. 2). This philosophy incorporates diverse, concurrent, non-sequential, and often recurring historical narratives, blending concepts deeply embedded in indigenous heritage with critical viewpoints emerging from modern thought (Chuji et al., 2019, p. 111).

In the realm of design, Diana Albarrán González (Albarrán González & Campbell, 2022, p. 3) posits that a Buen Vivir-centric approach counteracts dominant design paradigms. Its guiding principles are sovereignty, autonomy, and safeguarding community dignity (p.3). Albarrán González's research explores Indigenous Mayan textile designs as inherently coded with the cosmologies of *lekil kuxlejal*, a concept similar to Buen Vivir, meaning "good life" and examines how this contributes to community health (p. 7).

The principles of Buen Vivir, with their emphasis on holistic well-being, community dignity, and harmony with nature, contribute toward a pluriversal approach to fashion-textiles, challenging dominant paradigms that honour both the human realm and more-than-humans.

#### **2.4.4. Autonomous Design**

Escobar (2018a, p. 144) introduces autonomous design as part of the broader ontological battle for communities to protect their territories and ways of life. In other words, autonomous design nurtures the ability of all communities and individuals to actively design their own environments, technologies, and developmental projects (p. 143). Autonomous design acknowledges that Indigenous peoples and local communities frequently hold extensive expertise about their surroundings and have a profound grasp of their own requirements and goals (p. 140). An autonomous ontology can transition design from a top-down, expert-driven endeavour toward one that is participatory and grounded in local practices (Escobar, 2018a).

Wiradjuri professor Norm Sheehan (2023, p. 15) asserts that Indigenous Knowledge (IK) recognises that diversity forms the foundation for creativity and adaptability and, as such, does not attempt to persuade

others to conform, advocating for autonomy as the bedrock for design. Whether it is even possible to design autonomously within the sphere of modernity/coloniality remains a crucial question (Escobar, 2018a); however, there are divergent practices and initiatives already underway, some which sit outside of the dominant paradigm, some on the fringes and others that are instilling change from within (Kothari et al., 2019, p. xxiv). Many of these alternatives are highlighted in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (2019), as Kothari et al. (eds) and other pioneers point toward post-developmental options, not as linear or step-by-step guides but as inspiration to be applied in context. Renata M. Leitão (2020) broadens this discourse beyond just designing for needs to designing a pluriverse based on desires. She centres the essence of desire, the creative life-force energy founded in excitement, willingness and vitality, as having more potential to bring about real and meaningful change rather than solely focusing on needs (pp. 255–256).

Escobar (2021, pp. 10–11; 2018) contends that autonomies encompass theory and practice centred on interdependence and designing for and alongside the pluriverse. For these concepts to manifest effectively, design education plays a crucial role. To explore this educational dimension, I draw on Freire's (2018) pedagogical work as a source of design inspiration, particularly his championing of critical consciousness and praxis. I again draw on Freire's (2018) pedagogical work as a source of design inspiration, particularly his championing of critical consciousness and praxis. Freire (2018) believed that education needs to facilitate achieving liberation through engaged pedagogies that empower students to understand the socio-political contradictions in their lives (critical consciousness) and encourage them to take action against oppressive power structures and inequalities (praxis). He argued that bringing these discourses and practices into the classroom can usher in pathways toward liberation as students become actively engaged and enlivened through non-hierarchical and meaningful dialogues, sharings and personal development that results in transforming lives and practices going forth (Gahman et al., 2022). Learning to question, challenge and examine the prevailing norms in modern-Western design industries as well as academia instils autonomous ways of being in the world, what Ansari (2018, p. 2) says redirects to not only decolonial design but also toward a pluriverse.

#### **2.4.5. Autonomous Fashion-Textiles**

A notable example of design autonomies in practice in a fashion-textiles

context can be seen through Mahatma Gandhi's (1869–1948) work towards Indian independence from British colonial rule. In his plight for liberation, Gandhi promoted national hand-spun and hand-woven khadi fabrics as part of the Swadeshi movement (produced within the country) as a socio-political and economic means of resistance. In particular, Gandhi advocated for the revitalisation of manual and artisanal labour and traditional cotton-weaving techniques, which had begun to decline in India as the British brought a mechanistic culture characterised by speed, efficiency, and control (Worth, 2023). He organised public burnings of imported textiles to symbolise defiance against importing British goods and peaceful demonstrations of protest and prayer (Worth, 2023). By defying the coloniser's products, garments, materials, and broader ontologies, they could assert their autonomy, redirecting power and sovereignty back into their hands (Bean, 1989).

As illustrated in this movement, labour-intensive craft practices resist the speed, mass-production and homogenisation of modern fashion-textiles (Sandhu, 2020, p. 175), most prominently fast fashion. Embracing ancestral ways of making and expertise while honouring individual creative expressions can be a powerful remedy for today's fast-paced product-making (de Castro, 2019, p. 9). Sustainable fashion and upcycling pioneer Orsola de Castro suggests that we all harbour communal heritages rooted in craftsmanship, which can serve as creative sparks to ignite our making abilities (p. 9).

The practice component of this research explores this more in Chapter 4, as I have utilised my ancestral skills in embroidering to explore what pluriversal fashion-textiles in practice could be. Critical to emphasise is that autonomous fashion-textiles, as I connect to them do not diminish modern and industrial technologies and tools, as these can be potent collaborators toward making pluriversally. I have experienced this through utilising digital drawing technologies blended with artisanal stitching practices on materials. Instead, what I believe is called for is wayfinding toward co-creation with these tools and technologies in diverse contexts and through diverse rhythms that autonomously arise and are not merely dictated by the one-world world of how to do fashion-textiles. In this way, and as appropriate to each individual, community and context, we can weave threads from the past into the present and future.

Concurrently, my research activities have provided concrete examples of how Escobar's (2018a) ideas on autonomous design can be applied through a fashion-textile context. The workshops and making

practices embodied Escobar's (2018a) principle that "every community practises the design of itself" by creating spaces where fashion-textiles emerged locally in response to specific contexts, histories, and relationships. Participants were encouraged to tap into their unique cultural and personal backgrounds, demonstrating how each community can choose fashion-textile practices based on their desires and needs. While rooted in specific places and contexts, the workshops and making practices also acknowledged broader global connections and influences, creating a balance between local autonomies and global awareness in fashion-textiles. The workshops, in particular, explored Escobar's (2018a) autonomous design goal of "the realisation of the communal" by grounding fashion-textile practices in a relational understanding of the world. They created temporary fashion-textile communities that fostered a sense of belonging, shared visioning, and collaborative creation. This approach emphasised the importance of community with all beings, extending beyond human participants to include materials, places, and more-than-human entities. My making practices, especially the ritual experiments and embroidered cloths, embraced Escobar's (2018a) emphasis on "ancestrality, as it emanates from the history of the relational worlds" through incorporating ancestral wisdom and sacred practices into contemporary fashion-textile creation. This research component demonstrated how design can connect past, present, and future worlds through intentional making practices. The workshops and making practices created spaces for what Escobar (2018a) might call "the relational weave" through people, Earth, more-than-humans, and materials. This approach challenged conventional production processes by reimagining them as communities where every element plays a vital part.

#### **2.4.5. Discussion**

An ontology of autonomies is essential for transitions toward fashion-textile worlds grounded in the unique cosmologies and expressions of communities and individuals in all global contexts and places. Autonomies are founded on the principles of critical inquiry and contextual expressions that embrace various perspectives and practices rooted in diverse contexts, knowledge systems and experiences, and all of these, within their difference, have the right to exist and thrive in the world (Escobar, 2016, p. 29). Buen Vivir, or collective well-being,

represents an autonomous ontology in practice by emphasising the well-being of individuals, communities, and the Earth (Escobar, 2021, p. 2). Design can contribute to creating conditions in the world that diverge from modern/colonial ways of being toward life-affirming possibilities that emphasise the importance of context and the needs and desires of each community. This can redirect design toward participatory and locally grounded practices that embrace responsible ways forward rooted in the relational web of life (Escobar, 2018a). Fast, homogenised, mass-produced products and their processes in fashion-textiles defuture (Fry, 1999). Fashion expressions, which include crafts and artisanal practices, and those rooted in ancestry, context and responsibility for the entire Earth community, guide toward a pluriverse. In this spirit, this section has highlighted that pluriversality is ultimately a practice toward liberation. Leading on, the next section explores place, a fundamental pluriversal ontology that holds all.

## 2.5. Pluriversal Worldview: Ontological Redirection toward Place

The following pluriversal ontology discussed is *place*, which explores the localities and landscapes that have held, nourished, and co-created this research. In pluriversality, where connection to context and place is pivotal, recognising each locality's diversity, richness, and aliveness is essential. This moves beyond the physical significance of places and encompasses the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual realms and how these have influenced the research. The richness, diversity, and collaborative nature of places are rarely acknowledged in the context of modern fashion-textiles, and without the Earth holding us each day, this research, along with everything else, would not be possible. This section aims to reclaim place as a vital, agentic, collaborative, and dynamic force in fashion-textiles theoretical and creative research.

The section begins by unpacking the placelessness that erodes modern Western society, attributed to Enlightenment and modern/colonial narratives of separation. By reflecting on the various locations that this research was created within, the place is explored as a vital collaborator toward conducting research and promoting more relational ways of being that are mindful of places' colonial histories. Developing relationships with place enables a custodial ethic (Graham, 2014, p. 3) that instils care for the communities of relations that exist there and the complexities of doing



ethical, relational research with places. Place and fashion have been explored in research and practice through various projects, particularly through practices of localism and bringing fashion communities together in place. I conclude this section by acknowledging the fashion (clothed) body that has been physically situated in place, doing research, doing practice, and physically, spiritually, emotionally and intellectually engaging with the place(s).

### **2.5.1. Separation from Place: Placelessness**

It is crucial to offer a broad overview of the modern Western tendency that detaches significance from place, resulting in a prevalent sense of disconnection from nature and the unique qualities of each distinct context. This detachment from place, often referred to as placelessness, is a prominent characteristic of Western modernity, as various scholars have pointed out (Escobar, 2018a, 2001; Johnson, 2012; Merchant, 2003; Parada, 2020; Plumwood, 2009, 2002; Rose, 2004; Yunkaporta, 2019). Scholars like Merchant (1989, 1995) and Johnson (2010, p. 830) describe it as a physical, cultural, and spiritual displacement that stems from the dualistic worldview separating human culture from the natural world. This ontological division severs the connection between so-called civilised society and nature, a worldview that arose from the Enlightenment metanarrative (Merchant, 1980). This division has further disconnected Western science from Indigenous perspectives and ways of comprehending the world and impeded the development of a location-based critical consciousness within academia (Johnson, 2010, p. 835).

Reconnecting with places and recognising their cultural, historical, and spiritual significances contrasts with the prevailing sense of placelessness that characterises modern existence (Johnson, 2010, p. 831). Connecting to a place or place orientation involves the capacity to attune oneself to one's environment, whether in a rural or urban setting or anywhere between.

As indicated, these pluriversal ontologies cannot be grasped overnight and require daily connection, intentionality, delinking and patience. At first, it may seem complicated, even impossible, to sense into a place and the life that exists there. A mindful engagement with place not only situates one and locates one on the Earth but also creates a more profound sense of belonging as one begins to perceive themselves as an integral part of their interconnected landscape. In this way, place cannot be separated from this research.

### **2.5.2. Research with Place(s)**

This study has been co-created in theory, practice, and primary research across Gadigal, Bundjalung, and Worimi lands, all diverse places that span the easterly coast of New South Wales within Australia. I refer to these places through their First Nations names to honour and show respect and gratitude to the original custodians of these lands and to recognise that sovereignty has never been ceded. Through this, I further acknowledge the ongoing ontological, systemic, and physical violence and displacement that continues to be perpetuated toward First Nation's peoples, their culture and cosmovisions by the dominant one-world world.

Initially, Gadigal land was the primary location for the first stage of the study, given its proximity to my residence and research activities. Then, as the pandemic arose, some of the research in the first stage occurred on Worimi lands (mid-north coast of New South Wales), on my family's regional property, approximately three hours north of Gadigal. These locations were research sites where conceptualisation, writing, and creative work occurred. Then, in the second stage, I relocated once more, and the research became based on Bundjalung land, also known as the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales. The third stage saw me relocate once again back to Gadigal. Geographic and Indigenous studies professor Jay T. Johnson (2010, p. 830) says that we actively contribute to shaping places and meaningfully imbuing them through our daily interactions. As such, all of these locations and movements played crucial roles within the research process, providing a nourishing container for day-to-day living and the scholarly endeavours of this project in both theory making practices and social learning workshops.

Unangaŋ Professor of Indigenous Studies Eve Tuck and sustainability education researcher Marcia McKenzie (2015) explain that the concept of place goes beyond the physical realm to include the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual dimensions. The intricate layers of places and their interconnected relationships became evident through the relational research practices carried out directly on and with the land. As I have conducted this research, these places have held, nourished and guided me emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, and physically. According to Johnson (2012, p. 830), place functions as a conduit for understanding, experiencing, and gaining knowledge about the world. It acts as a tangible site where daily efforts to create meaning—whether political, cultural, spiritual, ecological, economic, etc.—are played out (Johnson (2012, p. 830). This context is crucial because it also entails

colonisation genealogies, as textile artist Sera Waters (2019) unravels in “The Unsettling Truths of Settling: Ghostscapes in Domestic Textiles.” Waters discusses that Australia is filled with places she names *ghostscapes*, the remnants of settler colonisation, and denied histories still alive today. In this context, she explores how textile making can hold pasts, provoke thought, and protest toward places and the complexities held within them (p. 388). Place-based learning researcher David A. Gruenewald (2003, p. 7) expands on this by discussing that engaging with places and, thus, context is, in fact, an act of remembrance. This engagement involves connecting with the stories embedded in the location while simultaneously reinterpreting those narratives through active listening and mutual learning with that place (p. 7). This is further linked to what architectural theorist and philosopher Hélène Frichot (2022, p. 115) calls “witnessing and bearing witness.” Whilst encountering and observing some Indigenous scarred trees on Naarm (Melbourne), Frichot acknowledges the vital knowledge alive today in these places and the colonial histories that continue to permeate them (p. 115).

Johnson (2010, p. 833) asserts that “being-in-place is continually an act of engaged/active learning.” In this research, connecting to place and becoming place-oriented has been less about studying place methodologies and more about phenomenologically being with places. This approach involves various practices such as sitting, observing, listening, walking, meditating, sensing, conducting on-site practice, and contemplating the research. This experiential approach aligns with Uncle Charles Moran, Uncle Greg Harrington, and Norm Sheehans (2018, p. 74) perspective on design’s core purpose. They emphasise that design should not merely focus on identifying problems, but on establishing connections with knowledge as it manifests in the world, for which place(s) is an integral component (Moran et al, 2018, p. 77).

Recognising the importance of context for both a pluriverse and this research, Donna Haraway’s (1988, p. 581) notion of *situated knowledge* proves valuable. Haraway affirms that all knowledge is context-dependent, forming an intricate web of multispecies relations and positioning itself in partial, not universal, ways (p. 32). Anthropologist Marilyn Strathern (2018, p. 23) builds on this, suggesting that to understand knowledge generation within specific contexts, it is necessary to envision knowledge as an active participant, transcending its conventional role as a mere backdrop or resource. From this relational perspective, frameworks, methods, practices, and techniques become active collaborators in shaping new knowledge creations (p. 28), a

principle that underpins this research.

Throughout this study, inspired by Tynan's (2020, p. 166) provocation, I have continually asked myself: *"How can I be mindful of the material, political, and spiritual dimensions of the land in the places where I currently reside, make and write?"* This question has guided the place-oriented approach, emphasising the multifaceted nature of place in researching and creating fashion-textiles.

### **2.5.3. A Custodial Ethic with Place**

As already highlighted, there is an intrinsic link between notions of place and Indigenous knowledge (De Santolo, 2018, p. 204) that must be recognised. Kombumerri and Wakka Wakka elder Mary Graham (2014, p. 3) articulate the concept of a custodial ethic as one shaped by responsibility. This ethic finds expression through various means, including rituals, social structures, organisational principles, laws, and narratives, and at its core, it involves the active care and stewardship of the land and its vitality. Graham further emphasises that a place is more than just a physical location; it embodies a complex web of relations, stories, and responsibilities infused with spirit, memory, and sovereignty; each place possesses its unique voice, engendering a profound sense of belonging to that specific location (p. 3).

Ethnographer Deborah Bird Rose situates ethics as intricately tied to place-specificities, as outlined in her seminal work *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonisation* (2004). Rose advocates for a place-based ethical framework characterised by openness and receptivity to all life forms, including humans and more-than-humans. As explored throughout this research, relational ways of being with places can redirect design epistemologies and methods toward decolonising efforts (Gothe & De Santolo, 2022, p. 5; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Moran et al. (2018, p. 77) further propose that decolonising design commences by fostering synergies through building connections with countries that transcend knowledge confined solely to intellect. Place, they argue, serves as an intelligent collaborator in the design process, embodying design patterns essential for our world (p. 77). Through these interactions, bridges between Western and Indigenous worldviews can be built (Johnson & Murton, 2007, p. 121). I resonate with the assertion design researcher Jacqueline Gothe (2024, p. 109) brings forward as a call for designers to be guided "through ethical relationality on questions such as how to care for each other and the beings around us in a practice that honours place

and the complexity of the designer's position in that place.”

Settler colonialism, characterised by its authoritative decision-making, starkly contrasts with First Nations lifeways deeply ingrained in their inherent land stewardship responsibilities and promoting community well-being (Martuwarra et al., 2022, p. 2). Author of *Decolonizing Solidarity: Dilemmas and Directions for Supporters of Indigenous Struggles*, Clare Land (2015), emphasises that decolonial solidarity must be rooted in “supporting local (land) struggles,” which counters colonial thinking that asserts the insignificance and insentience of the Earth. This is further highlighted in the work of Martuwarra et al. (2022), as Martuwarra, a river located in the West Kimberley region of Western Australia, is credited as the first author of the academic article, giving voice and agency to place and the relations that occur there.

#### **2.5.4. Fashion-Textiles & Place(s)**

Engaging mindfully with a specific place, establishing meaningful connections, and nurturing relationships with it give rise to a custodial ethic, which is pivotal in guiding us toward futures that are grounded in *Earth Logic* (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, pp. 49–50), which further leads to practices of localism. Escobar (2020b) poses a critical question: “How do we move beyond occupying spaces toward co-inhabiting places?” This inquiry calls for a transformation in practices that solely rely on the global corporate marketplace. This advocates for a shift towards a diverse cosmopolitan localism (Irwin et al., 2015, p. 8) that places human and ecological well-being at the forefront, echoing the principles of localism advocated by Helena Norberg-Hodge (2019). While localism has gained traction in fashion-textiles, more investigation needs to be made into how places shape the production of fashion knowledge (Hancock, 2020). In Australia, the fashion industry often looks to Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States for direction, overlooking the richness of its unique locales as sources for inspiration toward fashion-textile practice and enquiry. Several scholarly and industry projects underscore the importance of place as a fundamental and central component in the exploration of garments and textiles. A well-known example of a fashion-textile initiative that honours place can be seen through the work of the Fibershed movement. Fibershed is a local and sustainable textile and garment production system that uses regionally sourced raw materials, such as fibres, dyes, and labour, as everything is produced within a specific geographical area (Burgess & White, 2019). Its projects involve

collaborations between farmers, designers, spinners, weavers, dyers and wearers to create sustainable and local economies (Burgess & White, 2019). Rebecca Burgess in Northern California started the movement and has since expanded into a broader network with numerous affiliate projects worldwide (Burgess & White, 2019).

Within a learning context, Rissanen and Sansone's (2019, pp. 153–159) pedagogies, as implemented within the Sustainable Systems course at Parsons School of Design in New York City, bring forward a local and relational *Earth Logic* (Fletcher & Tham, 2019) approach to design education. Substantial to their pedagogies is how they can weave the hyper-urban activities with the surrounding environment of New York, centred around “real conditions that are both local and accessible,” as the starting point for sustainable design enquiry (Rissanen & Sansone, 2019, p. 153). A further strength lay within their project-based research on the subject, which is centred around plant care and natural dye explorations that create a more comprehensive understanding of the interconnections between nature, community, society, and economies in a given place (pp. 157–159).

As follows, Kate Fletcher's Fashion Ecologies (2015–2017) research project investigated garments and the clothing practices surrounding them within an epistemology of localism. Situated in the UK town of Macclesfield, the project provides insights into the emancipatory goals of localism within the fashion industry (p. 143). It examines how the relationships between locations, nature, society, and clothing can act as a pathway to create sustainable futures (p. 144). The project's strengths lay in translating the findings into visions for fashion localism as the cumulative clothing-related activity, manifesting through a Fashion Ecologies community walk, a fashion social, and an illustrated pocket guide.

Moreover, fashion scholar Tarryn Hancock's and Anastasia Joannides' (2021) research project Urban Fkeur, which they describe as a “site-responsive walking methodology for fashion design” is similarly grounded in narratives of place, located in and responding to the urban setting of Brunswick in Melbourne. They share that all urban places offer the potential for dynamic site-responsive design and presentation approaches (Hancock & Joannides, 2021, p. 285). Through the archetype of the *urban flâneur* “urban citizen,” their work presents walking and engaging with landscapes and communities as spaces for activation toward deeper layers of place-making (pp. 285–286).

In parallel to Fletcher and Hancock, Mazzarella explores fashion,



materials, practices, and relationships in specific locations through his Making for Change: Waltham Forest project (Mazzarella, 2020). The project involved various activities to engage locals with sustainability and develop and retain creative talent in the London borough of Waltham (pp. 8–9). The quality of the project is its particular focus on engaging hard-to-reach communities, deprived youth and the unemployed of the area with sustainable fashion practices through participatory methods that give voice to those typically excluded from the contemporary fashion discourse (p. 13).

Further research projects include Katelyn Toth-Fejel's Clothing Landscapes (2019) and Courtney Shepard's thesis "Going Against the Grain: Exploring Possibilities of Refashioning Secondhand Clothing through Place, Practice, and Community" (2015). Additionally, the 2018 issue of the journal *Fashion Practice* on Localism and Fashion, edited by Kate Fletcher and Ingun Grimstad Klepp, presented localism as a movement that cultivates holistic changes for the fashion-textile industry.

While not exhaustive, these diverse research projects and initiatives, illustrate the potential of place-based approaches for fashion-textiles. They reveal how engaging deeply with local contexts can foster sustainable practices, community engagement, and divergent design methodologies.

#### **2.5.5. (Fashioned) Bodies with Place & with Research**

As we exist within the world, clothing is integral to this existence. Entwistle (2001) famously emphasised the connection between clothing and the body. The garments we wear are an extension of the self, blurring the boundaries between self and material (Negrin, 2016). In this research, my clothed body has been the vessel for researching, making, facilitating workshops, and being situated upon and communing with place(s).

Tuck and McKenzie (2015, p. 105) refer to the synergy of mind, body, and environment as *emplacement*, a concept that extends beyond embodiment by incorporating the crucial element of place. Emplacement facilitates the reintegration of the body with the mind, the land, its narratives, and the research, allowing for diverse forms of relationships to emerge (Tynan, 2020, p. 168). These sensory practices significantly influence one's relationship with a place and, consequently, one's self in response to that environment and the living entities, humans and more-than-humans, that exist there (p. 168). These intricate interactions



between the body and place lead to a deeper understanding of materiality, akin to Ingold's (2011) concept of a *meshwork*. Nayak and Jeffrey (2011, p. 293) advocate applying nonrepresentational theory (NRT) to comprehend humans and social life, as sensory corporeal experiences interlink places with materials and matter.

A massive source of inspiration throughout this research has been adrienne marie brown's book, *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* (2019), as it champions liberation grounded in joy, sensuality and pleasure. She underscores that pleasure has been exploited within capitalism and is an inherent aspect of our corporeal existence that encompasses states of vitality, awakening, gratitude, humility, joy, celebration and ecstasy and can significantly serve us in our collective pursuit for justice (brown, 2019).

The modern/colonial division between mind and matter has resulted in the devaluation and suppression of physical bodies, and with it has come a devaluation and distortion of the sensual element of our existence. Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies (2014) attribute the toxic sexualisation of bodies, primarily women's bodies, to a lack of embodied and sensual connection with our environment, a direct consequence of capitalist and patriarchal estrangement from nature. Dominant Anglo- and Eurocentric body paradigms primarily revolve around white, cisgender, able-bodied, masculine bodies, reinforcing the universalisation and normalisation of this binary perspective (Ansari, 2020, p. 289). Ansari delineates that this marginalises individuals whose bodies do not conform to or fit within these binary norms, marginalising them to the "shadow" side of the one-world paradigm (p. 289). Although recent body positivity and sensuality movements seek to reestablish a connection with the body in more diverse ways, Western society as a whole continues to dictate 'appropriate' body ideals and expressions. Ontological transitions must include pluriversal ways of relating to and being in the body so that various bodies and forms of fashion-textile expressions can emerge, exist, and flourish according to their context and autonomies.

### **2.5.6. Discussion**

This section has explored the ontology of place as a fundamental aspect of a fashion-textile pluriverse. It has been unpacked by examining the concept of place beyond its physical dimensions and its vital role in shaping research, creative practices, and sustainable approaches to fashion-textiles. Fashion's emphasis on Eurocentric values often neglects the richness and significance of all places and what they can contribute

to fashion-textile enquiry and practice. The exploration revealed the pervasive issue of ‘placelessness’ in modern Western society, stemming from enlightenment and modern/colonial narratives that separate humans from nature. In contrast, this research advocates for a renewed connection to place, recognising its spiritual, emotional, and intellectual dimensions alongside its physical attributes. A critical insight is the importance of developing a custodial ethic with place inspired by First Nations’ perspectives. This approach cultivates responsibility, stewardship, and a deep sense of belonging, crucial for decolonial efforts and sustainable fashion-textile practices.

Furthermore, discussing the clothed body’s relationship with place emphasised the importance of embodied experiences in research and creative practices. This perspective challenges dominant body paradigms and calls for more diverse and inclusive approaches to fashion-textiles. The section highlighted several fashion-textile initiatives and research projects that centre place as a core component. These examples demonstrate how localism, community engagement, and place-based learning can create more sustainable and diverse fashion-textile practices. A pluriverse advocates for diverse contexts and differences and reconnects to place as a teacher, co-creator, and nurturer of all redirect fashion ontologies. Ultimately, the ontology of place underscores its critical role in fostering a fashion-textile pluriverse. By reconnecting with the unique qualities of each locale, embracing diverse perspectives, and nurturing a custodial ethic, we can move towards more sustainable, just, and diverse fashion-textile practices that honour the interconnectedness of all life. We now focus on the final ontology of pluriversality—relationality—which centres on interdependence.

## **2.6. Pluriversal Worldview: Ontological Redirection toward Relationality**

Escobar (2018a; 2020b) has consistently emphasised the need for design to shift from mechanistic and separationist ontologies towards “the relational dimension of life.” This section aims to comprehensively explore relationality as a foundational ontology for a pluriverse, examining its correlating themes and key scholars and practitioners in the field. The discussion begins by building upon the critique of the prevalent modern/colonial worldview of separation, as introduced in Section 2.1.

This brief overview of critical concepts and ramifications underscores the necessity for a reorientation towards relational ways of being. The section then explores language as both a communicative and worldmaking tool, capable of reinforcing modern/colonial divisions or fostering a deeper intimacy with all of life. Central to this section is an in-depth examination of a relational worldview, defined as an ontology in which entities and beings, humans and more-than-humans, exist and are transformed through engagement with others (Tickner & Querejazu, 2021, p. 396). This perspective is contrasted with the modern Western ontology of separation, highlighting the ethics and practices nurtured by a relational approach and its potential to cultivate pluriversal fashion-textile practices and research methodologies. The Western perspective on relationality is introduced primarily through the lens of systems theory and cybernetics. This is followed by exploring animism as a significant theme within a relational ontology, considering its implications for fashion-textiles when all beings, environments, materials, and objects are perceived as alive and agentic. The section emphasises the importance of a resensitisation to the world, requiring a reconnection through emotional, corporeal, experiential, and intellectual ways of perceiving and sensing. This approach can open new avenues for engaging with the world, fashion-textiles, and research. Concluding the section is a discussion on moving beyond hyper-individualism towards more collaborative, co-creative, collective, and reciprocal fashion-textile exchanges. This section aims to weave together these diverse threads of relationality, demonstrating their relevance and potential transformative power in the context of fashion-textile research and practice.

### **2.6.1. A Worldview of Separation**

We are currently experiencing a profound crisis of separation from our interconnected nature with all life on this planet (Eisenstein, 2007; Orr, 2011; Vaughan-Lee, 2013). This dissociation from a relational way of life has led to severe socio-ecological destruction and imbalance, underscoring the urgency of addressing this disconnection. Building upon the discussion in Section 2.1, “Ontological Redirection,” which delineated separation, duality, and othering as manifestations of modern/colonial logic, this section further unpacks these concepts to contextualise the fourth pluriversal ontology of relationality.

Relationality asserts the inherent interconnectedness of all elements in the universe, suggesting that we are part of a complex, dynamic network of

relationships and flows (Capra & Luisi, 2015). This worldview aligns with the perspectives long embraced and embodied by many of our ancestors and First Nations peoples. However, with the rise of patriarchal societies, followed by modernity/coloniality, Christianity, and capitalism, reductionist and mechanistic worldviews emerged, severing this relational way of being in the world (Merchant, 1989).

The contrast between these worldviews is stark. While relationality emphasises interconnectedness and mutual dependence, the modern/colonial perspective promotes separation and hyper-individualism. This shift has had profound implications for how we interact with each other and the environment, shaping our social structures, economic systems, and approach to the natural world. In the context of fashion-textiles, this separation has manifested in practices that often overlook the complex web of relationships involved in creating, using, and disposing of garments and textiles. From the disconnection between makers and users to the disregard for the ecological impact of production, the industry primarily operates under a paradigm of separation.

Ecofeminist philosopher Carolyn Merchant's influential book, *The Death of Nature* (1989), was among the earliest to emphasise the scientific evolution as a pivotal moment in shaping the ontology of human separation from the broader universe. Merchant (1980) illustrates how this separation was rooted in the devaluation of women, feminine qualities, and the Earth, arguing that the emergent mechanistic worldview, which prioritised rationalism and hyper-individualism, led to the diminishment of nature and all associated experiential, embodied, spiritual, and emotional aspects of reality.

As discussed in Section 2.1, this separation is fundamentally rooted in othering, allowing individuals to distance themselves from harm inflicted on the Earth and other beings. Elder Mary Graham (2014, p. 2) emphasises that this mechanistic worldview has severed humans' connection to their true selves, fostering alienation from place, culture, and spirit and categorising everything as other in relation to the self. Central to this worldview is the perception of relationships through a subject-object dichotomy. Within this framework, all life except humans is depicted as static and dead, allowing for the classification of either subjects (humans) or objects (everything non-human) (Merchant, 1989). This mode of relating originates from the division between nature and culture, reinforcing hierarchical structures and binary oppositions while leaving little room for dynamism, emergence, or fluidity (de la Cadena, 2012, p. 352). The shift from a relational connection with the world to

this subject-object worldview has perpetuated a sense of separation and desensitisation to the interconnectedness of all life. Psychotherapist Ronald Laing (1967, pp. 23–24) characterised this alienation as a state of unconsciousness and mental detachment that starkly contrasts with our intrinsic nature, arguing that this state has arisen due to suppression, denial, and other detrimental ways of interacting in the world, now considered normal.

The crisis of separation manifests in the fashion-textile industry through extractive and exploitative practices that prioritise profit over the well-being of the Earth and all its inhabitants. This approach, rooted in a mechanistic worldview, has far-reaching consequences. Philosopher of education Haseon Bai (2001, p. 12) argues that this mindset creates a pervasive sense of scarcity, fostering hyper-consumption and the misguided belief that endless material accumulation leads to happiness, a notion explored by Macy (1991). The detachment from our innate relational nature helps explain the limited resistance to increasingly polluting and degrading practices within the fashion industry in recent decades (Jansen, 2020, p. 832). This disconnection is further illuminated by multidisciplinary designer Elpitha Tsoutsounakis (2021, p. 207), who, drawing on Val Plumwood's (1993) analysis of the nature-culture divide, argues that design often undermines the concept of a pluriverse through practices characterised by backgrounding, instrumentalism, exclusion, and universalisation. Designers Claudia Mareis and Nina Paim (2021, pp. 11–22) extend this critique, noting that conventional design thinking and strategies often treat more-than-human entities as materials to be endlessly exploited, neglecting their inherent agency and intrinsic value in the web of life. To address this, they emphasise the need for design to prioritise relationships with more-than-human worlds, thereby redirecting hierarchical tendencies (Mareis & Paim, 2021, p. 12; Tsoutsounakis, 2021, p. 207).

Addressing the crisis of separation is fundamental to reimagining fashion-textile practices. A shift towards a relational ontology opens new avenues for engaging with fashion-textiles, necessitating a profound reassessment of our connections to materials, processes, and the broader ecosystem. This reorientation invites all stakeholders in the fashion-textile industry to view their work not in isolation but as part of an intricate, living network of relationships. Through this perspective, onto-epistemologies and methods can be nurtured that honour the interconnectedness of all elements in the fashion-textile system. This shift encourages viewing each stage of a garment or material's lifecycle, from

the Earth that cultivated the fibre to its production processes to end-of-life considerations as interconnected components of a larger whole. This challenges modern/colonial ontologies to move beyond seeing fashion-textiles as being merely product-based, instead recognising them as a dynamic expression of our relationship with the world around us.

### **2.6.2. Language that Reinforces and Redirects**

The subject-object divide, fundamental to the crisis of separation, is perpetuated through language, warranting critical examination. The English language, with its Latin roots, emphasises nouns over verbs, reinforcing the notion of fixed, separate entities and deepening divisions, hierarchies, and hyper-individualisation (McDonough et al., 2011, p. 182; Richey, 2022, p. 214). This “nouncing” creates relational and contextual distancing, separating humans from everything else (Falcon, 2020, p. 40).

Language shapes human experience and constructs realities (Stout, 2012, p. 407). Maturana and Varela underscore this in *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (1987), stating that all human actions occur in language. David Bohm (1980, p. 29) argues that nouns reinforce ontological divisions, rendering some entities stationary and unchangeable. In contrast, verb-based languages like those of First Nations, Arabic, and Hebrew encapsulate actions, processes, and interactions, depicting the world as in constant movement and becoming (Stout, 2012, p. 420).

In “Returning the Gift,” Potawatomi botanist and scholar Robin Wall Kimmerer (2014, pp. 375–376) further emphasises the significant role that language and, therefore, labelling plays in shaping our relationships with the environment, suggesting that it can either establish “relationships of dominance and distance” or “relationships of relatedness and respect.” Kimmerer (2014, pp. 375–376) argues that the English language tends to objectify nature, treating it as mere property through its binary classification as either human or other than human classified as “it.” This offers limited alternatives and unintentionally confines our capacity to conceptualise relationships with more-than-humans (p. 375). Kimmerer suggests replacing the impersonal pronoun *it*, typically used for non-human entities, with a new term: *ki*, a pronoun derived from *aki*, in her native Potawatomi language, which denotes a living being of the Earth, which is also proposed as an alternative to both *he* and *she* when referring to animate non-human subjects (p. 376).

In “Captive Words: Preface to a Situationist Dictionary” (1966),



social critic Mustapha Khayati similarly introduced a novel approach to language for sustainability. He argued that as language wields immense power, transformational change requires creating a new linguistic framework that dismantles the prevailing meanings associated with existing terms and introduces fresh interpretations aligned with the emerging reality (Khayati, 1966). Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theory in the embodied philosophy of language is also worth a mention, as it highlights the body as in a continual state of perceptive reciprocity, dialogue and energetic exchange with animate relations (Abram, 2012). This relational exchange is a preverbal perception guided by sensorial experiences with life (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

In fashion-textiles, language plays a critical role as an agential force shaping systems and paradigms. In *Earth Logic: Fashion Action Research Plan*, Fletcher and Tham (2019, p. 52) unpack the potency of language, noting the power of greenwashing in contemporary fashion. They observe that mechanistic and rational reductionist language forms have dominated sustainability communications, reinforcing separationist paradigms. New forms of languaging are needed to accommodate the continual becoming of a fashion-textile pluriverse. Fashion theorist M. Angela Jansen (2020, p. 815) proposes a significant shift: changing fashion into a verb to portray the diverse range of movements its practices entail. Expanding on this idea, terms like fashioning or textiling might help elicit a different ontology for fashion-textiles, founded in relations, flows, emergence, becoming, unbecoming, vitalities, forces and more.

This research aims to illuminate pluriversal pathways for fashion-textiles, questioning how to break away from the rigid monoculture of modern/colonial separationist language. It invites critical reflection on what language we must let go of and what new language we might need to create or bring forth to foster a more relational approach to fashion-textiles. Key questions emerge from this exploration: *How do we break away from the deeply rooted and rigid monoculture of modern/colonial separationist language? What language do we need to let go of? What language do we need to bring forth, perhaps even create anew?*

### **2.6.3. Toward a Relational Worldview**

At the core of pluriversality lies an ontology rooted in interconnectedness, referred to as relationality throughout this project. The fashion-textiles industry, academia, and even many sustainability movements lack this



relational grounding necessary for shifting toward lasting and meaningful change (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p. 33). The concept of relationality recognises that all forms of life on Earth, including both human and non-human beings, are intrinsically connected and mutually dependent. Life is viewed as an intricate tapestry in constant flux, where each being and form of matter possesses vitality, sentience, sovereignty, and a unique place within the web of life. This worldview has been the foundation for ethical, moral, and sustainable modes of existence globally for millennia.

In embracing a relational ethic, individuality is not erased, but instead, interconnectedness can enhance one's self-concept and guide one toward ethical interactions with others (Yunkaporta & Shillingsworth, 2020, p. 1). In his work toward integrating Indigenous wisdom traditions into Canadian curriculum and pedagogies, Dwayne Donald (2009, p. 6), a descendent of amiskwaciwiyniwak, introduces the notion of "ethical relationality," which welcomes diversity and seeks to explore how varied histories and experiences situate individuals concerning one another. This ethical stance on relationality does not disregard or hide distinctive historical, cultural, and social contexts; instead, it places these understandings at the centre of relations (p. 6). Escobar (2018a) argues that a key component of societal change is the political mobilisation of ethical principles based on relationships and community, which are fundamental to transitions toward pluriversality. A relational ontology is foundational in the political mobilisation of sovereignty movements by marginalised Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and other communities globally that continue to confront systemic erasure in protecting their lands and cosmologies against the pervasive one-world world (Escobar, 2020b).

Kimmerer (2017, p. 371) illustrates the importance of reciprocity to a relational way of being in the world. She shares the wisdom of her Potawatomi forebears, who underline the responsibility of each individual to discover the response to "What can I give in return for the gifts of the Earth?" She continues that regardless of the gifts we possess, we are being asked to share them and to engage in a celebration that contributes to the rejuvenation of the world as a way of reciprocating for all of the gifts of nature, food, animals, matter, and for the breath of life (p. 373). Fashion-textiles can be part of this reciprocal and celebratory gift we share with the world. In line with this, *what can we give back to the Earth for all the precious gifts that fashion-textiles afford us? How do fashion-textiles become a celebration and rejuvenation of all life through their paradigms, systems, and outputs? How do fashion-textiles give back*

*more than it takes when it has taken so much?*

A relational remembering further elicits care, an essential practice for cultivating sustainable systems (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Integrating care into fashion-textiles takes us beyond surface-level sustainability ‘fixes’ toward nurturing and regenerating more profound ways of being in the world grounded in relationality (Tham, 2020). Escobar’s (2018a) call for “design that can become an open invitation for us all to become mindful and effective weavers of the mesh of life” is particularly relevant here and I extend this to: *What does being a mindful and effective weaver of the mesh of life look, feel and be like for fashion-textiles?*

In the context of fashion-textiles research, relationality offers a rich framework for understanding complex interactions. However, Querejazu (2022, p. 877) cautions against posing relationality as a fixed alternative to Western ontologies, instead emphasising the importance of “relations relating” through cosmopraxis. This approach focuses on how relations come into being through interaction, encouraging consideration of ongoing, co-creative processes (p. 878). Varela (1999, p. 8) extends this idea to include sensorial experiences in the worldmaking process, aligning with the embodied nature of fashion-textile creation. This relational ontology questions the objectification of reality, recognising our realities as continually crafted through active participation in life (Escobar, 2018a). Escobar (2018a) further cautions that there is also a risk of treating alternative ways of being as superficial additions to sustainability efforts. Embodying these concepts requires more than theoretical understanding; it demands integration through everyday practices of doing design and being human. The making practices in this research, including observation, contemplation, and textile embroidery, emerged as pathways for re-sensitising to a relational remembering with all of life.

A relational ontology further impacts how research is conducted. Wilson (2008, p. 73) emphasises that relationships are more important than things themselves in First Nations research approaches. This perspective challenges traditional Western forms of knowledge-making that categorise and separate, instead nurturing the interconnected integration of existence, emotion, knowledge, and action. In this way, this research aims to contribute to an activist knowledge ecology that moves its insights beyond academia toward more comprehensive and evolving fashion-textile worlds (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p. 41) whilst recognising

the need for designers to cultivate visceral, embodied, experiential, and spiritual connections both collectively and individually (St. Pierre, 2020, p. 12).

#### **2.6.4. Systems Theory & Cybernetics**

The concept of relationality is articulated from a Western perspective within the scholarly fields of systems theory and cybernetics. Physicists Capra and Luisi (2014) describe the emergence of systems thinking in Europe during the 1920s, where biologists pioneered the idea of unified organisms. This revealed that individual components depend on the organisation of the whole, leading to a significant shift in scientific perspectives. Fiksel (2003) defines systems thinking as exploring interactions between entities and their contexts, emphasising feedback loops that link components to a broader network. Through their pioneering work, Meadows (1999) and Macy (1991) have further highlighted the interconnectedness of systems thinking with resilience building in ecological systems. Meadows's seminal work, "Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System" (1999), encourages viewing systems thinking as an alternative perspective for understanding the world, advocating for designing and nurturing envisioned futures through this ontology. Concurrently, Macy (2007) underscores how systems thinking helps us recognise our interconnectedness with the broader world, challenging separationist tendencies and transforming self-perception.

Cybernetics, a pivotal field within western scholarship, builds upon systems thinking to understand complex systems. Cybernetics investigates how systems employ information, models, and regulatory actions to preserve their objectives while adjusting to various disturbances (Heylighen & Joslyn, 2001, p. 155). The field is divided into two main approaches: first-order cybernetics, which concentrates on system observation, and second-order cybernetics, also known as the cybernetics of cybernetics (pp. 155–157). This approach shifts from viewing entities as external to involving the observer in the observation process, creating a reciprocal exchange of relations (von Foerster, 1995). Scientist Heinz von Foerster (1995) argued that the pursuit of objectivity often serves to evade accountability, suggesting that second-order cybernetics offers a framework for analysing and creating alternative systems and paradigms. This self-reflexive approach could lead to more conscious and responsible practices within fashion-textiles as second-

order cybernetics mainly challenges fashion-textile researchers and practitioners to recognise their role as active participants in the systems they study and design.

This further aligns with complexity theory, which explores the emergence of form and its ability to create unity and stability through the interplay of organisation and chaos in living systems (Escobar, 2018a). Even though these Western expressions of relationality challenge the belief that ultimate reality can be fully comprehended through reductionist scientific methods (Escoba , 2018a), they lack a more integrated approach to connecting with relationality, which also encompasses the emotional, bodily and spiritual aspects. This raises several questions for further exploration, such as: *“How might we integrate systems thinking and cybernetic principles with more holistic, embodied approaches to fashion-textile design and research?”* and *“What new methodologies might emerge from integrating systems more holistic, embodied approaches to fashion-textile design and research?”*

### **2.6.5. Animism**

The modern Western separationist ontology, which places humans at the top of a hierarchical structure and views all other species as lifeless objects, perpetuates division and unequal treatment of all other-than-humans on our planet (Bai, 2001, p. 8). In contrast, First Nations and pagan cultures, some of which are active today, alongside several scholars, philosophers, scientists, and designers such as Heesoon Bai (2015), Louise St. Pierre (2020), Marisol de la Cadena (2010), Amaya Querejazu (2024) and Isabelle Stengers (2012) centre a relational and animist onto-epistemology that sees the Earth and all life and matter as vibrant and alive (Bai, 2001, p. 7). St. Pierre (2020, p. 138) furthers this to say that “all beings have knowledge and agency.” This is articulated through what is referred to commonly as animism. In the context of this research, I use the term more-than-human, which encompasses all entities, beings, and phenomena that are not human, including animals, plants, microorganisms, landscapes, materials, and even conceptual or spiritual entities (Price & Chao, 2023, p. 180). In the context of this research, more-than-human is used to acknowledge the agency, significance, and inherent value of non-human elements in fashion-textile systems. This concept challenges anthropocentric worldviews by recognising the active participation of these entities in shaping our world and practices (p. 4). This animist perspective has profound implications for fashion-textiles

research and practice. It invites reconsidering how we interact with materials, processes, and the broader ecosystem in which fashion-textiles exist. By incorporating more-than-human perspectives, this research contributes to a more holistic understanding of sustainability in fashion-textiles, one that goes beyond human-centric concerns to consider the well-being and agency of all entities involved in the creation of garments and textiles, which opens up new possibilities toward more holistic approaches.

This animistic perspective fosters respect and reverence for entities beyond the human realm (St. Pierre, 2020, p. 7) and encourages practices centred on care and reciprocity for all life (Kimmerer, 2013; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Much of Plumwood's (2009, pp. 111–127) work aimed to highlight that nature possesses its expressive voice, distinct from human-centred narratives. Through her philosophical and ecological perspective on animism, Plumwood (p. 121) championed the concept of *kinship* with what she termed “earth others”—non-human entities she viewed as essential partners in ethical, cooperative, and mutually advantageous pursuits. She argued that recognising these relationships is vital not only for such collaborations but also for developing a deeper connection with and understanding of one's environment (p. 121). By embracing an animist way of being, humans can dispel the misconception of mindlessness not through a logical explanation of consciousness but by experiencing themselves as part of a world already teeming with mindful and dynamic interactions (p. 176).

In multispecies communities, listening and, in a broader sense, being attentive is crucial as it allows for intra-action, where actions occur within a network of relationships, making each participant an integral part of the larger fabric of life (Andersona, 2020). In design, notions of separation and segregation can be deconstructed by reorientating toward more-than-human relationships in research and practice (Tsoutsounakis, 2021, p. 210). Tsoutsounakis demonstrated prioritising more-than-human design methods through her project Unknown Prospect, which she undertook in collaboration with ochre, a mineral compound from the Earth (p. 210). This is further illustrated in “An Interview with River Dean,” as Fletcher (2020) reflects upon her experience communicating and listening to a local waterway and the tensions and possibilities. She questions how more-than-human entities that do not communicate in human ways yet are deeply entwined in fashion systems can elicit voice and agency (p. 961). Such explorations, some of which have been undertaken through the practice component of this research (Chapter 4), can diverge

sustainability efforts beyond just humans toward encompassing all of existence (Vaughan-Lee, 2021).

Contemporary conceptualisations of animism considerably depart from earlier colonial interpretations (Rose, 2013, p. 132). The concept of animism can be traced back to nineteenth-century Western anthropological studies, which aimed to establish an evolutionary hierarchy within human societies and perpetuated clear distinctions between “primitive” cultures and “civilised” societies, reflecting its duality (p. 96). Contemporary animists instead emphasise that First Nation and pagan cultures do not formulate their concept of consciousness by projecting a human-centric paradigm onto nature; instead, they view humans as a minor subset within a broader realm of consciousness coextensive with the natural world (p. 132). Rose further emphasises that humans can expand their knowledge not by attempting to step outside the system and exert power over it but through a more profound interconnection and immersion into the “creature-languages of Country” (p. 104). Based on her discussions with First Nations Elders, she encourages us to pay attention:

It seems that if communication is to occur, people have to learn to understand many, many other creatures, paying attention, for example to the multitude of creature languages—the sounds, smells, and behaviour, the flowering trees, the seasons, and the comings and goings of birds, insects and other creatures, and the silences too. (Rose 2013, p. 105)

Extending this, it is vital to recognise that discussions about animism must consider matter, objects, and garments, recognising their value beyond utilitarian function. Amie Berghan (2020, p. 11) illustrates how animism within the Māori worldview extends to significant items such as *kākahu* (garments). These garments are deeply intertwined with the spiritual realm through the *whakapapa* (genealogy) of the natural materials from which they are created, serving as vessels for communication of “ancestral knowledge, practices, and values” (Berghan, 2020, p. 11). In the Indigenous Puruh tradition of Ecuador, dress may not possess the same inherent power as the natural world, yet its significance lies in its connection to nature through its embroidery, colours, and fabrics, making this relationship potent, active, and culturally influential (Parada, 2020, p. 236). Sidelining the aliveness and sacredness of objects or garments diminishes the power of matter in making worlds, which further denies a complete relational comprehension of worldmaking (Tickner & Querejazu, 2021, p. 397).



This then severs designers' connection with what they design and make and the ontological ramifications of their designs on the world. Some First Nations and pagan groups have broadened their animist cosmologies to recognise further animacy and their relations with spirits, deities, ancestors and other beings (Querejazu, 2024, p. 6). However, as Law (2015, p. 127) reminds us, many of these conversations remain relegated to one-world world identifications of stories, myths, and cultural beliefs, denying their pluriversal realities.

In the discourse on animism, it is crucial to consider the current discussions on *new materialisms* and their role in underpinning and, in some ways, falling short of this conversation. New materialism, a Western scholarly field, explores the intricate, embodied entanglements between material and immaterial, humans and non-humans, and social, physical, and cultural elements, as well as the meanings derived from these connections (Bruggeman, 2022, p. 153). Political theorist Jane Bennett (2010), a prominent figure in this field, characterises all matter as possessing agency, vibrancy, and vitality. Building on this, Karen Barad's (2015, p. 389) work in physics revealed that seemingly inert matter is in constant motion, composed of dynamic particles forming a patchwork. Barad (2007, pp. 136–137) termed this concept *agential realism*, challenging the traditional Western notion that relations follow *relata* and asserting that matter is neither fixed nor predetermined.

Significantly, Barad's research led to conceptualising an “ethical-onto-epistemology,” merging ethics, ontology, and epistemology (Barad, 2007, p. 90). This perspective emphasises that ethics entails “response-ability”—the capacity to respond to the other—as responsibility is inherently woven into the ongoing interactive development of the world (p. 90).

While these new materialist perspectives highlight inherent relational aspects between materials, their inherent forces, and humans and are of value to the discussion on animism, a closer examination reveals some significant factors that have been overlooked. While expanding our understanding of agency and vitality in matter, the new materialist approach still needs to fully capture the depth of animistic relational worldviews that First Nations and traditional cultures have held for millennia. The limitations of new materialism in fully addressing animistic perspectives include its grounding in Western academic traditions, which may inadvertently perpetuate certain colonial mindsets. Jacquelyne Kibler's (2022) doctoral thesis highlights a critical oversight in new materialism: the exclusion of Indigenous voices, despite their



millennia-old deep relational ontologies with matter, materials, and the ecological world. Western epistemic and onto-epistemological dominance are reinforced by framing these theories as “new” within academia (Kibler, 2022, p. 10).

Māori Professor Brandan Hokowhitu (2020, pp. 131–132) characterises new materialism as another instance of “exaggerated claims of Western discovery,” akin to the “emperor’s new clothes.” Kim TallBear as cited in Hokowhitu (2020, p. 135) observes that historical Euro-American thinkers erased Indigenous perspectives to de-animate the material world, while contemporary scholars now attempt to re-animate it, perpetuating a cycle of erasure. There is also the potential oversimplification of complex, culturally specific understandings of animism and the risk of appropriating Indigenous knowledge without fully acknowledging its origins and context. Elizabeth Anderson’s (2020b, pp. 205–216) research on material spiritualities notes new materialism’s tendency to omit spiritual dimensions of life, furthering Western epistemologies that relegate spirituality to organised religion or the margins of discourse (Tickner & Querejazu, 2021, p. 395). Despite these limitations, new materialism offers valuable insights that can complement and enrich our understanding of animism, particularly in the context of fashion-textile research and practice. While new materialism is frequently referenced in fashion-textile and sustainability discussions, there is a need for its reconfiguration beyond Western conceptualisations (Todd, 2016; Smith, 2012). This reconfiguration should honour the roots of these ideas in First Nation and spiritual onto-epistemologies, actively working toward a pluriversal and decolonial turn in academia (Kibler, 2022, p. 16).

Embracing an animist worldview can catalyse a profound shift towards more holistic fashion-textile practices. This perspective, which views the world as alive and sentient, challenges the industry’s current industrial and capitalist paradigms that often disregard the Earth’s agency and the value of non-human entities. Adopting a relational worldview focused on care, reverence, reciprocity, and co-creation invites a reimagining of the entire fashion-textile ecosystem.

This raises critical questions: *How might our fashion-textile paradigms, systems, and expressions transform if we embraced a relational worldview focused on care, reverence, reciprocity, and co-creation alongside all beings and matter on this Earth? What does it mean to elicit an animist worldview for fashion-textiles? If garments, textiles and tools are alive, how do I create, communicate, relate, and engage with them?*

### **2.6.6. Re-Sensitisation to Life**

St. Pierre (2019, p. 22) suggests that attuning to animism requires quieting the mind to sense the life in more-than-human worlds, existing in varied rhythms and tones of permeability. This process of re-sensitisation to life counters the state of desensitisation, or anaesthesia, instilled by modern/colonial, patriarchal, and hyper-industrial ways of being (Buck-Morss, 1981, p. 190). Philosopher Walter Benjamin observed that the dominant paradigm of his time (1892–1940) aimed to numb bodily senses through its systems and structures (p. 190). Buck-Morss adds that while this continues in modern society, the primary objective now is to revive the capacity to perceive and sense the world (p. 190). Perceptibility plays a crucial role in our relational connection with the world, extending beyond the mind to encompass physical, emotional, and spiritual receptivities. This research aims to reorient toward this perceptibility through theoretical groundings that redirect toward divergent pluriversal ontologies. Through primary workshops, it employs embodied, heart-centred, and experiential methods of making and engaging relationally with others.

Expanding on Escobar's (2018a) notion that "To know is to transform yourself and the unfolding universe," this research proposes that to sense and perceive is to transform yourself and the unfolding universe. This perspective raises critical questions: *How can we restore our ability to sense the world and all of life around us? How does this become embodied in the day-to-day? How do fashion-textiles become an active collaborator in this re-sensitisation?*

### **2.6.7. Beyond Hyper-Individualism**

A relational perspective views everything as inherently interconnected while embracing diversity within systems and individual entities. This ontology challenges the prevailing hyper-individualism dominant in contemporary Western society, redirecting focus from the individual to the communal and collaborative elements of existence.

The fashion-textiles industry and academia often operate within hierarchical structures that herald the designer as an apex, disconnected from the vast network of human, Earth, and more-than-human relations required in creation (von Busch, 2020). Anglo-European-North American fashion-textile systems perpetuate this glorification of hyper-individualism

with little focus on relational contexts (Odabasi et al., 2023, p. 356). Akomolafe (Schrei, 2023) reminds us that we are part of a continuous web of relationships. In many non-Western collectives, the concept of the individual is fundamentally different or non-existent, as individuals are in constant relationship with their communities, kin, nature, ancestors, and matter (Escobar, 2018a). Significantly, breaking out of individual dominion does not diminish personal creativity, authenticity, or expression. Instead, it calls for divergent approaches that value and honour the entire ecosystem of life contributing to fashion-making. This perspective encourages investigation of individuality's role in creating relational dynamics in fashion-textiles. It prompts the question: *What could individual creative expression look like within a relational framework for fashion-textiles?*

An exemplar of this relational approach is Fletcher and Fitzpatrick's (2024, p. 2) exploration of braiding as both a method and a metaphor for relational fashion research. The braiding process interweaves different fashion-textile knowledge and experiences, valuing embodied knowledge, contexts, places, sensorial experiences, emotions, and experiential logic. The braiding is enriched through its exchanges and dialogues with others (p. 9). Aligning with a pluriverse, braiding celebrates the interrelatedness of all participants' narratives, experiences, and contexts through their differences (p. 2).

By embracing such relational approaches, fashion-textiles can move beyond hyper-individualism towards practices that foster care, reverence, reciprocity, and radical responsibility for all life. This shift has the potential to elicit relational ways of being, doing, and thinking about fashion-textiles.

### **2.6.8. Discussion**

This section has explored relationality as a fundamental ontology for a fashion-textile pluriverse, challenging the prevailing worldview of separation that underpins many of the unsustainable practices in the industry. As separation, disconnection, and unsustainability permeate the world, a relational worldview can redirect toward interconnected ways that foster care, reciprocity, reverence and radical responsibility for all of life. Relationality is a fundamental ontology of a pluriverse that can guide toward divergent behaviours, beliefs and paradigms for fashion-textiles more compatible with sustainable transitions. The worldview of separation arose with modernity/coloniality, patriarchy and

industrialisation, which ushered in the nature-culture divide characterised by backgrounding, instrumentalism, exclusion, and universalisation (Plumwood, 1993). These profound consequences on the world and fashion-textiles highlight the need for restoring an interconnected way of being in the world and resistance to dominant paradigms. The one-world world continues to be enforced through our main communicative channel of language, particularly those derived from Latin, such as English.

In contrast, language that emphasises its relations, such as First Nation languages, creates worlds grounded in interconnection and non-hierarchical equitable relations between humans and more-than-humans. A relational ontology acknowledges and embodies that all life, human and more-than-human, including matter, is entwined in a universal web of interdependent interconnections. These relations are constantly evolving, emerging, negotiating, and becoming alongside one another, informing mindful and ethical action to be in the world and create fashion-textiles. Systems theory and cybernetics have expressed these relational ideas in the Western world, transforming the scientific domain beyond mere reductionist and mechanistic methods (Escobar, 2018a). Sensing into the Earth, every being and all matter as alive, possessing agency and sentience, animism decentres the human and anchors in relational practices of care, regeneration, listening and co-creation, so needed for our world. To start attuning to these vibrant pulses, a re-sensitisation that perceives and senses into the world through the heart, spirit, mind and body is required. Moving beyond a hyper-individualist approach to being and doing fashion-textiles opens up new avenues for collaboration, co-creation, sharing, listening, co-sensing and co-envisioning with human and more-than-human worlds. Embracing a worldview of relationality foreshadows a cultural shift that can guide us toward more equitable and diverse fashion-textiles practices rooted in a pluriverse. Ultimately, this section underscores the potential for a relational ontology grounded in a pluriverse to redirect fashion-textiles towards more sustainable options. This calls for a profound reconsideration of how we engage with materials, processes, and each other in creating and consuming fashion-textiles, emphasising care, reverence, reciprocity and responsibility for all of life.

## 2.7. Conclusions

This contextual review has thoroughly examined the necessity for an ontological redirection toward a pluriverse in fashion-textiles, exploring four underlying ontologies: Wholeness, Autonomies, Place, and Relationality. The research argues that addressing the unsustainable practices in the fashion-textile industry requires a fundamental shift in our ways of perceiving and relating to the world. The review highlighted how modern/colonial, patriarchal, capitalist, and separationist values shape contemporary life and fashion-textiles in ways incongruent with holistic sustainability. These prevailing universalising ideologies are insufficient for addressing the multifaceted nature of life on Earth. Embracing alternative possibilities demands more than reconsideration; it requires a profound transformation of our foundational ways of being.

The concept of a pluriverse is proposed as a cosmological option for practicing fashion-textiles grounded in care, reverence, reciprocity, community, and responsibility. A pluriverse encompasses multiple worldviews and realities, redirecting away from destructive ways of being toward diverse fashion-textile imaginings. This concept is deeply entwined with decolonising efforts and aims to decentre modern/colonial power structures and promote diverse onto-epistemologies.

Wholeness has been explored as an integrated methodology for fashion-textiles, advocating equal consideration of spiritual, emotional, cognitive, and corporeal aspects of existence. This challenges the Western paradigm that overemphasises intellectualism by acknowledging the inherent sacredness in all things, promoting love as a transformative practice, balancing rationality with other forms of knowing, and emphasising the significance of bodily wisdom and sensory perception.

The ontology of autonomies has been examined for its importance in fostering diverse and authentic expressions in fashion-textile contexts. This approach is rooted in critical thinking and context and embraces varied perspectives and practices, affirming their right to coexist. Concepts like Buen Vivir exemplify this philosophy, prioritising collective well-being. The exploration highlighted the importance of self-sovereignty, critical education, and ancestral craft techniques in resisting oppressive systems and nurturing diverse fashion-textile practices.

Place has been explored as the following fundamental ontology for a fashion-textile pluriverse, emphasising its role in contextualising and co-creating research. This concept extends beyond physical dimensions, encompassing spiritual, emotional, and corporeal aspects and historical narratives. By highlighting the importance of diverse locales, place

challenges the Eurocentric focus prevalent in fashion-textiles and advocates for a deeper connection with the places that hold us and all that we do.

Relationality has been examined as the fourth core ontology for a fashion-textile pluriverse, challenging the prevailing separationist worldview. The discussion traced the roots of separationist thinking, highlighting the need to restore interconnected ways of being. It introduced concepts like animism and systems theory to illustrate the interconnectedness of all entities, emphasising the need for re-sensitisation to the world around us. Moving beyond hyper-individualism, the research suggests that fashion-textile enquiries and practices can evolve towards more collaborative, context-aware approaches.

Ultimately, the research presents pluriversality as an option and tool toward liberation, reorienting fashion-textiles toward a holistic kind of sustainability aligned with *Earth Logic's* (Fletcher & Tham, 2019) values. It calls for rethinking traditional design industry norms and educational frameworks to allow heterogeneous fashion-textile onto-epistemologies to unfold contextually. Now that the research context has been established, the following pages present a glossary of the key terms and concepts needed to understand the theory, alongside a list of the anchoring pluriversal concepts that have emerged as a result of undertaking the theoretical investigation. Having set up these conceptual precedents for pluriversal fashion-textile, Chapters 3 and 4 explore how this may manifest relationally with others through experiential workshops and interactive making practice.

## Glossary

### Concepts that are needed to understand the Theory

Below are keywords that I use throughout the thesis. Their definitions have been cultivated through the past almost four years of research through other scholars and experientially through making and facilitating workshops.

#### *autonomies, liberation, sovereignty*

These three interconnected concepts central to pluriversal approaches in fashion-textiles refer to the emancipation from oppressive systems and the freedom to express one's authenticity through diverse onto-epistemologies and methodologies. The concept of sovereignty underscores the entitlement of both individuals and collective groups to retain authority over their cultural expressions, assets, and means of production. Autonomies acknowledge the diverse, self-governing ways of being and creating in fashion-textiles that resist homogenisation and honour diverse knowledges and practices.

#### *Eurocentrism*

A worldview that places European (and, by extension, Western) culture, history, and ontologies at the centre of understanding and interpreting global phenomena. In fashion-textiles, Eurocentrism manifests in the dominance of Western design aesthetics, production methods, and use patterns. This perspective often marginalises or overlooks non-Western traditions, knowledge systems, and practices in the field.

#### *fashion-textiles*

An interconnected field encompassing the design, production, and use of textiles within the fashion industry and fashion and textile learning systems. This term recognises the inseparable relationship between fashion and textiles, acknowledging that textiles are not just materials for fashion but integral to the conceptualisation, creation, and significance of clothing and fashion systems.

#### *First Nations*

A term used to describe the original inhabitants of a land, particularly in the context of countries colonised by European settlers. This research primarily refers to the First Nations peoples of Australia but can also encompass other peoples globally. At times, this term is used interchangeably with Indigenous. Bundjalung Country is situated within



the northern coastal areas of New South Wales and parts of southern Queensland, Australia. Gadigal are the First Nations traditional custodians of the inner Sydney area, part of the larger Eora Nation on the east coast of Australia. Throughout the thesis, First Nations place names are used throughout the writing as a mark of respect and reverence. Worimi are the traditional First Nation custodians of the Port Stephens area in New South Wales, Australia.

#### *modernity/coloniality*

I use the term modernity/coloniality, following the practice of other decolonial scholars (Escobar, 2018a; Maldonado-Torres, 2017, pp. 547–554; Mignolo, 2008, pp. 12–52, 2007, pp. 449–514; Vázquez, 2009, pp. 109–115). Modernity refers to the post-enlightenment era characterised by notions of progress, rationality, and individualism. Coloniality describes the ongoing legacy of colonialism in contemporary power structures, knowledge systems, and cultural practices. In fashion-textiles, this concept highlights how modern industrial practices and Western-centric design often perpetuate colonial mindsets, marginalising and othering divergent First Nations and non-Western approaches.

#### *one-world world*

This concept was coined by sociologist John Law (2015), who criticised the dominant globalised worldview that assumes a single, universal reality based on Western, modernist, and capitalist principles. It refers to the modern/colonial domination that attempts to reduce diverse territories and cultures into a singular way of being (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018, p. 3). This paradigm, also known as universalisation, establishes an ontology that influences mode n existence by asserting its authority and absorbing or erasing alternative worlds and possibilities (Escobar, 2020b). This research challenges this concept by exploring pluriversal approaches that recognise and value diverse, ecological, and ontological perspectives in fashion-textile practices.

#### *ontology*

Ontology examines the fundamental nature of being, existence and reality itself. In this research, ontological considerations explore diverse ways of understanding reality about fashion-textiles, recognising various worldviews, particularly pluriversal perspectives. Ontologies examine how our understanding of reality shapes approaches to sustainability and design in fashion-textiles, challenging dominant Western views that

separate humans from the rest of existence. This approach critically examines and potentially transforms fundamental assumptions about reality underpinning current fashion-textile practices.

#### *more-than-human*

A term that encompasses all entities, beings, and phenomena that are not human, including animals, plants, microorganisms, landscapes, materials, and even conceptual or spiritual entities (Price & Chao, 2023, p. 180). In the context of this research, more-than-human is used to acknowledge the agency, significance, and inherent value of non-human elements in fashion-textile systems and implies a wide swath of life that does not need to relate to the human. This concept challenges anthropocentric worldviews by recognising the active participation of these entities in shaping our world and practices.

#### *place/place-based*

Concepts that recognise the complex web of relationships, histories, ecologies, energies and cultural significances defining a particular place and environment. In fashion-textiles, these approaches honour local diversities, resources, and knowledge systems. This emphasises creating and enquiring about fashion-textiles in ways deeply connected to local ecosystems, practices, life forms, the community and contextually relevant design.

#### *relationality*

A principle emphasising the interconnectedness of all beings, systems, and phenomena. In this research, relationality refers to the web of connections between humans, non-humans, materials, processes, places, and more for a fashion-textiles context. Relationality challenges individualistic paradigms and recognises the inherent spiritual, emotional, and physical bonds within the fashion-textile ecosystem. Relationality grounds this research's approach to sustainability and design, which acknowledges the interconnected nature of all of life.

#### *social learning*

Social learning relates to the workshops conducted in this research through collaborative participation in communities of practice where knowledge emerges from interactions between participants, materials, and contexts. As Wenger (1998) explains, this process enables participants to engage in new activities, perform new tasks, and develop shared understandings through collective explorations.

*sustainability*

An expansive, relational concept that recognises the interconnectedness of all of life, transcending traditional environmental and social boundaries.

Grounded in a holistic ontology drawn from First Nations and ancient wisdom, sustainability in this research is presented as a dynamic, reciprocal process of mutual flourishing that dissolves artificial distinctions between human and more-than-human entities. Sustainability integrates spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical dimensions, where it is an ongoing, co-creative dialogue of interdependence where the well-being of all entities and communities—whether human, animal, plant, landscape, cosmic system and more—is fundamentally entangled with the broader ecological web (Kimmerer, 2013; Escobar, 2018). This perspective advocates for a regenerative approach that sees sustainability as a continuous engagement of care.

*TAFE*

TAFE (Technical and Further Education) refers to the Australian system of vocational education and training institutions. TAFE represents a significant part of the fashion-textile education landscape in Australia, offering hands-on training in design, production, and technical skills.

*transformative learning*

In the context of this research, transformative learning represents a profound educational experience that fundamentally redirects ontological foundations, challenging deeply ingrained assumptions about fashion-textiles through experiential approaches. Mezirow (2000) describes this as a process that transforms our frames of reference to become more open and reflective, facilitating the deconditioning from colonial perspectives toward reimagining something different.

*Western*

In this research, Western refers to the cultural, philosophical, and societal paradigms that originated primarily in Europe and North America and have become globally influential through colonisation, industrialisation, and globalisation. This encompasses ideologies rooted in the enlightenment, capitalism, and scientific materialism. This term critically highlights the limitations of dominant one-world global systems.

*wholeness, holistic, integrated*

*Wholeness, holistic* and *integrated* are used interchangeably throughout this

research. This approach recognises the interconnectedness of all aspects of life, encompassing a balanced way of being in the world that includes spiritual, emotional, mental and physical knowledge. This emphasises considering full-spectrum impacts and relationships in all processes, acknowledging that true sustainability and well-being emerge from balanced, integrated approaches that honour the complexity and fullness of all parts of being.

### **Anchoring Pluriversal concepts emerging from the theory**

#### *cosmos, cosmology, cosmovision*

*Cosmos* refers to “the times/spaces realm of dimensions (human, nature, spiritual, physical) in which societies organise their lives according to basic assumptions about reality and their beliefs on how these realities come to be” (Querejazu, 2022, p. 877). In this research, this is understood as a complex, pluralistic ethos of interconnections. *Cosmology* describes the study or system of beliefs about the universe’s nature, origin, and structure. It encompasses the basic assumptions different cultures and societies hold about reality and how these realities come to be (p. 877). *Cosmovision*, often used interchangeably with worldview, represents a culture’s comprehensive understanding of the cosmos and humanity’s place within it. It shapes how societies organise their lives, relationships with nature, and spiritual practices.

#### *diversity, difference, divergence*

Interconnected concepts that are central to pluriversal approaches in fashion-textiles. *Diversity* refers to the wide variety of onto-epistemologies and methods in fashion-textiles globally. *Difference* acknowledges the unique characteristics and perspectives that distinguish various approaches, emphasising the value of non-homogenised practices. *Divergence* describes moving away from dominant, standardised models towards multiple, context-specific ways of engaging with fashion textiles. Together, they celebrate the multiplicity of human creativity and knowledge systems, challenging the one-world paradigm. In this research, they underscore the importance of fostering and maintaining a wide range of approaches to fashion-textile design, production, and consumption that honour local ecologies and diverse ways of knowing and being in the world.

#### *embodied, embodiment*

An approach or state that integrates spirit, heart, mind and body, recognising the inseparable nature of physical experiences, emotions, and cognition. This research refers to ways of knowing, creating, and engaging with fashion-textiles that involve

sensory experiences, intuition, bodily and spiritual wisdom, which moves beyond conceptual articulations of ideas toward embodied experiences with them. Embodied practices acknowledge that knowledge and understanding are not purely intellectual but are deeply rooted in lived, physical experiences and interactions with materials, processes, and environments.

### *emergence*

Emergence describes the organic arising of complex systems, patterns, or properties from various relations. In this research, emergence refers to the unexpected outcomes, insights, and unfoldings that arise through engaging with pluriversal approaches in fashion-textiles. In doing so, it acknowledges that new forms of knowledge, practices, and understandings can surface from the interplay of diverse perspectives, materials, and processes when outcomes-based goals are let go of. Emergence emphasises the dynamic, often unpredictable nature of creative and research processes. In fashion-textiles, this concept encourages openness to unforeseen possibilities and the cultivation of conditions that allow for new and divergent practices.

### *knowledge*

In this research, knowledge encompasses diverse ways of knowing, including embodied, experiential, intuitive, and spiritual forms of comprehending the world and fashion-textiles. Knowledge is contextually situated, relationally constructed, and often deeply connected to specific places, practices and histories. This expanded view of knowledge challenges the dominance of Western epistemologies in fashion-textiles, extending beyond purely intellectual or academic comprehensions and acknowledging the validity and importance of First Nations, traditional, and localised knowledge systems. In fashion-textiles, this includes tacit knowledge embedded in making practices, cultural wisdom passed through generations, and ecological understanding derived from long-term relationships with specific environments.

### *worlding, world-making*

A concept that refers to the ongoing, active processes through which worlds are created, sustained, and transformed. In the context of this research, it describes how fashion-textile practices can contribute to shaping realities, values, and ways of being in the world. Worlding emphasises the performative and relational nature of existence, recognising that our actions and choices in design, production, and consumption actively construct our worlds (Willis, 2006, p. 70). This perspective challenges the notion of a fixed, pre-existing reality conducive to modern/colonial ontologies. Instead, it highlights the potential for fashion-textiles to participate in creating diverse and holistic worlds. This aligns with pluriversal approaches by acknowledging multiple ways of world-making across different contexts.

## ***Chapter 3. Workshops: Engaging Communities with Pluriversal Fashion-Textiles***

### **3.1. Introduction: Workshops that Relationally Engage Participants with Pluriversality**

In the project's second year, I expanded the research beyond individual exploration to involve diverse participants through workshops. This shift aimed to introduce pluriversal approaches in fashion-textile practices to others, observe how these concepts manifest in collective experiences, and explore methods participants might adopt for more relational design and inquiry. Moving from solo research to group participation, I sought to experiment with creating opportunities for shared engagement with the ideas I had been investigating, enabling a richer exploration of relational approaches and their broader application in fashion-textiles.

Over nine months, four workshops were conducted, three in person and one virtually, with a mix of fashion and textile practitioners, educators, researchers and students. Building on the redirective agenda of the research, as well as the first year's design experiments and pluriversal theories, I introduced participants to various relational, embodied, contemplative, animist and material processes. Embedded within a performative research paradigm, the workshops aimed to move beyond the confines of traditional qualitative methods, challenging them and exploring new ways of understanding (Østern et al., 2023, p. 272) and relating to sustainable fashion-textiles. Aligning with performative research and the methodological premise of relationality, enaction and emergence, the workshops were analysed to identify and chart the dynamics these spaces generated (p. 281).

As this project is grounded in relationality, taking the research beyond the self and incorporating others was integral. The workshops intended to explore what emerges when introducing others to pluriversal methods grounded in autonomies, wholeness, place and relationality. Additionally, the intention was to create spaces where participants could sit in ambiguity with divergent methods and concepts for a fashion-textile context, exploring how others interact with these and whether they have any foundational premise in going forth.

The workshops serve a dual purpose: They provided participants with an experiential engagement with pluriversal concepts while

validating emerging ideas from the literature and practical research, all within a dynamic space for collaborative learning about sustainable fashion-textiles. This co-created environment, facilitated by me and shaped by the participants, encouraged open-ended exploration and reflection, embracing ambiguity rather than offering predetermined solutions. This approach, which moved beyond traditional human-centred perspectives, yielded several methods for fostering relationality in fashion-textile work for others to take up within their work. Additionally, several unanticipated outcomes emerged from the data analysis and participants' responses.

### **3.2. Rationale for Running Workshops**

Workshops were introduced as a critical method to expand the research beyond individual exploration and align it with the relational nature of pluriversality. This decision emerged from the need to test concepts emerging from the literature research and making practices. The workshops investigated what unfolds when sharing pluriversal onto-epistemologies and methods with others. This approach aimed to facilitate a more relational exploration of pluriversal themes while simultaneously developing methods others could adopt to infuse their fashion-textile design and research practices with greater relationality.

The study's first stage found relational themes emerging whilst doing literature research into pluriversality and conducting various making experiments in places. In the spirit of relationality, I wanted to move these concepts beyond myself and include others in this research to explore what unfolds when others engage with pluriversal methods and approaches. I selected workshops as the primary data-gathering method because they create an immersive and collaborative environment conducive to generating meaning through communal discussions and experiences (Ørngreen & Levinson, 2017, p. 79). Østern et al. (2023, p. 272) share that workshops as a method are where post-qualitative and artistic research converge and thrive. The workshops aimed to emphasise and facilitate (un)learning experiences that challenge fashion-textile universalisms and explore pluriversal approaches. The workshops utilised various experimental modalities and embodied practices to capture the complexity, diversity and aliveness of participant experiences (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2018, p. 462). As such, and in line with the enactive and emergent components of the methodology, the workshops investigated how to create spaces that nourished different ways of



coming into fashion-textile knowledge, emphasising the ontological, relational, situated, enactive, and emergent.

This approach investigated how to challenge traditional research dichotomies between nature/culture and human/matter, emphasising the entangled nature of participants with methods, spaces, materials, tools, and more-than-humans (Barad, 2007, p. 139). The workshops served as social learning-sharing spaces, acknowledging that researchers and participants are active agents whose bodies and experiences shape the research process (Vannini, 2015, p. 318). The approach aligns with Arendt's (as cited in Chave, 2024, p. 77) concept of intersubjective identity formation through 'conditions of plurality,' where creative activities create 'spaces of appearance' for mutual receptivity and potential revelation of new identities and ways of knowing.

Diverse workshop facilitators exemplify the relational approach by cultivating communal spaces through design and making. Canadian First Nation's designer scholars Mills and Woods (2023, p. 123) conducted virtual beading circles, emphasising Indigenous methodologies and fostering knowledge resurgence. Participants engaged as kin, sharing experiences while beading. Similarly, Fidler-Wieruszewska's (n.d.) Community Couture project brought multiple perspectives together through a collaborative jacket representing community responses during the pandemic, embodying principles of participatory fashion practices (Fletcher, 2008, p. 190). These projects and my research align in their relational approaches while employing diverse methodologies, collectively challenging traditional research dichotomies and fostering community connections through creative practices.

In alignment with the research questions and aims of exploring how a fashion-textile pluriverse might manifest through shared learning experiences, I sought to develop methods others could adopt to make their fashion-textile designing and enquiry more relational. This approach reflects the evolving role of fashion-textile practitioners, who are increasingly moving beyond traditional product creation toward driving change and disseminating knowledge through innovative experiences (Valentine, 2017, p. 965). The field has witnessed a significant shift towards more inclusive and collaborative approaches, with designers embracing co-creation methods that involve various stakeholders (Lynas, 2019, p. 66). This approach aligns with Fletcher and Tham's (2019, p. 62) call for a 'plurality of practices' in fashion, emphasising the need for diverse, context-specific approaches that challenge the dominant,

growth-based fashion system. By conducting workshops and developing pluriversal fashion-textile methods, this research aims to contribute to this shift by exploring potential approaches that fashion-textile practitioners, researchers, and educators could use to foster more relational design practices in their work.

### 3.3. Workshop Design

This section outlines the design of four workshops, each incorporating methods grounded in redirective pluriversal ontologies. Building upon initial fashion-textile-making experiments and theoretical investigations into pluriversality, these methods emphasise embodied, relational, animist, experiential, and place-based worldviews. The approach aligns with scholars like Escobar (2018a), who advocates for alternative design methods. Workshops 1–3 employed six methods, while Workshop 4 expanded to eight, with slight variations across sessions. This repetition with variation is a generative force producing new meanings and identities (Bolt, 2016, p. 136). Significantly, this social research, which is also creative in methods, diverges from conventional scholarly-scientific protocols, instead exploring subjective and distinctive elements that require alternative approaches beyond established norms (St. Pierre, 2020, p. 80; Torres, 2022, p. 54).

#### *Workshop Method #1: Opening the workshop space, developing trust*

##### **and introductions** (15 mins)

This process included opening the workshop space, setting boundaries, developing trust and then having introductions. Confidentiality and adequate referencing of the researcher if sharing workshop ideas externally was stressed. I implemented these measures to build trust and minimise risks during the workshop. I assured participants they could share as much as they felt comfortable, emphasised that I would consider all responses valid, and reminded them of their right to withdraw from the research at any time. workshop. Introductions were made around the circle as each participant shared their name and connection to fashion.

**Origin:** Many workshops employ a similar approach to initiate their sessions, using structured opening activities to create a conducive environment for participation and learning.

**Execution:** I conducted this exercise the same way for each workshop.

**Rationale:** A crucial element of the workshop design was the inclusion of an opening method that served two essential purposes: setting the tone for the session and clearly outlining the upcoming activities. This approach aimed to foster a safe and comfortable atmosphere and establish essential guidelines for participants, ensuring everyone was aligned and prepared for the workshop experience.

**Connection to Pluriversality:** Autonomies, relationality.

*Workshop Method #2: **Coming into Presence & Place** (10–15 mins)*

This exercise guided participants through two phases: first, they focused on their breathing with closed eyes, then observed their surroundings with open eyes, promoting awareness of inner sensations and external environment.

**Origin:** This method originated from Joanna Macy's and Molly Brown's (2014) *The Work That Reconnects*, which focused on creating presence through breath, movement and silence.

**Execution:** I tailored this exercise to each workshop's specific context.

In Workshops 1 and 4, held on Gadigal Land, participants engaged in a two-part activity. First, they danced gently with closed eyes to music for two minutes, then sat quietly to listen to a 10-minute mindfulness recording titled 'A Guided Reflection on Sovereignty,' which First Nations UTS academics created. I chose this recording for its specific connection to Gadigal land.

However, in Workshops 2 and 3, which took place virtually on Bundjalung land, I asked participants to connect to their breath and bodies and observe their environment.

**Rationale:** This method aimed at grounding participants in the present moment and acknowledging the First Nations' land on which we all are situated upon. Engaging participants' bodies and senses helped them transition from their previous activities into a state of awareness, connecting them to both their physical selves and the immediate environment. Simultaneously, the exercise paid respect to the traditional caretakers of the land, recognising their ongoing connection and stewardship. This approach created a mindful foundation for the workshop, cultivating presence while situating the work within context.

**Connection to Pluriversality:** Place, relationality.

**Workshop Method #3: Fashion-Textile Offerings** (15 mins)

For this exercise, I asked participants to bring an item that symbolised their passion for fashion-textiles. I initiated the activity by presenting my item, explaining its significance, and placing it on the centre altar. We then proceeded around the circle, with each participant sharing their chosen item. They added their item to the growing centrepiece as they spoke about what the object represented and why they loved fashion and textiles. The aim was to create a visual representation of our collective experiences.

**Origin:** This method builds on approaches developed by Macy and Brown (2014b) and Starhawk (2011), which invite participants to express gratitude for something relevant to the workshop's context.

**Execution:** I conducted this exercise only in W4.

**Rationale:** This method was designed to encourage participants to reflect on the aspects of fashion-textiles that inspire them. By having each person contribute a meaningful fashion-textile object to a central display, we created a communal visual centrepiece—a collective altar—for the workshop. This approach aimed to stimulate individual contemplation and fostered a shared visual experience, setting the tone for collaborative exploration and discussion.

**Connection to Pluriversality:** Relationality, autonomies, wholeness.

**Workshop Method #4: Relationality** (30 mins)

This method was designed to give participants an embodied experience of relationality. The aim was to demonstrate how connections form and interrelate within a group physically.

**Origin:** After developing and implementing this approach, I discovered a similar technique used by researchers Niccolini, Zarabadi, and Ringrose (2018) in their work “Spinning Yarns: Affective Kinshipping as Posthuman Pedagogy.” Their method also used tactile threads to map relationships between various entities, including objects, humans, and materials.

**Execution:** This interactive exercise used yarn to visualise group connections. Participants attached yarn to fixed points and then moved towards each other based on clothing-related prompts. As they met, they introduced themselves, discussed their attire, and decided whether to swap threads or tie knots before moving

on. The activity culminated in everyone releasing their threads, revealing an intricate web of interactions. A group discussion followed, reflecting on the experience. For the virtual workshop, this concept was adapted using Miro, allowing for real-time online interactions.

**Rationale:** This method was facilitated so participants could have an embodied experience with relationality through the tactile medium of thread. This also aimed to get participants to engage with one another to create a more comfortable and communal environment.

**Connection to Pluriversality:** Relationality, place.

*Workshop Method #5: Listening to Materials* (30 mins)

I designed this method to get participants connecting to a garment or piece of fabric in animist ways.

**Origin:** This method evolved from animist concepts of relationality explored in the first stage of this project's practical component. Specifically, it builds on an initial experiment I conducted involving listening to polyester fabric. This exercise, now adapted for group participation, draws inspiration from Bertulis's (2019) provocative question: "Can absurd, repetitive (and poetic) research activities embody a shift toward relational bio-politics?"

**Execution:** I instructed participants to bring a fabric or a garment to the workshop. Participants engaged in a tactile meditation with a personal fabric or garment, exploring its journey and essence through touch. I guided participants to connect with the entire journey that brought the fabric into their hands and then enter into a silent dialogue with the piece. This sensory experience was followed by sharing insights, either group-wide or in pairs, depending on workshop size.

**Rationale:** This method transforms an individual, animistic exploration of materials into a collective sensory experience. It encourages participants to engage with garments and textiles as living entities, fostering a holistic and redirective approach to fashion-textiles. By doing so, it aims to reveal new perspectives on our relationships with materials and each other, challenging utilitarian views and unveiling unexpected dimensions of our material world.

**Connection to Pluriversality:** Relationality, place, wholeness.

**Workshop Method #6: Letting Go (20 mins)**

This method involved a symbolic ritual where participants released or let go of aspects of fashion and textiles they no longer needed or wanted.

**Origin:** This approach was inspired by rituals I have experienced in various workshops, where participants symbolically release unwanted elements by writing them on paper and burning them.

**Execution:** This release ritual, conducted in W4, guided participants through reflection and symbolic action. Each person identified aspects of their fashion and textile practices they wished to let go, wrote these on paper, and shared them with the group.

The papers were then placed in a central bowl of water, symbolising purification and movement. This collective ceremony aimed to clear space for new approaches, using the symbolism of water to reinforce the intention of transformation and fresh beginnings for participants' creative practices.

**Rationale:** The timing of W4 on the equinox—a day traditionally associated with transition and renewal—provided the opportunity to apply this concept to fashion-textiles. Recognising that the industry rarely allows time for such reflection, this exercise encouraged participants to examine their practices in a communal setting. I created a space for collective contemplation for letting go of outdated approaches and welcoming new ways for engaging with fashion-textiles. This shared experience aimed to inspire contemplation and foster a sense of relationality amongst participants.

**Connection to Pluriversality:** Autonomies, relationality, wholeness, place.

**Workshop Method #7: Pluriversal Futures (30 mins)**

This two-part exercise began with a guided visualisation, where participants imagined their ideal fashion-textiles future. They then translated these mental imaginings into tangible form through drawing or stitching.

**Origin:** This method draws inspiration from the ancient tradition of weaving symbolic meanings into textiles as had emerged from the theoretical exploration (Mencej, 2011; Survo, 2012; Zwierzyńska, 2014) as well as modern visioning techniques, such

as those emerging from *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy* (Macy & Johnstone, 2012).

**Execution:** This exercise guided participants through a multisensory journey of envisioning and creating. It began with a 10-minute meditation where participants imagined their ideal fashion-textile futures. Participants then translated these visions into tangible forms, either through drawing or stitching, using provided materials in person or their supplies for virtual sessions. The process encouraged connection and creativity as participants worked. The activity culminated in a sharing session, where each person described their vision and its material representation.

**Rationale:** This process blends visioning with hands-on creation, enabling participants to explore and materialise their desired fashion-textile futures. Through making, the aim was to move desired fashion-textile futures out of the remit of the mind into physical form so that these desired worlds can now manifest. Additionally, this method aimed to foster a communal experience where participants “weave” new visions alongside one another.

**Connection to Pluriversality:** Autonomies, wholeness, place, relationality.

#### *Workshop Method #8: Closing the Space* (5 mins)

This involved closing the workshop through collective sharing and reflection on what had transpired.

**Origin:** Reflecting on the workshop through collective sharing has been inspired by other facilitators (brown, 2017; Macy & Johnstone, 2012; Starhawk, 2011).

**Execution:** Each workshop concluded with a closing circle where participants shared memorable moments and received important follow-up information. This structured ending facilitated final reflections, clarified the following steps, including the post-workshop interview, and expressed gratitude for everyone's participation.

**Rationale:** This ensured a thoughtful and organised conclusion to the experience.

**Connection to Pluriversality:** Autonomies, relationality, place, wholeness.



### 3.4. Research Methods that Supported the Workshops

Various qualitative methods were employed to support the workshops and collect data to explore what unfolds when introducing others to pluriversal fashion-textile methods. Pre-workshop questionnaires and post-workshop interviews accompanied the workshops. These methods helped collect data on where the participants found themselves concerning sustainability and fashion-textiles before the workshops and how they experienced the workshop's environments and methods. These were analysed differently, and findings are outlined in detail in upcoming sections of this chapter. Additionally, I captured the workshop experiences on camera, allowing me to be fully immersed in the present moment. Later, I watched the recordings, taking notes, sketching connections, and sensing the relations and tensions that emerged. During the in-person workshops, I took photos as a visual method to capture the space beforehand, during, and afterwards.

#### *Pre-Workshop Questionnaires*

Before each workshop, I sent out a questionnaire to all participants by email to gather information about their current relationship with sustainability and fashion-textiles. This questionnaire enabled me to attune to each group's present state regarding their fashion-textile sustainability practices, perspectives and desires. This offered an initial snapshot into the participants' situation at that specific moment.

*Pre-workshop questionnaire questions that were sent to participants via email prior to the workshop:*

On a scale of 0-5 (0 being strongly disagree, 5 being strongly agree), express how you feel about each statement.

1. I feel connected to my current fashion practice.
2. I feel satisfied with the current systems, paradigms and logic that underline how contemporary fashion is created and thought about.
3. Modern ways of fashioning are in alignment with my values.
4. I believe that there are many diverse possibilities for doing and enquiring about fashion.
5. I feel open to exploring diverse and sustainable ways of understanding and doing fashion outside of 'normal' fashion practices.

6. I know how to implement sustainable fashion practices into my fashion practice.
7. I feel supported by others in implementing different, sustainable fashion practices.
8. I understand that fashion is interconnected to other fields, industries and systems.
9. I feel connected to the Place I currently live, work and play.
10. What fashion community (if any) do you feel connected to? (Please write here). How connected to this fashion community do you currently feel?
11. What is one thing (if any) you'd like to see shift in your current fashion practice? (Please write here).

### *Summary of Responses*

The initial questionnaires, sent via email, provided valuable insights into participants' perspectives before the workshops. Although self-selecting to participate would have skewed in this direction, 90% expressed dissatisfaction with prevailing fashion-textile systems and paradigms, while 80% felt these systems misaligned with their values. Encouragingly, 70% acknowledged diverse possibilities in fashion-textile practices, indicating openness to alternative concepts despite limited confidence in implementation.

Most participants recognised fashion-textiles as part of a more extensive interconnected system, suggesting readiness for exploring diverse ideas and practices. This pre-workshop data was motivating, though a potential bias emerged as participants were likely predisposed to alternative approaches in fashion-textiles. Many participants were also acquainted with the researcher through academic or social connections. Although this pre-workshop data was ultimately excluded from the diffractive analysis, as it was deemed less relevant to uncovering the relational unfoldings during workshops, it remained valuable in providing context about the diverse worldviews represented among attendees. This background enriched the research context, offering a glimpse into participants' initial standpoints before engaging in the workshop experiences.

### *Post-Workshop Interviews*

After a week of introspection, I gathered qualitative data through structured interviews with each participant. This method used when

specific data is sought, allows linking or juxtaposing information across consecutive workshops and interviews (Dawson & Dawson, 2009). The interviews aimed to explore participants' workshop experiences, perceptions of introduced concepts and practices, and emergent knowledge about fashion and sustainability. I conducted interviews anonymously to encourage honest sharing, typically lasting 15–20 minutes. I gathered responses via email, in-person, Zoom, or telephone for the first three workshops (W1, W2, W3). Due to a larger group of fourteen participants for the fourth workshop, an online post-workshop interview was conducted using AidaForm, a free online form creator, one to two weeks after the workshop. This approach provided valuable first-hand perspectives and experiences, adding depth to the research findings. The data from these post-workshop interviews was integral to the final diffractive analysis, which is detailed in upcoming sections.

*Post-workshop questionnaire questions that were sent to participants one week after the completion of the workshop:*

- 1 . Please describe your current position in fashion & textiles: student, student, educator, researcher, industry practitioner, PhD candidate, etc.
2. What was your overall experience with the workshop?
3. Were there any processes that stood out to you in the workshop and why?
4. Was there anything that you found challenging, confronting or surprising? If so, what was it and why?
5. Have any processes or ideas introduced in the workshop impacted your thinking and/ or relationship to your fashion & textile practice? If so, how?
6. Has your understanding of sustainability shifted in any way? If so, how?
7. Can you think of any ways that you may now start to implement some of these ideas or processes into your practice?
8. Is there anything else that you would like to add?
9. Do you have any questions?

### **3.5. Ethical Considerations**

Several ethical considerations guided this research, beginning with obtaining approval from the UTS Human Research Ethics Committee. This process ensured an ethics of care throughout the research stages (UTS Human Research Ethics Committee, n.d.). Participants were fully informed about the project's background, aims, and data usage, including

their right to exit the research at any time. Consent forms were signed, detailing participation and recording methods (photos, video, audio, scribing). I implemented data security measures, including secure storage on password-protected servers.

Creating a safe space was vital for participant engagement, especially when exploring unfamiliar concepts (Ørngreen & Levinsen, 2017, p. 72). As brown (2017, p. 213) notes, “Facilitation is the art of making things easier... the art of being in the right relationship with complexity, of making things easier for all involved.” This perspective guided the approach to workshop facilitation, which required a perception of both verbal and nonverbal communication and adapting strategies as needed (Ørngreen & Levinson, 2017, p. 73), mainly when themes and methods were explored that sit outside of regular ways of interacting with fashion-textiles or sustainability. To avoid power imbalances, any of my current or in-progress students were excluded from the research so as not to create an unequal power dynamic within the workshop setting. Past students were included in the study as it was deemed low risk to have them participate. The research process involved continuous learning and adaptation, drawing inspiration from experienced practitioners in the field (brown, 2021; Macy and Johnstone, 2012). This approach ensured a balanced, ethical, and inclusive research environment that respected participants’ comfort levels while encouraging open engagement with new ideas and experiences. To enhance facilitation skills, I immersed myself in diverse learning environments, adapted holding strategies, and drew insights from experienced practitioners in the field, including brown (2017), Macy and Johnstone (2012), Starhawk (2004), and others.

### **3.6. A Diffractive Analysis of Data**

This research explores the emergence of a pluriverse in fashion-textiles, examining the conditions that facilitate pluriversality and its implications. Workshop methods were grounded in wholeness, autonomies, place, and relationality, and as such, traditional analysis methods were considered inadequate for exploring and capturing complex, interrelated, ephemeral, and ineffable workshop unfoldings (Haseman, 2006, p. 100). The analysis focused on what emerges through relations and in-between spaces when introducing participants to pluriversal approaches in fashion-textiles.

Aligning with a performative research paradigm that centres on emergence, differences, and creating new knowledge experimentally

(Østern et al., 2023, p. 278), I chose a diffractive analysis as an appropriate method going forth. This methodological approach, often used in post-qualitative research, draws inspiration from the concept of diffraction discussed by physicist David Bohm (1996) and later adopted by Donna Haraway (1988) and Karen Barad (2007). Rooted in multiple intersecting approaches to perceiving an ever-evolving world (Regalado, 2022, p. 46), diffractive analysis aligns with the concept of a pluriverse where no single, fixed perspective dominates our understanding of reality.

Diffraction is a valuable lens that embraces difference (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1997). Haraway (1992, p. 300) elucidates, “Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction,” thereby mapping the effects of differences rather than their appearances. Unlike representational analysis, which interprets phenomena externally using structured methodologies, diffractive analysis enhances the perception of ambiguous and subtle unfoldings (Barad, 2007). This approach aligns more closely with the methodological framework of this research, allowing for a nuanced exploration of complex, interconnected phenomena.

A performative research paradigm (Haseman, 2006) and diffractive analysis (Haraway, 1997; Barad, 2003) actively engage with relational, place-based, and spiritual ontologies shared by First Nations people and articulated by First Nations scholars (Kimmerer, 2002, 2013; Smith, 2012; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015; Wilson, 2008; Yunkaporta, 2019, 2023). These scholars advocate for holistic knowledge, breaking away from the universalisation of Western knowledge claims and reigniting Indigenous approaches founded in relational frameworks (Wilson, 2008).

### **3.7. Results: Workshop Data**

The following sections detail the emergent data from carrying out the workshops. I conducted four workshops, bringing together a diverse group of participants of fashion and textile design practitioners, students, researchers, and educators from the university space, TAFE (Technical and Further Education) and industry fields. Given the extensive research undertaken in this study into pluriversality and aligning with the methodological framework, I considered that involving individuals from varied fashion-textile backgrounds and experiences could result in diverse unfoldings and foster rich learning-sharing environments across the workshops. To balance the practical constraints of fieldwork and the

need for a sufficiently broad and diverse group of participants, three to fifteen participants were chosen for each workshop, which ran between two and three hours. Although I could have extended the length of the workshops, their duration was deliberately limited to prevent participant fatigue or disengagement and maintain a manageable scope for subsequent analysis of emergent themes. Participants were recruited by posting on Instagram and sending email invites to my networks.

The first workshop (W1) was conducted in October 2022 at the UTS Building 13, Gadigal Land, with four participants present. Given the somewhat novel approach to the workshop, one of the participants included one of my supervisors who participated in this workshop to provide feedback for refining subsequent workshops. The other participants included one doctoral candidate, one UTS fashion student, and one fashion educator/industry practitioner. The second workshop (W2) took place at my home in Bundjalung Country in the Northern Rivers in November 2022, with five participants present. They all worked within their businesses at the time, ranging from sustainable clothing and textile creation to sustainable fashion brick-and-mortar and fashion production freelancing.

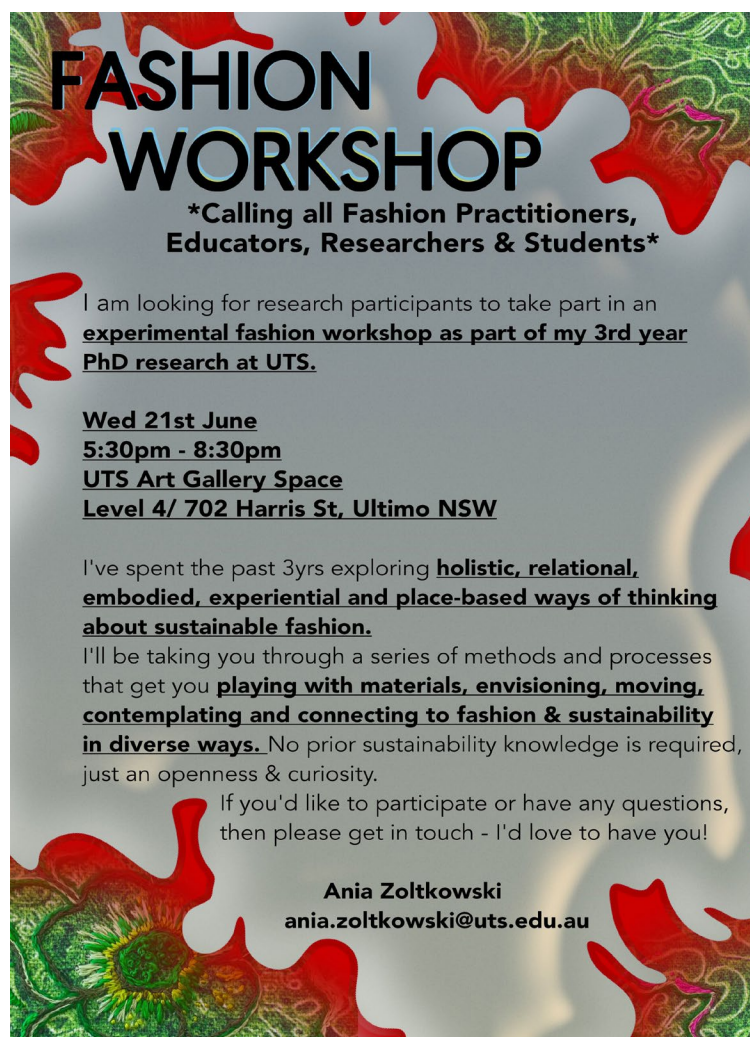
The third workshop (W3) was run virtually through Zoom also in November 2022, with six participants present, connecting from Meanjin (Brisbane), Naarm (Melbourne), Bundjalung (Northern Rivers) and Gadigal (Sydney) lands. Three industry practitioners, one former industry practitioner, a fashion educator, and a doctoral candidate were in attendance. For this virtual workshop, Australian residents were limited to this study to avoid issues with time differences. Additionally, as there is a significant component relating to place present within this research, it was deemed that detailing the nuances of place of modern-day Australia to others not present here was beyond the scope of the research.

The fourth workshop (W4) was developed to refine the initial three, incorporating lessons learned and featuring a larger, more diverse group of fourteen participants. Held in June 2023 at the UTS Art Gallery Space during the winter solstice, W4 included two fashion educators, eight fashion design students from TAFE (6) and University (2), two doctoral candidates, and two industry practitioners. This expanded session aimed to gather more comprehensive data and test refined workshop processes with a broader audience.

The data analysis process unfolded in two main stages, unpacked in more detail in subsequent sections. Initially, I conducted a general observation of the workshop events, compiling observations from workshop video recordings and post-workshop interviews to identify



preliminary themes. I then undertook a more profound, diffractive analysis, mapping the relational patterns and forces that emerged between participants, contexts, materials, processes and more, revealing several forces shaping the workshop outcomes.



**Figure 9.** The fourth workshop (W4) invitation that was emailed out to potential participants as well as posted on Instagram to recruit.





**Figure 10.**Photos taken during Workshop 1.

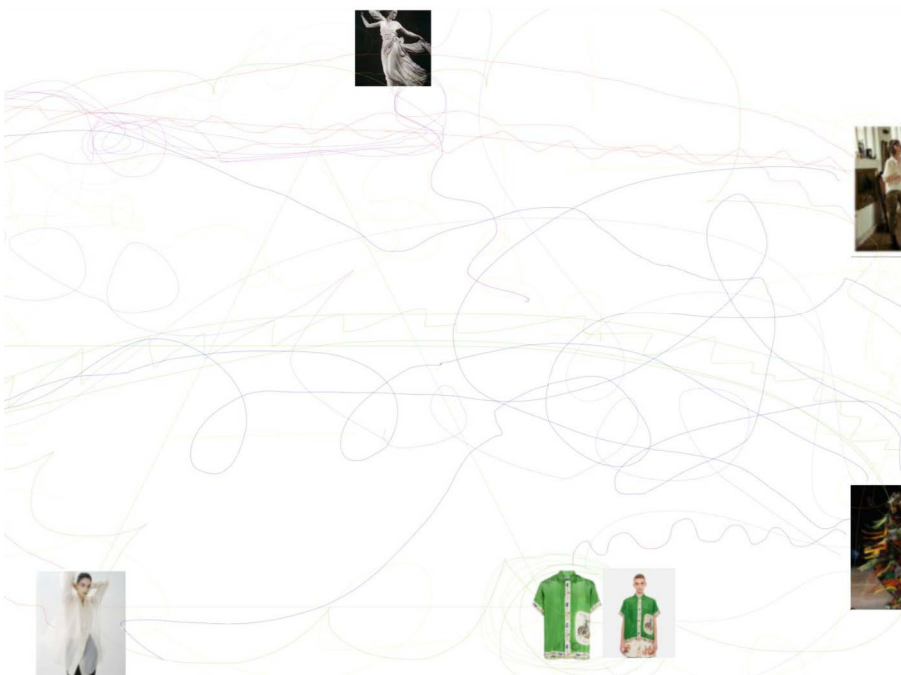
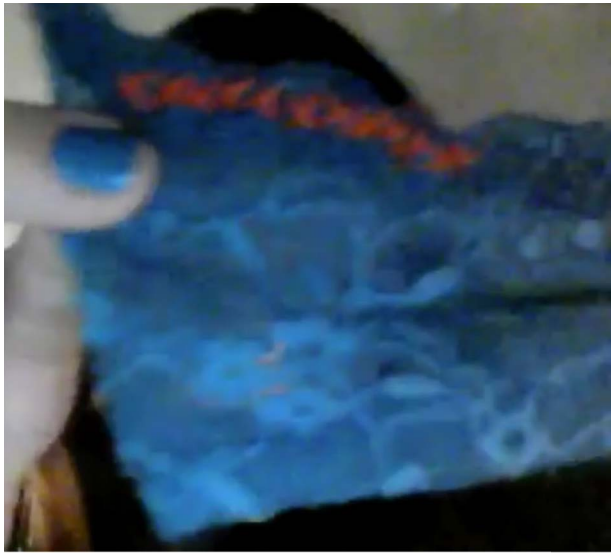
Top left: Workshop Method #4 - Relationality. Top right: Participants sitting and writing notes and drawing, after being taken through Workshop Method #5 - Listening to Materials. Bottom: The 'fashion altar', workshop centrepiece.





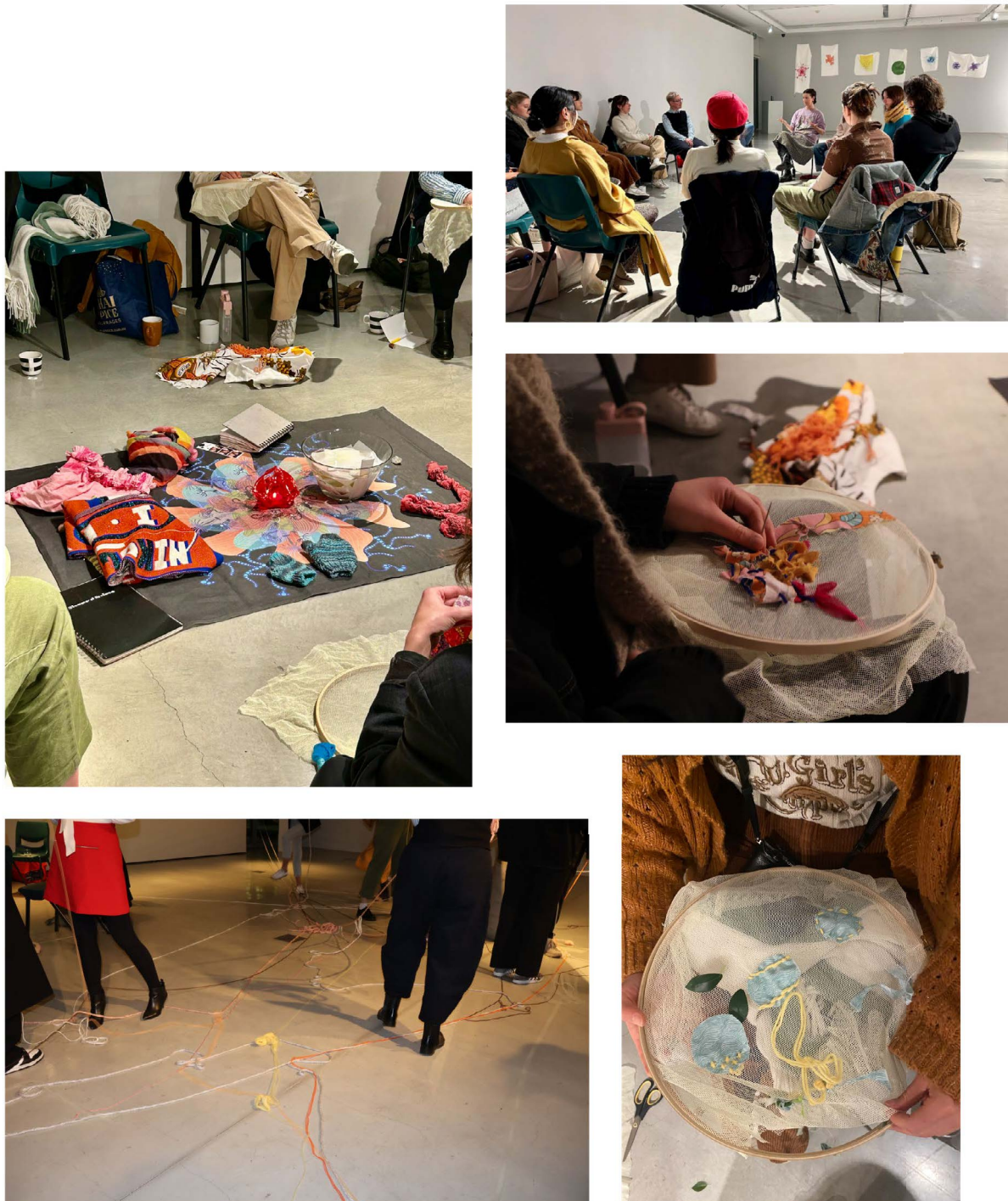
**Figure 11.** Photos taken during Workshop 2.

Top left: Participants engaging in Workshop Method #4 - Relationality. Bottom left: The 'fashion altar', workshop centrepiece. Bottom right: Material experimentation created after Workshop Method #7: Pluriversal Futures.



**Figure 12.** Photos captured during the virtual Workshop 3 of participants engaging in exercises. Top: Material experimentation created after Workshop Method #7 - Pluriversal Futures. Bottom: Virtual engagement with Workshop Method #4 - Relationality through Miro.





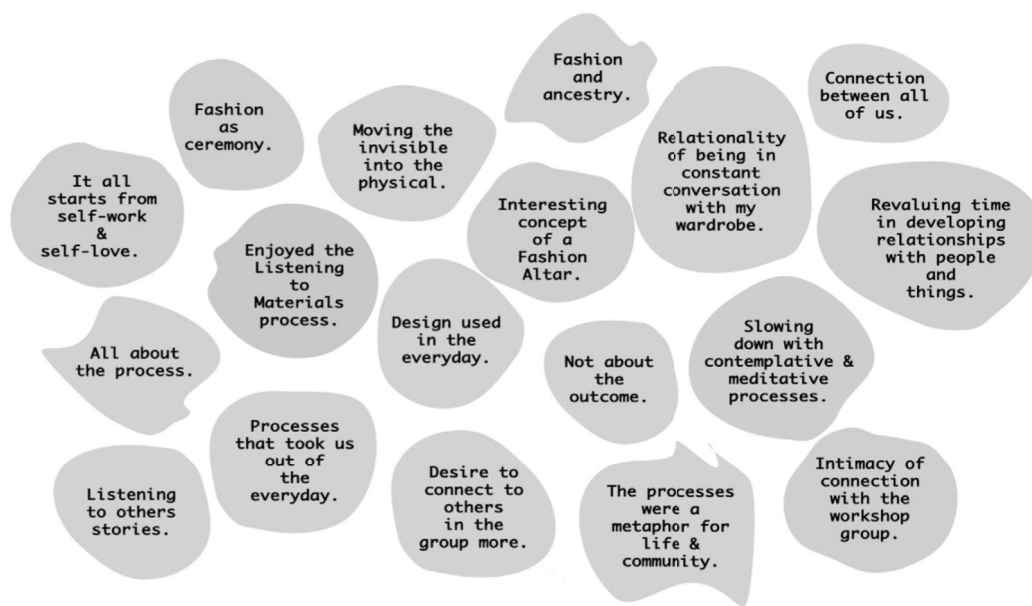
**Figure 13.** Photos captured during Workshop 4. Clockwise from top left: Participants sitting around the 'fashion altar' centrepiece after completing Workshop Method #6 - Letting Go; The participants and I sitting in circle; Material experimentations created after Workshop Method #7 - Pluriversal Futures; Participants engaging in Workshop Method #4 - Relationality.

### 3.8. First Layer of Data Analysis

The first layer of data analysis involved observing what occurred by rewatching the recorded film footage of the workshops, reading through the post-workshop questionnaires and interviews, and reflecting upon what I had experienced within the workshops as the researcher-participant. Emerging quotes, feelings, tensions, impacts, and ideas were pulled from the workshop data to sense what had occurred in a generalised way before deeper analysis began in the second diffractive layer of research.

After I completed the facilitation of each workshop, I spent some time writing down initial observations of what had occurred, what I had felt and what was said or acted out during the workshop experiences. Through this process I was informed of what worked, what did not, and what could be tweaked for the next workshop. I built upon the contemplative questions I had used to reflect upon my practice within stage one, as inspired by Sadokierski (2020, pp. 1–33) and Camozzi (2019, pp. 146–152):

1. *Was what happened expected; why/why not?*
2. *Did the methods/processes shift while working; how and why?*
3. *What emotional responses emerged throughout? What was frustrating, exciting, disappointing, or satisfying? What methods elicited this?*
4. *What insights were gained through this workshop? What is known now that was not known before?*
5. *Has this workshop shifted the research focus, aims or questions? If so, in what way?*
6. *What imbalances and opportunities did I create?*
7. *What conversations can emerge from these interactions?*
8. *What questions have sprung up?*
9. *What pathways are opening up here for fashion-textiles to emerge pluriversally?*
10. *Based on the reflections on action, what might be done differently or next?*



**Figure 14.** Some of the emergent themes visualised that unfolded from the first layer of data analysis from W1, W2, and W3.

According to the post-workshop interviews, the stand out processes were #5, “Listening to Materials,” #7, “Pluriversal Futures,” and #4, the “Relationality” exercise. Some of what emerged from participants were ideas surrounding fashion-textiles as ceremony, ancestry, design to be used in the everyday, processes that take one out of the every day, listening to materials, desire to connect with others more and hear them share about their work and ideas, that it is not all about the outcome but about relationships, fashion processes as a metaphor for life and the world, slow and contemplative processes, connection and intimacy, relationality of being in constant conversation with our wardrobe, the revaluation of time in developing relationships with people, materials and more.



**Figure 15.** The main themes visualised that emerged from the first layer of primary research from W1, W2, and W3.

The initial data analysis revealed several tensions in the research process. Workshop 3 (W3), conducted via Zoom, presented unique challenges in adapting the methods to a virtual environment. Ensuring the technology adequately supported the workshop experience was a primary concern. A participant in W3 expressed discomfort sharing with strangers online, highlighting the need for more time to be allocated toward nurturing initial connections in virtual spaces. In Workshop 2 (W2), several participants shared that they struggled to envision futures beyond current industry realities during the “Pluriversal Futures” exercise. These participants were fashion industry professionals. I wonder how much their struggle to envision alternative futures stems from their immersion in a demanding system that leaves little room for radical imagination. Participants across workshops desired more time for exercises and reflective questions, noting that these topics were outside their typical thought processes. These findings suggest that such workshops might benefit from extended durations, possibly several days or weeks, to allow more profound engagement with the processes and concepts.



Based on this initial data analysis, it was determined that an additional workshop would provide a more refined layer of experiences for emerging interconnections. Workshop 4 (W4) was extended from two to three hours to respond to participants' desire for more engagement time. Notably, participant recruitment revealed that most attendees had a prior personal connection or interest in sustainable fashion. W4 intentionally included a more diverse group to broaden perspectives, combining those with and without prior sustainability engagement. This mix aimed to enrich the workshop dynamics and provide insights into what emerges when introducing these pluriversal fashion-textile methods to a broader audience.

### **3.9. Second Layer of Data Analysis: Sensing into Intra-Actions**

The workshops fostered a complex web of connections and interactions across multiple dimensions. These encompassed the workshop methodologies and processes, physical spaces and places, materials and creative practices, interpersonal dynamics between researcher and participants and among participants, bodily experiences and emotions, past experiences and personal histories, atmospheric and auditory elements, more-than-human entities, and theoretical frameworks.

I employed a diffractive approach for the second layer of workshop data analysis through a performative research paradigm. This method shifted focus from linguistic representations to sensing the subtleties and complexities between relations, exploring outcomes that emerged from the interplay of interconnected phenomena (Bolt, 2008, p. 9; Regalado, 2022, p. 46). The analysis involved examining each workshop individually and then layering insights across all workshops to reveal overarching patterns of differences. I mapped the diffractive analysis through a series of visual maps (figures 17, 18, 19) to illustrate the unfoldings, forces, and intra-actions that emerged. Five predominant agentic forces unfurled by re-examining the workshop data focused on flows between relations rather than representations. These forces highlight the subtle perceptions that arose during the workshops and what was traversed through post-workshop interviews and footage, acknowledging that boundaries are not static expressions of interconnectedness but ongoing processes involving exclusions (Barad, 2003, p. 803).

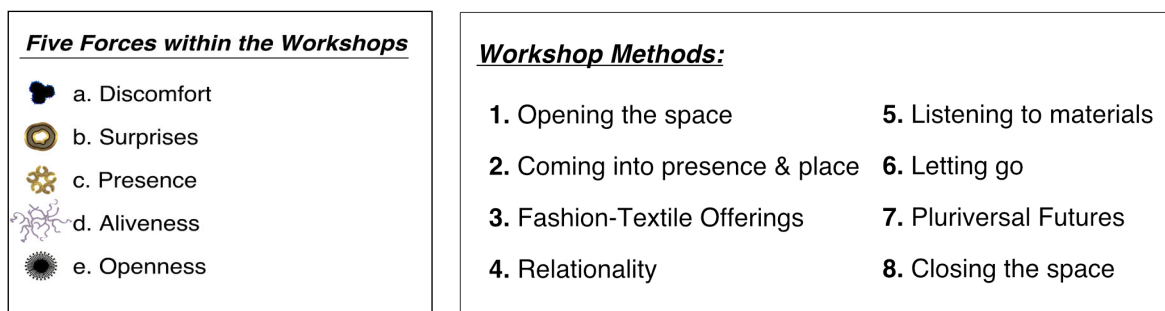
Aligning with the research's methodological framework of a performative research paradigm and a pluriverse, this analysis aimed to preserve complexity rather than simplify or universalise concepts (Østern

et al., 2023, p. 285). The five abstract and ambiguous forces from the second data analysis layer leave space for further unfoldings. Unlike traditional scientific research that values replicability (Bolt, 2008, p. 8), this approach recognises the inevitable influence of variables on each workshop's unique dynamics despite consistent methods and intentions. The unpredictable nature of social learning environments creates exciting possibilities for non-replicable, co-created outcomes, acknowledging that the researcher's worldview shapes and limits data interpretation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). This emergent contribution to the world cannot be assessed for dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), as each iteration resulted in distinctions rather than a "repetition of the same" (Bolt, 2008, p. 8). Such an approach underscores the project's ontological reorientation, valuing unseen, emergent, experiential, and non-linear elements as integral to the research process and findings.

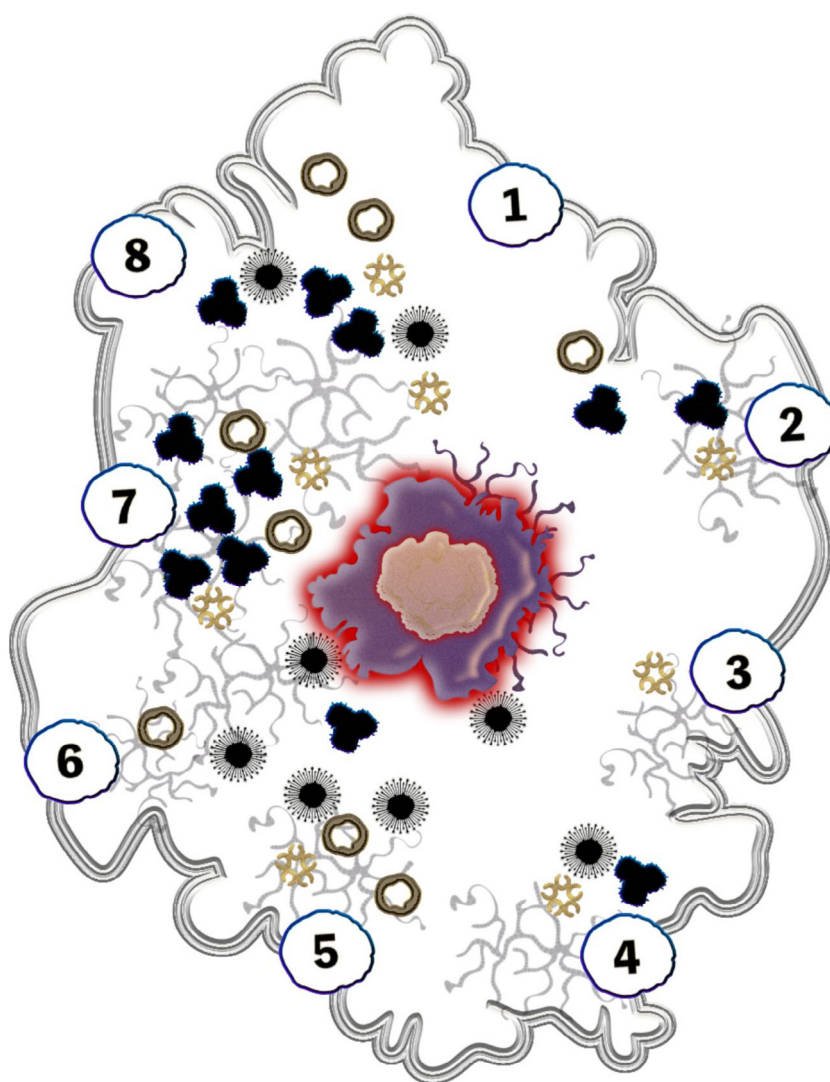
The five forces, documented in depth below, represent the intra-actions and subtle yet potent differences that emerged during and after the workshops. These are mapped visually in Map #1 (figure 17), which illustrates the five forces and where they emerged concerning the workshop formats both physically during the workshop and reflecting upon them through the post-workshop interviews. The numbers represent each workshop method outlined in the previous section (3.3 Workshop Design). The centre formation represents the workshop centrepiece of focus created for each workshop and everyone sat in a circle around. The purple and red form circle is representative of all of the workshop participants and me, the active researcher-participant.

### *Five Forces*

- a. Discomfort: confusion, awkwardness, not-knowing, resistance.
- b. Surprises: unexpected and "aha" moments.
- c. Presence: intuition, trance-like states, being here fully.
- d. Aliveness: energy, flows, vitality.
- e. Openness: openings to others, receptivity to diverse ideas, practices, energies, more-than-human.



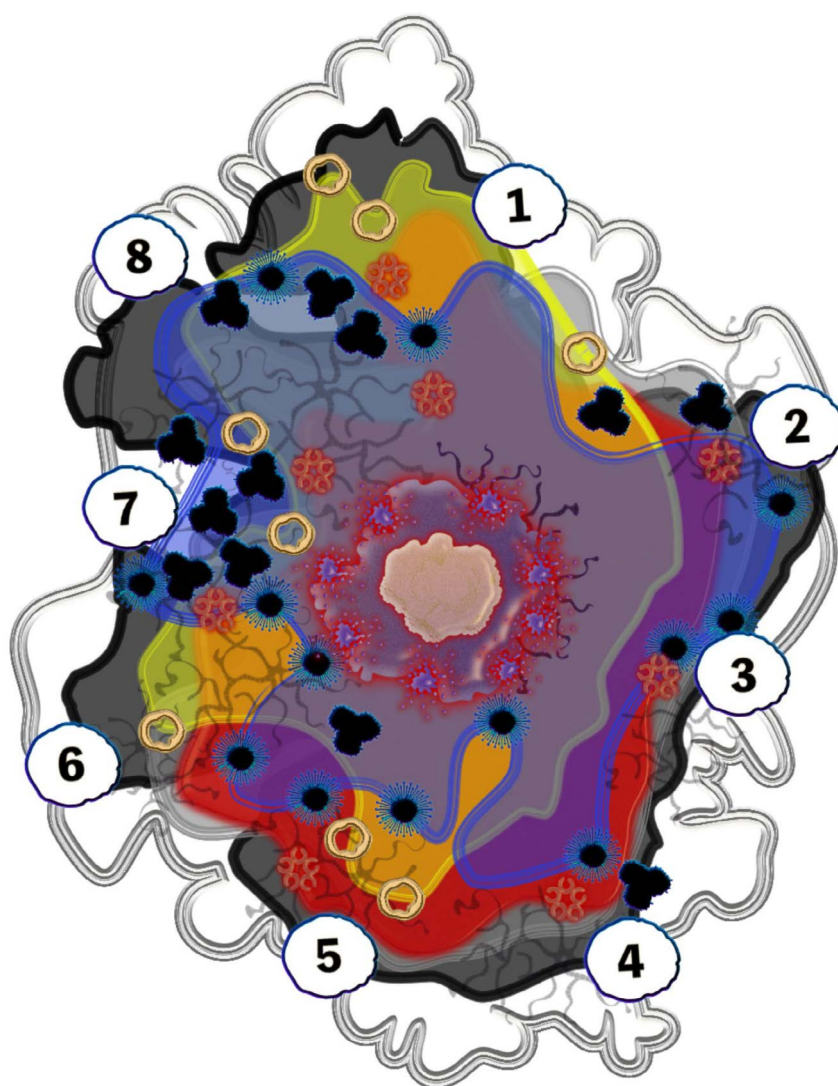
**Figure 16.** The key on the left explains the symbols used to represent the five main forces in the following maps, while the key on the right presents the workshop methods and their correlating numbers.



**Figure 17.** Map #1 illustrates the five predominant forces that emerged in the second layer of data analysis. The numbers symbolise the workshop methods. The symbols have been placed where these forces emerged based upon the workshop observations and interviews.





Map #2 (figure 18) offers a deeper visualisation of the analysis, illustrating the five forces and their intra-actions. It depicts the flows of

relations between these subtle forces based on insights from workshops and post-workshop interviews. Different coloured, overlapping layers represent each force, symbolising blurred boundaries and intra-active occurrences. Lines connecting the forces illustrate their relational flows, while movement and energy emanate from the central piece, representing participants' engagement and spatial movement. This visual representation captures the complex, dynamic nature of interactions observed throughout the research process.



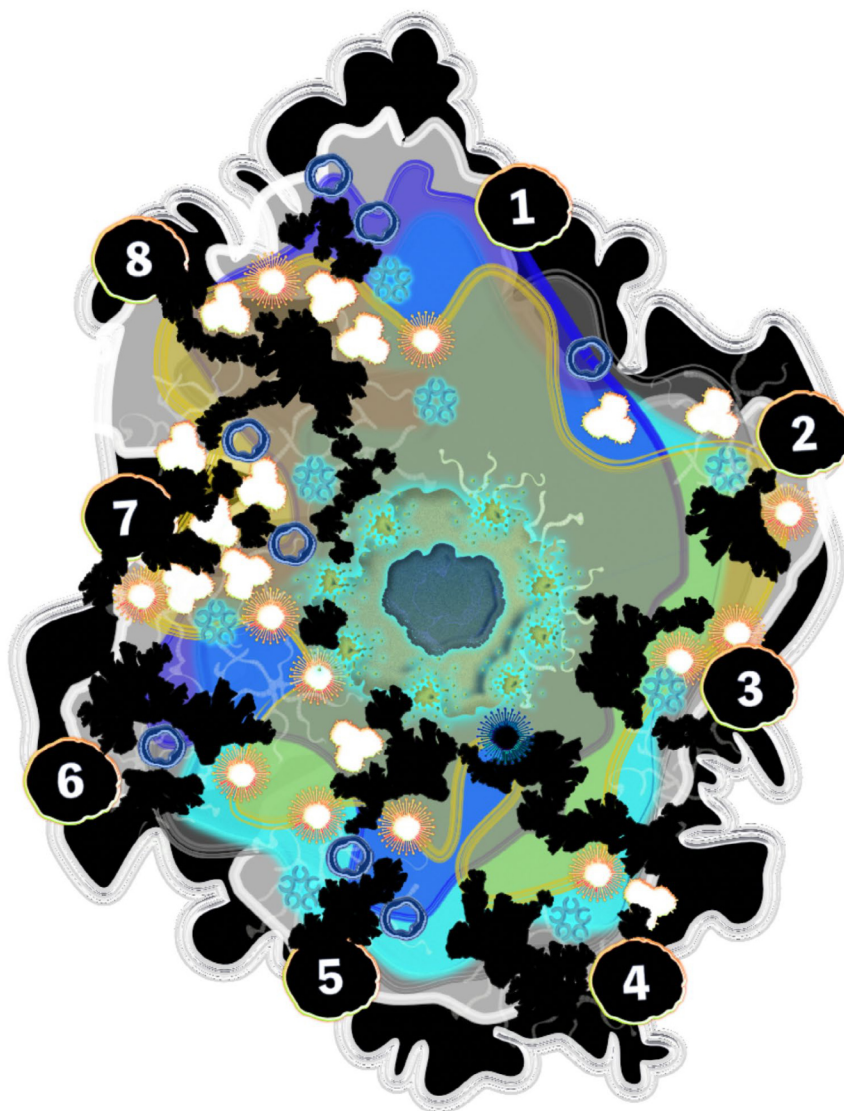
**Figure 18.** Map #2 extends on Map #1 by illustrating the five forces and their intra-actions, as shown through the differently coloured layers. Key is included below to clarify which force relates to which colour:

***Five Forces & their Intra-actions:***

-  a. Discomfort
-  b. Surprises
-  c. Presence
-  d. Aliveness
-  e. Openness



Map #3 (figure 19) illustrates the in-between emergent spaces between the processes, participants, and researchers, highlighting the places and moments of difference between the relations. These emergent spaces have been visualised through inverting the colours used in map #2 (figure 18).



**Figure 19.** Map #3 illustrates the in-between emergent spaces between the processes, participants, and researchers, highlighting the places and moments of difference between relations.

### 3.10. Five Forces and their Diffractive Interplay in the Data

The following discussion provides a detailed explanation of the maps by analysing each of the five forces individually. Relevant participant quotes have been included to illustrate these forces. In alignment with

efforts to decolonise Western-centric modes of knowledge production, participants' responses are presented verbatim, without alterations to grammar or spelling.

**a. Discomfort:** *confusion, awkwardness, not-knowing, resistance*

This force explores the tensions, points of resistance, discomfort, awkwardness and confusion that emerged throughout the workshops. Exercise #7, "Pluriversal Futures," particularly challenged participants to envision ideal fashion-textile futures. Multiple participants expressed their struggles in disconnecting from reality and embracing the imaginative aspect of envisioning their ideal fashion-textile futures. One participant admitted, "I was stuck when you asked us to envision our ideal fashion future, as I tend to lean towards logical thinking first." I am reminded of John Wood (2007) sharing on the importance of nurturing and sharing our visions of possible futures in cultivating collective power to shape and transform our world: "If we lose the art of dreaming for ourselves, we will eventually become unable to change anything" (Wood, 2007). Some participants felt overwhelmed, with one expressing, "I had the feeling when I left this that nothing is going to change...unempowerment." This quote illustrates how exercises can evoke emotions of despair despite careful framing, highlighting the complexity and full spectrum of transformative work.

Diverse perspectives on sustainability emerged in these interviews afterwards. One participant desired "greater sustainability within the workshop," while another noted that "in retrospect, I think that participating in a fashion sustainability workshop led me to expect more discussions about systemic issues within the fashion industry. So, the abstract and material-focused discussion, akin to storytelling, was unexpected." These statements highlighted the existence of diverse worldviews and revealed contemporary one-dimensional perspectives on sustainability (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017, p. 115). Furthermore, several participants conveyed their reservations about sharing within a group setting, underscoring the importance of establishing a welcoming and open environment while acknowledging that tensions may naturally surface in communal settings. One participant shared;

I went in with a level of uncertainty, knowing at some point I would have to be vulnerable in front of other people. So, I came in with a slight level of fear (shame). I found the workshop was

slow-paced and there was an icebreaker opportunity that eased me into feeling more connected and safe to the group, which made it easier to share my journey in fashion with more emotional language in my personal reflections

These tensions underscore the complexity of fostering pluriversal thinking in fashion-textile contexts, revealing challenges and opportunities for transformative learning.

***b. Surprises: unexpected and “aha” moments***

This element focuses on unexpected insights and “aha” moments that emerged during workshops and post-workshop interviews. Participants experienced various revelations, from realising significant changes in their relationship with fashion to unexpected emotional responses during exercises. One participant noted, “The activity where we posed questions to our garments stirred up emotions I hadn’t anticipated.” Another shared, “I really enjoyed the “future of fashion” activity—the forced creativity to hand sew and use the embroidery hoops. It has made me question my own practice (or lack thereof).” Some participants drew connections between textile lifecycles and existential questions, as exemplified by one reflection: “This was stimulated by the meditative/reflective exercise in which we were asked to ‘talk’ to textiles. A verbal trigger regarding the origin of the material caused me to consider an existential question/conundrum: if I could not picture the textile being ‘born,’ then neither could I logically imagine it ‘dying’...” The “Letting Go” exercise in W4 highlighted the interconnectedness of participants’ experiences, transforming vulnerability into shared relief and comfort. These unexpected insights demonstrate the workshops’ potential to provoke a deeper reflection and personal growth in how people engage with fashion-textiles.

***c. Presence: intuition, trance-like states, being here fully***

This force emphasises presence, embodiment, and immersive processes that can induce meditative states. It highlights the intra-actions between participants, bodies, materials and tools during various methods, aligning with Barad’s (2003, p. 810) notion that intrinsic influences beyond societal factors are present in human and more-than-human bodies. Participants engaged deeply with materials through exercises involving the altar



centrepiece fashion offerings, the yarn used to create connections for the relationality exercise, the materials and garments that were listened to, and the materials encoded with future pluriversal visions in the last active exercise. Referring to the experiential prompts and processes within the workshop, one participant pointed out, “When you did give these things some thought, ideas came. As designers, we do not think about it.”

Participants reported moments of deep immersion where their bodies intuitively guided the creative process, bypassing conscious thought. A participant described their experience:

I was wondering what would arise, and it was such a beautiful surprise to see that my hands knew before my mind/eyes what was required of the work I am doing in the wider world. And this has deepened my trust in my embeddedness and belonging in the living world. Thank you.. Working with textiles and needle and thread with needle and thread in circle with others and chatting (placing my thinking mind in the background) and allowing the answer to emerge through the motion of my hands in relationship to the thread and textiles and the frame... The surprise was to see my work and its place in the world.

Some experiences underscore the workshops’ potential to foster pluriversal autonomies, encouraging participants to connect with inner truths and communal wisdom, breaking free from conventional norms influenced by modern/colonial conditionings. One participant said, “I’ve never really considered trusting myself or relying on my judgment as a problem-solving tool. I think this has had a significant impact on me.”

Each workshop’s central fashion-textile altar was crucial, facilitating mindful engagement and collaborative world-building. Barad (2007, p. 381) notes that that individuals actively contribute to the ongoing co-creation of the world through their distinct material expressions. The inner fashion-textile altar served as a central focus of presence for each workshop, facilitating mindful engagement and sparking participant interest. During W4, in exercise #3, “Fashion-Textile Offerings,” each participant added to this centrepiece by placing an object or material symbolising their connection to fashion-textiles. This ritual initiated a collaborative process of worldmaking by envisioning and celebrating the positive aspects of fashion-textiles, unique to that workshop’s specific context and participants. Barad’s (2007, p. 381) concept of world co-creation through distinct material expressions aligns with this participatory ritual, where individuals actively contribute

to shaping their shared reality through tangible engagement.

**d. Aliveness:** *energy, flows, vitality*

The concept of aliveness encompasses the dynamic interplay between human participants, more-than-human entities, and the energies generated during and after the workshops between participants, materials, processes, and spaces. As von Busch (2021, p. 95) notes, “Our play with fashion...opens us to the world, to the effects of our peers, to sensing the world of togetherness,” highlighting how these interactions can foster a deeper connection to our environment and each other.

The sense of aliveness became particularly evident when reviewing the recorded footage of the workshops. It was not just about what was explicitly said or done but what was subtly felt and experienced in the in-between spaces between actions and relations (Akama, 2012, p. 2). Participants characterized these spaces with a palpable interconnectedness, deep engagement with processes and materials, and an overarching sense of tranquillity. Reflecting on their experiences at the workshop’s conclusion, participants shared sentiments such as, “I could have sat there for longer... I loved it, as I never take the time to slow down... Joy! Meditation, connection,” whilst another remarked: “The workshop helped me to appreciate fashion, to see another layer, inspired to bring into my work.”

These comments revealed a prevalent feeling of harmony with the creative process, and a sense of community emerged. Post-workshop interviews further emphasised this, with several participants expressing a desire for extended creative engagement and increased collaboration in future workshops. The workshops fostered communal experiences where participants could reconnect with fashion-textiles’ vitality.

**e. Openness:** *openings to others, receptivity to diverse ideas, practices, energies, more-than-human*

Openness involves embracing different and unknown aspects, such as connecting with others, engaging with processes and materials, and being receptive to diverse ideas, practices, energies, and worldviews. This receptivity was particularly evident in the context of animist perspectives, as exemplified by exercise #5, “Listening to Materials.” The openness to animist viewpoints was surprisingly prominent, diverging from typical Western paradigms.

According to post-workshop interviews, this exercise resonated strongly with participants and stood out as the most memorable. Several participants expressed how it had fundamentally altered their perspective on materials and garments. One participant shared, “When you talk about what fabric wants to be used etc. I have never touched, smell and consider fabric /clothes in that intimate way. I believe everything has a spiritual after this workshop.” Another participant stated, “Again, the activity where we asked our garments questions affected my relationship with fashion. It made me want to treat many and all garments I or anyone creates with absolute respect, love and care.”

Despite tensions, discomfort, and confusion, participants demonstrated significant receptivity to various worldviews and their practical applications throughout the processes. This openness extended to a willingness to be vulnerable and honest in the presence of others, including sharing and engaging in conversations with strangers. One participant expressed, “It was very in-formative to have time to be present with others and hear their stories expressing their experiences with textiles and fashion. The space and prompts allowed an openness and warmth to be curious about my own fashion/textile practices. Lovely...” Another remarked, “I feel that my appreciation for textiles has deepened and was reaffirmed by the process of group sharing.”

This openness to new perspectives, particularly animist worldviews, and the willingness to engage vulnerably with others and materials demonstrates the possibilities of embracing diverse ways of thinking and interacting in fashion-textile practices.

### **3.11. Workshop Discussion**

I conducted workshops to investigate what emerges when others engage with and apply pluriversal fashion-textile methods, addressing a key research sub-question.

The workshops served a dual purpose: they allowed participants to engage with pluriversal concepts experientially and provided an opportunity to validate the emerging ideas from the literature and doing research. These workshops created dynamic spaces for collaborative learning about sustainable fashion-textiles, exploring diverse approaches. Rather than offering predetermined solutions, the environment encouraged participants to embrace ambiguity. This co-created setting, facilitated by me and shaped by the participants, fostered open-ended

exploration and reflection on various facets of fashion-textiles and sustainability.

### *The Workshops Validated*

The workshops aimed to make pluriversal ontologies tangible through relational experiences, enabling participants to perceive fashion-textiles in new ways. This approach allowed participants to engage with critical pluriversal concepts—wholeness, autonomy, place, and relationality—both subtly and concretely. As a result, participants began to sense and understand these abstract ideas in practical, experiential contexts within fashion-textiles.

The concept of wholeness emerged in the workshops, encouraging participants to view fashion-textiles through a more holistic lens. Such an approach emphasises the interconnectedness of all elements, aligning with Hill's (2017, p. 13) observation of the complex interplays between participants, researchers, more-than-human entities, places, spaces, and material forces. The workshops fostered a shift towards perceiving everything as alive and sentient, extending beyond mental constructs to encompass sensory and intuitive experiences. Participants shared shifts in their creative processes and mindsets in the post-workshop interviews. One noted, “Very meditative. Don’t necessarily do that when doing creative stuff. Allowed you to get into that zone quickly” highlighting the potential for this approach in fostering sustainable mindsets even in large fashion brands. Another participant observed, “It got you in touch with your creative side I wouldn’t usually use... Allowed me to connect to a deeper level of creativity than I do usually,” indicating a broadening of creative perspectives.

The workshops created a space for participants to access and express their authentic desires for fashion-textiles, fostering some sense of autonomy despite the limited time frame. This emergence of autonomies was characterised by participants breaking away from rigid constructs and moving towards more diverse and sovereign expressions. One participant noted, “Doing random activities put us in a different way of thinking outside the box.” The sessions validated the importance of connecting individuals and communities to their unique and authentic fashion-textiles expressions and choosing how to enact them based on their unique desires, contexts, intuition and needs.

The workshops enabled participants to connect with places and the workshop environment directly through exercises, and more subtly through engaging with others, materials, and methods in spaces, thereby

revealing the ontology of place. This perspective fostered an understanding that all fashion-textile systems, materials, and processes are inherently linked to and supported by places, acknowledging that we are always held by place. A participant eloquently captured the workshop's essence in their post-workshop response, seeking to "make conscious the essence and potential of 'place' in relation to fashion and textiles practice," envisioning a fashion practice that honours "the essence and potential of every living being through its own potential as co-creative, life-affirming processes."

The workshops offered participants a tangible experience of relationality in fashion-textile contexts, moving beyond traditional human-centred approaches. As Østern et al. (2023, p. 273) suggest, this performative research process allowed findings to emerge through the investigation itself. Participants engaged in a continuous negotiation of relationships with each other, materials, spaces, and language, creating a dynamic learning environment that highlighted the interconnectedness of all elements in the research process. This approach challenged conventional paradigms by demonstrating how knowledge emerges from the complex interplay of human and non-human factors. The result was not just a learning experience, but the performative formation of fashion-textile communities, illustrating the potential of relational methodologies to transform our understanding and practice of fashion and textiles.

The relational methodology connected participants to each other and fostered communities. Participants' feedback highlighted the power of these shared experiences. One participant noted, "Gained great connections with people when going through shared experiences with others," while another appreciated "the meditation and the interactive activities to meet people and hear a wide variety of experiences and perspectives." The symbolic rituals, such as the "fashion altar" and "letting go" ceremony, were particularly impactful in connecting participants to one another. One participant shared, "I absolutely loved the fashion shrine, and combined with our 'letting go' activity. It was really freeing and eye opening into the thoughts and processes of others — what inspires them and drives them to continue as creative practitioners." These experiences created a sense of community, fostered mutual respect, and provided new insights into others' creative processes. As one participant aptly summarised, it was "a metaphor for life and community."

### *Recommendations for Methods*

Based on the data analysis and participants' post-workshop responses, three workshop techniques emerged as particularly effective for making fashion-textile work more relational. The "Relationality" exercise (#4 using yarn is a powerful method for embodying interconnectedness. Participants found this activity deeply impactful, with one noting how it symbolised "a map, connections, where everyone else was going." Another appreciated "the process of the web—being able to see the patterns and relationship with the threads and the people... and the interconnectedness of these sources of the interaction." This exercise, utilising a common fashion-textile material, offers a tangible way for practitioners, researchers, and educators to engage with and visualise the complex web of relationships within their field, making abstract concepts of relationality experienced through materials and bodies in spaces. This parallels Carmichael's weaving work (2017, p. 24 in which she uses yarn as both a physical, hands-on material and a metaphorical embodiment of relational interconnectedness. By entangling participants, materials, and ideas in novel ways, the workshop embodies a form of posthuman pedagogy that activates spaces for cultivating relationalities (Niccolini et al., 2018, p. 327.

The "Listening to Materials" exercise (#5 emerged as another powerful technique for fostering relational approaches in fashion-textile practice. This method encourages practitioners to engage with materials on a deeper, more intuitive level, challenging conventional human-centric perspectives. Participants found this experience the most transformative, with one noting, "Thinking of how a garment feels and how a garment wants to be used was very thought-provoking. It forced me to think about the life of the garment and since I have been more mindful of how I shop/ approach fashion." Another participant reflected that it "Helped me see the animacy in everything." Inviting practitioners to listen to and commune with materials opens up new avenues for understanding and working with materials, potentially leading to more reciprocal, considered and co-creative methodologies.

The "Pluriversal Futures" exercise (#7 emerged as a potent method for visioning and making in fashion-textile practices, addressing the challenge highlighted by Turner and Taboada (2021, p. 419) regarding the paradoxical nature of embracing pluriversality. This technique integrates imaginative projection with tangible creation, allowing participants to envision and concretise their aspirational fashion-textile futures. By actively engaging participants in conceptualising and embodying



alternative modes of existence, this method challenges deeply rooted assumptions about design and being. Participants found the exercise transformative, with one reflecting,

Working with textiles and needle and thread with needle and thread in circle with others and chatting (placing my thinking mind in the background) and allowing the answer to emerge through the motion of my hands in relationship to the thread and textiles and the frame... The surprise was to see my work and its place in the world.

This approach fostered new perspectives and rekindled appreciation for fashion-textiles, as one participant shared being “Reminded of a sense of appreciation for materials and textiles.” Making transforms these conceptual futures from mental constructs into physical manifestations, potentially catalysing their realisation. Furthermore, this approach cultivates a collaborative environment where participants craft and interweave their novel visions, fostering a shared experience of future-building in fashion-textiles. The exercise thus offers a practical way to move beyond conceptual alternatives to experiential engagement with pluriversal futures in fashion-textiles.

### *Surprising Unfoldings*

The workshops yielded several unexpected outcomes that I had not initially anticipated within the design rationale.

The workshops unexpectedly revealed a profound capacity for worldmaking during the sessions and in their aftermath. This potency aligns with Bolt’s (2008, p. 10) observation on the complexities of illustrating findings in creative research. A diffractive approach, allowing time for reflection and emergence, illuminated the dynamic nature of worldmaking as described by Hill (2017, p. 3), where phenomena evolve through intricate material intra-actions. The ritual processes enacted in the workshops brought multifaceted pluriversal worlds into being, resonating with Haraway’s (2016) concept of *sympoiesis*—a collaborative “making-with” and “worlding-with” that echoes the project’s relational focus. This worldmaking potential, unfolding over time, opens up numerous avenues for further exploration, demonstrating the workshops’ capacity to initiate ongoing, divergent processes toward pluriversal fashion-textile practices and enquiries.

A further surprising outcome, upon reflection, was that the

workshops cultivated an environment that encouraged participants to embrace ambiguity and multiple possibilities for a fashion-textile context. This approach aligns with Vitek and Jackson's (2010) emphasis on recognising the limits of knowledge in complex systems. By creating spaces for not knowing and exploration, the sessions diverged from conventional fashion-textile and sustainability discourses that typically focus on material and product-level changes. This embrace of ambiguity is similar to Barad's (2003, p. 803) concept of diffraction, which reveals the fluid nature of boundaries by showing "shadows in 'light' regions and bright spots in 'dark' regions." In the workshops, this manifested as participants navigated the interplay between modern ways of doing fashion-textiles and their values. Participants were encouraged to consider garments not just as products but as living entities with their agency, blurring the lines between object and subject and challenging traditional notions of fashion-textiles.

The workshops elicited an unexpected level of openness and eagerness from participants, many of whom were experiencing such exercises for the first time. This receptiveness led to profound impacts on their perspectives and practices. One participant noted in the post-workshop interview how the workshop helped them become "more reflective and proud of my work," with each design choice becoming "a more conscious effort." Another described the experience as "very meditative," suggesting its potential to help those in large fashion brands cultivate a "sustainable mindset." The workshops also sparked a re-evaluation of value, with one participant expressing a desire to "re-evaluate the notion of 'value' not only in my creative practice but in my personal, work and spiritual understanding of my world." Overall, the workshops encouraged "a moment of pause, slowing down, considering," fostering a deeper, more mindful approach to fashion-textiles.

The workshops unexpectedly fostered deep and potent fashion-textile communities, extending beyond the initial focus on relational experiences of pluriversal ontologies. As Østern et al. (2023, p. 277) note, drawing on Karen Barad's (2007) perspective, these sessions facilitated a transformation from static existence to dynamic emergence. This shift was evident in participants' frequent expressions of desire for connection and creation with others, as noted in the post-workshop interviews. This further aligns with the community-centric values of *Earth Logic* (Fletcher & Tham, 2019). One participant described the workshop as "enriching and grounding," noting that it provided "a strong sense of connection with a creative community who is interested in sustainability in relation

to textiles.” Another emphasised the intimacy fostered within the group, while another characterised it as “a social approach to sustainability.” These responses highlight the workshops’ capacity to create meaningful, transformative connections among participants.

### 3.12. Conclusions

Engaging in primary research as a testing platform allowed for a deeper exploration of concepts that had arisen in the earlier stages of the study and their potential contributions to the field of pluriversal fashion-textile research and making. The workshops have been a vital force in helping to move the theoretical exploration and practice away from the individual toward the communal, testing how these concepts are experienced relationally by others. Additionally, the workshops have resulted in some methods others can adopt to make their fashion-textile designing and enquiry more relational.

Through four workshops conducted over the second and third stages of research, I introduced almost thirty fashion-textile participants to various experiential, embodied, relational material practices. Grounded in pluriversal ontologies that emerged from the prior theoretical exploration, the methods created an environment of ambiguity. Crucially, these workshops encouraged creative exploration without predetermined outcomes, where participants engaged and developed in community. By attuning to different rhythms co-created in the spaces—slower, contemplative, collaborative, and ritualistic—participants were invited to temporarily disengage from the constant mental activities prevalent in our day-to-day lives and cultivate embodied presence. These processes allowed participants to experience divergent pluriversal methods and explore what unfolds in these environments.

This diffractive reading of emergent workshop data, supported by pre- and post-workshop questionnaires and interviews, revealed several vital intra-actions: Discomfort, Surprises, Presence, Aliveness, and Openness. These intra-actions represent the tensions and diverse perspectives that underscore the various complexities that emerged between workshop relations when exploring pluriversal methods for a fashion-textile context. Discomfort arose from participants grappling with unfamiliar, ambiguous processes that challenged their usual ways of engaging with fashion-textiles. Surprises manifested in unexpected outcomes and realisations, highlighting the generative potential of pluriversal approaches. Presence emerged as participants attuned to

the immediate, embodied experience of the workshops, temporarily disengaging from habitual thought patterns. I observed aliveness through the dynamic, energetic interactions present and emergent between participants, materials, and ideas. Openness reflected the participants' willingness to embrace new perspectives and divergent ways of working.

These intra-actions were not isolated but interconnected, creating a rich tapestry of experiences that illuminated the nuanced perceptions surfacing during and after the workshops. By examining these forces through a relational lens rather than a representational one, insight has been gained into the subtle, often ineffable aspects of engaging with pluriversal methods in fashion-textiles. This approach recognises the dynamic, fluid nature of boundaries and exclusions in research processes, as highlighted by Barad (2003, p. 803), and opens up new possibilities for understanding and engaging with fashion-textile practices in diverse ways.

The initial data analysis phase encompassed reviewing workshop footage, examining post-workshop questionnaires and interviews, and reflecting on the researcher-participant's experiences. This process aimed to extract key quotes, emotions, tensions, impacts, and ideas from the workshop data, providing a broad overview before proceeding to a more in-depth diffractive analysis in the second research layer. In analysing the data diffractively, I sought to identify diverse relational patterns—identifying subtleties, differences, and disparities and delving into aspects that defy easy articulation. Ultimately, I was looking for what emerges through relations and the in-between spaces when introducing participants to pluriversal ways of engaging with fashion-textiles. Upon re-examining the workshop data through a relational lens rather than a representational one, five primary agentic forces unfolded: a. Discomfort; b. Surprises; c. presence; d. Aliveness; e. Openness. These forces illuminate the nuanced perceptions that surfaced during the workshops and afterwards, as highlighted through post-workshop interviews and video analysis. This approach recognises that boundaries are not fixed manifestations of interconnectedness but rather dynamic processes that inherently involve specific exclusions (Barad, 2003, p. 803). I created several visual maps to illustrate these findings. A performative research paradigm opens up new possibilities for understanding and engaging with the world in all its complexity by foregrounding the embodied and performative aspects of research.

These immersive workshops created dynamic learning environments that transcended traditional product or material-focused approaches to sustainable fashion-textiles. By engaging participants in

ambiguous, ritualistic, and experiential settings, the spaces encouraged a deeper, more holistic and nuanced understanding of the field. Participants explored subtle and liminal aspects of fashion-textiles, gaining tangible experience with pluriversal ontologies in this context. This approach fostered diverse perspectives and insights, forming performative fashion-textile communities that embody relationality. These communities demonstrated a relational approach to sustainable fashion-textiles, which shows potential for further development in future research and practice.

Returning to the research sub-question, "What unfolds when sharing pluriversal onto-epistemologies and methods with others?", these workshops revealed that when participants engage with pluriversal approaches to fashion-textiles, what emerges is a complex interplay of forces that challenge, surprise, and ultimately open up new possibilities. The findings indicate that pluriversal methods catalyse not just intellectual but embodied, emotional, and relational shifts that can lead to more holistic approaches to sustainability. This underscores the importance of creating communal learning spaces that embrace ambiguity and foster relational thinking, rather than focusing solely on technical or material solutions to sustainability challenges.

These workshop findings carry significant implications for how we approach fashion-textile education, research, and practice. They suggest that fostering pluriversal engagement requires creating environments that balance discomfort with openness, structure with emergence, and individual exploration with collective meaning-making. Looking ahead to Chapter 4, these relational insights will be complemented by an exploration of my personal making practice, which offers another perspective on how pluriversal concepts can be embodied through creative processes. Together, these two forms of engagement—communal and individual—provide a more comprehensive understanding of how a pluriverse might manifest in fashion-textiles, contributing to the overarching aim of this research to explore holistic, sustainable approaches that move beyond conventional paradigms.

## ***Chapter 4. Enquiry Through Making: A Journey into the Practice-Led Embodiment of the Theory***

### **4.1. Pluriversality in Practice**

This chapter explores how my approach to practice-led research develops applied understandings of pluriversality through material forms. I delve into the practice-led making component of research that has been a vessel to enquire about, situate, and embody the project's theoretical underpinnings through making. Physically creating with materials has been vital in moving the research beyond the conceptual into practice. In Chapter 1, "Foundations," I introduced the project research methodology that sits within a performative research paradigm and works collaboratively with a pluriverse. However, in this chapter, I discuss how this practice-led research component has allowed me to embody what pluriversal fashion-textile making could be like by exploring diverse and immersive artistic expressions (Bolt, 2016, p. 130). Important to note is that a performative research paradigm does not solely focus on creative outcomes (p. 10). Instead, it emphasises the processes and forces that influence material realities, emotional responses, and theoretical discussions through making (p. 10). The relational forces that emerged due to the practices are unpacked in detail below, organised into major themes of what unfolded during the creative research process.

To begin this chapter, I bring forward the fundamental concepts and values that ground the making practice and how these interweave with the larger methodological aims of the project, as well as the theory and workshops. This chapter includes discussing how creative research has allowed me to embody pluriversal theories, as the corporeal has been an agentic collaborator in knowledge-making. Next, I reintroduce a central component of the project's methodology—emergence—and how this unfolded throughout the making journey. This is followed by exploring how the making processes and materials became vital, emergent, and transformative relations toward more-than-human materialities. Aligning with the premise of a pluriverse that recentres diverse knowledge systems have been hidden, devalued, and erased through modern/colonial constructs (Escobar, 2018a), I delve into the role that contemplation has had on the research methodology in that it has allowed me to slow down, and develop a more profound sense of awareness and sensitivity toward relations through the making practice. I move on to an overview



of the practice of embroidery and its potency as a method in both my work and others. As I learnt to stitch from my Slavic matriarchal lineage, I present research into the reverence, rituals and world-making processes historically found in creating textiles. I reinstate the importance of place throughout my making journey by offering insights into ritual-like ways of making. I then provide a comprehensive overview of the evolving creative processes and outcomes that unfolded in stages one, two, and three of the project. Concluding this chapter, I draw attention to the insights that have emerged from the making practices and how these can contribute to pluriversal-making methods.

The making practice began as a series of design experiments that evolved into textile creations and then an Earth-cloth, a modular fashion-textile garment. The Earth-cloth jacket, like all artifacts and processes in this research, represents one contextual manifestation among countless possibilities in a fashion-textile pluriverse. The process of creating this piece further interlinks with pluriversal ontologies as will be unpacked further in the subsequent chapter. Distinctly defining where this practice sits, whether in fashion-textile design, craft, and art realms, was only considered once I had finalised the making to allow it to unfold organically instead of trying to represent it within contemporary classifications, which can be limiting. To this point, I am inspired by designer and anthropologist Elizabeth (Dori) Tunstall (2013, p. 243), as she shares that in order to decolonise design innovation, designers “should seek to eliminate false distinctions between art, craft, and design in order to recognise better all culturally important forms of making as a way in which people make value systems tangible to themselves and others.”

I am a trained fashion-textile designer, and I contextualise this project within the fashion-textile space. Closely intertwining is essential to artistic research, emphasising handcrafting, slowness, and connection to ancestry. When I speak of artistic research in this chapter, this encompasses fashion-textile and craft research. Even though craft is essential to fashion-textile creation, craft practices and artisans have been devalued through industrialisation and globalisation mechanisms (Hughes, 2012, p. 451). As “hierarchical classifications of differences” can lead to the devaluing of other forms of knowledge and making that do not fit into the dominant mode and paradigm (Escobar, 2018a), this chapter does not delve into the differences between fashion-textile making and craft-making as they have worked co-creatively within the premise of this project.

#### ***4.1.1. Artistic Research as the Embodiment of Theory***

This practical element of the project is a form of artistic research, which

artistic researchers de Assis & D’Errico (2019, p. 3) articulate as a form of knowledge production that inseparably intertwines research with creative artistic activities. Additionally, and vital for my research, is what Barrett & Bolt (2007) note that artistic research allows the researcher to do—to engage the body in making practices driven by emotional, personal, and subjective concerns that rely not only on clear and precise knowledge but also on intuitive and tacit practices. Aligning with the holistic proposition for this pluriversal research, which encompasses the full breadth of knowledge creation (cognitive, spiritual, emotional, and physical), hands-on praxis has been a vital ingredient within this research journey. As delineated in previous sections, this research is grounded in a holistic methodological framework that aims to approach fashion-textile knowledge creation in an integrated way, transitioning the research from the intellectualised theoretical underpinnings to further embracing the embodied, emotional and experiential as valued knowledge creators. As argued and explored throughout this study, fashion-textiles, sustainability, and academic spaces are lacking in this integrated approach, and a reconnection to this vaster and whole way of being in the world leads to different pathways, options and outcomes. This further aligns with one of the main aims of the research to create and integrate holistic research methods to engage with fashion-textiles towards pluriversality. Actively making in iterative, experimental, and intuitive ways, and the relationships formed through and between these relationships, have allowed nascent and nuanced artistic methods to unfold in multifaceted and surprising ways.

The practice has been the vessel to embody theoretical knowledge, as interdisciplinary scholar Paul Carter (2004, p. xii) describes through the concept of “material thinking.” I have broadened the research to include corporeal matter, acknowledging bodily and sensual agency as both an experiential and vital force in the making process. Art theorist Barbara Bolt (2013, p. 5) argues that “art is a material practice and that the materiality of matter lies at the core of creative practice. Dance, theatre, and fashion, as embodied practices, engage the matter of bodies.” My body is the conduit for sensing and experiencing these relations and that which emerges in between, as I am physically located where I create, draw, and stitch cloth. Within this context, materiality refers to not just the textiles of a garment but also the physical body that engages with materials, whether through wearing or creating, as well as the living systems of fashion production, design, and use (Smelik, 2018, p. 34).

Fashion cultural theorist Daniële Bruggeman (2022, p. 156) emphasises the autonomy of all living matter, recognising the importance of physical and embodied existence and advocating for granting more agency

to all living organisms, systems, and materials. The concept connects to bodily materialism, stemming from the idea of the "embodied or enfolded subject," as introduced by Italian post-humanist feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti (2011). This lens can critically examine the prevailing anthropocentric fashion system (Bruggeman, 2022, p. 156). As within a pluriverse that decentres the human to recentre all life on this planet, bodily agency must extend beyond anthropocentric human-centred definitions to encompass all types of bodies, entities, systems, materials, and substances in the world (p. 153).

In my practice over the years, the physical body has slowly become an active and agentic participant in the creation process, entangling with the experiential, sensual, and material dimensions formed relationally through the research-making processes. The boundaries between these entanglements have been fluid and permeable, blurring edges between nature-culture dichotomies towards what Braidotti (2019, p. 31) defines as a "continuum of living matter." Knowbotiq, the artistic collective of Yvonne Wilhelm and Christian Hübner, embodies this as they explore a variety of forms and mediums in expanding notions of knowledge creation and epistemic disobedience. Knowbotiq's (2017) artistic investigations within their ongoing project *kotomisi: un-inform* centre around aesthetic violence, contextualised through clothing known as *kotomisi*, originally worn by enslaved women in the then Dutch colony of Suriname in South America during the seventeenth century. Through a variety of creative media, ornamental, embodied, and experiential outputs, knowbotiq work towards reimagining historical representations of postcolonial identification and classification towards female liberation (knowbotiq, 2017).

The artistic research allowed for an engagement with the theory through the body, specifically the hands. Through her textile research, Nithikul Nimkulrat, a Thai textile artist, designer, and researcher, discusses that making textiles is not merely about handcrafting objects but is also a method for cognitive engagement as the hands shape materials, "a means for logically thinking through senses" (Nimkulrat, 2012, p. 1). The method can be likened to Italian architect and curator Paola Antonelli's (as cited in Tlostanova, 2020, p. 169) *thinkering*, meaning "thinking with your hands," which prioritises critical questioning in design over seeking immediate solutions. Within this project, *thinkering* occurred through iterative stitching that allowed me to switch the rational mind off and be present to whatever thoughts, visions, and experiences wanted to come through at the time. Bolt (2008, p. 5) shares that artists come into existence through the repetitive act of creating art, a process

that shapes and defines the artist.

The experimental making practice granted me a space to relate to the complex, ambiguous, and multifaceted nature of a pluriverse in a personal, experimental, and direct way, “a dynamic process of learning and understanding through material experience” (Gray & Burnett, 2009, p. 51). Such an approach further pertains to what American philosopher and educator John Dewey (1980) proposed: that humans learn best through direct engagement with the doing experience, whereas through artistic practices, as in everyday life, “action, feeling, and meaning are one.” Such an approach is exemplified through the practice-led research of designer-researcher Ruby Hoette (2022, p. 89), particularly within her project *Conversation Piece*, as she shares how she uses tools and techniques from the world of textiles as well as language as a pathway to reveal viewpoints on extending fashion practices in order to discover the “embodied, temporal, and intellectual potential of fashion.” Through objects and simple activities related to textiles and text, such as unpicking and highlighting, a process of reinterpreting and reimagining garments and words opens up (Hoette, 2017). Hoette contends that practice-led fashion research must occupy a hybrid space across being-doing-thinking fashion, revaluing fashion knowledge found through practice (pp. 81–82).

Important to highlight is how certain phases of the creative journey pose distinct challenges. The initial stage, in particular, proved demanding as I grappled with uncertainty about what to create. During this time, I was caught in moments of stagnation, attempting to exert excessive control over the process and its outcomes. I noticed that whenever I tried to rush or push my body into making from a sense of urgency or stress, this led to a disconnect with the making that stalled and repelled me away. As a result, and slightly dissimilar to how I approached the theoretical and workshop components, I chose not to impose any deadlines on the creative practice and instead allowed it to unfold at its own pace, free from external pressures, with space to exist, (un)become and emerge. Relating to practice in this way meant I did not know what the unfoldings would result in—an uncomfortable place to sit within but also necessary to create a different relationship to the making process. In contemporary Western fashion-textile practices, outcome-based, control-heavy and hyper-individualistic methods are valued over others. In this light, I enjoy how craftsman and scholar David Pye (2010) discusses craft as a “workmanship of risk,” the idea that the outcome within is always uncertain, with a gamble involved in the process, as one cannot predict what will or will not unfold. Embodying the research through making was

further characterised by variations in rhythms and flows over the years, where some periods saw rapid creations emerge while others saw a shift towards theoretical development and workshop focus. Such an ebb and flow allowed for an organic process without coercion or rigidity with the practice, an essential element in relating to the practice in an emergent way.

#### **4.1.2. Emergence through Making**

The research methodology, including the practice enquiry, is anchored in emergence. Chapter 1 introduced emergence as a methodology, and this chapter further explores it, particularly by reflecting on the journey of making and how emergence has unfolded throughout the years. In this context, emergence emphasises the nonlinear and unpredictable nature of the research process, where outcomes and knowledge evolve organically through engagement with practice methods, materials, places, and theory.

Anthropologist Victor Turner (1982, p. 113) introduced the concept of liminal spaces into Western contexts, describing them as ambiguous and fluid environments between established structures and norms, which offer opportunities for transformation and the emergence of new ideas, perspectives, and ways of being. For a design context, designer researcher Yoko Akama (2015, pp. 262–274) presents in-between spaces through the Zen Buddhist Japanese philosophy of *ma*. This cultural concept views between-ness as a method for collectively transforming and becoming with, which Akama (2015, p. 262) says opens up designers into liminal spaces and what emerges through them, helping them to become more relationally aware and, in turn, better designers.

For a pluriverse to emerge within fashion-textiles, diverse and divergent forms of making and enquiring are needed to disrupt conventional power structures and notions of absolute truth (Akomolafe & Ladha, 2017, p. 823). Akomolafe and Ladha (2017, p. 820) share that emergence encompasses the indeterminate, aberrant, and nonlinear phenomena, where alternative relationships to power and knowledge can come into play. Throughout my creative practice, there was a deliberate exploration of diverse materials and techniques throughout each phase, marked by a sense of trust and a departure from conventional design and creative methodologies, which typically prioritise predetermined outcomes. While a practical output materialised at the project's end, it was not preordained and evolved gradually and organically over time. Within practice-led research, there was an underlying commitment to

iterative, repetitive experimentation (Bolt, 2008, p. 5) throughout the years, which was pivotal in the making journey as a way to move beyond attachments to final or polished outcomes prevalent in design and artistic spaces.

The experimentation became a dance between surrendering and moving with the flows of theory, materials, and process in front of me, which Ingold (2011) calls “intuition in action.” My subjective relationship with the world shaped this project over the years as I prioritised my intuition and what I wanted to emerge through my relationship with practice. Rather than adhering to external expectations, prescribed research methods, or predetermined paths, I listened, followed, and created what felt right in each moment. This “feeling right” began as an over-intellectualised decision process, but as time went on and in developing a more intimate relationship with practice, “feeling right” became that quick, intuitive hit felt viscerally in the body.

In this way, flowing between theory, embodied knowledge, and the insights of others, I embraced the ambiguity and fluidity of liminal spaces. Somerville (2007, p. 234) refers to this as an “ontology of self-becoming other in the space between self and the natural world, composed of humans and non-human others, animate and inanimate; animals and plants, weather, rocks, trees.” During the creative process, I alternated between gently guiding the flow and completely surrendering to it, echoing Ingold's (2009, p. 92) insights. At first this was clunky as I held deep-seated beliefs about perfectionism, outcomes, aesthetics, and how I thought they should be. As I let go more, deconditioning and delinking into these ways (a continual process), showing up with an open heart, a sense of curiosity, and a detachment to outcomes, the materials, processes, and tools began to reveal more and more in what and how they wanted to co-create with me. I learned to ask *what wants to come through now*, by listening carefully and trusting the intuitive responses given. This became a co-creative process between myself as the researcher and the creative work emerging. Like in any thriving relationship, there was a need for regular tending to love and care, showing up even when it was uncomfortable or I just could not be bothered, with reciprocity and reverence as much as possible.

This more intimate relationship with creating emerged in the second and, even more solidly, in the third research stage. Like any other relationship, I learned the entire spectrum, from creative flows to blockages. There were moments of frustration, overwhelm, and exhaustion juxtaposed with intense bliss and feelings of communion with



creation. It was sometimes helpful to step away from the practice, allowing space, rest, and more openness to emerge so it did not become too consuming. I learned to trust and surrender to the non-linearity of the co-creative journey, even with looming deadlines, teaching commitments, and life's growth and discomforts along the way. Through this, my approach to being a researcher-designer transformed from a state of control to one that embraces co-creation and emergence within my engagement with creative research.

As the researcher-designer, I actively navigated the research process through emergence, allowing it to reciprocally shape my understanding. This challenges the notion of the researcher as an objective, detached observer, positioning me as an active participant in the co-creation of knowledge. In academia and pedagogy, dominant methods often rely on empirical, logical, and rational processes, neglecting nonlinear methods like emergence that defy traditional measurement forms (Somerville, 2007, p. 227).

Additionally, emergence is a state that allows one to contemplate and sense broader and, at times, more invisible socio-cultural concepts. As I experimented and noticed how much I wanted to control the outcomes in the beginning stages, I thought about how most of the world operates this way. Much of the sustainability space predates on "knowing the answers," rushing to "solutions" in linear ways that universalise paths to resolution. In this way, emergence became a metaphor for contemplating so much more. Artist-researcher Ellen Sampson further demonstrates this, as her current practice explores stains on garments as both an embodied and metaphorical "in-between" space (Sampson, 2023, p. 179). She uses stains as the lens through which to explore the emergent concepts surrounding pollution, violence, damage, imperfections, and more about more significant environmental concerns and our relationships with used and worn garments (Sampson, 2023, p. 179).

#### **4.1.3. Vital Processes & Materialities**

By allowing emergence to unfold throughout the research, I became a researcher-practitioner situated within and interrelated with a network of material and process relations, where my role was to allow what I wanted to emerge to unfold through active and mindful engagement with processes and materials.

In the first stage, several fashion-textile ritual practices emerged, while in the second and third stages, I created a series of intuitive hand and digitised drawings blended with embroidery. I surrendered myself to the fabric, needles, threads, computer, and pencils as these materials and tools intuitively guided my hands towards the flow of what to create. Philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (2004, p. 451) refer to this as surrendering to the material and “following where it leads.” They share that life is about the relationships between materials and their forces (p. 377), and instead of having preconceived designs in mind and commanding these onto materials, viewing them as void of agency, the practitioner mediates within the currents of process and flow (Ingold, 2009, p. 92).

Viewing all matter as active and agentic, not reliant on whether humans do things to them in prepossessed ways (Wallis & Carocci, 2022, p. 1), opens divergent ways of being and creatively working with materials. Subsequently, various and surprising rhythms and processes may unfold that a human may not have been able to conceive of on their own (Wallis & Carocci, 2022, p. 1). Decentring the human from the top of the hierarchical tower of knowledge creation grants non-human entities (derived from nature and technology) a stage to co-create (Smelik, 2018, p. 34). Sensing materials and processes as “alive” has been vital for fashion-textiles as it revalues the materiality of garments and objects as living entities, which moves beyond contemporary fashion studies focused on the representational, semiotic, textual, and discursive (Bruggeman, 2022, p. 153).

Moreover, this approach dismantles the divisions and dualisms rooted in modernity/coloniality, a crucial step towards embracing pluriversal ways of existence (Bruggeman & Van de Peer, 2016, p. 8; Smelik, 2018, p. 39). Historian Glenn Adamson (2018) relates to this through his concept of “material intelligence” as a way to comprehend and interpret the physical world, perceiving the meanings embedded in the form of objects and infusing matter with intention.

At the same time, other forms of intelligence emphasise logical reasoning, critical thinking, social interactions, and emotional understanding, material intelligence centres on materials, processes, tools, and all of these relations, which are crucial for sensing and appreciating the work, care, and traditions inherent in material culture (Adamson, 2018). Of Murri heritage, scholar Brooke Collins-Gearing (2023) shares her relationship to weaving and the vital connections it allows for:

For me, knowledge becomes an embodied state of being while I'm weaving: while my hands move, my body grounds, my heart calms, and my mind detaches from thoughts, letting one flow to the next, as I watch one stitch lead/follow the next. Until the row becomes the spiral becomes the base becomes the basket. Each stitch documents my reflections in the process of weaving the whole... The regenerative aspect of this process has been powerful and impactful for me because of my relationship with time and space, my relationship with my Country, my relationship with people, my relationship with sovereignty. I don't have the words to describe how weaving allows me to embody a relationship with that tiny little spark of creativity in me, so I weave it instead. I see that spiral fractal in everything around me. Weaving, for me, has become a way to listen to them speak.

Materials are matter infused with intention, waiting to be transformed, manipulated, and connected (von Busch, 2022). As human relationships with the material world, objects, and nature rearrange (Bruggeman, 2022, p. 169), threads of reciprocity adjoin. In this way, and aligning with the relational essence of a pluriverse, throughout this research, materials and their processes have been active collaborators in the generation of knowledge. My fashion-textiles practice leads me to a deeper enquiry into kinship with matter and more-than-humans, exploring how we can restore and nourish these relationships to create alternative possibilities.

Reflecting on this as I made, several questions arose:

*How do we shift our worldview from being human-centric to being all-life-centric?*

*If all matter is agentic, how do we learn to listen to materials, processes, and tools?*

*What stories, guidance, and desires do they have to share with us?*

*How do we engage with matter in reciprocal ways?*

*And how do we avoid this becoming another "add-on" approach towards sustainability to embodying this in everyday life?*

In his exploration of the complex interplay between human and non-human entities, cognitive archaeologist Lambros Malafouris (2008, pp. 22–24) suggests we move beyond concepts of possession. Instead, he encourages us to concentrate on the interconnected and evolving

results that emerge from our interactions with various materials (pp. 22–24). Within this context, Tim Ingold (2007, p. 12) introduces the idea of the spirit as the regenerative power inherent in the circulatory flows within materials and processes. Such a concept encourages us to view the world relationally and vitally, invoking a sense of wonder (MacLure, 2013, p. 231). This further correlates to what design professor Otto von Busch (2021, p. 15) underscores as the importance of adopting a vitalist perspective for promoting life-affirming fashion and sustainability. Von Busch (2021, p. 17) advocates for recognising fashion as a force that contributes to “human health and flourishing,” which shifts the sustainability narrative beyond isolated efforts to engage the interconnected patterns of reality, what he terms “Vistas of Vitality.” Feminist materialist philosopher Elizabeth Anderson (2020b, pp. 205–216) discusses that the notion of spirit as being alive in matter challenges conventional notions of transcendence by firmly grounding it within our tangible world, a discourse that has been significantly contributing to ongoing feminist discussions about the nature of human experience. This further disrupts established hierarchical binaries such as body/knowledge, spirituality/science, and imagination/reality, and defies conventional frameworks, prompting a re-evaluation of the deeply ingrained hierarchies governing these fundamental aspects of human experience and materiality (Schaeffer, 2018, p. 1006).

At the same time, it is crucial to look beyond mere materiality and explore the sustainability of non-physical elements such as empathy, significance, longing, and other abstract elements that shape a product's lifecycle. Jonathan Chapman's (2015, p. 55) concept of "emotionally durable design" embodies this approach, emphasising the importance of intangible aspects in creating lasting relationships between users and objects.

#### **4.1.4. Contemplation**

A pluriverse illuminates diverse knowledge systems that have been hidden, devalued, and erased through modern/colonial constructs (Escobar, 2018a). These include other forms of awareness, emphasising contemplation as a vital approach to making. Throughout the project, this creative process evolved into active mindfulness, a space that nurtured stillness and contemplation, practised for thousands of years (Capra, 1975; Fischer, 2019). As Bai et al. (2016, p. 83) discuss, mindfulness practices promote awareness and sensitivity to our environment, bodily sensations, and life purpose, nurturing empathy and care for ourselves,

others, and the world.

Thoroughly unpacked in Chapter 2 in the theoretical groundings, modernity/coloniality and Western science have largely disregarded subjective practices and altered states of consciousness, prioritising objectivity over subjectivity (Bai et al., 2016, p. 79). In alignment with this research's pluriversal and, as a result, decolonial agenda, this project aims to deconstruct traditional research methodologies, recentring and revaluing contemplative, intuitive, creative, and experiential approaches that emerge through fashion-textile practices. Introspective processes, which are embodied, esoteric, and not always easily articulated, enable the researcher-practitioner to navigate the inner and outer realms (pp. 83–85). Such an approach enriches the research in dynamic, holistic, and relational ways, as my subjective experiences with the making practices informed the theory and workshops and the many relations occurring in between. Anthropologist Joshua Falcon (2020, p. 157) discusses that embracing diverse forms of consciousness may open up possibilities beyond the socio-cultural norms of modernity and contribute to creating “new ontological designs.”

The slowness associated with stitching and the contemplation that this slowness nourished allowed me to immerse myself fully in each stitch, the larger textile piece, and the ruminating ideas throughout the process. Philosophising about weaving, Isabelle Stengers (2004, p. 2) reveals how weaving processes slow down our thinking, decelerate the urge to produce at maximum speeds, and resist conventional methods that direct reality, its actions, and thoughts. Weaving and embroidery bear differences in tools and processes, yet both elicit slow and contemplative material practices. These spaces of contemplation while stitching allowed me to sink into the process of creating and the underlying theoretical ideas. In these moments of allowing myself to be with tools, materials, process, and contemplation, novel insights, ideas, and connections naturally arose that coloured the research profoundly. Designer Louise St. Pierre (2020, pp. 108–109) says that these moments of connecting into the relational web of life, which is what contemplation allows one to do, create unity between animate and inanimate beings, nourishing a space for ideas and experiences to emerge that are beyond preconceived representations.

In fashion-textiles, the often-overlooked internal dynamics of contemplation, reflection, silence, and deliberate slowness are rarely given space for or accounted for their potency towards creating. *I wonder what new possibilities might arise and what diverse fashion-textile onto-epistemologies and practices could emerge with a decentring of these*

*vital inner spaces?*

#### **4.1.5. Embroidering**

Embroidery, an ancient craft practice involving the creation of designs on fabrics through repetitive stitching, has been a primary method of creative expression throughout this research journey, particularly in stages two and three. This practice allowed abstract pluriversal research concepts to become embodied as I literally and metaphorically stitched theory and its unfoldings into materials. Embroidering as a method is deeply ingrained within my being, evoking an innate familiarity and guiding me into meditative, trance-like states. This connection to the craft is rooted in my ancestral lineage, especially the women who mastered this art. Childhood memories of observing and attempting to replicate my grandmother's meticulously hand-embroidered pieces have played a crucial role in my tacit learning. Resonating with Adamson's (2007) perspective that crafting is a form of thinking, I view embroidering as a holistic expression engaging hands, heart, spirit, and mind. It serves as a medium to access states of flow, creativity, and intuition, connecting with the relational flows of life. Within this project, stitching has been a means of creative expression, healing, and personal transformation, informing the research as these embroidered cloths hold the full spectrum of experiences from the past four years.

YeSeung Lee (2016), in her research "Seamlessness: Making and (un)Knowing in Fashion Practice," describes the act of hand-stitching as a method of becoming intimate with the unfamiliar. Through creation, a readiness emerges to surrender to the cloth, relinquishing control and momentarily blending with it, transforming both the work and the creator. As Rissanen (2023, p. 139) notes, "to stitch is not a neutral act." This research, therefore, champions stitching as an empowering, creative, sacred, and world-making practice.

While acknowledging the profound lineage of women historically connected to stitching practices, it is essential to recognise the complex role of craft-making in political, feminist, and social justice movements. Roszika Parker (1984), in "The Subversive Stitch," explores how embroidery has been both a tool for emancipation and domination. Today, women still make up the majority of workers in the fashion-textile industry, where making can sometimes serve as a tool for suppression rather than liberation. Conversations on gender in fashion-textiles and sustainability are paramount yet deeply lacking (Southwell, 2015, p. 101).



It is important to acknowledge here Fletcher's (2023, pp. 117–130) contribution to this discourse, as she provides crucial insights into the intersectionality of gender dynamics, fashion practices, and sustainability challenges, analysing how sustainability practices in fashion are culturally gendered and arguing for renewed attention to gender in a field often treated as 'gender-blind'.

This gender-focused lens in fashion sustainability intersects with textile practices that serve as tools for emancipation and healing. The collaboration between Diana Albarrán González and the autonomous women's collective Colectiva Malacate (2024) demonstrates stitching as an emancipatory practice. Their embroidered works capture the memory of body territory, aiding in healing and strengthening community support networks amongst women affected by armed conflict (Albarrán González & Colectiva Malacate 2024, pp. 3–5). Through embroidery and collective mapping, they create supportive environments for conversation, introspection, and connection, enhancing self-awareness and well-being in line with the principles of *lekil kuxlejal*(good living) (pp. 3–7).

The Dreams of Weaving study further explores the relationship between artisanal weavers' skills, emotions, and personalities as expressed through their craft. Using a practice-led approach, the researchers examine how weavers' thoughts and feelings manifest through their creations, arguing that experiential and emotional knowledge are key craft strengths (Gopura & Wickramasinghe, 2023, p. 212).

Embroidery in this research serves not only as a method of creative expression and data generation but also as a powerful tool for embodying theory, connecting with ancestral wisdom, and engaging in transformative, world-making practices that challenge traditional academic boundaries and contribute to the emergence of a pluriversal approach for fashion-textiles.



**Figure 20.** Embroidering textiles on the balcony at the University of Technology, Sydney.

#### **4.1.6. Ancestral Connection through Cloth**

Connecting to the potency of stitching through this practice has led me to reconnect to my Slavic familial lineage from what is now called Eastern Poland. I have been additionally inspired by Tyson Yunkaporta's *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking can Save the World* (2019), and similarly reiterated in *Right Story, Wrong Story: Adventures in Indigenous Thinking* (2023), as he emphasises that "the assistance people need is not in learning about Aboriginal Knowledge but in remembering their own" (p. 163). This statement has deeply impacted me in deepening a connection with my pre-Christian Slavic pagan ancestry. At the same time, I hold reverence and respect for the First Cultures of the lands that I am held by each day.

Before patriarchal and Christian dominance devalued and erased pagan belief systems, my ancestors believed that textiles and their associated processes mediated metaphysical worlds (Survo, 2012, p. 344). In "Mythologems of Embroideries: On Karelian Sources," Russian-Finnish researcher Vera Survo (2012, pp. 328–352) reveals how people saw the process of creating textiles as mythological. They wove threads into past, present, and future worlds, preserving sacred knowledge through the textile-making process (Survo, 2012, p. 345). Spinning was associated with mythical beings, particularly female goddesses (Mencej, 2011, p. 56). Throughout the making processes, which included spinning, weaving and stitching, women would share their dreams and whisper prayers or spells, symbolically woven into the cloth (Zwierzyńska, 2014). Polish cultural writer Ewa Zwierzyńska (2014) reveals how textiles could influence and shape reality. Slovenian Professor of Folkloristics Mirjam Mencej (2011, p. 55) demonstrates in her article "Connecting Threads" how eastern European folklore linked the entire course of life to harvesting and spinning fibres, creating textiles and garments. Makers passed knowledge to the next generation through textiles, which carried a fragment of the maker's soul within them (Markowicz, 2022, p. 35).

Feminist historian and founder of the Suppressed Histories Archives, Max Dashu, further explores these practices' connections to witches and witchcraft throughout her work. In *Witches and Pagans: Women in European Folk Religion, 700–1100* (2016), Dashu establishes historical and mythological links between textile crafts and witchcraft

practices, were essential and highly regarded elements for the well-being of every functioning society. Spinning and weaving further served as divination tools for bestowing blessings, facilitating healings, and conducting rituals to invoke the goddesses (Dashu, 2016). Her book devotes an entire chapter on the spiritual significance of textile practices in pagan European societies, of which little elsewhere has been written about and for which I am grateful.

As I stitch my textiles, I contemplate how makers intentionally crafted textiles, recognising the power and potency of each stitch. This awareness has drawn me closer to my ancestry and my grandmother, whose embroidered cloths I used to mimic. Likewise, in contemplation of stitching, fashion researcher-designer Rissanen (2017b, p. 123) shares:

It also connects me with the countless individuals whose hands have made the same motions since the first bone needle pushed sinew through an animal skin tens of thousands of years ago. Cross-stitching by hand connects me to deep time and it connects me with our ancestors.

Exploring these ideas from a more local First Nation perspective, everything is alive (Neale in Page, 2021, p. 19). As such, objects are not just created but infused with life by the person crafting them, establishing a connection to all those who came before, including ancestors (Neale in Page, 2021, p. 19). Adjunct Professor and Head of the Centre for Indigenous Knowledges, Margo Neale (2021), discusses that the maker is a conduit for this process, and the stories they carry, as well as the narratives they become a part of, all contribute to the vitality of the object. This vitality accumulates over time, turning the object into a living entity with layers of rich meaning: "So what you make, why you make it, how you make it, when you make it, is all part of this ancestral cycle of life" (Neale in Page, 2021, p. 19).

Designer-researcher Yoko Akama (n.d) reflects upon learning to weave from Wiradjuri Elder Aunty Lorraine Tye, who facilitated a Dabaamalang Waybarra Miya (Sovereign Weaving) community event:

When Aunty Lorraine teaches me weaving as a practice of Wiradjuri sovereignty, I am pleasantly surprised by my nimble fingers that quickly picks up the technique. This is because I have my mother's hands, which are also my grandmother's hands ... my grandmother's hands that stitched kimono for all her

children, passed down to me from my grandmother, to my aunties, and to my mother. So my ancestry is very much alive in me, it is part of my sovereignty and my culture.

*This makes me wonder on how it would be like to imbue more intention, ritual, reverence and reciprocity into our making processes? What could emerge if we created from such a place?*

As I stitch, what are the ancient worlds I am connecting to through cloth and the physical act of stitching? As I closely observe the hand-made cloths of my Grandmother, noting that this is how I learnt to embroider many years ago, through observation of these artefacts. I wonder about their stories, what they've seen, and the hands that have touched them. As I stitch into this cloth now, what are the ancestral stories I am connecting to and what are the new stories I want to tell? What worlds do I care to bring into beingness through this cloth? What codes, symbology, dreams, visions, prayers, and spells do I imbue this work with? So many worlds are created unconsciously. What worlds do I care to create consciously? How can every stitch be set with care and intention, a thread travelling the universe representative of all that I desire for myself and others; joy, vitality, healing, liberation.

(Personal reflections on making, 4 November 2022)



**Figure 21.** Stage 2 and 3 embroidered cloths in progress. Photo by Annelijn Hooij.

#### **4.1.7. Textiles as World-Making Practices**

As highlighted, crafting textiles has carried profound historical and ancestral connotations to the emergence of life and the moulding of reality within societies. Despite giving significant consideration in philosophical discussions to its ontological existence (Prez-Bustos, 2017), and as already introduced in previous sections, the creation of textiles was and is a world-making practice.

Slovenian professor of Folkloristics Mirjam Mencej (2011, p. 77) discusses that traditionally, the act of spinning and the materials used (mainly flax or unspun wool), along with the resulting products (threads, yarn and cloths), held deep symbolic significance related to fundamental aspects of human existence (birth, life, and death). Before Christianity, modernity/coloniality, industrialisation, and globalisation, people saw crafting textiles as a world-making process—a bridge between birth, life, and death (p. 77). Makers spun metaphorical and physical worlds into being, as the thread symbolised human life, and spinning signified the creation of one's destiny, life, and the universe (Zwierzyńska, 2014). These connections were understood symbolically through rituals and myths and practically through spinning, weaving, and stitching forms into being. Such an approach represents a world-making practice, which design researcher Renata Leito (2023, p. 19) highlights as design being used to construct worlds, translating abstract values and ideals into concrete experiences and objects.

World-making, also called worlding, refers to creating realities (worlds) through symbolic, experiential, and representational practices (Clark et al., 2017, p. 1). Worlds are never entirely new, as they arise from other worlds, adding to them, transforming them and disrupting them in ways that Clark et al. share have the power to shift relations, actions, thoughts, and behaviours (p. 3). Philosopher Nelson Goodman introduced the term world-making within Western constructs, illustrating that there is no singular way to articulate and sense the world and that, instead, there are multiple ways through which “universes of worlds as well as worlds themselves may be built” (Goodman, 1978). In design, Fry (1999) famously emphasises “design’s powers of world-making,” as worlds are made and (un)made through them. Through this lens, the world is not merely a gathering of subjects or objects nor a concept or representation (Clark et al., 2017, p. 2) but is continually unfolding. These practices are gateways to different possibilities, which Ingold (2009, pp. 91–102) describes as material wayfinding activities towards various states of becoming or



unbecoming.

Important to note is how designer-researcher Matthew Kiem (2013, pp. 107–108) discusses that craft and design are practices that shape and create worlds and have the power to destroy worlds. The worlds we see and live through in this time result from worlding practices brought about through particular systems and paradigms that continue reinforcing ontologically destructive ways of being in the world. St. Pierre (2020, p. 24) further highlights the need for designers to incorporate subjective knowledge and perspectives into their world-building practices, acknowledging the personal nature of their work and how this begins a redirective design practice.

Throughout the making journey, I have been contemplating these questions:

*What fashion-textile worlds do I want to create and contribute to?*

*What practices and ways of being am I currently involved in that are not in alignment with the worlds I desire to create?*

*What needs to be let go of and put to rest?*

*What space does this now open up for something else to emerge?*

Intentional world-making towards desired, flourishing, pluriversal worlds that this project guides toward require pluriversal imagination (Escobar, 2018a) through making practices. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012, p. 159) states,

The project of creating is not just about the artistic endeavours of individuals but about the spirit of creating which Indigenous communities have exercised over thousands of years. Imagination enables people to rise above their own circumstances, to dream new visions and to hold on to old ones. It fosters inventions and discoveries, facilitates simple improvements to people's lives and uplifts our spirits. Creating is not the exclusive domain of the rich nor of the technologically superior, but of the imaginative.

Mila Burcikova (2019, p. 329), a researcher at the Centre for Sustainable Fashion at UAL, introduces utilising utopian thinking as a valuable tool



towards envisioning diverse fashion futures. In her utopian studies research, Levitas (2013) reveals how utopia serves as a method that enables holistic thinking about possible futures, integrating reflexivity, provisionality, and democratic engagement with their underlying principles and practices. Even though some deem a utopia unattainable or undesirable, its methods provide a critical instrument for revealing present-day policies' shortcomings (Levitas, 2013).

What has become evident through the material practices undertaken is that these have been world-making practices in motion. Current fashion-textile worlds have been sensed through theoretical research. In contrast, the pluriversal worlds this project steers towards have been explored, crafted, and embodied through practices and within the social learning workshops (Chapter 3).

#### **4.1.8. Making with Places**

As previously outlined in Section 2.5, place is the foundation that holds all aspects of this research, an active co-creator with this making practice. Kombumerri and Wakka Wakka Mary Graham (2009, p. 75) underscores the fundamental importance of place, which I commence this subsection by sharing:

Place precedes inquiry. Place defines and supersedes inquiry. Place is a living thing, whether it is geographically located or located as an event in time. Place does not hamper, confuse, or attenuate inquiry; instead, place both enhances and clarifies inquiry. Place underpins inquiry but not merely in an ideological sense. Instead, place underpins inquiry in the most profound ontological sense, in as much as, from an Indigenous point of view, it is the fundamental existential quantifier: it informs us of where we are at any time, thereby at the same time informing us of who we are.

During the four years of this project, which saw the pandemic and multiple relocations, the research and practice were conducted over several cities and locations on the eastern side of Australia, of which I am so grateful to have been held. The first stage of the research unfolded partly on Gadigal and Worimi Lands, the second stage predominantly on Bundjalung and a little on Gadigal, whilst the third stage was back on Gadigal and Gayemaygal lands. Practice-based designer-researcher Laurene Vaughan (2017, p. 10) suggests that where the action of practice

occurs becomes the site of research as all of these places provide an integral context, meaning, and enquiry for the project. Knowledge derived from aesthetic experience is inherently contextual and situated (Barrett, 2007, p. 116).

As highlighted multiple times, all places possess agency, and my creation upon and with varied places inevitably influenced the research and practice in subtle and more obvious ways. Additionally, being a non-Indigenous woman living and researching on colonised lands raised numerous questions towards enquiry and contemplation whilst making out on and with places:

*What does it mean to exist and create within this place?*

*How does the act of making on Bundjalung today compare to my earlier work on Gadigal and Worimi lands in the first stage?*

*What impact does my current location have on my creative process?*

*What agency does place exert within this research and the resulting creations?*

*Do these places desire to co-create with me? If so, how?*

*How do I learn to listen to places better?*

*What stories do these places have to share with me?*

*What relationships emerge amongst humans, non-humans and materials in these places?*

*What does it mean to employ ancestral textile methods and materials imported from far away lands to create with this place here, now?*

To establish a connection with each place where I was creating, I would first locate myself through the four directions and their associated elements (water/north, fire/south, air/east, and earth/west). By acknowledging these, I paid my respects to the Earth, which grounded and situated me within each location (Marchand et al., 2020; Starhawk, 2004). During these times, I was reminded of practice-led researcher Maarit Mäkelä's musings in "A Nourishing Dialogue with the Material Environment" (2019) that the physical act of creating with materials in places cultivates an embodied and dialogical exchange with the environment. Contemplations, reflections, emotions, visions, and pluriversal imaginings would stream through as I sat observing, sketching, and embroidering in many urban to more nature-based localities. As I intentionally engaged with materials, tools, and processes, these places became fundamental co-creators in these relational creative weavings.

*I sit and embroider into the cloth, purely focused on the next stitch.*

*Material silently screaming, thread into me next. Colour. Stitch. Choose me, they say.*

*At times I glance up, observing what is occurring around me.*

*The rustle of leaves as the wind dances through them.*

*The songs of birds as they catapult through the skies.*

*The sound of machinery tending to the Land.*

*The smell of my partner cooking up in the kitchen.*

*The thought of the looming deadline and all that is to be done next.*

*Weaving through as it weaves my self.*

*(Reflections as I embroider with cloth, 19 November 2022).*

Lyn-Al Young, a fashion designer and artist with heritage from the Gunnai, Wiradjuri, Gunditjmara, and Yorta Yorta peoples, crafts unique garments in partnership with the land (Principle Design, n.d). Her creations draw inspiration from the tree engravings, symbolic patterns, water systems, totemic animals, and terrains of her four ancestral territories, and her processes involve painting silk fabrics placed on rocks within Gunnai country (Principle Design, n.d). She expresses her artistic intention, stating, “My hope is that every person wearing one of my designs will sense the spirit of Walumarra Nungurra (protection and peace)” (Principle Design, n.d).



**Figure 22.** Stage 3 embroidered cloth in progress. Hanging on Gadigal Land.



**Figure 23.** Photos of some of the Places this project has been created upon and with. Clockwise from top right: Worimi, Gadigal, Bundjalung.

#### **4.1.9. Fashion-Textile Rituals**

Before the dominance of modernity/coloniality and its friends, our ancestors would commune with the entire web of life, what anthropologist Frédérique Apffel-Marglin (2011) describes as “beings, powers, and spirits who tricked us, protected us, quarrelled with us, guided us, taught us, punished us, and conversed with us.” As previously discussed in Section 2.6, life flourishes through an abundance of relations, as more-than-human worlds can teach us how to live in reciprocity, collaboration, creativity and co-creation with all of life, with humans as just one part of the weave, not the overarching one (Apffel Marglin, 2011). Entities possess their own distinct voices and desires, which they enact through dialogue with more-than-humans in ritual



practices, challenging the notion that the world exists solely for human exploitation (Apffel-Marglin, 2011). Ritualising these material practices endeavours to move beyond dualist ontologies towards the unification of material and immaterial worlds, and as within animist and relational traditions, materials and processes have been related to as alive, sentient, as teachers and co-creators.

Rituals have played an essential role in this research as making practices connect to more-than-human worlds that move the theory beyond the remit of the intellectual toward other worlds. Rituals bring ceremony and magic into our lives by interweaving the sacred with the mundane, endowing reverence and respect for the symbols and worlds we create through everyday actions (Eisenstein, 2019). Sacred deathcare practitioner Sarah Kerr (2012, p. 8) discusses that in this sense, rituals are practical, as they aim to influence the world by transforming everyday relationship patterns. Dagara Elder Malidoma Patrice Somé (1998) shares that rituals open up a liminal space that bridges worlds, blurring the Western divisions between the material and immaterial, thereby actualising a reorientation of our relationship with reality through cultivating new relationships between self, community, nature, materials and Spirit (Kerr, 2012, p. v).

Stages two and three of this creative research encompassed making practices conducted with intentionality, care, reciprocity, reverence, listening, and an openness to emergence. These textile pieces woven into an Earth cloth, a modular fashion-textile garment, are an amalgamation of theory, practice, and workshops, which have intentionally woven worlds between materials, places, ancestors, and their multifaceted relations. Ritual theorist Ronald Grimes (1995) shares the inherent role of artists in bringing forth “emergent rituals” into the world through art practices, which become pathways that provoke a reflective awareness within society. Additionally, theologian Matthew Fox shares that creatives are the “makers of connections” as they inherently explore their visions in remote places of awareness and bring them into the physical through art (Fox, 1979). Creating these cloths became a ritualistic process as I translated theoretical concepts through hand drawings, digital renderings, and embroidery, moving through each stage in contemplative states of being. The cloths have travelled with me and have been stitched in various places, such as parks, balconies, public transport, aeroplanes, the university, gatherings and ceremonies. In each place, the corporeal process of stitching has felt like a ritual action of merging into the present moment with the needle, thread and cloth, connecting me entirely to my body and with the ritual process of making.

Repetition of these actions has further played a role in these rituals, as the repetitive act of stitching, stitch by stitch, helped to come into a present and trance-like state, in complete flow and submergence with the process. Letting go of strict timelines and preconceived notions of how these should look and letting it emerge and flow co-creatively was essential in keeping the making process in an intentional and ritual-like space.

From an Australian First Nation's perspective, Yunkaporta (2023) reveals how communities encode ritual objects with intentional cultural information that guides them in living in right relationship. Through retelling some of his yarns with Nyikina Warrwa Anne Poelina and Kombumerri and Wakka Wakka Mary Graham (2023), they share that “ritual objects are created and imbued with memory so that recall can be enacted,” further encouraging us all to embed our own knowledge into the making of tangible things. Walbanga and Wadi Wadi woman and designer Alison Page (2021, p. 3) further discuss that “objects are containers of energy” that blur the edges of physical and non-physical realms (Wallis & Carocci, 2021, p. 3). Curators Wallis and Carocci further claim that ritual objects can make ‘real’ in everyday life that is not always experienced nor accepted within the Western world, disrupting traditional binary dualisms and notions of separation (p. 3). Professors in international relations based in Colombia, Arlene B. Tickner and Amaya Querejazu (2021, p. 404), offer the example of Coroma textiles from Bolivia to explain that crafts are “more than ‘just’ textiles.” Coroma textiles serve as custodians of ancestral spirits, narrators of stories, and ritual objects to the past and future, functioning as both historical relics safeguarded through global regulations and essential members of the cosmic, political and social fabrics (Tickner & Querejazu, 2021, p. 404). In this light, anthropologist Jane Schneider (2006, p. 204) highlights that textiles and clothes produced through capitalist production have lost their connection to rituals, ceremonies, magic and reverence, age-old practices exemplified through craft making. Otto von Busch (2015, p. 245) argues that contemporary production methods still hold partial layers of infusing garments with rituals through how they adorn the wearer’s body, through contexts and relations, and companions through life and death.

Within the first research stage, the design experiments undertaken evolved into what I named *fashion rituals* due to their contemplative, intuitive nature, which required a deep presence and connection to simple and mundane processes. Within the second and third stages of making, the entire process of creating the embroidered cloths became a ritualisation through creating. The symbolic actions undertaken to make



these pieces utilised imagination, bodily and sensorial awareness and emotions through non-linear and trans-rational processes (Driver, 1998). Such an approach relates to Lee's (2016) research, as she suggests that crafted handmade objects result from ritual-making processes. The action and outcome of making by hand can serve as the intersection where creator and user converge, acting as a catalyst for such encounters (Lee, 2016). For someone deeply engrossed in the process, even the most mundane aspects, such as stitching, can be imbued with what Lee (2016) calls “poetic potential.” She stresses the potency of this poetic essence as it evades even those experiencing it first hand as it is rationalised and linearised into thoughts, diminishing its sensorial and emotional richness (Lee, 2016).

## **4.2. Practice Details**

The following three subsections detail the practical making processes for each of the project's three stages, outlining materials, processes, context, and outcomes.

### ***4.2.1. Stage #1: Fashion-Textile Experiments, 2020–2021***

To draw new insights from these projects effectively, I have engaged in a cyclical process of action and reflection by adopting Donald Schön's (1983) reflective practice methodology. Drawing from this methodology influenced me to undertake each creative practice project as an emergent process of “reflection-in-action” and “reflection-on-action” (Schön, 1983), with each project building on the insights of the last.

In the first research stage, I undertook several design experiments to explore some theoretical ideas surrounding pluriversality in iterative and process-driven ways. This approach involved participating in what Schön (1983, p. 130) describes as an introspective dialogue within an unpredictable and distinct environment, achieved through conducting experiments, analysing their processes and outcomes, and responding to these reflections with further experiments. The design experiments underwent multiple iterations, spanning various locations across Gadigal Land in the first year of study. The experiments drew inspiration from a spectrum of material and experiential fashion, textile, and design practices, including “Co-Creating with a Tick” (Bertulis, 2019, pp. 44–50),

“Learning from Harakeke Towards a Network for Textile Design in Aotearoa New Zealand” (Kane et al., 2019, pp. 72–78), “Earthbond Prototyping, a Method for Designers to Deepen Connections to Nature” (Camozzi, 2019, pp. 146–152), “Antarctica SE3: A Conversation on Designing with Care” (Pennington & Margolies, 2019, pp. 186–192), and “A Nourishing Dialogue with the Material Environment” (Mkel, 2019, pp. 173–178), all found in *Design and Nature: A Partnership*, edited by Fletcher et al. (2019). Additionally, “An Interview with River Dean” (Fletcher, 2020), *The Earth Path: Grounding our Spirits in the Rhythm of Nature* (Starhawk, 2004), and “Languaging Fashion Moments” (Tham, 2017, pp. 75–77) provided valuable sources of inspiration. These reference points served as a foundation, which evolved and expanded through regular reflection and intuition throughout the year.

Industrial designer-researcher Eugenia Bertulis's (2019, p. 48) question inspired me: "Can absurd, repetitive (and poetic) research activities embody a shift toward relational bio-politics?" As time progressed, I shifted her inquiry to explore: Can simple, intuitive and repetitive research activities embody a shift toward relational, place-based, holistic, autonomous and, as a result, pluriversal fashion-textile politics?

Over the year, I conducted eleven design experiments with multiple variations and iterations, closely following what Schn (1992) describes as "seeing-moving-seeing." The experiments encompassed a variety of creative methods and processes conducted out on place. These included sitting, walking, observing surroundings and systems, drawing, embroidering, talking to and listening to materials, sensing places and the many relationalities that exist there, weaving, listening to places, contemplation, and more. Aligning with Bertulis's (2019, p. 48) proposition, I aimed to sense what emerges pluriversally within me as a designer-researcher when conducting simple creative processes. Sadokierski's (2020, p. 1–33) guidelines for designers inspired my development of critical documentation practices to capture these insights. Particularly useful was the reflective experiment log (Sadokierski, 2020, pp. 10–12), as aims, methods and critical reflections for each practice were recorded for each design iteration. According to Argyris and Schön (1974), expressing implicit and experiential knowledge from daily interactions enables the unfolding of new insights. These were recorded before each session and afterwards on my phone's notes application to remember what had arisen throughout and reflect upon the processes. The last few experiments were further video recorded, where reflection was made upon watching the recordings instead of taking

notes throughout, allowing me to cultivate full presence in the process of doing them.

Based upon Sadokierski's (2020, pp. 10–12) reflection prompts as well as design as well as design researcher Zach Camozzi's (2019, pp. 146–152) contemplative cues as delineated through Earthbond Prototyping, an experiential method for designers to connect to the environment, I reflected upon the following questions after each method:

1. *What imbalances and opportunities did I create through this experiment?*
2. *What is emerging and unfolding here?*
3. *What conversations could emerge from these interactions?*
4. *What questions have sprung up?*
5. *What pathways are opening up here for sustainable fashion to emerge as something otherwise?*
6. *What is my experience of myself and the world (un)becoming through this?*

These abstract prompts allowed for more profound reflection into the process, and through them, insights began energising that interlinked with the project's theoretical concepts surrounding pluriversality. I undertook most of the experiments outside, sitting on sand, upon rocks, on grass hills and park benches. I began with walking, sitting and observing, sketching, and embroidering. I slowly began to sense into the places holding me, and from that place, I would put pen to paper, thread to material, and create. I observed the many systems surrounding me: waterways, various earth beings, humans, fashion-textile systems, and atmospheric systems. I began to sense the relatedness of all around me and the webs I was weaving through doing this work upon and with places. I reflected upon how uncomfortable this was and how deeply conditioned I was within modern fashion systems to create with outcomes in mind, always have to know the answers, and always make aesthetically pleasing outputs. I pondered what fashion-textiles could be like when they started from here, unadulterated from dogma. I pondered a lot. I contemplated, felt sincerely, made, and reflected upon the process. In its simplicity, all of this was incredibly uncomfortable, as there were no pre-ordained outcomes in mind and no steps to follow. I was just being with what was in each moment, with materials and the creative process.



All of this guided me towards asking deeper questions, and I did not fully know where this was going. These experiments formed the foundation of methods utilised in the social learning workshops with and evolved into phase two of the practice.



**Figure 24.** Stage 1 experiments: observing, connecting materials to algae and rocks, intuitive embroidering, sketching systems, being with Places.





**Figure 25.** Stage 1 experiments. Top left to right: sitting and observing place; intuitive sketching of living systems; intuitive embroidering; conversing with materials (polyester; intuitive embroidering in place; fashion in urban spaces.

#### **4.2.2. Stage #2: Embroidered Textile Worlding Cloths, 2021–2022**

In the second stage of practice, a series of intuitively created textile cloths unfolded. These are indirectly and subtly the physical manifestations of the theory, as I created these alongside more thorough theoretical development and the primary workshops undertaken in the project's second year. The corporeal act of stitching, making and reflecting on the research concepts generated novel fashion-textile practices rooted in emergence, intuition, contemplation, place, relationality and wholeness (connection to spirit + heart + mind + body).

Four of these cloths were completed by the end of the second stage, with plans to create another three in the third stage. Each cloth was focused on a different colour, beginning with red, then orange, yellow and green, with turquoise, indigo and violet still to be made. Each color connects to a different tone within the rainbow. Numerous cultures, including Slavic traditions, mythologically interpret the rainbow as a bridge between the Earth and higher realms (Lee, 2001). For this project, each color represents a different world within my pluriverse of exploration. To create the cloths, I undertook several iterative and repetitive processes:

1. Firstly, I intuitively created some hand illustrations using pencil. Some were 'doodle'-like, intuitive sketches in contemplative response to the theory. Some of the drawings I drew in detail over days.
2. I photographed each illustration and put it into Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop, where I manipulated, enhanced, repeated, and augmented the original drawings. Again, this was intuitively guided.
3. The augmented drawing was then mapped out out digitally, as I prepared for it to be sent off to be printed upon fabric.
4. For the printing, an organic linen or cotton-linen fabric was chosen based on the printer's supply. I sent off the fabric to Frankie & Swiss digital printers in Naarm (Melbourne).
5. When the fabric was received, I spent months stitching it intuitively with silk and cotton threads.



I embroidered the cloths in various places: within homes, at beaches, in parks, at airports, all on Bundjalung land, where I was located at the time. I would stitch in various emotional and mental states, and as I navigated through life, the cloth, needle, and thread became my companions. Each cloth signifies a diverse dimension of pluriversality brought into existence through making. At this stage, there was no larger outcome aim for these pieces but to develop a relationship with materials and processes and see what unfolded. Ritualistic settings were created by intentionally connecting with materials, processes, tools and the concepts I was researching at the time. Within this journey, the cloths became conduits between the theory, workshops, and myself—the physical manifestations of the research, ever-evolving and emerging as the project grew. Due to the time-consuming and detailed laborious work that embroidery entails, I did not finalise the cloths until later within stage three of the project.



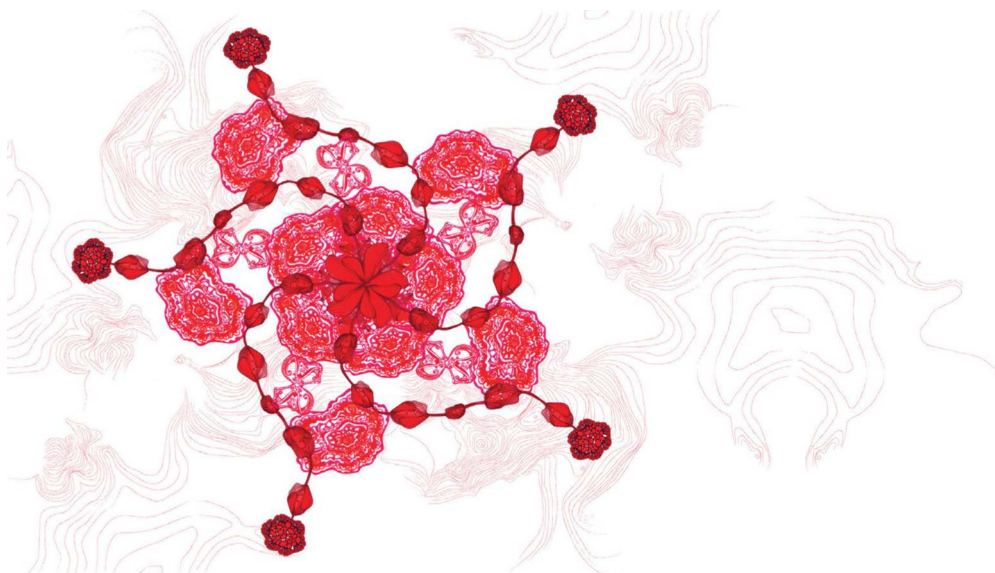
**Figure 26.** Clockwise from top left: intuitively drawn sketch reflecting on the research; digital rendering of the original hand sketch through Adobe Illustrator & Photoshop; digital printing of the motif onto linen fabric ready to be embroidered; close up of the embroidered motif on linen; linen embroidery in progress, hanging in place.





**Figure 27.** Metamorphosis of hand drawing, into digital, onto cloth, then collaborating with needle and thread.





**Figure28.** The process of turning sketches into digital renderings, then printed on cloth and embroidered.

### ***4.2.3. Stage #3: Final Practice Component: Sensing into Pluriversal Fashion-Textiles, 2022–2024***

The project's final year saw the expansion of the initial four cloths into seven, each featuring a distinct colour palette and embroideries. These cloths were worked on simultaneously, with intuitive stitching guiding the process. As the project neared completion, a clear intention emerged: I wanted to translate these textiles into a garment. Given the project's fashion-textile design context, incorporating the cloths into a wearable piece became a natural progression and just one manifestation of how pluriversality can emerge in practice. This progression from embroidered pieces to garment represents my specific creative journey rather than a prescribed process. Further reflection led to the concept of a modular artefact that could function both as a garment and an Earth-cloth. This dual-purpose design was inspired by the altar centrepieces used in the workshops during stages two and three, which served as visual focal points. With more direction and parameters than in previous stages, this loose brief began several months of experimentations, failures and surprising unfoldings.

Creating a multifunctional, modular piece that could be worn and laid flat presented unique challenges in ideation and construction. The three-dimensionality of the human body meant that a pattern fitting the body might not lay nicely on the ground. Initial experiments with traditional, zero-waste, and subtraction-cutting techniques proved challenging, as forms that worked on the body often failed to translate into interesting flat layouts. A pivotal shift came when my supervisor suggested reversing the process: starting with the flat Earth-cloth pattern and then adapting it to fit the body. This approach was informed by Rickard Lindqvist's (2015, p. 7) kinetic garment construction research, which challenges traditional stationary-body-based tailoring by incorporating movement. Integrating design and construction during the making process diverges from conventional fashion practices, which typically separate these phases. Julian Roberts's subtraction cutting technique and the zero-waste fashion design methods by Holly McQuillan and Timo Rissanen exemplify this unified approach, merging design and construction into a single, cohesive process (McQuillan et al., 2013, pp. 40–41).

Lindqvist's work evolved into Atacac, a collaborative brand offering "sharewear," open-source kinetic patterns available for download, modification, and resale under Creative Commons licensing (Atacac, 2016–2022). Inspired by this, I chose their "studio jacket" pattern for its orchid-like flat form, which aligned with my project's aesthetic needs.

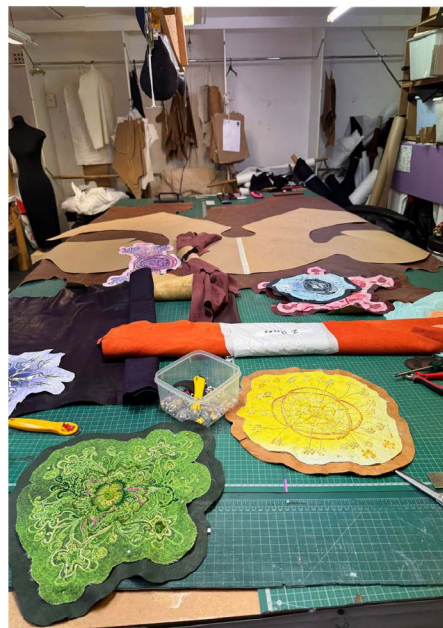
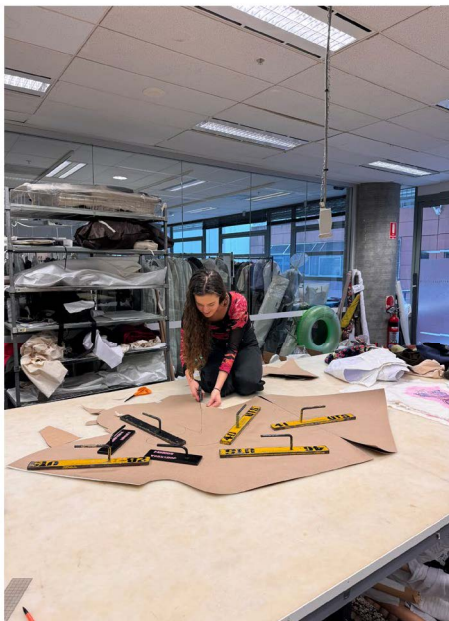


This exploration process, documented in a casual phone diary, revealed numerous challenges and personal insights, contrasting sharply with the intuitive flow of my earlier embroidery work and exposing deep-seated insecurities about fashion design.

The garment-making process exposed long-dormant insecurities and aesthetic conditioning, contrasting sharply with the intuitive flow of embroidery and revealing the complex emotional landscape inherent in fashion-textile design. This journey became a lesson in self-trust and breaking free from preconceived notions, ultimately resulting in a pattern that successfully balanced wearability and visual appeal as a flat Earth cloth and could integrate all embroideries, all while resembling a flower-like shape when laid out.

Leather was chosen as the final material due to its flexibility, resilience, softness, and sturdiness. There is a certain primalness and timelessness imbued in leather that attracted me to it, a material used to create garments since ancient times (Tsaknaki et al., 2014, p. 5).

The sustainability of leather is contentious. Leather is a by-product of the meat industry, however, there are environmental and ethical concerns related to how it is treated and finished, as well as animal welfare issues (Tsaknaki et al., 2014, p. 6). Despite this, leather remains unique amongst natural materials for its robustness and suppleness, making it a complex choice for designers weighing functional properties against ethical considerations.



**Figure 29.** Cutting the final kinetic and modular pattern piece.

**Figure 30.** Cutting the final leather pieces in Julio's studio in Drummoyne, Gadigal.



After experimenting with second-hand leather options, I selected a new skin to avoid a patchwork appearance and create a long-lasting piece. Such product longevity arguments often justify increased material intensity that still results in many articles being discarded.

I was drawn to the idea that selecting a particular type of leather would result in a piece that could last a very long time, evolving and changing with use over the years. The final leather was sourced from a local leather supplier chosen for its high quality and certifications. The pecan-coloured aniline cow leather imported from Italy had minimal treatment and finishings, allowing for the animal's natural markings, scars, and wrinkles to be visible. In *Thinking through the Skin* (2001), scholars Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey note that “the marking of the skin is linked to both its temporal and spatial dimensions...it materialises that passing (of time) in the accumulation of marks, of wrinkles, lines and creases, as well as in the literal disintegration of skin” (p. 2). In this way, the skin’s “lived” appearance represents life and movement. I utilised coloured leather remnants sourced from various wholesalers for the embroidery borders.

Knowing that leather is the skin of another impacted how I interacted with and treated the material in its handling whilst making, transporting and caring for it. As I cut out the pattern, scraps were not thrown away but kept, pieces I will one day transform into something else. I reflected on the life sacrificed to create this skin, recognising the need to honour its origin through respectful and purposeful engagement. My approach would be one of reciprocity, treating the material with deep reverence for its previous living form. In outlining her practice-based research centred on gleaning as a redirective sustainability practice, fashion practitioner Tania Sława-Neyman (2014, p. 352) shares that “there is a gravity of responsibility felt towards leather,” which I cannot agree more.

I constructed the jacket with the assistance of Julio Valdes, a local Chilean leather craftsman, and his long-time sewer, Charlie. Going to see Julio in his studio, which was always a colourful experience with the fashion stories he had to share, guided me in working with leather and the required hardware and tools. Roughly we inserted three hundred bronze eyelets, whilst some old mesh fabric I had was turned into the ribbon used to weave through the eyelets and join the seams. As fashion researcher YeSeung Lee (2016) shares, direct engagement with materials and processes uniquely shapes the maker emotionally, physically, and psychologically, offering an experience that cannot be replicated by someone else making for you.



**Figure 31.** All seven embroidered cloths in progress are laid out alongside one another.



**Figure 32.** Embroidering and being with the embroidered cloths in Place. Clockwise from top left: Gayemagal Land, taken by Zofia Zoltkowski; Worimi Land by author; Gayemagal by Elizabeth Curtis Walker.

The Earth-cloth jacket presented here represents just one potential manifestation of pluriversal fashion-textiles among countless possibilities. Rather than attempting to encapsulate the entire essence of pluriversality in a single artifact—an impossibility that would contradict the very nature of a pluriverse—this piece emerged as a contextual, relational expression specific to my journey with these ideas. The garment acknowledges that in moments of transition between paradigms, one world does not completely cease to exist; my work is not about eradicating western forms of fashioning but rather exploring how diverse approaches can coexist and flourish. The photoshoot on Gadigal land at Bronte Beach, where much of this research was undertaken, was itself a pluriversal practice that extended beyond the garment. This location was chosen intentionally to honor the place that held so much of this research journey. The collaborative process involved not just the model wearing the garment, but a community of people—the photographer, assistant, and the make-up artist—engaging with fashion within this specific place and context. Additionally, there were the more-than-human entities involved; the sand, water, breeze, rocks, moss, atmosphere and so much more. The relational unfolding that occurred in the lead-up to and during the shoot embodied many of the pluriversal values explored throughout this research. These collaborative efforts created a temporary fashion-textile community in place, demonstrating how pluriversality manifests not just in objects but in processes and relationships.

It is important to acknowledge that there is not one defining artifact that anyone would arrive at as a result of this research process. There exists an endless range of possibilities because of the diversity of thinking and approaches to making in a pluriverse. This does not invalidate the artifact I arrived at—it positions it as one among many potentialities, a physical manifestation that bridges the thinking and making explored throughout this thesis. The Earth-cloth jacket does not claim to represent all pluriversal possibilities; rather, it emerged as one valid expression from my specific context, place, relationships, and creative journey.

This perspective aligns with pluriversality, which values context-specific expressions over universal representations. My embroidered cloths, the workshop methodologies, the final garment, and the photoshoot collaborations all represent different but equally valid facets of how pluriversality might manifest in fashion-textiles. No single element claims to be definitive; together, they illustrate the rich tapestry of possibilities that emerge when fashion-textiles are approached through pluriversal ontologies.





**Figure 33.** The final Earth cloth, a modular fashion-textile garment.





**Figure 34.** The final Earth cloth, a modular fashion-textile garment. Laid out on Worimi Land.



**Figure 35.** Video footage of me tying & untying the Earth cloth garment. Click each image to be taken to an external link to view and switch sound on.





**Figure 36.** Photo taken of the Earth cloth, a modular fashion-textile garment on Gadigal land by Macami. Model: Savvy Mahony-Dixon. MUA: Sara Belobrajdic.





**Figure 37.** Photo taken of the Earth cloth, a modular fashion-textile garment on Gadigal land by Macami. Model: Savvy Mahony-Dixon. MUA: Sara Belobrajdic.

### 4.3. Discussions on Making & Outcomes

This section examines and reflects on the making process and its outcomes, utilising guiding questions proposed by Bolt (2016, p. 141) for a performative research enquiry. This practice component of research explored how pluriversal fashion-textiles could emerge through making.

This research shifts material practices in fashion-textiles by providing a range of methods for exploring pluriversal ontologies through practical, creative research. The study serves as a container for experimenting with slower, more contemplative, relational, embodied, situated, and experiential approaches to making, which are often marginalised in contemporary fashion-textile practices and typically confined to craft and artisanal spaces. By engaging with the pluriversal foundational ontologies of wholeness, autonomies, place, and relationality through physical-making practices, I could embody ontologically divergent ways of working within the fashion-textile domain. The making journey allowed me to develop a deep connection with these ontologies, demonstrating how theoretical concepts can be manifested into tangible, material forms. This process can be viewed as a microcosm of more significant pluriversal concepts, illustrating how alternative approaches to fashion-textile production can be developed and implemented, potentially leading to more sustainable and holistic practices in the field. The Earth-cloth jacket, like all artifacts and processes in this research, represents just one contextual manifestation among countless possibilities in a fashion-textile pluriverse, not an attempt to universalise or encapsulate pluriversality into a single form.

Throughout the making process, significant methodological shifts occurred, transforming the approach from a controlled, outcome-oriented practice to a more organic and holistic one. Initially, I entered the journey through a conditioned hyper-individualistic worldview, focused on controlling processes and outcomes and prioritising visual aesthetics. However, as the process evolved, particularly in the second phase of making, this perspective gradually gave way to a co-creative and relational approach. As I surrendered to the process over time, I let go of preconceived notions about outcomes and the pressure to create conventionally beautiful things. Over two years of intuitive embroidery, the practice naturally adopted methodologies of emergence and relationality, among others. This shift created space for engaging with fashion-textiles practices in ways that embraced different rhythms and patterns of making—more intuitive, slower, and contemplative—rather than solely relying on outcomes or aesthetics as is typical in contemporary creative practices.

As part of the PhD research, this creative practice revealed a process of ontologically diverging from contemporary fashion-textiles practices towards pluriversal possibilities. It allowed for the embodiment of pluriversal ontologies within my unique context.

Concerning wholeness, the research explored holistic ways of making that valued all aspects of knowledge creation: spirit, heart, mind, and body. While these four domains interrelate and overlap, each emerged uniquely in the creative process. Spirit manifested through inactive and experiential aspects of making, encompassing contemplative and introspective moments, intuitive hunches, and connections to ancestral, energetic, and subtle realms. The heart domain spanned the emotional field, processing personal emotions and my relationship with the work while guiding intuitive, creative decisions. The mind engaged with pluriversal concepts during the making process, visioning and ruminating on future ideas. The body was the physical creator, translating complex pluriversal literature into tangible forms, primarily through stitching. This holistic approach revealed the importance of moving conceptual and theoretical research beyond mere intellectual understanding towards embodied knowledge. The process illuminated challenging aspects, highlighting the ineffable nature of some experiences in integrative making practices.

Autonomies emerged through deconditioning from traditional fashion-textile practices, facilitating experimentation with more authentic approaches to making. This process of autonomous designing involved deliberate efforts to delink from conditioned fashion-textile habits, particularly those focused on outcomes and aesthetics. I acknowledge the difficulty of fully shedding these habits, given how ingrained they are in our culture – as well as the danger of unwittingly going the other way, into a subconscious desire for the work to not look like ‘fashion’ (which of course would still reflect aesthetic considerations). As a result, the practice naturally progressed towards emergent, relational, enactive, and situated methods of making. These approaches shifted from conventional, predetermined processes to a more fluid and reciprocal creative practice.

Exploring place revealed the importance of context and physical landscapes in making and how all places inherently inform our work as they hold and nourish us. Some of my makings did occur outside in physical landscapes where I let the elements physically mark the work as I stitched the cloths outside upon the earth, near fires, in the rain and the wind. These experiences taught me about letting go of pristine outcomes and surrendering to making co-creatively with places, highlighting the interconnectedness between creator, process, and place.

Relationality emerged as a co-creative force in the making practice, fostering a surrender to collaboration beyond cognitive articulation. Correspondingly, the process created an experiential and embodied relationship with materials, processes, and tools, as new worlds emerged through these interactions. The process taught comfort with uncertainty and trust in collaborative creation, acknowledging the researcher-creative practitioner as part of a larger making ecosystem. As Barrett (2014) notes, this research method elicits a collaborative act where methodology and all involved co-create a shared endeavour for investigation, ultimately moving conceptual and theoretical research towards embodiment and revealing new possibilities in fashion-textiles practices.

This research further revealed the world-making potential of fashion-textile creation, demonstrating its capacity to shape desired realities through intentional making. In exploring Slavic pre-Christian traditions, I attempted to infuse the making process with ritual, magic, intentionality as well as responsibility. This fostered a relationship with materials and processes based on co-creation, reciprocity, and care, contrasting with conventional fashion-textile education and industry learning. I explored this concept further through the workshops, where participants physically stitched their desired fashion-textile worlds into cloth in the last exercise. This practice of intentional stitching proved potent in eliciting alternative approaches to fashion-textile enquiry and creation grounded in care, hope, and visioning.

This research demonstrates how diverse concepts in fashion-textile design can shift understandings and practices in the field. The project delineates a path diverging from traditional approaches by experimenting with pluriversal ontologies and values in the making process. The findings highlight several fundamental shifts: Firstly, the research emphasises the equal importance of process and outcome in fashion-textile creation. This aligns with Haseman's (2006) assertion that tangible manifestations from making practices are vital embodiments of research discoveries, holding inherent value beyond their final form. Secondly, the project underscores the vital role of making alongside theoretical enquiry. As Scrivener and Chapman (2004) argue, practice-led research distinguishes itself by exploring issues by creating artifacts, with the creative product holding equal significance to the knowledge it encapsulates. Thirdly, the research reveals the broader applicability of knowledge generated through artistic practice. Barrett (2007) notes that making serves as a mode of generating knowledge that extends beyond immediate production and consumption



points. Finally, while no outcome cannot fully represent a pluriverse, and attempting to do so diminishes what it is, the Earth-cloth jacket offers just a tiny glimpse into my research journey. This artifact embodies just some of ineffable aspects of the socio-natural worlds (Escobar, 2018a) related with throughout this research. Correspondingly, this work contributes to Escobar's (2018a) vision of creating more pluriversal worlds.



**Figure 38.** Photo taken of the Earth cloth, a modular fashion-textile garment on Gadigal land by Macami. Model: Savvy Mahony-Dixon. MUA: Sara Belobrajdic.



#### **4.4. Connections, Comparisons, and Tensions: Individual Making and Participatory Practices**

The individual making practices and workshop activities conducted throughout this research represent two complementary pathways toward understanding pluriversal fashion-textiles. While distinct in their methodological approaches, these practices reveal several intersections, divergences, and tensions that enrich the overall research findings.

My solitary making journey created space for deep personal exploration, allowing me to surrender to emergent processes and develop an intimate relationship with materials, ancestors, and places over extended periods. This immersion in pluriversal themes lasted for years, enabling a deep engagement with the underlying ontologies. The workshops, in contrast, fostered collective meaning-making through brief, structured engagements where multiple perspectives converged and diverged in dynamic interplay. These 2-3 hour sessions served as initial touchpoints to pluriversal concepts rather than sustained immersions. Both approaches explored the core pluriversal ontologies of wholeness, autonomies, place, and relationality, yet their expressions revealed nuanced differences in how these concepts materialise in individual versus communal contexts.

A significant connection between these approaches emerged through their shared emphasis on slowing down and attuning to different rhythms. In both settings, participants and I experienced a palpable shift away from the hurried, outcome-focused pace typical in fashion-textile education and industry. The workshops created temporary collective spaces for this slowing down, while my making practice sustained this altered temporality over years, revealing how different durations of engagement affect the depth of pluriversal experience. The animist perspectives that gradually unfolded during my years-long individual embroidery practice emerged more rapidly but perhaps less deeply in the brief workshop setting, where participants reported surprisingly immediate connections to the agency and aliveness of materials, mainly through the 'Listening to Materials' exercise.

Tensions emerged in how these different contexts navigated the discomfort inherent in pluriversal explorations. In my individual practice, I could sit with uncertainty and ambiguity for extended periods, allowing deeper deconditioning from established fashion-textile approaches. Workshop participants encountered similar discomfort but within a shorter time period and supportive structure of a facilitated environment and community. This both cushioned and constrained their explorations. This highlights a tension:

individual practice can offer depth over time, and even though there is connection with more-than-humans, this risks isolation from humans and what may occur between them, while communal engagement provides breadth and support but may limit radical departure from established paradigms which takes more time and exploration. The two approaches further revealed complementary insights about relationality. My individual practice uncovered the intimacy possible in one-to-one relationships with materials and processes, while the workshops illuminated the complex web of relationships that form when multiple human and more-than-human entities interact. Together, they demonstrate that pluriversal relationality operates at multiple scales and intensities, requiring both deep personal engagement and dynamic collective interaction to be fully understood.

Additionally, these approaches yielded different forms of knowledge transmission. The short workshop sessions created immediately shareable methods and experiences that participants could adapt and implement in their own contexts, while my years-long individual practice generated embodied knowledge that proved more challenging to articulate but potentially more transformative over time. This suggests that fashion-textile education might benefit from interweaving both approaches—providing structured communal experiences while encouraging sustained individual exploration—to facilitate both immediate shifts in perspective and deeper ontological redirections.

#### **4.5. Conclusions**

This chapter discusses how practice-led research has developed embodied understandings of pluriversality through material forms and processes, guiding fashion-textile practitioners toward making pluriversally. The research advocates a shift from universalising approaches to creating a rich tapestry of diverse fashion-textile practices, supporting more sustainable and equitable worlds. The practice has served as a vessel to enquire about, locate, and embody the project's theoretical underpinnings through bodily creations. Artistic research has been the conduit for sensing and experiencing various material and process relations. Moving beyond preconceived notions and fixed methodologies, the theory, practice, and workshops yielded comprehensive outcomes through a methodology of emergence, allowing non-linear, intuitive, experiential, phenomenological, dynamic, vital, and divergent creative methods to unfold. With pens, threads, fabrics, and needles, I became a wanderer through textural landscapes of possibilities, balancing guidance and allowing myself to be guided (Ingold, 2009, p. 92). Embracing emergence necessitated surrender and co-creation with the process, an uncomfortable deconditioning

from established fashion-textile practices. An animist approach to collaborating with materials and processes led to a deeper enquiry into relationality, creating new dialogues and possibilities. Contemplation served as a tool to slow down, listen to these relations, and create space for ideas and experiences to emerge beyond preconceived representations (St. Pierre, 2020, pp. 108–109). Embroidery, the primary practice method, allowed me to think about theory through stitching and connect to my Slavic ancestors and their understanding of textile creation's magic. Making textiles is an ancient worldmaking practice and intentional worldmaking towards desired, flourishing, pluriversal worlds requires pluriversal imagination (Escobar, 2018a). Place acted as an active collaborator throughout the research, while fashion-textile rituals allowed for symbolic actions utilising imagination, bodily awareness, and emotions through non-linear processes.

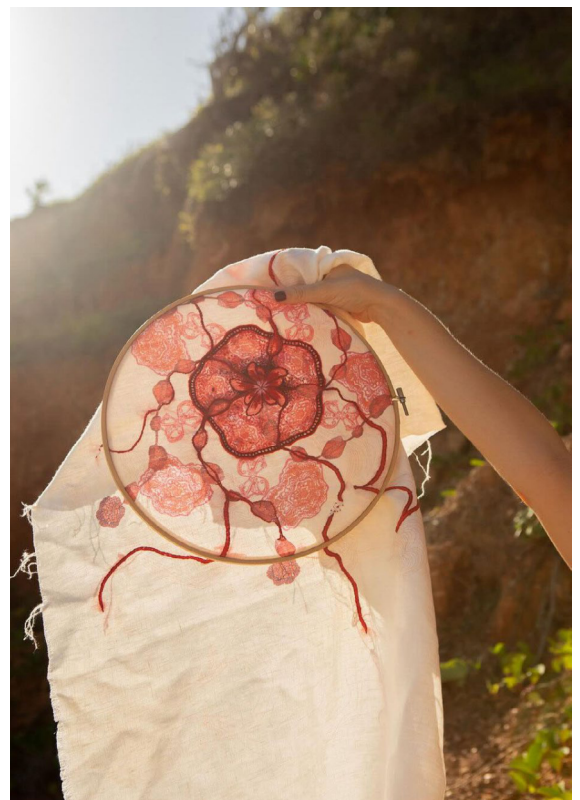
The practice unfolded in three stages: initial design experiments, hand and digitally-drawn embroidered cloths, and the creation of seven coloured cloths. The process-driven approach resulted in a modular garment piece: a multifunctional unisex leather jacket that folds flat into an Earth-cloth. Creating this piece allowed me to generate further knowledge about materials, process (Lehmann, 2012, p. 159) and place. Ultimately, this practice-led research component allowed me to explore what one expression of pluriversal making could be like through immersive artistic expressions (Bolt, 2016, p. 130).

While this research deliberately segmented individual making practice from participatory activities to allow for distinct methodological explorations, I recognise valuable opportunities exist in blurring these boundaries. Had others been involved in the drawing and stitching processes described in Chapter 4, different insights might have emerged through collective embodied knowledge creation. Collaborative making could have revealed additional dimensions of pluriversal fashion-textiles through shared ancestral connections, diverse cultural interpretations, and communal ritual-making. This apparent tension between my individual practice and the relational ethos of the pluriverse actually represents a productive dialectic. My making practice served as a necessary foundation for developing personal relationships with materials and processes that I could then bring into communal spaces. The pluriverse encompasses both individual sovereignty and collective relationships—neither privileging isolated individualism nor subsuming personal experience into homogeneous collectivity. Future research might productively explore the rich middle ground between these approaches, where individual making practices interweave with collaborative creation to generate knowledge that honors both autonomy and relationality as essential, complementary elements of pluriversal fashion-textiles.

This making practice has directly addressed the research sub-question: "What emerges when creating fashion-textiles in pluriversal ways?" By engaging in embodied, emergent, and relational making processes, I discovered that creating fashion-textiles through pluriversal methods, a shift in the creator's relationship with materials, processes, and ontological foundations occurs. What emerged was not merely physical artifacts, but transformative experiences that challenge conventional fashion-textile paradigms, reconnect with ancestral wisdom, and foster deep relationships with places and non-human entities. This suggests that pluriversal making practices can serve as powerful tools for ontological redirection, offering pathways toward more sustainable, relational, and context-sensitive fashion-textile engagement that modern, universalising approaches often neglect.

The significance of these findings extends beyond individual making practices to broader implications for fashion-textile education, research, and industry. By demonstrating how theory can be embodied through material practices, this research offers concrete examples of how pluriversal concepts can move from abstract ideas to lived experiences. The making journey revealed that practice-led research creates unique forms of knowledge not accessible through purely theoretical or workshop-based approaches, highlighting the necessity of integrating diverse knowledge-making methods when pursuing pluriversal fashion-textile transitions. The modular Earth-cloth jacket serves as just one physical manifestation of pluriversality.

Moving forward to Chapter 5, the insights from the making practice, combined with the theoretical grounding in Chapter 2 and the social learning findings in Chapter 3, will be synthesised to address the overarching research question about how a pluriverse can manifest through fashion-textiles. The concluding chapter will draw together these diverse strands to offer a comprehensive understanding of pluriversal fashion-textiles and present potential pathways for practitioners, educators, and researchers seeking to engage with these concepts in their work. This integrated approach demonstrates how theory, social learning, and individual practice collectively contribute to a pluriversal vision of fashion-textiles.



**Figure 39.** Photo of work in progress embroidered cloth taken by Annelijn Hooij on Bundjalung Land.

## ***Chapter 5. Conclusions: Towards a Fashion-Textile Pluriverse***

### **5.1. Summary & Discussion of Findings**

This research presents one of the first comprehensive, scholarly, and practice-led articulations of what pluriversality might mean for fashion-textiles, exploring its potential as a guiding approach in contributing toward sustainable practices. Addressing the main question, “How can a pluriverse manifest through fashion-textiles theory, making practices and learning-sharing with others?” the study experimented with a multifaceted methodology. This approach integrated theoretical insights from existing literature, practical hands-on explorations, and communal learning experiences, yielding rich and nuanced understandings of pluriversal fashion-textiles. The research illuminated how pluriversality can be practiced and how it can contribute toward sustainability transformations that are grounded in relational, place-based, autonomous, and holistic ontologies. Pluriversal practices do not ensure sustainability, but instead this type of work contributes to sustainability.

Rather than providing a prescriptive model, this work examined emergent methods and divergent practices, offering more nuanced engagements with contemporary sustainability challenges. Each research component—theoretical exploration, practice-led making, and social learning workshops—contributed diverse findings to the field, demonstrating how pluriversal approaches can support more holistic understandings, embodiments, and transitions. By laying the groundwork for future research into fashion-textiles through a pluriversal lens, this study opens up new questions and pathways for deeper future explorations and how this can contribute to sustainability.

This research’s theoretical contribution is grounded in a thorough contextual review that situates the study within current pluriversal literature, key scholars, and correlating themes. This approach expands the boundaries of traditional research methodologies, embracing the complexity and ambiguity inherent in knowledge creation. The contextual review accomplishes two goals: it questions outdated frameworks hindering sustainable progress in fashion-textiles and emphasises perspectives that open up new avenues toward divergent possibilities.



This groundwork addresses the critical question: “What ontological redirection is needed for a pluriverse to emerge in fashion-textiles enquiry, practice and social learning workshops?”

The findings reveal that for a pluriverse to emerge in fashion-textiles, a fundamental shift towards four key ontological foundations is necessary: wholeness, autonomies, place, and relationality. Wholeness calls for a holistic view recognising the interconnectedness of all elements in fashion-textile systems. Autonomies emphasise the importance of diverse, self-determined ways of knowing and creating. Place highlights the significance of local contexts and situated knowledges. Relationality underscores the interconnected nature of creators, materials, processes, and environments.

These ontological explorations offer different pathways for understanding and engaging with fashion-textiles. These shifts can engender new worldviews, behaviours, thoughts, and actions in fashion-textile creation and enquiry, which are essential for breaking free from unsustainable contemporary practices. These ontological redirections support pluriversal ways of being, thinking, and doing in fashion-textiles, demonstrating why and how a pluriversal approach is more conducive to transformation. By grounding fashion-textile enquiry, practice, and social learning in these ontologies, the research enables the emergence of diverse, context-specific, and relational approaches that characterise a pluriverse. This theoretical foundation cultivates the conditions for exploring in more detail other options through creative making practices and social learning workshops, contributing to a growing body of literature that seeks to embrace complexity and ambiguity in fashion-textile research.

This research further challenges prevailing paradigms in fashion-textile practices by embracing diverse perspectives and exploring liminal spaces, offering new pathways that may contribute to sustainability. Emergence played a crucial role in the research methodology as liminal spaces were inhabited during the creative process. As I engaged others with these ideas, we co-created the conditions for new insights to surface. This approach facilitated unlearning old patterns and opened up fresh learning opportunities. This thesis offers further examples of how researcher-designer-practitioners may incorporate a methodology of emergence into their creative and learning practices in fashion-textiles.

By being mindful of decolonisation imperatives, the study further demonstrates a process of unlearning colonial epistemologies and established notions of expertise, opening up to alternative modes of knowing and being through fashion-textiles. The methodological

approach, grounded in ontological redirection, represents a significant departure from conventional fashion-textile inquiry, which often prioritises the status quo, separation, placelessness, rationality, predetermined outcomes, and control. Drawing inspiration from Escobar's (2018a) assertion that "every design activity must start with the strong presupposition that people are practitioners of their knowledge," this work recognises and values diverse expertise. This research integrates ancient, often marginalised ontologies into modern Western fashion-textile design contexts, bringing together typically disparate ways of being, such as relationality, animism, and experiential knowledges, into material culture. Embracing the wisdom of the body, intuition, places, and lived experiences challenges the dominance of purely intellectual approaches, offering a rarely articulated, holistic perspective for fashion-textile research and practice. Creative making practices primarily revealed an approach focusing on emergent, enactive, situated, embodied, and experiential methods of integrating abstract theory through bodily and material forms. Such an approach suggests that change toward more holistic ways of doing fashion-textiles requires more than conceptualisations and should consider including the hands, heart, and spirit. The hope is that this opens up avenues for others within fashion-textiles to engage with their own personal and contextual knowledges, integrating them into their research and practices. Through this, diverse approaches could develop that are contextual and grounded in an *Earth Logic* (Fletcher & Tham, 2019; 2023).

Through social learning workshops, this research further explored the sub-question, "What unfolds when sharing pluriversal onto-epistemologies and methods with others?" The findings reveal multifaceted outcomes that significantly contribute to the potential applications of pluriversal approaches in fashion-textiles. The workshops created spaces for participants to engage with ambiguity and sense into pluriversality, fostering an environment where conventional certainties could be questioned and new possibilities could be explored. Even though there were obvious signs of confusion, discomfort, awkwardness, challenges, and more, such an environment elicited an overall sense of calm and ease among participants. This pathway suggests the potential for creating subtle, thoughtful environments where people can explore diverse perspectives grounded in pluriversality. By stepping outside their usual thought patterns, participants may come to discover new insights, free from the pressure of finding immediate solutions or conforming to predetermined outcomes.

Within the workshops, the participants and I co-created an environment where everyone could feel safe sitting in ambiguity and the unknown through a pluriversal fashion-textile context. For example, the “Listening to Materials” method had participants connect to animist qualities within garments and fabrics. Many participants found this exercise the most memorable, as evidenced through their post-workshop responses. The exercise prompted multiple participants to reflect on themes of care, love, and use, all of which are divergent, pluriversal approaches.

Participants engaged with pluriversal ontologies—wholeness, autonomy, place, and relationality—through experiential, embodied, and relational practices. These sessions integrated various methods and concepts, creating a complex web of ideas and interactions that moved from individual exploration to collective engagement. Diffractive analysis revealed five primary agentic forces— discomfort, surprises, presence, aliveness, and openness—illuminating the nuanced interactions that emerge when introducing pluriversal methods to fashion-textile practices. The workshops yielded several notable outcomes, including a capacity for worldmaking and cultivating environments that embrace ambiguity. They facilitated the formation of fashion-textile communities and introduced effective methods for fostering relationality, such as the “Relationality” exercise, “Listening to Materials”, and the “Pluriversal Fashion Futures” method.

These dynamic, collaborative learning environments successfully translated theoretical concepts into tangible, experiential methods. Participants engaged in hands-on, embodied material practices, accessing forms of knowledge and sensory experiences often neglected in conventional research. They reported changes in their approaches to fashion-textiles, including increased reflection, mindfulness, and re-evaluation of value. The workshops served as platforms for deconditioning and delinking from modern/colonial understandings of fashion-textiles and sustainability, encouraging participants to challenge ingrained perspectives and embrace alternative worldviews. The research uncovered an intense desire among participants for spaces that allow for different approaches to fashion-textiles, such as slowness, contemplative and process-driven making, as well as community and collective making. Although time limitations constrained the depth of exploration, post-workshop analysis confirmed that pluriversal fashion-textile processes could begin to catalyse alternative ways of thinking about and engaging with fashion-textiles that can contribute toward sustainability. The methods developed show potential for expansion and application in diverse global contexts, providing practitioners, researchers, and

educators with practical ways to engage with and visualise complex relationships within the field.

It is important to note that ontological and paradigmatic shifts require sustained effort in order to rewrite deeply ingrained perspectives and behaviours. While a single workshop cannot catalyse significant, lasting change, these sessions revealed the potential for further work in collaborative exploration toward pluriversal approaches in embodied, experiential, and relational ways. Encouraged by these outcomes, I am committed to further developing these methods and fostering more of these types of environments, recognising the need for multiple touch points to elicit further change over time.

The making component of this research addressed the question, “What emerges when creating fashion-textiles in pluriversal ways?” Recognising fashion-textiles as an inherently creative and embodied discipline that brings form to life through, for, and with bodies, this practice-led approach complemented and enriched the theoretical exploration of pluriversal fashion-textiles. The findings underscore the vital role of making in embodying pluriversal concepts, revealing it as a potent medium for connecting with pluriversal themes on both macro and micro levels for my unique context. Through diverse making practices grounded in emergence, contemplation, and co-creation, the research demonstrated that engaging with fashion-textiles in pluriversal ways can elicit divergent understandings of what fashion-textiles are and can be. These alternative approaches could be more compatible with a holistic type of sustainability that challenges conventional paradigms and illicit's an *Earth Logic* (Fletcher & Tham, 2019).

Key findings from this process illuminate the importance of emergence as a methodology, allowing for non-linear, intuitive, and experiential creative methods to unfold. The research also revealed the value of an animist approach to collaborating with materials and processes, leading to deeper inquiries into relationality. Furthermore, contemplation emerged as a crucial tool for slowing down and creating space for ideas to emerge beyond preconceived representations. The making process emerged as a form of embodied knowledge creation, allowing for the tangible exploration of abstract pluriversal concepts. By attuning to the intricate relationships between the body, materials, processes, concepts, and places, this approach generated new knowledge for pluriversal fashion-textiles that transcend purely intellectual comprehension. It facilitated a deep, experiential engagement with ideas of wholeness, autonomy, place, and relationality, translating theoretical constructs into tactile, lived experiences.

The practice, which unfolded in three stages over the years, culminated in a modular Earth-cloth jacket that is just one possible manifestation of this research into physical garment form. This practice-led approach demonstrates how pluriversality might emerge through fashion-textile making practices based on relational, place-based, autonomous, and holistic ontologies. Notably, the research found that pluriversal making practices can shift designers' and makers' worldviews, seeding the possibilities for a more interconnected and sustainable approach to fashion-textile creation. These practices opened up new possibilities within me toward what it means to design and make sustainably, emphasising process over product, embracing uncertainty, and cultivating a deeper connection with materials, process, tools and broader ecological contexts.

The workshop and making components of the research critically underscored that a pluriverse involves embodiment and real-world practices; it cannot exist solely as an abstract concept but must be manifested tangibly and with others. In fashion-textiles, pluriversality necessitates a move beyond abstract conceptualisations in order to integrate ideas into practice and lived experiences. Through a combination of practice-led making experiments and social learning workshops, this study revealed that pluriversal understandings are supported through active and relational engagement with materials and processes. This study showed that the physical engagement of the hands through making textiles and garments is an essential component of moving fashion-textiles research into a stage of embodiment. Korn (2013) describes this as a form of self-crafting where creators infuse their work with pluriversal ontologies. As I stitched, my worldviews were challenged, and they shifted as I engaged with different ways of making.

Ultimately, this embodied process prompts a broader reflection on the potential of making practices in both personal and societal contexts. It underscores the profound impact of translating pluriversal concepts into tangible forms within fashion-textile research and practice. Such an approach assists in illuminating pathways that reimagine and reshape fashion-textiles.

Additionally, this study has revealed that pluriversality demands a fundamentally different research approach that embraces emergent, ontologically redirective, relational, enactive and situated methodologies.



These approaches have proven invaluable in exploring pluriversality within fashion-textiles, contributing significantly to the growing body of literature on this subject. This research bridges theory, practice, and learning in novel ways by extending Escobar's (2018a) work on pluriversality for the context of fashion-textiles.

Building on Escobar's (2018a) concepts, this study demonstrates how holistic, autonomous, place-based, and relational approaches can be practically implemented in fashion-textile contexts. The methodology, grounded in ontological redirection, relationality, situatedness, enaction, and emergence, illustrates how divergent values from a pluriverse can create different ways of engaging with and understanding fashion-textiles. This research offers concrete examples of how pluriversal ideas manifest in fashion-textile practices through making practices and workshops with others. The practice-led component, in particular, exemplifies Escobar's notion of design as a tool for world-making, showcasing how fashion-textile creation can embody and propagate pluriversal ontologies.

Furthermore, this study aligns with and extends the *Earth Logic* framework (Fletcher & Tham, 2019; 2023), offering practical pathways for implementing its principles in fashion-textile contexts. The workshop methodologies developed provide tangible ways to foster "diverse ways of knowing" and "care," while the practice-led findings demonstrate how calls for "local" and "interdependent" approaches can be realised in fashion-textile design processes (Fletcher & Tham, 2019; 2023). By developing new vocabularies and methodologies for pluriversal fashion-textiles, this research contributes to *Earth Logic*'s emphasis on learning and language, with the relational approaches explored aligning with advocacy for emergent ways of working.

The social learning workshops conducted during this research uncovered a significant need and desire for experiences that guide fashion-textiles into divergent spaces, allowing participants to slow down and connect with fashion-textiles in deeper, communal ways. This finding underscores the potential of pluriversal approaches to transform research methodologies and educational and professional practices in fashion-textiles.

Acknowledging that the research methodology has significantly influenced the interpretation of findings, introducing certain biases inherent in the research design is crucial. The methodology, grounded in a performative research paradigm and embracing critical aspects of a pluriverse—ontological redirection, relationality, situatedness, enaction,

and emergence—reflects approaches I had been familiar with to varying degrees for several years prior to this study, both in my personal and creative life. This prior exposure and experience with these methodological facets extend beyond the four-year scope of this research, allowing for a deeper comprehension of the project. While familiarity with pluriversal concepts has advantageously deepened the research engagement, it has also inevitably shaped the study's perspective and introduced a bias towards these particular values and approaches. For others seeking to adopt aspects of this work in their unique contexts, it is essential to recognise that the depth of understanding and practice demonstrated in this research results from extended engagement with these concepts. When interpreting and applying these findings, researchers must account for the extensive time and practice required to develop a nuanced understanding of divergent pluriversal approaches. The goal is not to achieve a complete comprehension but instead to embrace the contextual, relational and emergent nature of a pluriverse, valuing it as an ongoing dialogue and learning process.

## 5.2. Limitations

While this study offers valuable insights into pluriversal approaches in fashion-textiles, it is crucial to acknowledge its limitations. Pluriversality, by its nature, encompasses a vast array of worldviews and possibilities. This research, bound by time and resource constraints, could not explore the full breadth of pluriversal concepts and practices. Instead, it focused on elements vital for pluriversality in a fashion-textile context based on existing scholarship, material experimentation, and workshop data. As such, this project presents a glimpse into what pluriversal fashion-textiles could be rather than a comprehensive exploration of all possibilities. Given the interconnected nature of pluriversal concepts, some ideas were explored only at a surface level due to time and scope limitations. While together they form a comprehensive understanding, individual concepts may need more extensive exploration. Researchers and practitioners have yet to fully explore the long-term impacts of adopting pluriversal approaches in fashion-textile education and industry practices. As a result, this research provides a snapshot of potential effects but cannot predict sustained outcomes.

The subjective nature of this research is both a strength and a

limitation. The emerging concepts and practices are rooted in my unique worldview, experiences, and context, which may not align with everyone's perspectives. While this subjectivity is inherent to the pluriversal approach, it limits the applicability of its findings. The research does not propose a one-size-fits-all model, as such an approach would contradict the essence of pluriversality. Instead, it aims to inspire others to connect with the erased worlds they deem potent for their contexts. The research was conducted within a specific cultural and geographical context, so the applicability of the findings to diverse cultural settings and geographical locations may be limited and requires further investigation. Juggling multiple roles as a researcher-practitioner also presented issues in terms of maintaining objectivity and balancing different perspectives throughout the research process.

This research's ontological, relational, situated, enactive, and emergent methodology presented several challenges. It required significant deconditioning from traditional research practices, which was sometimes difficult, energy-consuming, and complex, particularly when it came to acknowledging ingrained tendencies. Striking a balance between structure and flexibility within these approaches was often tricky and purely depending on emergent situations risked lacking a clear structure for exploration and development. Even though I undertook intentional steps to disconnect from entrenched fashion-textile conditioning, especially perspectives fixated on predefined aesthetics and end products, I recognise both the challenge in completely abandoning these deeply rooted cultural practices and the potential pitfall of unconsciously developing a counter-aesthetic that rejects traditional "fashion" appearances—which paradoxically still constitutes an aesthetic judgment. Additionally, the integrated methodology meant some experiences and concepts were challenging to articulate fully within the academic language and format constraints. Moreover, the emergent nature of the work meant that some aspects of the making process only became apparent towards the end of the research period which limited the time available for in-depth exploration of specific creative outcomes.

The workshop component of the research also had several limitations. Participants were primarily recruited through personal networks and social media, potentially limiting the diversity of perspectives. The use of Instagram's algorithms for recruitment may have further narrowed the participant pool. Due to practical limitations, I restricted the workshops to Australian residents, even for virtual sessions. This geographical constraint may have impacted the breadth of perspectives gathered. Multiple participants mentioned that the 2

to 3-hour workshop duration was insufficient, suggesting that longer, possibly full-day sessions could have yielded richer insights. While the diverse backgrounds of participants provided breadth, it limited the depth.

A significant limitation of this research lies in the inherent constraints of language, particularly when attempting to articulate the complex, nuanced, and often intangible experiences central to the pluriversal fashion-textile practices conducted within this research. The English language, rooted in Western epistemologies, must often be revised to capture the full depth of embodied knowledge, intuitive insights, subtle energetic experiences, and relational dynamics that emerge from engaging with pluriversal approaches. This limitation extends to describing spiritual or transcendent experiences, conveying cultural concepts without direct English equivalents, and accurately representing the rich emotional landscapes encountered throughout the research process. Fitting these experiences into academic language may inadvertently shape or alter their understanding and risks losing or distorting their essence.

This challenge highlights a broader issue within academic research, particularly in fields engaging with diverse perspectives and non-Western ways of knowing. The dominance of English in academic discourse inadvertently privileges specific ways of thinking while marginalising others. Acknowledging this limitation underscores the need for alternative modes of communication in fashion-textile research that move beyond traditional scholarship. I emphasise the importance of reflexivity, encouraging researchers to question how language shapes understandings and representations of pluriversal concepts and practical manifestations. Despite these challenges, the attempt to articulate these experiences imperfectly has been attempted through the thesis and practice.

Acknowledging these limitations opens up several avenues for future research. These include exploring pluriversal approaches in other contexts, conducting longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impacts of pluriversal approaches in fashion-textile education and industry practices; investigating the application of these concepts with a more focused group of participants; developing methods for more extended, immersive workshop experiences; and deepening the exploration of individual pluriversal practices within the fashion-textile context. However, while these limitations constrain the comprehensiveness of the findings, they maintain the value of the research; they provide a realistic context for interpreting the results and offer potent soil for future investigations into pluriversal fashion-textiles.

### 5.3 Contributions & Applications

This research makes contributions across several interconnected disciplines and sub-disciplines. In fashion-textiles, the research introduces pluriversal approaches to design processes, expands sustainable design methodologies, and proposes new frameworks for holistic and relational design practices. The work also substantially contributes toward the field of sustainability by offering novel perspectives in the context of fashion-textiles, grounded in *Earth Logic* (Fletcher & Tham, 2019), as well as exploring the intersection of holistic values and sustainability in design. In terms of design research methodologies, the study develops innovative, practice-led research methods, integrates embodied and experiential knowledge, and proposes new ways of conducting workshops and collaborative learning experiences.

The research further advances decolonial studies in design by applying decolonial thinking to fashion-textile practices through a pluriverse, challenging Western-centric design paradigms, and integrating diverse ontologies and epistemologies. Such an approach can impact fashion-textile education by creating diverse teaching methodologies and workshop formats that incorporate pluriversal ontologies and practices, encouraging holistic, embodied learning experiences. The work also contributes to material culture studies by exploring diverse relationships between humans, materials, making processes, places, and more, examining the cultural implications of pluriversal approaches. Across these areas, the research introduces new theoretical frameworks, develops diverse methodologies, proposes practical applications of pluriversality, challenges existing paradigms, and bridges gaps between theory and practice for a fashion-textile context.

#### *Contributions to Theory*

This research contributes to fashion-textile theory, practice, and learning while opening up new avenues for future research and application. By exploring pluriversality in the context of fashion-textiles, this study offers a divergent perspective that challenges existing paradigms and proposes alternative ways of knowing, being, and creating fashion-textiles worldwide. This research recognises that knowledge creation is a world-making activity that often reinforces existing paradigms, leading to the absence of particular perspectives (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018). This study's methodological approach represents a significant contribution



to fashion-textile research by integrating spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual elements into the inquiry process. This holistic methodology challenges traditional Western epistemologies and expands the boundaries of knowledge creation in the field. Drawing on practice-led inquiry, this research fostered such an approach and nurtured an intimate connection between myself as the creator and the work through care, collaboration, reciprocity, and reverence. This circumvented my traditional fashion-textile education and societal programming that is predicated on a detached stance typical of contemporary scientific methods, and instead moved toward doing research and coming into a co-creative relationship. By embracing varied perspectives and embodied knowledge, this methodology contributes to the existing body of knowledge and has the potential to inspire innovative approaches to fashion-textile and sustainability research.

### *Contributions to Methods*

This methodological approach is distinctive in that it serves as both a method of inquiry and a set of practical tools. It is crucial to differentiate between the research methods employed to investigate pluriversal approaches in fashion-textiles and the resulting learning and practice methods developed for practitioners to implement. While there is inherent overlap, this research consciously separates these aspects. This dual nature allows the research to explore pluriversal concepts and produce actionable methodologies for fashion-textile educators, researchers, and practitioners. These pluriversal ontologies and methods that emerge from the theory, workshops, and practice can be viewed as recipes for fashion-textile professionals to adopt in their work, demonstrating how the research investigates and generates applicable approaches toward pluriversal fashion-textile practices.

This research is aimed at practitioners, researchers, educators, and students in fashion-textiles who recognise the need for change toward something different in the industry. This research provides an alternative pathway for others in this field seeking to transform their work. It offers approaches that diverge from conventional sustainability rhetoric, which many already recognise is inadequate to create lasting transformational change. By introducing more holistic and sustainable methodologies, this work guides those looking to reshape their practices and thought processes, moving beyond the limitations of modern sustainability discourses. Aligning with the aims of *Earth Logic* (Fletcher &

Tham, 2019), this work aims to move beyond mere theoretical discourse toward inspiring diverse, actionable possibilities. This project seeks to bridge academia and communal practices, encouraging engagement with erased worlds that hold potential for sustainability within fashion-textiles. By embracing varied perspectives and embodied knowledge, this methodology offers a comprehensive understanding beyond purely cognitive processes.

The Earth-cloth jacket serves as one expression of pluriversal fashion-textiles among countless possibilities, demonstrating how creative practices and methods can embody theoretical concepts through contextual manifestation rather than universal representation. Through its creation and accompanying photoshoot on Gadigal land, this piece facilitated exploration of key pluriversal ontologies—establishing relationships with materials and place, forming temporary fashion communities through collaborative processes, and honoring autonomous creative expressions within specific contexts. The value of this artifact lies not in attempting to encapsulate the entirety of pluriversality, but in illustrating how fashion-textile making can become a vehicle for investigating alternative ways of being, knowing, and creating that challenge modern/colonial paradigms while embracing emergence, relationality, and situated knowledge.

### *Earth Logic Contributions*

Additionally, it is essential to reflect on how Earth Logic's (Fletcher & Tham, 2019) principles have been woven throughout this work, guiding its trajectory and outcomes in bringing more pluriversal ideas. The research embodies Earth Logic's "Values," "Nature," and "Learning" layers (pp. 48–52), manifesting in the prioritisation of diverse, place-based knowledge systems, the recognition of the interconnectedness of fashion-textiles with all other systems, and the commitment to transformative, embodied learning experiences. The research's holistic perspective on sustainability, encompassing social, cultural, political, and ecological dimensions, resonates with *Earth Logic*'s call for "whole system thinking" (p. 18). This was enacted through the research's grounding in relationality, not just in what was researched as a guiding pluriversal ontology but in becoming part of the methodology and how the research was conducted. The "Learning" aspect from *Earth Logic* (p. 52) further manifests in the research's commitment to transformative, embodied learning experiences, as experienced through the workshop methodologies and participatory approaches, as well as disrupting how traditional academic research is done through a performative and pluriversal research methodology.

*Applications for Practitioners*

This study's practice component inspires practitioners to explore emergent, relational, and experiential creation methods. It encourages those familiar with pluriversal concepts or recognising the need for change in fashion-textile practices to envision alternative possibilities guided by the ontologies and methods presented in this research. The work aims to attune practitioners to new ways of engaging with fashion-textiles that emphasise connection to place, relationality, wholeness, and autonomy. Outcomes will vary as practitioners translate these concepts within their specific contexts, fostering diverse pluriversal approaches. By providing practical pathways for implementing pluriversal concepts, this research demonstrates how theoretical ideas can be applied in real-world settings. This approach is valuable for makers seeking holistic and divergent creation methods that challenge current fashion-textile norms. It prompts practitioners to question established practices and connect with their unique voice, community, and context. For instance, my exploration led me to connect with my Slavic ancestry, researching ritual textile-making practices from that region and incorporating these methods into my work.

*Applications for Educators & Researchers*

This research offers fashion-textile educators novel approaches to teaching and learning incorporating pluriversal concepts, addressing the need to transform traditional education methodologies. The workshop methodologies developed in this study provide a framework for creating holistic, relational, and place-based learning experiences that can be adapted and integrated into existing curricula. Specific examples from the research include the "Listening to Materials" exercise, where students explore textiles through animist approaches and multiple senses, encouraging a deeper, more embodied understanding of garments and materials; the "Relationality" exercise, which allowed students to connect through yarn, fostering a sense of place and community connection; and the "Pluriversal Futures" exercise where participants envisioned sustainable fashion-textiles futures and then manifested these into material forms.

Educators can build upon this research to develop comprehensive curricula that weave pluriversal concepts throughout fashion-textile design programs, manifesting as longer, immersive workshop experiences or entire courses based on pluriversal approaches. The research serves as both inspiration and practical guide, offering educators a method and mode of inquiry into potential pathways for integrating divergent approaches for pluriversal fashion-textiles. Importantly, and aligned with pluriversality, these approaches are flexible and contextual, allowing educators to translate and apply them

according to their specific communities, desires, visions, and needs. In exploring these methods and methodologies, the research empowers educators to create divergent learning experiences that prepare students to navigate the interconnected challenges of fashion-textiles.

This work lays the groundwork for further exploration of pluriversality in fashion-textiles, offering researchers a comprehensive foundation that introduces key scholars such as Arturo Escobar and contextualises pluriversal concepts within fashion-textile design. It equips researchers with theoretical understandings and practical tools for implementing pluriversal approaches, fostering innovative and sustainable practices in the field. For researchers situated within transformative change and sustainability spaces, this work can provide an outlook into how pluriversality can contribute to sustainability. It could inspire the integration of more holistic ontologies and practices, potentially catalysing a range of ontologically redirective research projects and outputs. Future studies could delve deeper into specific aspects of pluriversal fashion-textiles, exploring areas such as the long-term impacts of these approaches on sustainability outcomes and the application of these concepts within diverse contexts. There is also significant potential for interdisciplinary research, investigating how pluriversal fashion-textiles intersect with fields such as ecology, sociology, cultural studies and more. These avenues of research promise to broaden our understanding of pluriversality's potential in addressing complex, multifaceted challenges in fashion-textiles as both an industry and area of enquiry.

Sustainable fashion-textile researchers can draw inspiration from this work to envision and pursue alternative research possibilities and methods. The study guides towards more relational research methodologies that consider place; integrating diverse knowledges, such as experiential, spiritual, embodied, and more; and helping to co-create a different approach to doing research. This divergent knowledge paradigm is grounded in care, reverence, reciprocity, and relationality ontologies, which points toward a shift in how we approach and understand fashion-textile research. By engaging with this research, fashion-textile researchers are encouraged to expand their perspectives and research methodologies by inviting them to reimagine their role and the impact of their work, nurturing a research culture that is more aligned with the principles of pluriversality and sustainability.

### *Applications for Students*

For fashion-textile design students, especially those passionate about sustainability and transformation, this research presents a divergent perspective

that could influence their design approach and future work. Exposure to these pluriversal concepts can fundamentally shift students' worldviews and creative practices, encouraging them to think beyond conventional paradigms. By engaging with this research, students can develop a more holistic, diverse and context-specific vision for their role in the fashion-textile industry, equipping them to become future agents of positive change in their communities.

The work encourages students to expand their understanding of sustainability beyond conventional material or process-driven change. It introduces them to a more holistic, relational approach that considers the interconnectedness of social, environmental, and cultural factors in fashion-textiles. This broader perspective can inspire students to think more critically about their design and the creation of new systems and paradigms that move fashion-textiles beyond product creation. Moreover, this work challenges students to reconsider their role as designers. Rather than seeing themselves as isolated creators, they are encouraged to view their practice as part of a more extensive, interconnected living system. This shift can foster a sense of responsibility and agency, inspiring students to see their work as a potential catalyst for positive change in the industry and society. This work can further empower students to challenge established norms in the fashion-textile industry through the alternative ontologies and practices presented throughout. These aim to offer students inspiration and permission to question current systems and imagine and enact radically different fashion-textiles futures.

Additionally, through my study, I offer examples of how this may manifest in physicality, inspiring others to believe that other possibilities are possible. Such examples may inspire and contribute to cultivating a generation of designers who, instead of perpetuating the status quo or paralysed in hopelessness, can become empowered visionaries and pioneers reimagining and reshaping fashion-textiles in their unique ways. This research aims to support them in navigating divergent ideas and encourage the next generation to work in different ways, trusting their intuition, embracing diversity, and finding joy and meaning in their creative processes.

#### **5.4.Possibilities for Future Research**

This research into pluriversal approaches for fashion-textiles opens up several exciting avenues for future investigation, each with the potential to significantly extend and expand upon the current state of knowledge in the field. For industry professionals, the pluriversal approaches explored in this study could contribute to more sustainable and ethical practices in fashion-textile production. Future research could examine how companies embrace diverse worldviews and foster deeper connections with materials, processes, and places to develop more



relational and responsible business models. Such research could further involve exploring the manifestation of pluriversal approaches in contexts beyond Australia, investigating how these practices might contribute to or align with different communities, contexts, and cosmologies, and studying their evolution over time. A crucial area for future study is the long-term impact of pluriversal methods in fashion-textile education on students' design practices and career trajectories. Examining how educational institutions can integrate co-creation and participatory learning methodologies that align with pluriversal ontologies and practices could be developed further. Aligning with *Earth Logic* (Fletcher & Tham, 2019) principles, future research could delve deeper into how pluriversal approaches support local economies and communities. This might involve studying how these practices foster learning, and unlearning fashion-textile processes that challenge modern/colonial paradigms. Developing holistic, qualitative, and context-specific evaluation methods to measure the success of pluriversal fashion-textile practices is another exciting area for inquiry that could involve metrics rooted in relationality, care, joy, autonomies, and more.

Further research questions emerge around the practical application of pluriversal concepts. For instance, what could pluriversal making look like in diverse contexts? How can making with an emergent methodology be integrated into the current fashion-textile industry and learning practices? And what shifts are necessary to create space for these approaches? In terms of workshops and collaborative learning, future studies could explore how the methods developed in this research might evolve in different contexts, and what emerges when these approaches are introduced to diverse communities.

These future research directions, grounded in the experiences and discussions from this study have the potential to advance the understanding of pluriversal approaches in fashion-textiles significantly. They offer rich opportunities for established educators and researchers and the next generation of scholars and practitioners to contribute to this evolving field, pushing the boundaries of what sustainable fashion-textiles could be.

### 5.5. Closing Reflections

This research journey has profoundly transformed my understanding of fashion-textiles, holistic sustainability, and my role as a practitioner-researcher. The process of conducting this research has been both challenging and enlightening. Navigating the complex intersections of pluriversal theory and fashion-textile practice demanded a constant negotiation between abstract concepts and tangible realities. It required me to question deeply ingrained assumptions and to remain open to unexpected insights and outcomes. As Gibson (2019, p. 27)

notes, "Through being actively engaged in practice, both subjects and objects are created and undergo transformation in the process of making." This statement encapsulates my experience, as I found both myself and my understanding of fashion-textiles fundamentally altered through this research process.

Embracing de la Cadena and Escobar's (2024, pp. 44–45) vision of "pluriversal designing" as an open-ended endeavour, this study welcomes diverse perspectives and ways of knowing into the fashion-textile design process. It reveals pluriversality not just as a theoretical concept but as a practical tool for liberation from universalising approaches, grounded in embodiment and practices in the world with others. Escobar (2020b) notes that this demands a fundamental shift in our outlook on existence and our place in the world, necessitating a process of deconditioning, introspection, and a heightened receptivity to alternative possibilities.

One of the most significant challenges was translating the theoretical concept of pluriversality into actionable practices within fashion-textiles. However, this challenge also led to some of the most exciting insights, revealing how abstract ideas can manifest in tangible ways. The research demonstrated that embracing pluriversality is not just an academic exercise but a pathway to liberation for those wanting to disconnect from universalising approaches and move toward authentic fashion-textiles expressions. This research explores ways of approaching and acknowledging pluriversality, recognising that it cannot be simply created or implemented. Pluriversality is context-specific, it is an approach, and there are many different ways of approaching it in both theory and practice; this research has demonstrated just one of those ways.

Looking at the broader context, this research contributes to a growing body of work challenging dominant paradigms in fashion and sustainability. Offering holistic, relational, and context-sensitive approaches provides valuable alternatives to the industry's complex sustainability challenges. The emphasis on diverse ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, and methods opens up new possibilities for practitioners, educators, and researchers to explore pluriversal fashion-textiles in their contexts.

This research marks a significant milestone in exploring just one manifestation of a fashion-textiles pluriverse, and this is merely the beginning of a broader exploration. Rather than presenting a definitive conclusion, this work extends an invitation to fellow practitioners, researchers, and educators in the field. It encourages them to embark on their journeys, uncovering diverse understandings and embracing multiple ways of knowing and being within fashion-textiles and beyond. The path forward is rich with potential and possibilities of varied approaches that can collectively contribute to a more holistic future for our field.

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